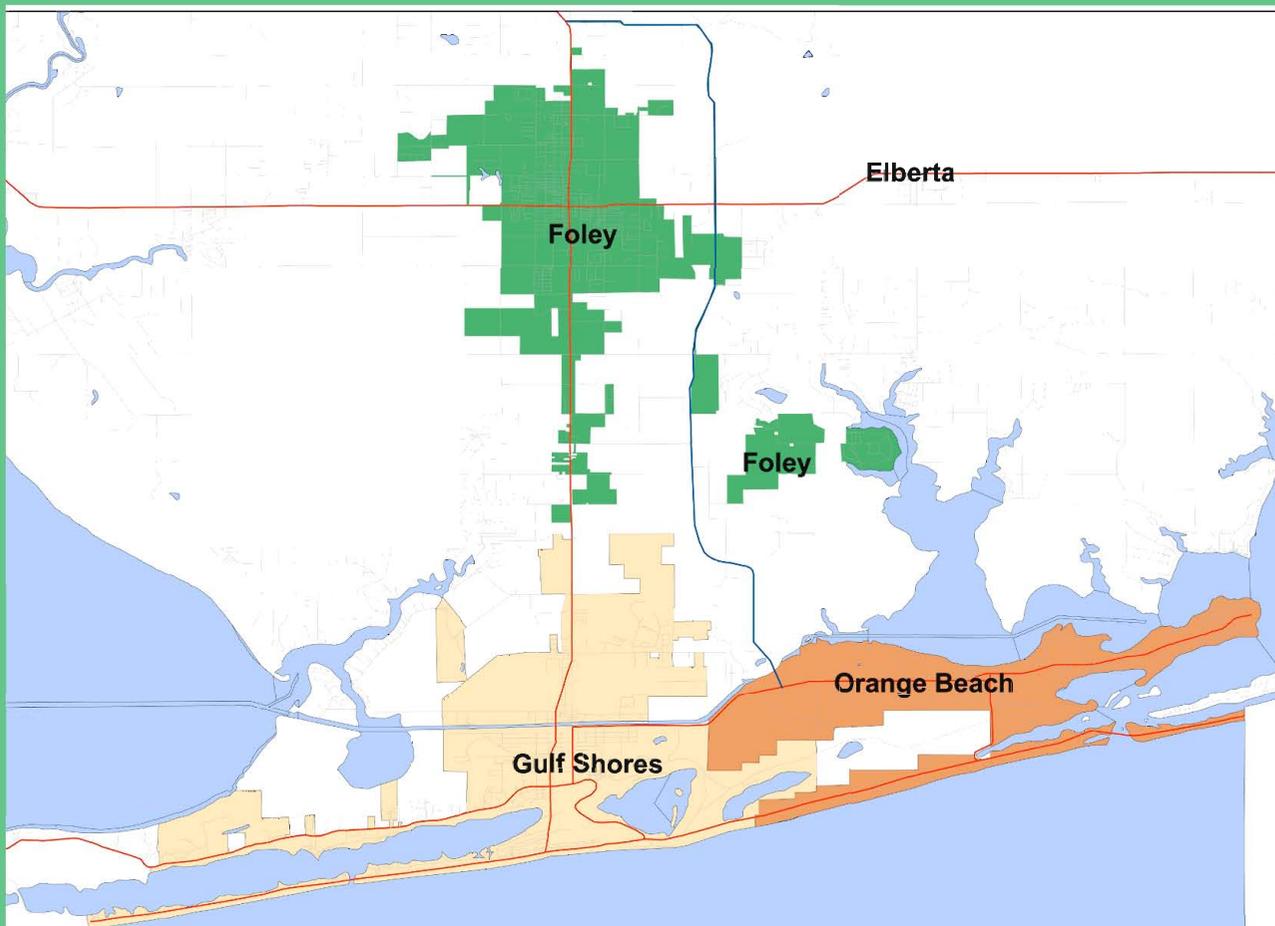


South Baldwin County Transit Plan for the Cities of Foley, Gulf Shores, and Orange Beach January 2008

South Alabama Regional Planning Commission



GRESHAM
SMITH AND
PARTNERS

McDonald Transit Associates, Inc.

SLADE
L.E.T.
Planning

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Executive Summary

The study goal was the development of a plan, a plan that met the needs of three communities. The process was straightforward. Start with constructing a vision and take the vision to the public for their input. The next step refined the vision based on public input and priced the cost of implementation. The third step returned the plan to the public for comment. The final step examined the opportunities for funding the implementation of the vision.

This plan recognizes the demographics of the resident population and acknowledges the economic impact of the visitor population. This plan recommends a public transportation service that will appeal to the visitor population and accommodate the transportation needs of the personnel working within the hospitality industry. This plan recognizes that public transportation is not a cost to the community, but an investment by and in the community. Public transportation is an option in a full and complete transportation network- it is not a social service. This plan recognizes that successful public transportation relies on the communities making the connection between land use and transportation.

The cities of Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach also recognize the connection between land use and transportation and their economy. Their funding of this study through the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission confirms their recognition of the importance of public transportation. Their undertaking of this study enforces the position that transportation, public or private, is crucial to the economy of the community.

This plan evolved through the positive actions of creating, collaborating, engaging and deliberating on the possibilities. The result is a set of phased recommendations with a review of potential funding sources. Included are recommendations for vehicle types and estimates of potential ridership. It also recognizes previous studies and concepts that were provided to the three communities. It recommends and enforces the messages they carried concerning system connectivity and developing a sense of place.

This plan provides two options with two seasonal variations in service for fixed route service. It also recommends an immediate investment in supporting ridesharing and vanpooling.

Greater than half of the Baldwin County workforce is gainfully employed within a half mile of the major State Routes traversing the three cities. There are attractive population densities in Foley on a year around basis and in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach during the peak seasons to support transit services. While there is an influx of commuters from outside Baldwin County, the majority of the work force is county residents that form a constituency for public transportation services.

The visitor population indicated they would be willing to walk $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to access a transit stop. They are willing to wait, but not more than 20 minutes, they would like a bus to arrive every 10 to 20 minutes; but are willing to wait if the arrival time were available electronically. The most telling comment was from the respondent that said transit service "...had to be like Disney Land". The next most telling was the response to the question "Would you be willing to drive your car to a park and ride location to access public transportation for a special event, such as the shrimp festival"? The answer was yes for an overwhelming 85% of the respondents; an indication of the congestion level that will encourage people to use public transportation and of an identifiable activity center that would draw them to a particular location.

The plan acknowledges that the current system meets as many needs as possible within the constraints of the service type and budget and is organized in a way that enables it to be a fairly efficient service. BRATS, however, is not able to meet all the needs of the community, including those of the summer and snowbird season visitors. BRATS has provided contracted employment routes that are the strength of the system. It would be possible to convert some of these routes to vanpool operations and free up BRATS resources.

There is an opportunity for a fixed route system operating along the primary highway routes throughout the three cities. There are challenges and some obstacles but they can be addressed. Recommended route options are a variation on four fixed routes of service: Route 1 is a circulator



within the City of Foley. Route 2 runs between Foley and Beach Blvd. Route 3 is the Foley/Wharf/East Beach express and route 4 is the Beach Blvd route running from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd. In the consideration of the peak versus off peak the plan considered seven months peak service and five months of off peak service for determining system costs.

A revenue hour of service is the measure for establishing system cost and the service recommendations determine the estimated number of revenue hours, the cost per revenue hour is based on national statistics. System operating costs and estimates of infrastructure improvements costs are:

Annual Operating	Between \$4.8 and \$6.2 million depending on the option chosen.
Initial Capital Costs	Between \$13.5 and \$15 million depending on options chosen.
Recurring Capital Costs	Between \$950,000 and \$1 million depending on productive vehicle life.
Future Infrastructure	\$53 million
Annual Ridership	Between 952,000 and 1,200,000 trips per year depending on option chosen
Cost Per Passenger	Year One \$6.43; Year Two \$4.83 and Year Three \$3.86.

Federal transportation funds are available for acquiring capital equipment but the competition for federal allocations is strong. Funding for the service will be dependent on local funding. A review of funding sources available to the three communities identifies the lodging tax and sales tax as the strongest revenue possibilities for funding the proposed system. Gasoline taxes, property taxes and impact fees simply cannot generate an adequate and stable revenue source on their own. A combination of all revenue sources is an option and possible under the Capital Improvement Cooperative District recommended as the administrative umbrella for operating the system.

A successful public transportation system is dependent on a supportive infrastructure. The policies in the Orange Beach comprehensive plan, the recommendations in Envision Gulf Shores and the work being accomplished for the City of Foley address the issues of adequate pedestrian facilities and the development of a sense of place within the communities. The planning efforts in all three cities are moving them toward a holistic approach in considering their community and their transportation system. The current infrastructure can certainly be used in support of a fixed route system, yet it is certainly not the ideal situation. The addition of on road bicycle routes, additional pedestrian connections, improved pedestrian facilities and concentrated land development polices will not only support public transportation, but it will enhance the resort atmosphere of the three cities and improve the quality of life for workers and residents. The three communities need to follow their plans through implementation.

Public transportation is a viable alternative for South Baldwin County. Public transportation is an important alternate with the overall transportation network. Frequent, dependable, affordable public transportation, is "...like Disney Land", will be vital in preserving the reasons people seek out South Baldwin County as a recreational and employment choice.





Background

Project Understanding

This project is the result of the leadership within the Cities of Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach understanding that planning for a public transit component was necessary for the future transportation network of the three cities. To accomplish the development of a public transportation element of the overall transportation network, the three cities funded and empowered the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission to engage a third party contractor to perform this important planning work. The consultant team chosen was comprised of Gresham, Smith and Partners, McDonald Transit Associates Inc. and Slade L.E.T. Planning. The initial advisory committee was expanded, based upon the recommendation of the committee members and for the purposes of the study, was to be known as the Visionary Advisory Committee.

Project Goals

At the initial meeting of the consultant team and the advisory committee, the project goal was clearly articulated. The goal of the study was the identification of a public transit element for the South Baldwin County transportation network that increased mobility, reduced congestion, promoted economic growth and prepared for future development.

The advisory committee was articulate in their requirement that the public transit element cover an immediate, intermediate and long range time frame. And that the public transit element must cover the touchstones of system reliability and sustainability, identify any required infrastructure and include recommendations on the governance and funding of the public transit element.

Project Objectives

Objectives by definition should be focused on a result; objectives should be specific, they should be measurable and they should be attainable. The objectives of this work are to 1) Identify a public transit element that will be part of the fabric of the South Baldwin County transportation network; 2) Identify a public transit element that supports economic development; and 3) Identify a public transit element that has broad based stakeholder support.

Report Layout

The report layout is formatted in the following manner. All tables are included in the main body of the document. At the conclusion of each data assembly section the writers have included their observations of the data in relation to establishing and operating a public transportation system. All short term route recommendations include an explanation of the alternatives considered. The future recommendations include a synopsis of the alternatives considered. The maps of the routes, if they have been included in the body of the report in a reduced format, are presented in large format in the appendix. Survey results are presented in a narrative summary rather than a tabular presentation.

Current Demographics

Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach lie at the southern end of the largest county in the State of Alabama. The area is known internationally for its sun and fun and is a destination place for family vacations. It is an area that is experiencing rising property values, low unemployment and continued growth in business and population. It is also an area contending with increased congestion and challenges in recruiting employees. It is an area looking for solutions. An examination of the area demographics will help us understand some of the interactions. Understanding the demographics of the study area is important to understanding the area. The demographics for the resident population at the county and city level are the initial tabulation followed by an examination of employment patterns and the demographics of the vacation population. Countywide numbers have been updated since the 2000 Census; however, data elements at the City level have not been updated since the 2000 Census. When examining the resident population, we will see that among the three cities there is not great disparity.



Resident Population

- Baldwin County

Demographic review is best done in a tabular presentation. Basic building blocks of any demographic profile are age and income. Table 1: Baldwin County Population Characteristics give us a view of the entire population of Baldwin County in 2000 and again in 2005. The basic county data shows a population increase of 14.2%, a slight decrease in per capita family income and a marked increase of 27.7% in the Hispanic/Latino population.

Table 1: Baldwin County Population Characteristics

	2000	2005
Total Population	140,415	160,354
Male	49%	49.2%
Female	51%	50.8%
Median Age	39	40.2
< 5 year Old	6.10%	5.90%
18 to 65	75.60%	77.50%
>65	15.50%	15.80%
% White	87.10%	87.90%
% Black	10.30%	10.20%
% Hispanic /Latino	1.80%	2.30%
Average Household Size	2.94	2.89
Median Family Income	\$47,028	\$46,946
Per Capita Income	\$20,826	\$23,661
% in the Workforce	59.80%	62.50%

American Community Survey updates census figures. The last update was completed in 2005. The American Community Survey does not update at every geographic level and for Baldwin County the update is only completed at the county level. We can examine the changes at the county level and then examine the 2000 census data for the individual cities and make some very safe assumptions about the resident populations. We are primarily concerned with income levels, workforce status and age. When we do not see a dramatic change at the county level, there is no valid reason to assume or predict any dramatic change at the smaller geographic level.

- City of Foley

As noted, the datasets for 2005 from the American Community Survey are not available at the city level but it is acceptable to use the county level percentages. The goal is an identification of trends in population and income, not targeting individual household level data. We see that the City of Foley comprises approximately 5% of the county population and is nearly identical to the countywide median age of 39. In fact, the City of Foley nearly mirrors the county demographics in all categories, diverging at median family income and average household size. About 7.1% of families and 11.5% of the population were below the poverty line, including 13.4% of those under age 18 and 12.0% of those age 65 or over.



Table 2: City of Foley Population Characteristics

	Baldwin County	City of Foley
	2000	2000
Total Population	140,415	7,590
Male	49%	46%
Female	51%	54%
Median Age	39	39.6
< 5 year Old	6.10%	6.40%
18 to 65	75.60%	76.90%
>65	15.50%	21.70%
% White	87.10%	74.50%
% Black	10.30%	21.90%
% Hispanic /Latino	1.80%	4.60%
Average Household Size	2.94	2.35
Median Family Income	\$47,028	\$38,427
Per Capita Income	\$20,826	\$19,364
% in the Workforce	59.80%	57.00%

- City of Gulf Shores

Gulf Shores demonstrates a climb in average family income, a sharp drop in persons under five years of age and a marked drop in the number of persons per household as compared to the whole of Baldwin County. The differences are magnified when looking at median age and per capita income. About 6.8% of families and 9.9% of the population were below the poverty line, including 6.4% of those under age 18 and 6.5% of those age 65 or over. In general, in Gulf Shores we have an older slightly more affluent population with fewer school aged children than either the countywide or the City of Foley.



Table 3: City of Gulf Shores Population Characteristics

	Baldwin County 2000	City of Gulf Shores 2000
Total Population	140,415	5,044
Male	49%	49%
Female	51%	51%
Median Age	39	46.3
< 5 year Old	6.10%	3.10%
18 to 65	75.60%	83.60%
>65	15.50%	23.10%
% White	87.10%	97.50%
% Black	10.30%	0.20%
% Hispanic /Latino	1.80%	1.20%
Average Household Size	2.94	2.15
Median Family Income	\$47,028	\$51,862
Per Capita Income	\$20,826	\$24,356
% in the Workforce	59.80%	57.40%

- City of Orange Beach

Orange Beach demonstrates characteristics remarkably similar to Gulf Shores: small family size, high per capita income and a large portion of the population active in the workforce. Surprisingly, about 6.2% of families and 10.6% of the population were below the poverty line, including 15.0% of those under age 18 and 3.1% of those age 65 or over.

Table 4: City of Orange Beach Population Characteristics

	Baldwin County 2000	City of Orange Beach 2000
Total Population	140,415	3,784
Male	49%	52%
Female	51%	48%
Median Age	39	44.2
< 5 year Old	6.10%	3.80%
18 to 65	75.60%	83.40%
>65	15.50%	18.20%
% White	87.10%	94.80%
% Black	10.30%	0.40%
% Hispanic /Latino	1.80%	2.80%
Average Household Size	2.94	2.13
Median Family Income	\$47,028	\$51,222
Per Capita Income	\$20,826	\$27,082
% in the Workforce	59.80%	62.70%



- Observations

None of the observations made here are going to be a surprise for the area residents. The demographics paint the picture of the City of Foley as having the more permanent population, a lower overall per capita income and larger family units. Orange Beach and Gulf Shores represent the upper spectrum of income when compared to the entire county. Population estimates released in March 2007 place Baldwin County's population at 169,162, a 4% increase in population countywide. There is still a remarkable low density of population when considering only the area residents, with Foley the densest at 531Persons/mi². The City of Gulf Shores is the least dense at 274 Persons/mi²; mostly attributable to the large expanse of the State Park. Orange Beach's density is in the area of 363 Persons/mi², not exactly a dense urban environment. And of course this is why people come to the beach, to relax and enjoy their surroundings. However when we consider the summer visitors that swell the ranks of the combined Gulf Shores/Orange Beach population we see an entirely different picture. Almost 43,000 resident visitors per day can be counted during the peak seasons and this produces a marked increase in population density to some 1800 Persons/mi².

Employment Patterns

- Daytime Population

The concept of the daytime population refers to the number of people, including workers, who are present in an area during normal business hours, in contrast to the resident population present during the evening and nighttime hours. Information on the expansion or contraction experienced by different communities between nighttime and daytime populations is important for many planning purposes, including those dealing with transportation.

Table 5: Daytime Population

Total Resident Population	Total Workers Working in	Total Workers Living in	Estimated Daytime Population	Daytime Population Change Due to		Workers Who Lived and Worked in the		Employment Residence Ratio	Place Name
				Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D) = (A)+(B)-(C)	(E) = (D)-(C)	(F) = (E)/(C)*100	(G)	(H) = (G)/(C)*100	(I) = (B)/(C)	
7,590	8,420	3,276	12,734	5,144	67.8	1,740	53.1	2.57	Foley
5,044	4,979	2,402	7,621	2,577	51.1	1,079	44.9	2.07	Gulf Shores
3,784	3,194	1,993	4,985	1,201	31.7	942	47.3	1.60	Orange Beach

Daytime population is meaningful in giving us a snapshot of the potential ridership market for work related transportation trips. For the Cities of Foley, Gulf Shores, and Orange Beach, we can see in Table 5: Daytime Population, the estimated increase in daytime population attributable to commuters.

- County to County Work Flow

We observe that each City's population grows significantly during the daytime hours with Foley experiencing the largest percentage increase, but where are these commuters coming from and what is the origin of this commuter population? For this information we can examine the census county workflow information for a tabulation of the commuter origins. When looking at the information in Table 6, we see that the majority of the workers in Baldwin County come from within Baldwin County, so in targeting or prioritizing our transit investments the county is certainly the focus.



Table 6: County to County Work Flow

Residence County to Workplace County Flows for Alabama Sorted by Residence State and County			
Residence State-County Name	Workplace State-County Name	Count	% of All Workers
Baldwin Co. AL	Baldwin Co. AL	45,208	73%
Baldwin Co. AL	Mobile Co. AL	12,615	20%
Baldwin Co. AL	Escambia Co. FL	1,695	3%
Baldwin Co. AL	Escambia Co. AL	527	1%
Commuting From		62,219	
Residence County to Workplace County Flows for Alabama Sorted by Workplace State and County			
Residence State-County Name	Workplace State-County Name	Count	% of All Workers
Baldwin Co. AL	Baldwin Co. AL	45,208	87%
Mobile Co. AL	Baldwin Co. AL	3,425	7%
Escambia Co. FL	Baldwin Co. AL	1,975	4%
Escambia Co. AL	Baldwin Co. AL	752	1%
Commuting To		52,198	

- Major Employment Centers

In the process of identifying sources of major employment within the boundaries of the three cities, we acquired the longitudinal location data of major employers from the US Census Bureau. We see an expected concentration of employment along the major routes. These figures represent the estimated employment within ½ mile on either side of the named route. This data is depicted below in Table 7.

- Observations

Greater than half of the Baldwin County workforce is gainfully employed within a half mile of the major State Routes traversing the three cities. While these numbers are not precise, they are more than sufficient for the purposes of targeting transit services. Recapping, there are attractive population densities in Foley on a year around basis and in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach during the peak seasons. Additionally, while there is an influx of commuters from outside Baldwin County, the majority are county residents forming a constituency for public transportation services.

State Route	Employment
59	<u>10,093</u>
161	<u>629</u>
180E	<u>2,147</u>
180W	<u>2,626</u>
182E	<u>4,628</u>
182W	<u>2,188</u>
98E	<u>2,420</u>
98W	<u>3,161</u>
	<u>27,892</u>

Table 7: Employment Concentrations



Automobile Ownership

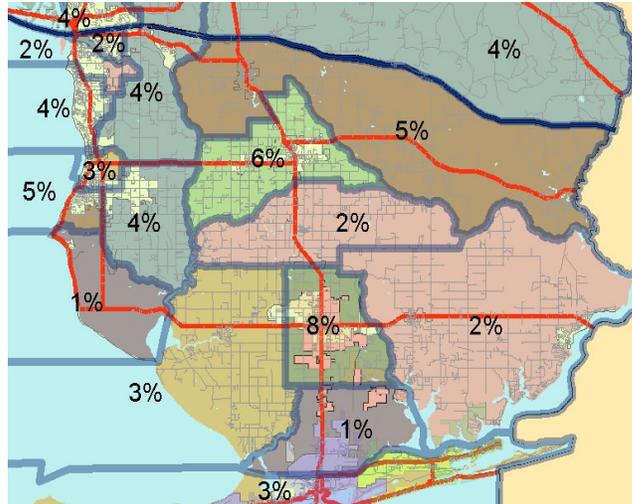


Figure 1: Zero Auto Ownership

We have established the patterns of travel for Baldwin County and we have examined the basic demographics of age and income. We are cognizant of the employment concentrations along major state routes and we will examine the current traffic patterns along these routes.

The 2000 Census tabulated the following statistics for auto ownership. The City of Foley has 8% of households with zero autos and Gulf Shores and Orange Beach have 3% and 1% respectively. From this we can assume that the greatest mobility challenges are within Foley. Gulf Shores and Orange Beach have lesser mobility problems.

Vacation Populations

Visitor profiles developed for the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau are an excellent resource in understanding the South Baldwin County visitor. The visitor's primary purpose is vacation; they come to the area mostly from the southeast, they travel by private automobile. During the past five years most have been families who return to the beach at least once every year. While at the beach they want to eat, relax on the beach and shop.

Visitors report that they love the beach and that they are familiar and comfortable with the surroundings. The area has a family atmosphere and is close to their home. All these qualities are something a transit system needs to complement to be successful.

To gain more insight into this important rider segment the investigators used an online questionnaire. The web site with the questionnaire was distributed to the vacationers via email and after their stay in the area. This was not a rigorous scientific study, but a valuable planning tool for gaining some additional insight into the thoughts of vacationers concerning public transportation.

- **Observations**

The survey observations bore out the visitor profiles established by Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau and the experience of investigators in similar resort locations. The majority of respondents would be willing to walk $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to access a transit stop. They are willing to wait, but not more than 20 minutes, they would like a bus to arrive every 10 to 20 minutes; but are willing to wait if the arrival time were available electronically. Some of the responses alluded to the need for freedom, need for baby seats, need to carry pets as reasons they could not travel by public transportation. The most telling comment was from the respondent that said it "...had to be like Disney Land". The next most telling was the response to the question "Would you be willing to drive your car



to a park and ride location to access public transportation for a special event, such as the shrimp festival”? The answer was yes for an overwhelming 85% of the respondents; an indication of the congestion level that will encourage people to use public transportation and of an identifiable activity center that would draw them to a particular location. Neither of these issues is surprising.

Transportation System Characteristics

The transportation “system” for South Baldwin County as in most Alabama communities, is geared toward single occupancy vehicles. It is built up from the farm roads of days past. These once were adequate for the agricultural activities of a rural community and for occasional family vacation trips to the State Park or the White Caps Motel for a family vacation.

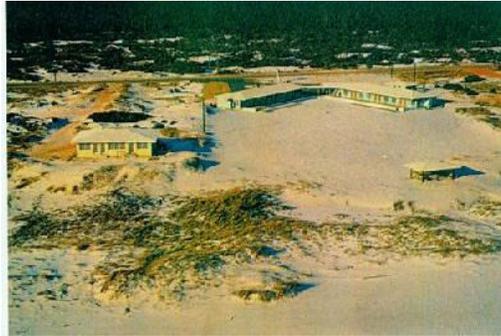


Figure 2: White Caps Motel 1960

SR- 59 has had capacity added over the years. The “new” bridge was added and the “old” bridge was taken down. SR-182 was improved along the east beach, with a five lane section available today. The improvements to SR-59 include the additional northbound lane on the SR-59 Bridge up to the Tanger Outlet Center, which allows five lanes northbound during emergency evacuations.

Figure 3: Gulf Shores 1960



Figure 4: Gulf Shores 2004

The addition of the Foley Beach Express has provided a much needed alternate route to the east end of the island. This has added roadway capacity and provided improved travel efficiency across the network for single occupancy vehicles. Other modes of transportation have been considered and the improvements along SR 182 have included wide outside lanes that accommodate both bicycles and pedestrians. Land use decisions have concentrated the vacation housing both east and west of the State Park, which is the large expanse of open land that you see in each photo.

Highway System

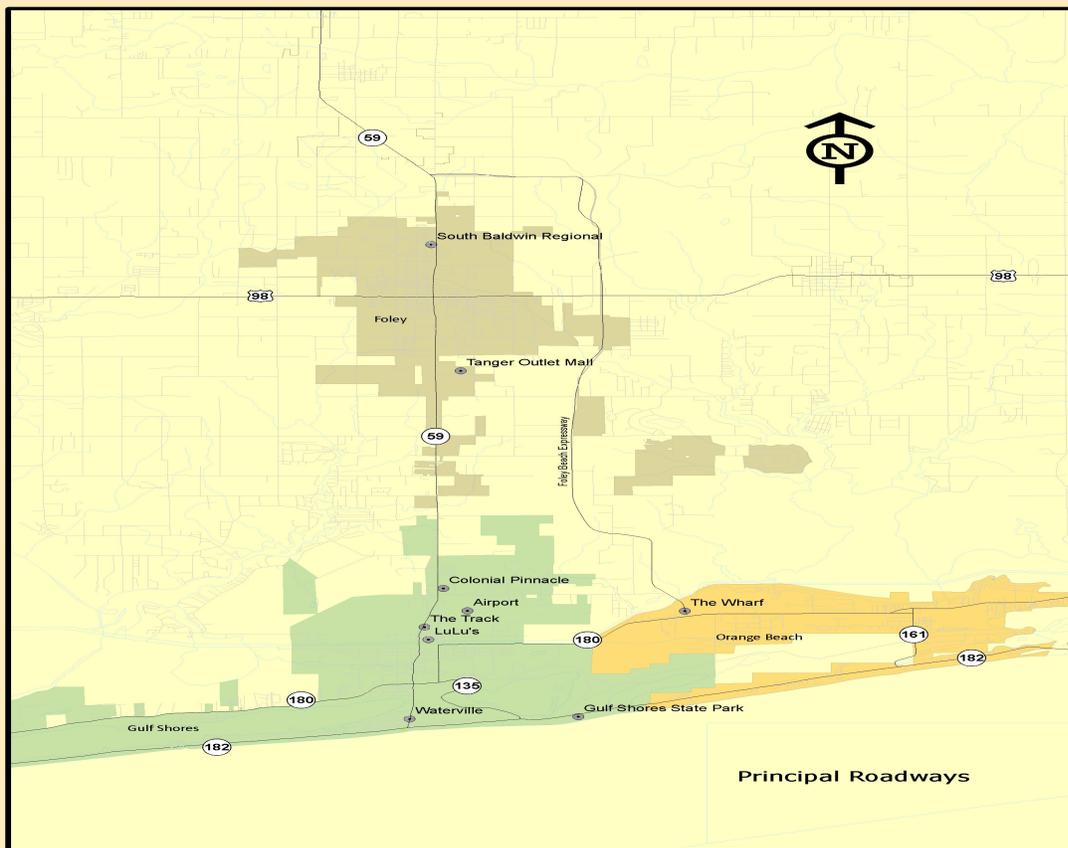
Routes under State jurisdiction have been widened and improved. Those under municipal jurisdictions have not kept pace with the demand for access. The major roadway system is important to provide



access for vacationers and for commuting workers. Figure 5: Principal Roadways displays the major roadway network that serves South Baldwin County.

The observations on traffic conditions show that Beach Blvd (SR 182), a five lane section, while sometimes slow, is not at capacity and operates at a Level of Service C. Canal Rd (SR 180), a two lane section operates at or near its twenty four hour capacity at Level Service D. SR 59 operates at or near its twenty four hour capacity during the year, at or near a Level Service D below the Intracoastal and a Level of Service C north of the Intracoastal. SR 59 is packed with offices and traffic generators from the north end of Foley all the way to the beach. The major slowdown point of SR 59 is the Intracoastal Bridge. The Foley Beach Express and toll bridge have helped alleviate some of the congestion on SR 59. Table 8, SR 59 Trend/Actual shows the traffic trend line versus actual growth for SR 59, without the Foley Beach Express SR 59 could expect traffic to be near 45,000 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT).

Figure 5: Principal Roadways

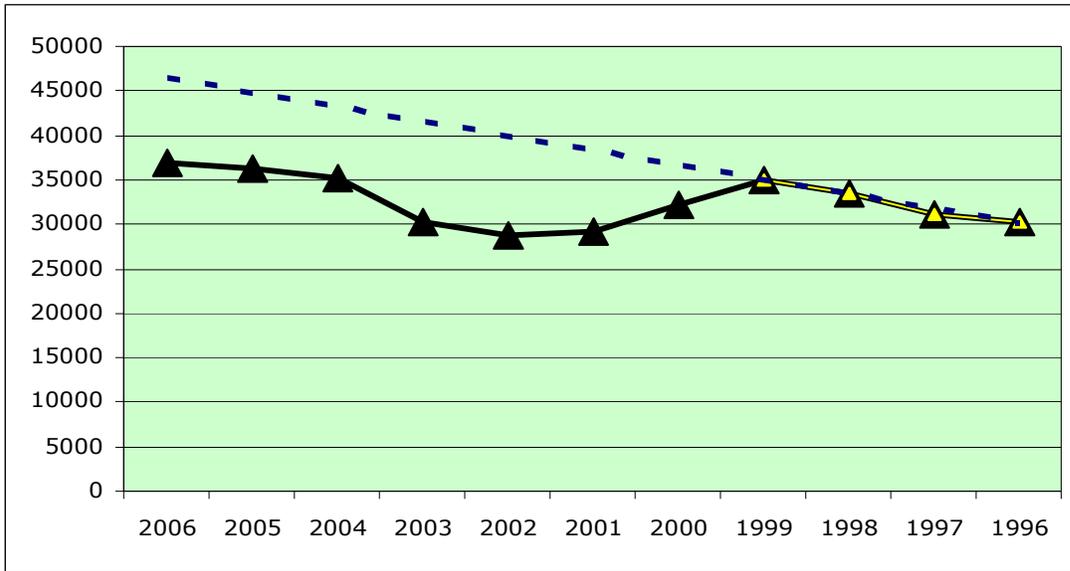


The consulting team did not collect traffic from the east/west routes north of the island. Field reviews did not show marked congestion except at the intersections. Flow rates are increasing and certainly the public will begin calling for signals along the east/west routes, especially those east/west routes that connect SR 59 and the Foley Beach Express.

The current and historic volumes on State Routes 59, 180 and 182 were examined to develop an understanding of the patterns and hourly distribution of the vehicular traffic. To put this information in perspective a few basic facts are necessary. Two lane roadways with shoulder sections have a nominal daily capacity of 16,000 vehicles per day (vpd). Four lane roadways of the same configuration have a capacity of 36,000 vpd. Table 9, AADT Distribution, shows the hourly distribution of traffic for a Saturday, Sunday and Monday in both peak (May, June, July) and off peak (October, November, December) seasons. These are counts from the station north of the Intracoastal bridge.



Table 8: SR 59 Trend/Actual



In examining the hourly counts, trends were discovered that do bode well for transit operations. One, there is relatively constant traffic flow between 8:00 am and 7:00 pm regardless of the time of year, and desire to reach destinations via SR 59 remains constant. It points to a fact that transit can make a difference. If we take 3:00 p.m. which is peak hourly volume in any season and dissect the numbers we discover some promise. On a summer Saturday at 3:00 pm there are a reported 3,153 vehicles on SR 59, traffic counts tell us that in the peak hour there is a directional split of 60% in one direction and 40% in the other direction, the same conditions will exist for a winter Saturday when there are 2,143 vehicles. Broken down further this means on a summer Saturday there are 945 vehicles per lane per hour and on a winter Saturday there are 642 vehicles per lane per hour. The recommended service configuration for SR 59 could pull approximately 75 vehicles per lane per hour out of the traffic stream. Not the ultimate solution, but it does contribute.

Future roadway projects in the pipeline to be completed by the ALDOT include the widening of SR 180 east and west of the Foley Beach Express to five lanes and improvements to SR 180 to straighten curves from Fort Morgan east to SR 59. A major planned roadway improvement is the extension of CR 83 (Foley Beach Extension) north to I-10. These projects are important to the area from both economic and safety reasons. They will serve as a conduit for visitors to the area and an additional pathway for hurricane evacuation. These projects will come with baggage; additional access will bring additional growth. Additional growth will of course generate additional traffic. And the existing business model for development of the transportation system will not be up to the task of providing area mobility.



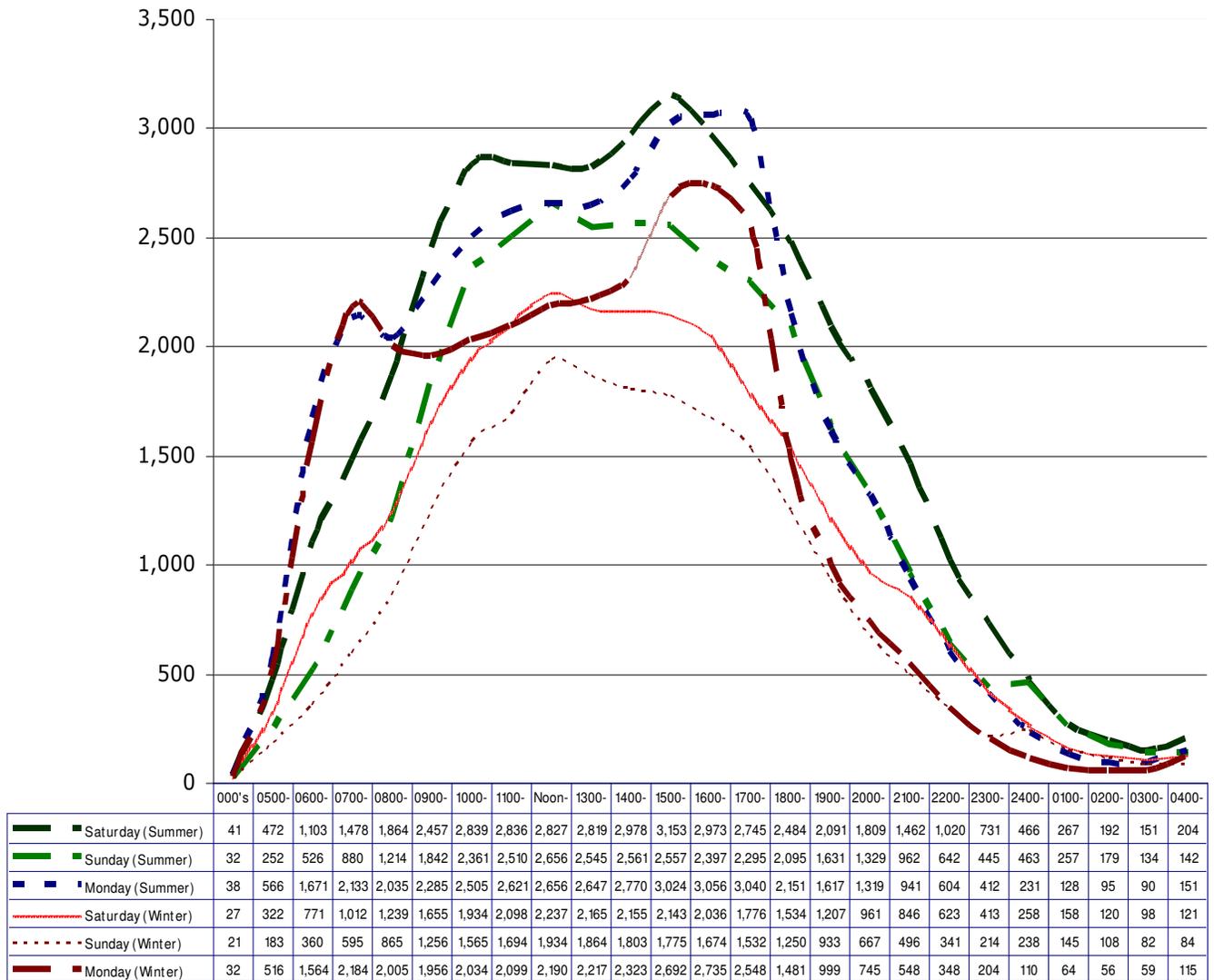


Table 9: AADT Distribution

Transit System

The current Baldwin Rural Area Transportation System (BRATS) provides a combination of services throughout the entire expanse of Baldwin County. Transit service combines general public demand response service with specially contracted service. The service is structured to meet the needs of the county by splitting vehicles by geographic area of the county. All routes convene at the BRATS office in Robertsdale at scheduled times during the day to transfer passengers to vehicles that serve other areas of the county. The contracted routes serve employees of the Plantation Resort, Tanger Outlet Center, and various fast food restaurants.

BRATS provide weekday service all year-round, with additional service in the peak season. Special event service is provided at various times during the year. Service on the weekend is limited to the contracted employment routes.

The current system meets as many needs as possible within the constraints of the service type and budget and is organized in a way that enables it to be a fairly efficient service. BRATS, however, is not able to meet all the needs of the community, including those of the summer and snowbird season



visitors. The contracted employment routes are the strength of the system and allow service to be provided in a highly cost effective manner that simply cannot be provided by a fixed route service. It is possible to convert some of these routes to vanpool operations and free up BRATS resources.

Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian access is crucial for a proper public transportation system. Pedestrian access, while not completely inadequate, is also not sufficient for a comprehensive transit system. Our automobiles take us from our front door to our near work parking spots. The transit rider accomplishes this beginning and ending access by foot. So the challenge of crossing a 5x5 drainage easement on SR 59 poses a challenge, and to do this while standing in the wind and rain adds a dimension.

All three cities have at their core a good pedestrian system. Gulf Shores has a great sidewalk system along SR 59 from directly south of the Intracoastal Bridge to Beach Boulevard, Foley has an excellent sidewalk in the city center and along SR 59, and Orange Beach has done a remarkable job along SR 161 building their bicycle and pedestrian pathways. And when we examine major destinations for the vacation population such as the Wharf, Tanger Outlet Center, Gulf Shores State Park and any of the hotels and restaurants along SR 182, pedestrian access is acceptable. Commercial sites are somewhat less inviting, because of the large expanse of parking, no channelization in the lot and, of course, no sidewalks. These very large lots are quite tough to cross, especially for the workers using buses or thinking of using public transportation for their trips to work. It would make little sense for a fixed route bus running along SR 59 to stop at each and every business location along the way. When examining current operations the lack of pedestrian connectivity between sites is a challenge for workers intent on using public transportation options.

Land Use

Current land use within the three cities presents an additional challenge in proving public transportation. With the exception of the downtown portion of the City of Foley, all three cities have developed as auto centric suburban/rural communities. The land use policies that have encouraged the disconnect between land use and the transportation network, still exist. There have been improvements and the prospect for future development that will support transit and pedestrian activity is promising. In the City of Orange Beach the development at The Wharf brings forward the concepts of mixed use at the one location. It combines retail, entertainment, dining and guest housing on the one site. And while this does not eliminate trips across the network, it does fill a void in that it is a walkable site plan and it is the type of development that you can park once and access a variety of activities. In its "Community Preservation and Growth Management Plan" the City of Orange Beach has identified the area south of Wolf Bay, west of SR 161 and north of the as an area "... to be developed using classic Traditional Neighborhood Design. The streets should be developed using grid patterns and limiting the use of cul-de-sacs. Each development is intended to connect with future or existing adjacent developments". Including this policy in the comprehensive plan is an excellent land use decision that is a transit supportive action by the leadership of the City of Orange Beach.

The City of Gulf Shores has made progress in their discussions on the realignment and improvement of the intersection of SR 182 and SR 59. The concept was publicly explored for the first time in the report "Envision Gulf Shores" prepared after Hurricane Ivan devastation in 2004. The concept was the development of a destination location in Gulf Shores, another "park once and enjoy situation" or "ride the bus and enjoy the situation". And the Envision Gulf Shores Plan also stressed the need to develop and coordinate transit operations. The plan also recommended physical improvements to the roadway network and the expansion of pedestrian and bicycle facilities throughout the area. There is nothing included in Envision Gulf Shores that is not a transit supportive action.

The City of Foley is completing their comprehensive plan. Conversations with staff and plan developers suggest that the final product will include recommendations for a movement toward traditional neighborhood development as the city moves forward. The City of Foley has exhibited its leadership and foresight in the development of the Foley Beach Express and the resulting public-private partnership that leads to the development of a toll bridge across the Intracoastal waterway. Foley's development of a strict set of guidelines for the preservation of the functionality of the Foley Beach Express was ground-breaking work in the State of Alabama.



- Observations

The transportation network for the three cities is built around personal automobile travel. And personal automobile travel is the means of conveyance for 94% of the vacation population, the majority of the working population and most of the residents. There simply is not a viable option to replace the single occupancy vehicle. The policies in the Orange Beach comprehensive plan, the recommendations in Envision Gulf Shores and the work being accomplished for the City of Foley address these shortcomings. The efforts in all three cities move them toward a holistic approach in considering the transportation system. The current infrastructure can certainly be used in support of a fixed route system, yet it is certainly not the ideal situation. The addition of on road bicycle routes, additional pedestrian connections, improved pedestrian and concentrated land development polices will not only support public transportation, but it will enhance the resort atmosphere of the three cities and improve the quality of life for workers and residents. The three communities need to follow their plans through implementation.

Stakeholder Analysis

Review of the concerns of major stakeholders in the study was assembled to understand the level of support among area leaders, vacationers, workers and residents. This was accomplished through several methods that combined interview, web based surveys, on board questionnaires and the review of the results from previously administered surveys.

Stakeholder Interviews

The stakeholder surveys were intended to discover the attitudes of community leaders toward public transportation service in South Baldwin County. The questions presented to the stakeholders are included in the Appendix. All of the stakeholders interviewed agreed that public transportation was a needed service in Baldwin County. The respondents also indicated that they felt that few of the needs were being met. The respondents indicated that most, if not all, public officials they knew supported public transportation. None of the respondents indicated that they were current users of BRATS. They responded that commuters were the group most in need of transportation choices and several respondents indicated that there was limited carpooling among their employees. However, they also indicated that they did not contribute to their employees cost of commuting. A minority indicated they might consider such an arrangement in the future. When asked their opinion of the most likely users the top ranked choices were senior citizens, working poor, disabled populations and commuters.

Ridership Surveys/ Ridership Profiles

Surveys were administered to the BRATS ridership and the questions asked are shared in the appendix. Buxton took the results of the surveys and information from the BRATS files to develop their ridership profile. They then extracted from their database the logical locations of potential new ridership. Figures 6 and 7 display the origins and destinations of BRATS ridership that were derived from the survey material. Buxton uses a technique known as a psychographic profile. Profiling and segmenting household data creates the picture of households on a psychographic basis, giving us the ability to distinguish amongst demographically similar households anywhere in the United States. Technically, segmentation is a standardized method of classifying, sorting, and grouping people. Segmentation classifies households into distinct socioeconomic groups and measures households according to lifestyles and behavior patterns. Millions of customer transactions are analyzed and grouped on an annual basis to determine similar habits, which are used to develop psychographics.

Compared to traditional broad-based demographics, the psychographic approach is more focused and produces results that are more accurate. The advantage of this system is the ability to integrate behavioral, demographic, and most importantly, consumer spending habits into models that describe any household in the United States.





Figure 6: South Baldwin Origins

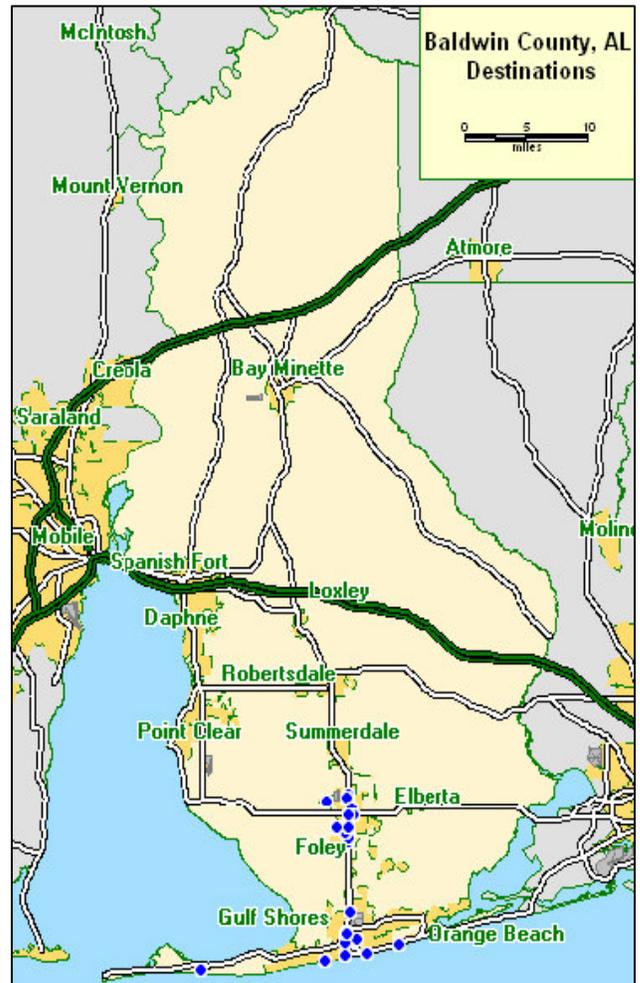


Figure 7: South Baldwin Destinations

These models not only describe age, income, and education, but also the investments and purchases a household is likely to make. The household segmentation system has been thoroughly tested and is well recognized by retailers, services, and restaurants. The psychographic profiles that fit as most likely consumers of BRATS service based on current BRATS ridership profiles are shown below in Table 10 below. It identifies the BRATS core riders by their segment number and name.



Figure 8: Actual vs. Base Percentage of Core Riders

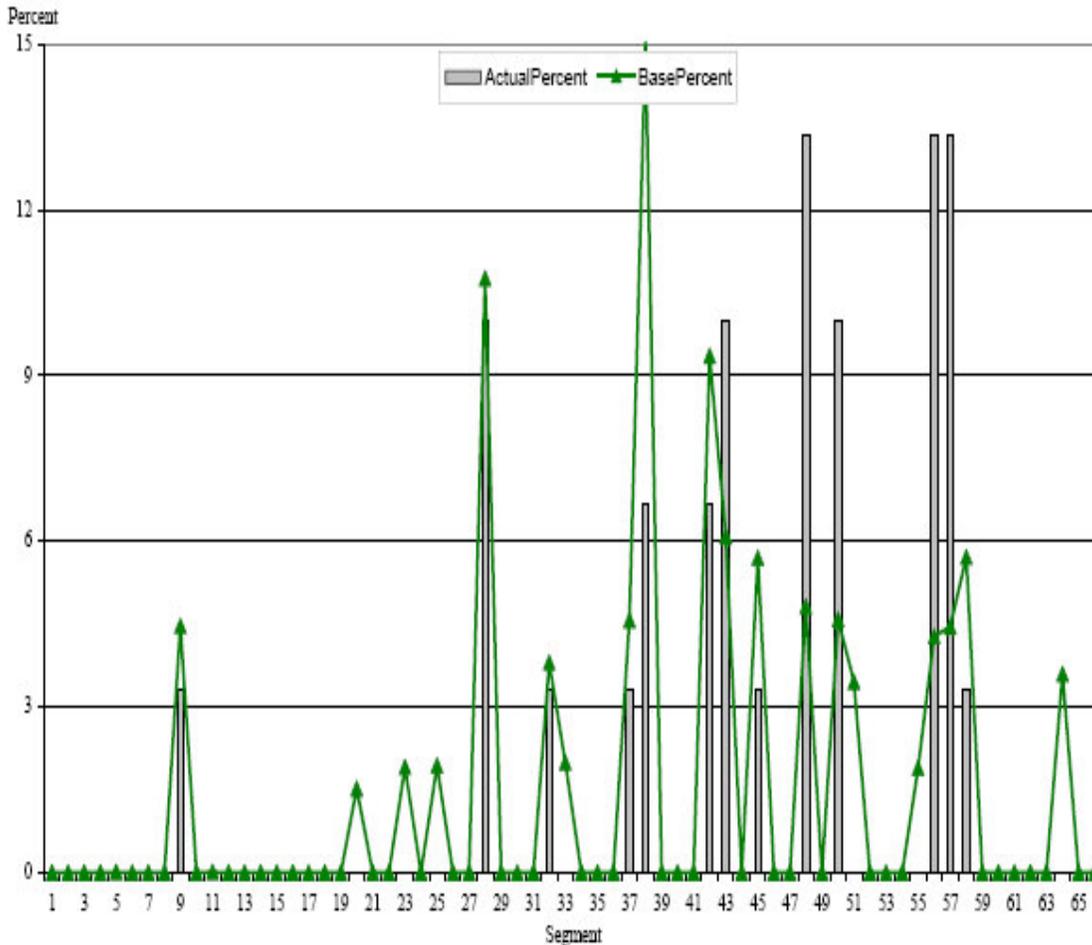


Figure 8 is the graphic representation of the percent composition of existing BRATS riders (*Actual percentage*) along with the percent composition of the base profile (relative % of *residents within the community of this type*) identifies which segments are most likely to be riders. If a segment makes up a higher percentage of the existing rider base than it makes up of the greater Baldwin County area, BRATS is capturing a larger amount of that segment from the area. Graphing the percent composition of existing BRATS riders along with the percent composition of the base profile identifies which segments are most likely to be riders.

The PRIZM®*NE* segmentation system, utilized by Buxton, identifies 66 household segments nationally, ranging from “Upper Crust” at the highest level of the socioeconomic continuum to “Low-Rise Living” at the lowest level. The five categories identified as the most likely customers of BRATS are described by very unique characteristics; the numbering and unique naming correspond to the numbering and descriptions in Figure 8 and Table 10.



Table 10: Core Riders

Segment Number	Segment Name
43	Heartlanders
48	Young & Rustic
50	Kid Country USA
56	Crossroads Villagers
57	Old Milltowns

43 Heartlanders – America was once a land of small middle-class towns, which can still be found today among Heartlanders. This widespread segment consists of middle aged couples with working-class jobs living in sturdy, unpretentious homes. In these communities of small families and empty-nesting couples, Heartlanders pursue a rustic lifestyle where hunting and fishing remain prime leisure activities along with cooking, sewing, camping and boating.

48 Young & Rustic – Like the soap opera that inspired its nickname, Young & Rustic is composed of young, restless singles. Unlike the glitzy soap denizens, however, these folks tend to be lower income, high school-educated and live in tiny apartments in the nation’s exurban towns. With their service industry jobs and modest incomes, these folks still try to fashion fast-paced lifestyles centered on sports, cars and dating.

50 Kid Country, USA – Widely scattered throughout the nation’s heartland, Kid Country, USA is a segment dominated by large families living in small towns. Predominantly white with an above-average concentration of Hispanics, these young working-class households include homeowners, renters and military personnel living in base housing; about 20 percent of residents own mobile homes.

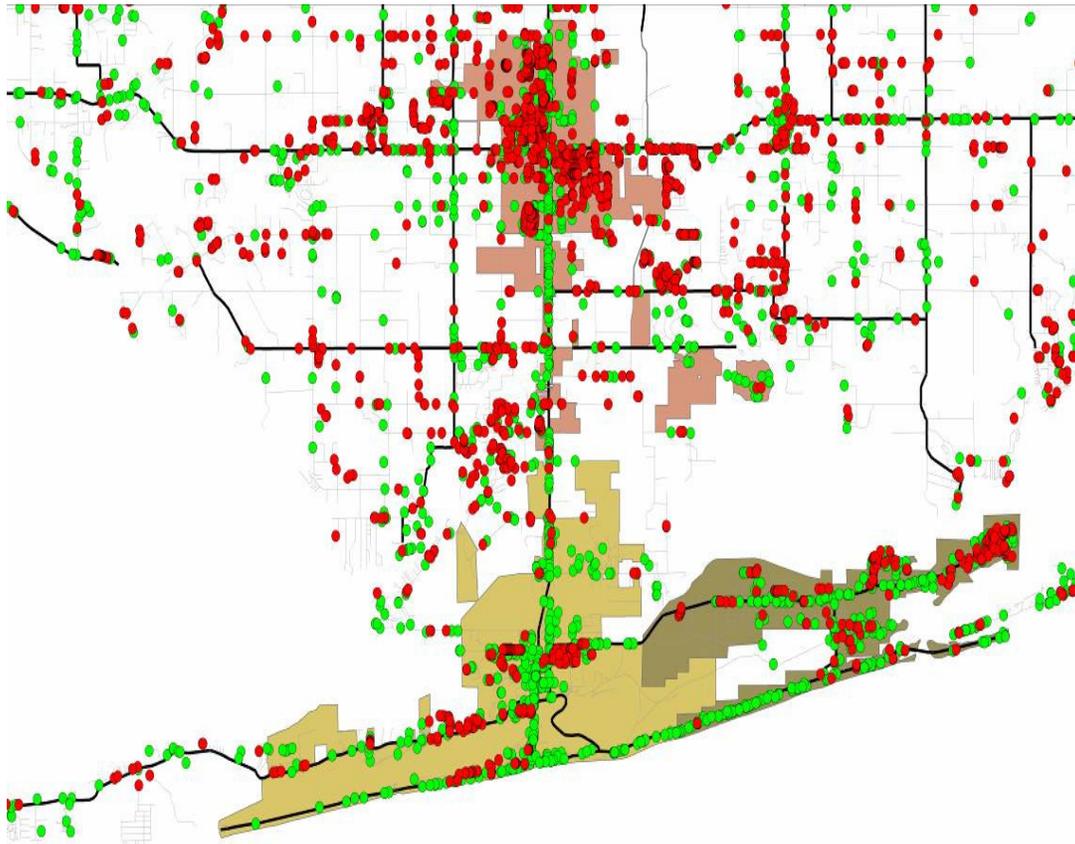
56 Crossroads Villagers – With a population of middle-aged, blue-collar couples and families, Crossroads Villagers is a classic rural lifestyle. Residents are high school educated with lower-middle incomes and modest housing; one-quarter live in mobile homes. There’s an air of self-reliance in these households as Crossroads Villagers help put food on the table through fishing, gardening and hunting.

57 Old Milltowns – America’s once-thriving mining and manufacturing towns have aged—as have the residents in Old Milltowns communities. Today, the majority of residents are retired singles and couples living on downscale incomes in pre-1960 homes and apartments. For leisure they enjoy gardening, sewing, socializing at veterans clubs or eating out at casual restaurants.

And each one of these exceeds the base profile and makes the grade to be considered a marketable segment. Figure 9 shows the relationship between potential ridership (RED) and actual job locations (GREEN). The clustering along major routes points to the potential for fixed route service.



Figure 9: Potential Ridership vs. Job Locations



Visitor Surveys

The South Baldwin public transportation study had an irreplaceable resource in the survey data compiled by Evans – Klages Inc. for the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau. This data source proved invaluable in understanding the visitor population. The consulting team supplemented this data with a web based survey to discover visitor attitudes toward public transportation. The survey was emailed to a group of spring time visitors after they had returned to their homes. This survey was in no way as rigorous as the Evans – Klages Inc. work or the Buxton work. It did serve to support the practical operating experience of the McDonald Transit group that they have garnered over many years of transit operations in resort locations. The visitor survey confirmed the same destinations as the CVB surveys for vacationers. The additional information concerning their willingness to use public transportation was most enlightening.

The top reasons for choosing this local are shown in the table below that was taken from the CVB report. They enjoy the atmosphere, it is close to home and they are familiar with the surroundings. They like to visit the Tanger Outlet Center and the State Park and, not unexpectedly, some (22%) like to do nothing.



Table 11: CVB Survey Highlights

	<u>Fall '02</u>	<u>Winter '02</u>	<u>Spring '03</u>	<u>Summer '03</u>
Why Choose GSH/ORB (Multiple Response)				
Close to Home	33.9%	27.0%	26.3%	33.7%
Family Oriented	14.7	2.8	14.6	26.2
Familiar/Previous Visit	21.8	23.5	20.5	25.4
Nice Beaches	20.2	22.7	40.0	20.9
Recommended by Friend/Relative	13.6	10.8	13.6	14.4
Quiet/Laid Back	7.8	11.3	8.5	8.5
Not Crowded/Commercial	13.3	10.1	4.4	7.9
Friendly People	2.2	3.9	2.4	7.7
Never Been/Try Something Different	6.9	2.3	8.3	6.0
Reasonable Rates	7.1	7.6	10.1	5.8
Clean	4.9	3.4	3.2	4.9
Friends/Relatives in Area	6.1	8.3	5.7	2.9
Accommodations	8.8	6.6	4.3	4.2
Shopping	2.2	1.4	7.9	1.0
Golfing	12.3	12.3	13.7	0.3
Food/Local Restaurants	5.9	9.3	8.7	3.0
Business/Conference	2.0	6.1	5.0	3.1
Weather	0.7	10.7	3.0	0.3
Attractions Visited (Multiple Response)				
Riviera Centre	61.1%	53.5%	43.0%	53.8%
The Track	9.7	5.7	17.6	25.1
Gulf State Park	18.1	29.7	26.3	18.2
None	22.4	18.8	20.8	17.6
Waterville	5.5	2.4	10.5	17.0
Fort Morgan	15.5	29.0	24.9	15.9
Pensacola Naval Museum	10.0	23.0	9.7	9.4
Battleship USS Alabama	12.2	13.7	11.7	8.2
Dauphin Island	6.9	9.0	10.3	5.7
Mobile Bay Ferry	5.8	13.5	11.8	5.2
Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo	3.5	4.6	6.3	5.0
Bon Secour Wildlife Refuge	5.1	14.6	16.8	2.5
Bellingrath Gardens	5.6	7.9	11.2	1.6

The web based survey provided some interesting focus to the visitor population's view toward public transportation. The visitor population is amenable to using public transportation for trips to the Wharf, Tanger Outlet Center, Fort Morgan and special events. They are less inclined to use public transportation for a trip to the golf course, the State Park or Waterville, and when examined in context of the trip purpose or activity, the idea of a visitor boarding a public transportation vehicle with golf clubs, beach chairs and wet bathing suits is less probable than the same visitor taking public transportation to shop or to dinner. The visitor population is also willing to pay for service received. Over 80% of the visitor respondents would pay a dollar or more per trip for public transportation. The respondents indicated that the bus must be at least as fast as traveling by personal automobile, but they would be willing to add time to their trip if there was an information system that would inform them of pending arrivals and departures.

- Observations

The Buxton data delineates the groups and locations and probable destinations of the resident population that fits the current BRATS ridership profile. The results show a cluster of origins and destinations around the employment centers previously identified and along the primary routes throughout the three cities. Through the CVB surveys, we know the locations of choice for visitors to the area and they are also located along the primary routes throughout the three cities. Finally, we have an understanding that the vacationers to the island would use transit for their trips but the service must be convenient and dependable, "...It must be like Disneyland..."

There is an opportunity for a fixed route system operating along the primary highway routes throughout the three cities. There are challenges and some obstacles to access the potential transit service. Accommodations can be made in the short run to begin service but the physical challenges



and obstacles to service must be avoided or eliminated over the course of time. Table 12 shows the three conditions that must be met to provide a desirable public transportation system.

Table 12: Desired Fixed Route Characteristics

	Current Ridership	Visitors	Local Population
Frequent Service/ Every 20 to 30 Minutes	x	x	x
Dependability	x	x	x
Less than \$2 per Trip	x	x	X

The resident population that does not fit the current BRATS ridership profile will likely have motivations similar to visitors in making use of public transit. Transit service can be made acceptable and available, but it will have to meet some very strict standards to be accepted by the visitor and resident populations.

Developing the Vision

Visioning Process

The visioning process was a two stage approach. The visioning process was the task of the Vision Advisory Committee (VAC). In the first phase the consultant presented the VAC with all of the review material from the public and private plans, the potential impacts to the transportation network and the results of the data collection efforts.

In the second phase the project team returned to the VAC with costs for each alternative and recommendations for funding sources. The VAC was asked to invest another day deliberating the alternatives while considering the financial implications. The consultant team interfaced with the VAC as it debated the issues and facilitated the discussion to arrive at a plan for the public transportation system.

Developing the Options

In considering the options available for transit service the consulting team reviewed the available demographic data, the survey responses, the CVB surveys and the Buxton data to determine the starting point for developing system options. A peer analysis was completed to determine information about services similar to those proposed here for Foley, Gulf Shores, and Orange Beach. The peer review data provided quality information on the average cost per hour, cost per passenger and fare box recovery that can be expected.

Option Selection Parameters

In considering the options the team looked at service delivery first and did not consider any cost factors. The primary need is for transportation in the area as articulated by the Vision Committee was to provide transportation to jobs and circulation options for the visitor community, and local residents. There is a need to bring employees from outlying areas to the three cities, as well as a need for circulation around resorts, commercial areas and the beach for employees and visitors.

An additional stated parameter was that the public transportation system must be available for tourists to circulate so they can leave cars at lodgings and avoid congestion. For that visitor population, the following facts were recognized:

- 92.5% of visitors have personal car available
- 43.4% shop at Tanger
- 97.7% visit beaches
- 86.5% dine out



The hotel and commercial areas along SR 59 from Foley to the beach need service. The Foley Beach Express offers an express alternative to the beach in as much as it bypasses commercial areas. In picking options the team recognized that service was needed to the Plantation Resort for employees, but it was difficult to serve because of distance from SR 59 and limited supplemental development along Fort Morgan Road. did not lead the team to consider Fort Morgan Road. for a potential fixed route.

The BRATS has linkage to other parts of the county as well as Pensacola and Mobile and provides a good deal of service for employees' transportation for neighborhood businesses. They also provide contracted service along Fort Morgan Road to the Plantation Resort.

The long term success of a South Baldwin system may depend on capital investments to bypass congested roadways. Automobile ownership or the percentage of households with no automobile within each of the cities had to be considered; after all, the single occupancy vehicle is the direct competitor for transit ridership.

Option Characteristics

In the process of considering the options the project team had to consider the very large service area being covered, the potential customer base and the resort atmosphere of the area. And the big question that needed to be answered was how to deliver service to the largest number of potential riders with the most efficient use of revenue service hours.

The best method of selecting a set of options that had these characteristics was to let the data map the routes. The project team had assembled the following data elements and understands the market. The team considered the following service area characteristics when developing the recommendations:

- Population density,
- Percentage of homes with limited mobility (no auto households),
- Employment concentrations,
- Retail concentrations,
- Locations of potential riders meeting the current ridership profile,
- Activities enjoyed by the visitor population,
- Area traffic conditions
- Potential new developments

The project team examined the options that would deliver the service that met the parameters and characteristics outlined by the Vision Advisory Committee. The project team identified service options regardless of cost of the proposed solutions as suggested by the VAC. The consulting team considered Fixed Route Transit, Vanpools/Carpools, Light Rail, Trolleys, Heavy Rail, and Demand Response. The team did this evaluation within the context of the practical experience that team members have developed in transit operations throughout the United States.

Status Quo Option

The team examined the options and considered the Status Quo or the existing system first. The evaluation criteria expressed by the VAC requested that any proposed system must contribute to the long term plan, allow for phased growth and meet the needs of local residents and visitors, and be customer friendly.

Based on the evaluation of the effectiveness of BRATS service, the team determined that BRATS provides effective demand response for medical and subsistence trips, and contract service for employers. Additionally, they have demonstrated excellent service for special events and provide a much-needed link to Mobile County and Pensacola.

BRATS level of service is primarily on the weekdays – year round – 8 am to 5 pm, with some employment routes seven days a week. This service meets the needs of only a small number of local residents and does not meet visitor needs for transit. The system responds well considering size of the



service area and low funding. It does a remarkable job. However, the service is not a mobility choice for anyone but the transit dependent populations.

Publicly Proposed Options

To move beyond service to only the transit dependent populations and to provide true public mobility, the consulting team has proposed two options with seasonal attributes for each option. We will describe these routes as Option 1 (Peak), Option 1 (Off Peak), Option 2 (Peak) and Option 2 (Off Peak). Peak refers to the season between Memorial Day and Labor Day and another short period of September/October in all instances and for the off season the months of November, December, January and February. Based on the Convention and Visitor's Bureau occupancy rates for seasonal traffic the seasons rank in this order 1. Summer (June -August); 2. Spring (March - May); 3. Fall (September -October) and 4. Winter (November - February). In the consideration of the peak versus off peak the team considered seven months peak service and five months of off peak service.

Publicly proposed options were presented to the VAC for their review. These options were then presented to the public in three separate public information meeting held in the City Hall of each of the three sponsoring cities. The initial set of meeting took place June 11 and 12 and the second set of meetings took place on August 21, 2007. Major changes from the first session to the second session involved the Foley local route and the Foley to Beach Blvd. route.

The Foley local route (Route1) was initially proposed in two different configurations, one that ran north and south along SR 59 for Option 1 and a route configuration known as route deviation for Option 2. This was revised and presented at the August meeting as a north/south route on SR 59 for Option 1 and for Option 2 a route that traveled west and east of SR 59 and east/west across US 98 (Laurel Avenue). This configuration moved forward as a final recommendation.

The Foley Beach Boulevard route was the other route that underwent change between June and August. An original proposal had Route 2 in Option 1 running just north and south along SR 59 between Tanger and the 59/182 intersection. Option 2 for this route went south on 59 took CR 4 to the Foley Beach Express and then went west on SR 180 to SR 59 and then south again to the 59/182 Intersection. This was completely redone during the August session and the recommended route for both Off Peak Option 1 and 2 is that the SR 59 route will serve residents and businesses along County Road 4, as well as The Wharf, with on-demand service only. In the short term, this allows the service to meet demand in these two venues in the most efficient manner. Should demand to The Wharf in the off-peak season prove to be substantial, the route can easily be revised to consistently serve The Wharf.

Once the planned development occurs along County Road 4, it makes sense to then begin a dedicated route along CR 4 to The Wharf and back. Operationally, the route would be set up to alternatively serve the SR 59 corridor from the north end to the beach and back and from the north end of the route deviating at CR 4 to The Wharf, then returning to the north end of the route. In essence, each "leg" of the route would be served on 30-minute frequency operating out of a transfer point in the vicinity of CR 4 and SR 59.

The final recommendations include four routes as the core for the transit system. Routes 1, 2 and 4 are included in both peak and off peak scenarios; Route 3 is included in only the peak scenarios for Options 1 and 2. There is always a local route in Foley, always a connection between Foley and Beach Blvd. and always a beach shuttle between Perdido Pass and 11th Street at West Beach Blvd. The crucial change is the addition of an express route between Tanger, the Wharf and the East Beach during the peak seasons and the frequency of service for each route.

Integral to all service options proposed is the funding of a Vanpool/Rideshare coordinator and assistant to market the rideshare/vanpool services available through the SARPC. That coordinator would also be responsible for raising awareness of the importance of public transportation as an alternate mode of transportation.



- Option 1 Peak

Option 1 provides four fixed routes of service: Route 1 is a circulator within the City of Foley. Route 2 runs between Foley and Beach Blvd. Route 3 is the Foley/Wharf/East Beach express and route 4 is the Beach Blvd route running from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

Route 1 would take riders north and south along SR 59 from the Regional Medical Center to the Tanger Outlet Center with stops along SR 59 and on site at the Regional Medical Center and Tanger.

Route 2 would take riders north and south along SR 59 from the Tanger Outlet Center with stops along SR 59 and end at the intersection of SR 59 and SR 182 (Beach Blvd.)

Route 3 would be an express route that would transport riders from Tanger, south on Juniper St., east across CR 20 to the Foley Beach Express, to the Wharf and on to the East Beach via SR 180 and SR 161.

Route 4 would take riders east and west along SR 182 from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

- Option 1 Off Peak

Option 1 Off Peak provides three fixed routes of service; Route 1 is a circulator within the City of Foley; Route 2 is the Foley to Beach Blvd. route; Route 4 is the Beach Blvd route running from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

Route 1 would take riders north and south along SR 59 from the Regional Medical Center to the Tanger Outlet Mall with stops along SR 59 and on site at the medical center and Tanger.

Route 2 would take riders north and south along SR 59 from the Tanger Outlet Mall with stops along SR 59, the route would then go east on CR 4 to the Foley Beach Expressway and on to the Wharf. The route would then return the same path to SR 59, and continue south on SR 59 to the intersection of SR 59 and SR 182 (Beach Blvd.).

Route 4 would take riders east and west along SR 182 from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

- Option 2 Peak

Option 2 Peak provides four fixed routes of service: Route 1 is a circulator within the City of Foley, route 2 runs Foley to Beach Blvd. Route 3 is the Foley/Wharf/East Beach express and route 4 is the Beach Blvd running from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

Route 1 would proceed west on Peachtree to Cedar, south on Cedar to Laurel Ave., east on Laurel to Juniper St., south on Juniper to Tanger and the route would reverse and follow the same path back to the Regional Medical Center.

Route 2 would take riders north and south along SR 59 from the Tanger Outlet Center with stops along SR 59 and end at the intersection of SR 59 and SR 182 (Beach Blvd.).

Route 3 would be an express route that would transport riders from Tanger across CR 20 to the Foley Beach Express, to the Wharf and on to the East Beach via SR 180 and SR 161.

Route 4 would take riders east and west along SR 182 from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

- Option 2 Off Peak

Option 2 Off Peak provides three fixed routes of service: Route 1 is a circulator within the City of Foley; Route 2 is Foley to Beach Boulevard.; Route 4 is the Beach Blvd route running from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

Route 1 would proceed west on Peachtree to Cedar, south on Cedar to Laurel Ave., east on Laurel to Juniper St., south on Juniper to Tanger and the route would reverse and follow the same path back to the Regional Medical Center.

Route 2 would take riders north and south along SR 59 from the Tanger Outlet Center with stops along SR 59, the route would then go east on CR 4 to the Foley Beach Express and on to the



Wharf. The route would then return the same path to SR 59, and continue south on SR 59 to the intersection of SR 59 and SR 182 (Beach Blvd.).

Route 4 would take riders east and west along SR 182 from Perdido Pass to 11th Street at West Beach Blvd.

Peer Review

The peer review data provided quality information on the average cost per hour, cost per passenger and fare box recovery that can be expected. Peers were selected on a number of factors, with an emphasis on those agencies that report data annually to the National Transit Database administered by the Federal Transit Administration. This is important because it allows the proposed services to be compared on an “apples-to-apples” basis. All data reported to National Transit Database is bound by specific definitions and parameters, making comparison extremely valuable.

The peers selected for this study included:

- Island Transit (Galveston, Texas)
- Sarasota County Area Transit (Florida)
- Collier Area Transit (Florida)
- VOTRAN (Volusia County, Florida)
- Coast Transit Authority (Mississippi)
- Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (Florida)

The size of these agencies varies widely; however, they were selected primarily because of the large tourist component in each of these systems. By focusing on indicators, such as cost per revenue hour, the team was able to equalize the data to make it valuable to this study.

Of particular interest in this study is the type of funding used by each of the peers. The following tables show information on the operations funding sources for each of the selected peer agencies. The funding sources vary widely between agencies. Each of the systems receives some level of federal funding, ranging from 1% for Collier to 46% for Coast Transit Authority and Pinellas. Five of the six systems receive a substantial amount of dedicated local funds, including both general funds and other dedicated fund sources. Two of the six agencies have local property taxes dedicated to funding transit, as well as two having a dedicated funding source from state gas tax receipts.

Each of the systems has a mix of funding sources, including federal, state and local. This mix allows the systems to capitalize on available federal and state assistance and minimize local contributions to the extent possible. However, those systems which do have dedicated, sustained local fund sources, such as a property tax, are able to more effectively plan service in the long term because of the relative fund stability. In addition, this type of dedicated source promotes a sense of ownership in the community. This allows the system to be successful both in operations, by having adequate funding, and public image, by promoting community ownership and pride.

Peer Funding

These tables display the mix of funding sources for each of the peer review systems. These mix tables identify funding sources and the percentage contribution to total system expenses.



Table 13: Peer Review Total System Cost

Agency	Total Expenses
Island Transit	\$2,777,568
Sarasota County	\$11,301,515
Collier Area Transit	\$4,284,375
VOTRAN	\$16,396,772
Coast Transit Authority	\$3,601,699
Pinellas Suncoast Transit	\$43,818,783

Table 14: Peer Review Federal Funds

Agency	Federal Funds		Percentage of Total Expenses	
	FTA	Other Federal	FTA	Other Federal
Island Transit	\$914,321	\$374,080	3%	2%
Sarasota County	\$1,601,589	\$0	8%	0%
Collier Area Transit	\$125,700	\$96,004	0%	1%
VOTRAN	\$1,304,978	\$0	14%	0%
Coast Transit Authority	\$1,072,652	\$576,641	30%	16%
Pinellas Suncoast Transit	\$0	\$287,180	33%	13%

Table 15: Peer Review Directly Generated Funds

Agency	Directly Generated Funds			Percentage of Total Expenses		
	Fare Revenues	Other	Dedicated and Other	Fare Revenues	Other	Dedicated and Other
Island Transit	\$229,813	\$285,762	\$0	15%	0%	0%
Sarasota County	\$800,888	\$28,201	\$0	28%	1%	0%
Collier Area Transit	\$655,196	\$0	\$0	20%	4%	64%
VOTRAN	\$4,520,872	\$231,087	\$0	7%	0%	0%
Coast Transit Authority	\$687,932	\$157,333	\$0	19%	4%	0%
Pinellas Suncoast Transit	\$8,939,519	\$1,768,610	\$27,987,251	8%	10%	0%

Table 16: Peer Review State and Local Funds

Agency	State Funds		Local Funds		Percentage of Total Expenses			
	General Revenue	Dedicated and Other	General Revenue	Dedicated and Other	General Revenue	Dedicated and Other	General Revenue	Dedicated and Other
Island Transit	\$333,712	\$0	\$639,880	\$0	0%	32%	0%	48%
Sarasota County	\$0	\$2,946,295	\$0	\$5,924,542	0%	18%	45%	0%
Collier Area Transit	\$0	\$1,370,533	\$0	\$2,036,942	10%	0%	1%	0%
VOTRAN	\$0	\$2,940,404	\$7,399,431	\$0	0%	26%	0%	52%
Coast Transit Authority	\$67,106	\$0	\$1,040,035	\$0	2%	0%	29%	0%
Pinellas Suncoast Transit	\$4,472,412	\$0	\$363,811	\$0	12%	0%	23%	0%

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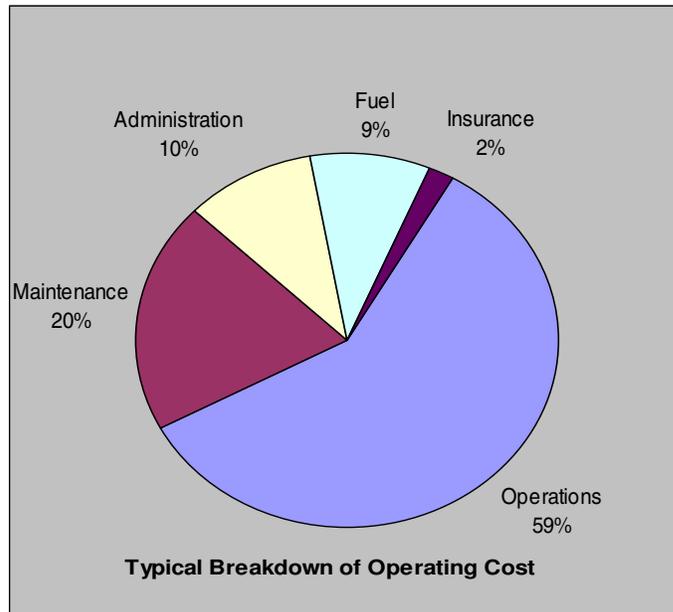


System Costs and Ridership

In establishing the system cost the project team measures revenue hour cost and revenue hours. The service recommendations determine the estimated number of revenue hours required and while the cost per revenue hour is based on national statistics and operator experience. The unit cost for a revenue hour for this plan was set at \$65. The distribution of that cost is displayed in Figure 10.

System costs based on the \$65 unit cost and estimates of infrastructure improvements costs are included in the tables that follow. In summary the system costs are:

Figure 10 : Operating Cost Breakout



Annual Operating	Between 4.8 and 6.2 million depending on the option chosen.
Initial Capital Costs	Between 13.5 and 15 million depending on options chosen.
Recurring Capital Costs	Between 950,000 and 1 million depending on productive vehicle life.
Future Infrastructure	53 million
Annual Ridership	Between 952,000 and 1,200,000 trips per year depending on option chosen
Cost Per Passenger	Year One 6.43; Year Two 4.83 and Year Three 3.86.



Table 17: Future Infrastructure Improvements

Future Infrastructure Improvements	
Ferry Landing	Future Improvements will include a Ferry Landing along the Intracoastal Waterway to receive the High Speed Ferry From Mobile.
SR -182 (Beach Road)	Improvements along SR -182 would include a non mountable median with stations and stops on-half mile apart.The median would eliminate direct left turns and provide protected u-tuns along the corridor.As traffic builds signals will be added along the route.
SR-59 Gulf Shores Parkway	Bus Only lanes from SR -182 through Cotton Creek Rd (CR-4)
Transfer Points	Transfer Stations at CR-4 and SR-59, Ferry Landing, Gulf Shores State Park Transfer Stations at Tanger. The Wharf, Orange Beach, Gulf Shores, and Foley
Areawide Improvements	Build Complete Streets, Follow and Implement the Major Street Plans that are in place or currently being developed.
SR-180	Will become a five lane section between the Foley Beach Expressway and SR -161 in Gulf Shores.

Table 18: Future Infrastructure Costs

Future Infrastructure Costs							
	SR-59 Improvements	SR-182 Median Improvements	Stations and Stops	SR-182 Signals	Stations and Stops/On Island	Stations and Stops/Off Island	Totals
Today	\$28,000,000	\$14,500,000	\$5,600,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$3,000,000	\$53,600,000
2010	Bus Only Lanes on SR - 59 (SR 182 to Cotton Creek,CR-4)	8.5 Mile Median	16 Platforms	8 Signals	3 Platforms	6 Platforms	\$62,704,419
2020							\$92,817,858
2030							\$137,393,103



Table 19: Future Capital Costs

Capital Improvements								
	Small Vehicles	30-35' Vehicles	Maintenance Facility	Transfer Facility	Shop Equipment and Supplies	Bus Stop Improvements	ITS Systems/WEB Based Locator System	Total
Option 1	\$875,000	\$8,125,000	\$4,235,636	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$81,250	\$250,000	\$13,766,886
Option 2	\$875,000	\$9,425,000	\$4,235,636	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$81,250	\$250,000	\$15,066,886

Table 20: Yearly Operating Costs

Yearly Operating Costs							
		Yearly Revenue Hours	Option 1 Peak	Option 1 Off Peak		Option 2 Peak	Option 2 Off Peak
Local Route Foley	Route 1	6,528	\$424,320.00				
SR-59/Wharf/ Beach	Route 2	14,688	\$954,720.00				
Express Route Tanger/Wharf/East Beach	Route 3	6,528	\$424,320.00				
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	13,056	\$848,640.00				
Local Route Foley	Route 1	5,650		\$367,235.56			
SR-59/ Beach	Route 2	9,534		\$619,710.00			
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	3,528		\$229,320.00			
Local Route Foley	Route 1	7,344				\$477,360.00	
SR-59/Wharf/ Beach	Route 2	14,688				\$954,720.00	
ExpressRoute Tanger/Wharf/East Beach	Route 3	7,344				\$477,360.00	
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	22,032				\$1,432,080.00	
Local Route Foley	Route 1	8,172					\$531,180.00
SR-59/ Beach	Route 2	17,313					\$1,125,345.00
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	4,032					\$262,080.00
Gulf Shortes Circulator		3,828	\$248,820.00	\$248,820.00		\$248,820.00	\$248,820.00
Orange Beack Circulator		3,828	\$248,820.00	\$248,820.00		\$248,820.00	\$248,820.00
Totals			\$3,149,640.00	\$1,713,905.56	\$4,863,545.56	\$3,839,160.00	\$2,416,245.00
					Total Year Round Operations		Total Year Round Operations

Table 21: Ridership Estimates by Route

Ridership Estimates							
		Revenue Hours	Option 1 Peak	Option 1 Off Peak		Option 2 Peak	Option 2 Off Peak
Local Route Foley	Route 1	6,528	104,448				
SR-59/Wharf/ Beach	Route 2	14,688	235,008				
Express Route Tanger/W	Route 3	6,528	104,448				
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	13,056	208,896				
Local Route Foley	Route 1	5,650		90,396			
SR-59/ Beach	Route 2	9,534		152,544			
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	3,528		56,448			
Local Route Foley	Route 1	7,344				117,504	
SR-59/Wharf/ Beach	Route 2	14,688				235,008	
Express Route Tanger/W	Route 3	7,344				117,504	
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	22,032				352,512	
Local Route Foley	Route 1	8,172					130,752
SR-59/ Beach	Route 2	17,313					277,008
Beach Route SR -182	Route 4	4,032					64,512
			652,800	299,388		822,528	472,272

Table 22: Ridership Estimates for Initial Three Years

	Estimates	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
		0.6	0.8	1
Option 1 Peak	652,800	391,680	522,240	652,800
Option 1 Non Peak	299,388	179,633	239,511	299,388
	952,188	571,313	761,751	
Option 2 Peak	822,528	493,517	658,022	822,528
Option 2 Non Peak	472,272	283,363	377,818	472,272
	1,294,800	776,880	1,035,840	
Cost per Passenger	\$3.86	\$6.43	\$4.83	\$3.86



Selected Options

An important charge of this project was for the consultant to recommend immediate, mid and long range options for the transit system, these recommendations come with qualifying conditions that must be met in order to make them viable.

Immediate

The immediate option is the establishment of a Rideshare/Vanpool Coordinator and assistant for the three cities. This position would be a salesperson/spokesperson for public transportation within the three cities. This position would cooperate with their counterpart at the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission. This position would promote ridesharing and vanpooling as viable options for the area workforce. This promotion of the activities would be to both employees and employers. This effort takes a considerable deal of salesmanship to get started. There are misgivings on the part of employees and employers that must be overcome. There are inaccuracies in perceptions to correct and there is a lot of door to door contact to be accomplished. This is not a desk job, this is active engagement. SARPC has already made the investment in hardware and software that support this activity; cost sharing expenses with SARPC is available and recommended.

This position should be part of the BRATS operation and it is recommended that the funding be shared among all three of the cities under a contract with the Baldwin County Commission; and if this is the recommendation that comes forward from the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce Study or the Baldwin County Transit Study then the costs could be further subdivided.

This service is an eligible expense under the Section 5311 program for Rural and Small Urban Areas.

Mid Range

The mid range options would include all of the routes examined herein coupled with neighborhood circulators in Orange Beach and Gulf Shores and building upon the activities of the Rideshare/Vanpool Coordinator. The mid range solution should concentrate on the use of existing sites for transfer points and stops. System improvements along the routes should include clear and well maintained signage and a GIS tracking system for the fixed route is strongly recommended. Customer service will drive the system success and unless there is a commitment to providing a complete system; half hearted or incomplete startups should not be considered because they cannot deliver a viable transportation alternative.

Long Range

The long range options hold most if not all of the characteristics of the mid range program, but add system improvements or additions that make the system a true transportation alternative. The long range options would include significant capital improvements. In the category of station and stop infrastructure the system will need permanent transfer points at CR4/SR59, the Tanger Outlet area and a full service station/stop to receive the cross bay ferry if it goes into operation. A transfer station and stop north of Foley on both SR 59 and the extension of the Foley Beach Expressway will also need to be considered.

In the presentations to the community and the Vision Advisory Committee the need for additional surface streets was stressed. These streets should be developed along the lines of the street shown below in Figure 10, Complete Street or in Figure 11 Isometric View Complete Street.



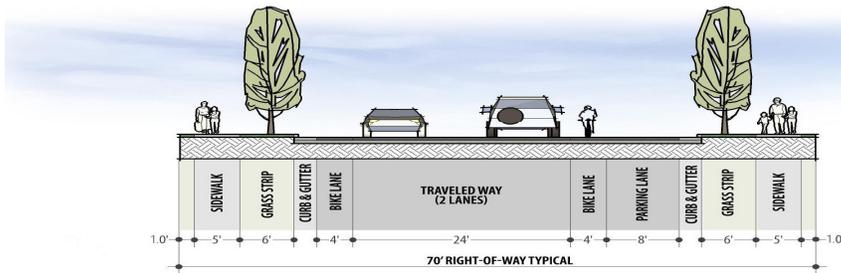


Figure 11: Complete Street

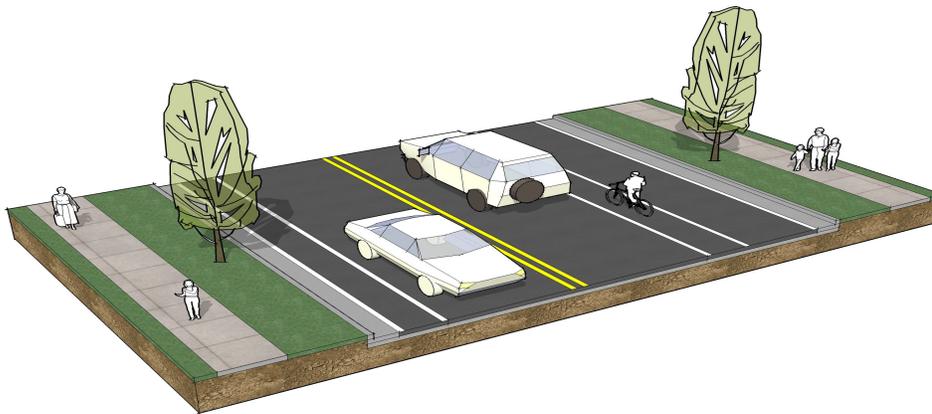


Figure 12: Isometric View Complete Street

These are long term improvements that should be accomplished regardless of the prospect of a transit system. Building streets that accommodate multiple modes of transportation is good business. Orange Beach and Gulf Shores have a major street plan in place and the City of Foley is developing a major street plan. The municipalities have this authority to require this type of street in all new development occurring, and certainly the entire area is in such a growth mode that these requirements are not likely to drive away investment opportunities. However, efforts to put these street types in place after development will be both costly and contentious.

Other long term improvements that should be considered involve the existing Intracoastal Bridge in Gulf Shores, SR 180 and SR 182 (Beach Blvd.). Originally considered but later set aside was an additional crossing of the Intracoastal Waterway, just east of the current bridge. This option was set aside as the discussions evolved. The possibility of crossing the State Park land and providing a direct connection to SR 182 was considered improbable at best and was reason enough not to include the option in this plan. The reason for the suggestion and the opportunity it afforded Gulf Shores is viable and another set of supporting conditions were aligned that would produce similar results.

The "Envision Gulf Shores" plan completed in 2005 recommended a realignment of SR 182 and SR 59. The realignment would accomplish multiple goals. It would provide:

1. An opportunity to improve this highly traveled intersection,
2. A new "place" which would be a destination element for the beach community.
3. A "hub" for transit activity along SR 59 and SR 182.
4. An opportunity for a major change to SR 182 that both Orange Beach and Gulf Shores have envisioned for years, a median divided highway along SR 182 from SR 59 to SR 161.



Within this policy framework the long term improvements that need to be included in future planning are considered by corridor.

On SR 182 (Beach Blvd) the initial consideration for a future long term improvement involved the method for conveying vehicles along the route and passenger access to those vehicles. Planners considered to varying degrees a route along the beach (dismissed for environmental reasons); a single lane on the south side of SR 182 for buses only (dismissed because of the vast number of driveways and turning vehicles), operating in traffic on the current configuration (accepted for the present time but not as a long term option); and finally the solution to modify the existing roadway eventually to accommodate a public transportation vehicle operating in the median. In sessions in Orange Beach and Gulf Shores the community concept of a median divided highway was identified as being desirable form both an aesthetic and traffic calming viewpoint. The recommendation for long term improvements along SR 182 would include a median that had a raised platform for passenger access and protected u turn opportunities for passenger vehicles to access destinations on both the north and south side of SR 182. Stops would be no less than ½ mile apart and adjusted to accommodate stops at the State Park. The State Park stop should be off system from SR 182 to accommodate a longer dwell time for the State park stop.

On SR 59 from Beach Blvd. to CR 4 (Cotton Creek Drive) the long term improvement is a Bus Only/Right turn only lane or shared lane on SR 59. This combines the element of a bus only lane with the provision of right turn lanes. It accomplishes several purposes, it improves operational efficiency with right turn lanes, it comes very close to BRT performance for bus operations for travel between intersections, and it would require a smaller amount of right of way. This option is obviously enhanced by several conditions, the elimination of driveway cuts, (especially north of 12th Ave.), the dedication of a bus only lane on the northbound side of the current Intracoastal Bridge and the addition of a bus only lane on the southbound side of the Intracoastal Bridge. The narrowing of the travel lanes and elimination of the southbound shoulder is required. Once again the land use/transportation connection is evident. Closing of driveways along SR 59 and enabling cross property access and utilizing the existing north/south corridors for local/pedestrian and bicycle traffic would improve travel conditions along SR 59. In most case the north/south route is no more than a ¼ mile from SR 59; certainly within a walk shed for most.

In the vicinity of CR 4/SR 59 a transfer station within the future development should be constructed. This would provide a transfer point at CR4/SR 59 and another transfer point in the vicinity of the Tanger Outlet Center. With a medical facility, additional shopping and transit access this will become another *place* in the area.

The long term solution north of the Intracoastal Waterway is an additional north/south route between SR 59 and the Foley Beach Express; a complete street facility with higher density and mixed use lining the corridor, transit and pedestrian friendly corridor. This does not need to be built now but it does need to be "enabled" by implementing the structure that will allow it to be built in the future.

On SR 180 (Canal Rd) the options are somewhat limited. This facility is being designed and built as a five lane section and will go forward in its construction phase in the near term for the Wharf east to SR 161. The City of Orange Beach following its own policy guidance on development can capitalize on this needed improvement. The recommendations set forth in the ***Community Preservation and Growth Management Plan*** for the transportation system are right on target and should be followed. Adopt and implement the Transportation Master Plan prepared by Day Wilburn and Associates as part of this plan; continue to use highway right-of-way of Highway 180 west of Highway 161 to install bike paths and landscaping adjacent to, but separate from, the pavement to facilitate bike and pedestrian traffic from neighborhoods; the area located west of Alabama Highway 161, south of Wolf Bay and north of the State Park to the west corporate limits is the least developed of all the areas in Orange Beach. This area should be developed using classic Traditional Neighborhood Design. The streets should be developed using grid patterns and limiting the use of cul-de-sacs. Each development is intended to connect with future or existing adjacent developments. This is good advice for any community.



And finally, a facility will be required to accommodate the cross bay ferry from Mobile. The stop will be on the Intracoastal Waterway, there should be stops in both Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, the stops must be a "place" and they must be served by transit. The Wharf is a logical choice for Orange Beach, but the Gulf Shores location is less defined. Whatever the final choice is it will have to meet the criteria identified above. A spot on the south bank and east of the existing bridge and roughly bounded by East 2nd St, SR 59, the Intracoastal Waterway and East 22nd Avenue would set out approximately 60 plus acres for redevelopment.

Funding Strategies

The funding required for this transit system is substantial and the available sources of funding are limited. The industry typically looks at funding as being derived from Federal, State or Local sources.

McDonald Transit Associates has approached the task of identifying revenues to support the proposed service with the assumption that the cities of Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach have limited funds to commit to the operating and capital costs of a new system. Therefore, the revenue models we have constructed have been designed to maximize revenues from sources other than the participating cities, in order to limit the local share required.

Transit services, especially if they are to be adequately funded and safely and attractively operated, require substantial and consistent public financial support. In general, fares from transit services, especially in smaller cities and rural areas can only be counted on to generate a small percentage of a transit system's operating expense. For instance, the peer transit systems that were identified for comparison have a range of 9-22% of operating costs being recovered from fares. It typically takes a system up to three years to stabilize in terms of consistent ridership and fare revenue trends; hence, the new service would probably have a lower farebox recovery at the outset and then increase to a stable level over the next few years.

The remaining percentage, or in essence the required subsidy, is the highest per user for demand response services, such as BRATS, and is less per user for scheduled fixed route systems, but can be significant depending on the level of service operated. It should be noted, however, that reducing frequency of service to save costs can also reduce ridership, possibly below acceptable levels for continued operation. Importantly, operating expenses are recurring and tend to increase after a while. Most transit systems rely on some form of assistance from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and/or from state governments to help with the cost of operating service. Because capital expenses are not as regular and are more tangible, the FTA, and states in general, are more generous with capital assistance than with support for operating costs. Nonetheless, there are ways to infuse transit system operating budgets with some support from the federal and state governments.

Federal

Federal funds for public transit projects in Baldwin County are controlled by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). The following summaries outline the various Federal programs available to the cities to fund the recommended transit system.

Capital Assistance

- FTA Discretionary Program (Section 5309).

The Bus and Bus-Related Facilities program provides capital assistance for new and replacement buses and related equipment and facilities. Federal transit funds are available to State or local governmental authorities as recipients and other public transportation providers as sub-recipients for up to 80 percent of the net project capital cost. There are no minimum or maximum funding limits for applications under this notice; however, FTA intends to fund as many meritorious projects as possible. FTA may allocate less than the total amount requested in the application.



FTA will give special consideration to applications that address priority areas that FTA has established for the FY 2007 discretionary Bus and Bus Facilities program. These priority areas include Fleet replacement needs that cannot be met with formula funds; fleet expansion that allows significant service increase and/or improvements and/or operating efficiencies; facility construction or renovation to support increased service or introduction of clean fuels; strategic investments in rural areas where formula funding is inadequate and the purchase of clean fuel vehicles or intermodal terminal projects that include intercity bus providers.

Eligible capital projects include the acquisition of buses for fleet and service expansion, bus maintenance and administrative facilities, transfer facilities, bus malls, transportation centers, intermodal terminals, park-and-ride stations, acquisition of replacement vehicle and passenger amenities such as passenger shelters and bus stop signs, accessory and miscellaneous equipment such as mobile radio units, supervisory vehicles, fare boxes, computers and shop and garage equipment.

Competition for these discretionary funds can be expected to be robust. FTA will receive many times more projects than it can fund. Success in acquiring these funds will be a partnership between a good project design and an aggressive education campaign aimed at FTA and policy leaders who can have influence.

- **FTA Section 5309 Capital Investment Grant Program**

Project under this category of funds are known as Small Starts. Small Starts projects are defined as projects requesting under \$75 million in Section 5309 Capital Investment Grant funding with a total cost of less than \$250 million; both amounts are in year of expenditure dollars. FTA has scaled the planning and project development analysis to the size and complexity of the proposed projects. To this end, FTA has also defined a class of projects that are very simple, low-cost and demonstrably effective called Very Small Starts projects within the Small Starts Program. Very Small Starts will qualify for an even simpler and expedited evaluation and rating process.

In addition to the cost and funding limits specified above, a Small Starts project must either (a) meet the definition of a fixed guide way for at least 50 percent of the project length in the peak period, (b) be a new fixed guide way project, or (c) be new corridor-based bus project with all of the following minimum elements:

- Substantial transit stations,
- Traffic signal priority/pre-emption, to the extent, if any, that there are traffic signals on the corridor,
- Low-floor vehicles or level boarding,
- Branding of the proposed service, and
- 10 minute peak/15 minute off peak headways or better while operating at least 14 hours per weekday.

These elements have been identified because experience shows that they represent key features which contribute to transportation and economic development benefits. Further, research has shown that the service frequencies represent the maximum wait times for which passengers are likely to arrive randomly rather than having to consult schedules.

Very Small Starts projects are simple, low-risk projects that, based on their characteristics and the context in which they are proposed to operate, qualify for a highly simplified project evaluation and rating process. Small Starts projects that qualify as Very Small Starts are bus, rail, or ferry projects that possess the general elements described above, but which include other attributes which distinguish them from Small Starts. Very Small Starts must include the following features:

- Substantial transit stations,
- Traffic signal priority/pre-emption, to the extent, if any, that there are traffic signals on the corridor,
- Low-floor vehicles or level boarding,
- Branding of the proposed service,



- 10 minute peak/15 minute off peak headways or better while operating at least 14 hours per weekday (not required for commuter rail or ferries),
- Are in corridors with existing riders who will benefit from the proposed project that exceed 3,000 per average weekday, and
- Have a total capital cost less than \$50 million (including all project elements) and less than \$3 million per mile, exclusive of rolling stock.

If a project does not meet all of these criteria, it will be evaluated as a Small Starts project. All of this guidance is available on the FTA website at http://www.fta.dot.gov/planning/newstarts/planning_environment_222.html

- ALDOT and Flexible Federal Funds.

The SAFETEA-LU legislation contains provisions that provide flexible funding opportunities to state and local governments, allowing them the option of using some Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds for transit projects and vice versa. Funds can be transferred from FHWA to Sections 5307, 5310, 5311, 5313(b) and the Interstate Substitute Program to support transit projects.

The funds transferred from FHWA can be drawn from the following sources:

The Surface Transportation Program (STP) and National Highway System Funds (NHS), may be used for all projects eligible for funds under current FTA programs excluding operating assistance at an 80%/20% matching ratio and while these Highway funds are eligible for transit use, they are limited to the construction and improvements of fixed guide ways, the purchase of rolling stock (buses) and other transportation equipment, and any other project eligible under FTA's Section 5309 capital grant program.

Operating Assistance

- FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Formula Assistance.

These funds can be used at a 20% local match requirement for the cost of maintaining (but not operating) FTA-financed equipment. In other words, the cost of maintenance personnel and outsourced maintenance is recoverable at 80%. For purposes of the budget calculations, our team has estimated capital funds available based on our estimate of actual maintenance expenses. Depending on how the service operations are procured by the cities, additional revenues may be available from this source. If the cities competitively contract for service, FTA rules permit claiming a negotiated percentage of total expenses as a basis for reimbursement, which may be more than that outlined in the budget models. There are limited Section 5307 funds available and BRATS currently attracts accesses those funds for its service in Lillian, service in South Baldwin County would not be eligible for Section 5307 funding.

- FTA Section 5311 Rural and Small Urban Assistance.

This program (49 U.S.C. 5311) provides formula funding to states for the purpose of supporting public transportation in areas of less than 50,000 populations. It is apportioned in proportion to each State's non-urbanized population. Funding may be used for capital, operating, State administration, and project administration expenses. Each state prepares an annual program of projects, which must provide for fair and equitable distribution of funds within the states, including Indian reservations, and must provide for maximum feasible coordination with transportation services assisted by other Federal sources. Projects to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Clean Air Act, or bicycle access projects, may be funded at 90 percent Federal match. The maximum FTA share for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs. Capital projects may be funded at 80 percent of the cost.



- FTA Section 5316 JARC Program Funds.

These funds may be used, if approved, to underwrite the cost of transit services designed to connect customers to employment sites. These funds require the preparation and approval of a JARC plan approved by ALDOT and SARPC. Job Access Reverse Commute Funds would be eligible for the services proposed in this report. This fund source is intended to be a temporary source of aid to get a project started and is only available for three years. After that time, the cities must identify an alternate funding strategy for the service.

The Job Access and Reverse Commute grant program assists states and localities in developing new or expanded transportation services that connect welfare recipients and other low income persons to jobs and other employment related services. Job Access projects are targeted at developing new or expanded transportation services such as shuttles, vanpools, new bus routes, connector services to mass transit, and guaranteed ride home programs for welfare recipients and low income persons. Reverse Commute projects provide transportation services to suburban employment centers from urban, rural and other suburban locations for all populations.

The Job Access and Reverse Commute grant program is intended to establish a coordinated regional approach to job access challenges. All projects funded under this program must be the result of a collaborative planning process that includes states and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), transportation providers, agencies administering Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and Welfare to Work (WtW) funds, human services agencies, public housing, child care organizations, employers, states and affected communities and other stakeholders.

“Job Access” Challenges:

Must be a coordinated effort to meet the needs of the low income wage earners specifically and large coordination efforts such as this may take from three to twelve months, depending on the number of agencies and issues involved, to reach agreement on the service characteristics and other program initiatives, such as agency-funded transit passes for individuals.

“Reverse Commute” Challenges:

Coordination with human services agencies to determine level of need for operating service from Mobile and or Pensacola to the South Baldwin County will be difficult. Once levels of need are determined; a cost-benefit analysis must be done for operation during non-traditional service hours, which typically produce lower ridership levels.

- FTA Section 5317 New Freedom Funds.

These funds are intended to provide funding for new public transportation services, and alternatives to public transportation services, for people with disabilities, beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The intent of this program is to encourage the consolidation of human service transportation services.

- Observations Federal Funding

The stakeholders reviewing this report know all too well that federal funds bring federal requirements. And each and every federal program has a set of program guidelines that must be followed. An element of this federal process was successfully navigated when The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission completed the “Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan: for the Alabama Counties of Mobile, Baldwin and Escambia”, in October 2006. The document enables the BRATS system to pursue funding under the Job Access Reverse Commute program or the New Freedom Programs. Neither of these programs will fund the public transportation envisioned for South Baldwin County.

The BRATS system is currently funded through FTA’s Section 5311 program (Rural Transportation) and receives modest growth if and when there is an increase in this federal formula program. BRATS



has also been successful in securing some Section 5307 funding for transportation services to Lillian and has been successful in obtaining a piece of the very small pot of funding available Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC).

State

There is a current Alabama Attorney General opinion in circulation that interprets current Alabama state law as prohibiting the revenue from gasoline and motor fuels taxes from being expended on anything but roads and bridges. This means that the transfer of federal funding to a local area would require that the local jurisdiction provide the required matching fund.

Capital Assistance

Almost any of the federal transportation funds made available to the State of Alabama can be used for capital acquisition of transit equipment or the construction of transit facilities. This funding would require a 20% local match. Therefore a project costing \$250,000 could be funded with \$200,000 in federal funds and \$50,000 in local funds.

Operating Assistance

There is not any State of Alabama funding available for transit operating expenses, no ifs or maybes it just does not exist.

Local

The local funding option is the most probable solution for south Baldwin County. The consulting team has identified the federal sources of funding and these are more suitable for the capital funding of the public transportation system. Those sources will be limited and difficult to access. The analysis of local sources is an order of magnitude examination for the existing government revenue sources and their ability to fund transit operations. It is very much a political decision as to which of the sources would be an acceptable and viable funding solution.

Locally Generated Revenues

- Operating Revenues

As mentioned initially in this section, transit fares can only be counted on to generate a relatively small portion of the total operating budget. Fares are also subject to price elasticity in that attempts to maximize fare revenue as a portion of operating expense by raising rates can have a negative affect on total ridership and return. For the purposes of the budget estimates, fares have been set at \$1.00 each way for the general public. The model does assume some reduced fares are to be offered to qualifying senior citizens and people with disabilities, as this strategy is required under FTA grant programs. Of course, establishment of fare levels is a policy decision for the Cities. Many factors need to be considered in setting fare levels. These include not only revenue generation but incentives for ridership, promotion of local businesses, improved access, reduction in congestion, providing more relaxed travel for visitors and many others.

Advertising and other self-generated funds. Advertising inside and outside buses at bus stops and at shelters can generate some revenue. It is difficult to estimate the net return for the system of such a program in Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach. Often the success of advertising programs in other communities is dictated by the current cost of other forms of advertising locally, and the level of sales effort expended to get a program started. Special consideration should be given to the possibility of exterior advertising on the vehicles linking the service to the tourism industry as well. For purposes of the budget estimates we are assuming a small cash return for advertising as part of operating revenue.

- Institutional Fare Purchases

Direct fare arrangements with large employers and resorts. A promising but challenging source of revenue is the concept of prepaid fare arrangements. Many transit entities operating in communities



with large employers can negotiate pre-paid or contractual arrangements to benefit their employees. In the case of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, this type of agreement can be arranged with the large resorts as well to benefit their guests.

In general, two basic types of agreements can be reached. First, a pre-paid arrangement based on either the number of employees at a certain cost per employee or guest. The second type of agreement is based on a per-ride cost. For this option, the system would need to record the number of either employees or guests for each agreement and bill the employer/resort on an agreed-upon basis at a per-ride cost.

Remarkably simple, these programs eliminate the barrier of a fare that can exist in trying a bus or tram system initially and can lead to steady ridership. They also offer Federal tax reduction advantages to employers and employees. The obvious benefits to the community include reduced congestion and parking problems, better air quality, and the additional benefit of making transportation more accessible to a broader range of people, including residents and tourists, not just those with ready access to automobiles.

Implementation of these types of fare arrangements will require a fairly intensive effort to market the concept. Our budget does not include any provisions for this type of arrangement; however, it can be a significant source of revenue, as well as community support, for the system. Our team's recommendation is to aggressively pursue this option as a means to attract ridership and build ownership of the system by area employers and resort facilities. This concept could follow the pursuit and development of the area wide carpool and vanpool program.

- **Lodging Taxes**

A related source of revenue could be municipally adopted surcharges on visitors. For example, the Cities could investigate the legality of instituting a modest bed tax. Such a tax could generate a significant income stream at a relatively low rate given the large number of visitor nights booked in the area. Lodging taxes are well used in the area. The State of Alabama collects a 2% lodging tax throughout Baldwin County. Revenue as reported by the Alabama Department of Revenue exceeded \$9,795,000 million in 2006 based on a 2% tax rate. The Cities of Foley (4%), Gulf Shores (5%) and Orange Beach (5%) also collect a lodging tax that is administered by each of the cities. The revenues reported for each city were Foley \$274,000, Gulf Shores \$3,900,000 and Orange Beach \$5,240,858.

Table 23: Lodging Taxes

	Foley	Gulf Shores	Orange Beach
Lodging Tax	4%	5%	5%
Lodging Tax in Police Jurisdiction	2%	2.5%	2.5%
2006 Lodging Tax Revenue	\$274,000	\$3,900,000	\$5,240,858

A county lodging fee of 1% could yield approximately \$4,800,000 per annum, and a 1% increase in each city would yield approximately \$1,800,000 per annum. Such a tax has the advantage of shifting the burden to visitors who will gain a lot from the new system and reducing the amount local residents have to tax themselves to get the service and would provide ***\$6,600,000*** for public transportation.

- **Gasoline Taxes**

Gasoline taxes are also collected at the local level throughout Alabama and are typically intended for roadway improvements. In Baldwin County there is a tax of .05¢ per gallon, in Gulf Shores it is .05¢, in Orange Beach it is .01¢ and there is no gasoline tax in Foley. The estimated revenue from the Gasoline tax for the City of Gulf Shores is approximately \$400,000 for Fiscal year 2008 or \$133,000 per .01¢. In Orange Beach the expected revenue for FY 2007 for their .01¢ tax was approximately \$75,000. And if we make an extreme assumption that the City of Foley could generate a higher tax collection of somewhere in the neighborhood \$175,000 per .01¢, an optimistic outlook on an annual basis for an additional .01¢, per gallon per City would be ***\$383,000*** per year.



- Property Taxes

An increase in property taxes could be the least popular of all proposals. Recent changes requiring an annual reappraisal of property values has raised awareness of this particular revenue source. The use of property taxes is a very efficient method of spreading the cost of providing transit services. Table 14 shows the relative tax revenues generated from 4.5 to 5.0 mils of property tax for the year 2006 in each city. The information is assembled from the Alabama Department of Revenue site and City budgets.

Table 24: Property Tax

	Foley	Gulf Shores	Orange Beach
Current Millage	5.0 mils	5.0 mils	4.0 mils
2006 Property Tax Revenue	\$984,000	\$3,600,000	\$3,000,000
1 Mil	\$196,800	\$720,000	\$750,000

So an additional one mil of property tax levied would generate ***\$1,666,800*** from the three cities as a revenue source to support transit.

- Sales Taxes

An increase in sales tax is usually the least opposed of all potential tax increases. There is the perception that it is "paid" by everyone, no scofflaws. It is an incremental assessment and possibly less painful to watch it passes through one's hands on a daily basis. In their annual budget the City of Foley estimated that the additional 1% sales tax generated approximately \$6,900,000 annually. A 1% additional sales tax in Gulf Shores could generate approximately \$4,000,000 annually and in Orange Beach based on their most recent budget, approximately \$2,600,000 could be expected for an additional 1% levy. This could total to approximately ***\$13,500,000*** per year from a 1% sales tax levy across the three cities.

Table 25: Sales Tax

	Foley	Gulf Shores	Orange Beach
Sales Tax	2%	3%	3%
Sales Tax in Police Jurisdiction	1%	1.5%	1.5%
2006 Sales Tax Revenue	\$13,300,685	\$12,000,000	\$7,751,946

- Impact Fees

Impact fees were allowed during the 2006 Alabama Legislative Session. The revenue from the funds may be expended on storm water, drainage, or flood control; roads and bridges; capital expenses for law enforcement, fire, EMS, park and recreation, and schools. The legislation prevents the city or counties from levying impact fees outside of this act and caps the fee at 1% of the value of completion. There must be a plan in place that demonstrates the maximum supportable impact fee. The City of Orange Beach engaged the firm TischlerBise to prepare a report to calculate the impact fees for the City of Orange Beach that satisfied the statutory requirements of Alabama Act 2006-300. With the 1% cap on the impact fee the city of Orange Beach may not be able to capture the entire maximum supportable impact fee. An example would be the \$450,000 single family home constructed in Orange Beach. The study calculated the current maximum supportable impact fee at \$5,573 and the cap would limit the fee at \$4,500. All other types of residential construction would have a maximum supportable impact fee of \$4,280.

The next planned revaluation of the impact fees will be several years in the future. Using the current projection in the excellent TischlerBise work the expected revenue over a year for Orange Beach would be approximately 163 single Family Units at \$5,573; 315 residential units at \$4,280; 48,000



Sq. Ft of non residential space at \$4,174 and 38 motel rooms at \$3,342 which would mean an income stream of \$2.8 million. The City of Orange Beach has prudently used a figure of \$500,000 in their most recent annual budget. Gulf Shores has approved the use of impact fees and established the schedule of fees for new development. Foley have not embarked upon their efforts to develop their plan for impact fees but it would be a safe assumption that they will be in a similar range of revenue generating capabilities.

- Other

Foundation and Philanthropic organization support is a possible but unreliable source of funding and would be better suited for pursuit by advocacy groups for specific client uses. Not identified specifically in our budgets, this type of support is sometimes used to supplement local contributions, especially on behalf of persons with limited or fixed income or people with disabilities. The cities could assist these groups in the preparation of required grants applications.

- Observations on Local Revenue Generation

In examining the revenue generating abilities of each of the existing funding mechanisms it appears that either property tax or sales tax would be the choice for providing sufficient revenue for the South Baldwin Public Transportation System. This will of course be a political consideration but even a ½ % sales tax increase could generate over \$6,000,000 annually.

Implementation Strategy

And how will the Cities of Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach proceed? Which steps come first? How is IT financed? Who will operate IT? What characteristics must be considered?

Staging

- Step One

It is the recommendation of the consultants that the Cities begin the development of the system with the funding of a Carpool/Rideshare coordinator and assistant. We have estimated this investment to be approximately \$220,000 annually. This would include hiring a coordinator at \$55,000 annually, an assistant on a twenty-five hour week at an annual rate of \$25,000. We would consider the overhead on these two individuals to be approximately \$120,000 for the total cost of \$200,000 annually, equally divided between the three cities. The additional \$20,000 is an estimate of the cost sharing with SARPC for the existing software and website and the guaranteed ride home program.

It is recommended his coordinator remain in place for a period of three years, building support for rideshare and carpooling among the citizens and the business community and ensuring that the program has ample opportunity to get off the ground. A successful carpool/vanpool program will free up resources for the current BRATS system. This person should be with the BRATS organization but it is not a requirement. The goal should be the establishment of a carpool/vanpool program that operates with the SARPC system and with user funding not federal funding of the vehicles. If recommendations in the Eastern Shore Public Transportation Study and the Baldwin County Transit Study include a Carpool/Rideshare coordinator and assistant the cost could be spread among all participants.

- Step Two

It is the recommendation of the consultant team that the Cities of Foley, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to pursue the funding of the transit system and investigate the appropriate funding source. If consensus on this topic can be reached then it is recommended that the three cities explore the formation of a Capital Improvement Cooperative District to fund and operate the transit system. The district and not the individual cities would then be the operators of the transit system. A Capital Improvement Cooperative District ([Code of Alabama, Section 11-99B-1](#)) will allow the district to pursue any capital improvement, facility, structure,



building, property or appurtenances thereto of any nature, type, or description which any member (City) is authorized by any law of the state to own, acquire, construct, or finance.

- Step Three

It is the recommendation of the consultant team that all municipalities review and then take action on their major street plans and identify early and reserve the sites for transfer stations and additional maintenance facilities.

- Step Four

Proceed with the transportation plan.

System Attributes

There are certain attributes of the proposed plan that need to be considered prior to reaching step four concerning operational and capital needs.

Operations

The location and positioning of stops and service frequency are paramount to remarkable service delivery. It is recommended that the operation of the public transportation system include a third party contractor. A third party contractor responding to an established budget, service requirements, and performance standards will provide the needed skill sets and incentives for a first class system. The feedback received from the public and knowledgeable stakeholders have outlined the service frequency for peak and off peak operations, the plan outlines a level of service required for a remarkable system. These parameters require constant attention and tuning and a competitively selected operator is well suited to responding to these requirements, which is their expertise. This is not a negative review of the current BRATS operations. The current operation, given its budget and resources, provides the best service possible, it is a system that a community would strive to keep in place, but it is a service that is under funded and geared to providing service for the transit dependent and social service transportation delivery, and it does that quite well.

The third party contractor would operate under the auspices of the Capital Improvement Cooperative District and with the administrative guidance of the BRATS organization. The current BRATS organization can provide the interface between the governments and the third party contractor. The BRATS organization is known entity that has the trust and confidence of the community leadership, but the third party contractor can provide a level of expertise and flexibility that is sometimes unavailable to the public sector.

Facilities

There are proven attributes for public transportation facilities that have been examined and test over time by multiple transportation agencies. The following facilities characteristics are drawn from multiple sources and have been compiled by the Federal Transit Administration.

- Bus Stop Location

Whether a bus stop should be located at the *near side* of the intersection, the *far side* of the intersection or at *mid-block* has been a source of debate. In general, far-side stops are preferable; however, other types of stops may be justified in certain situations. There are advantages and disadvantages to each location. Table 16: Analysis of Bus Stop Locations provides the compilations of the research on locating stops.



Table 26: Analysis of Bus Stop Locations

Stop Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Near Side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimizes interference when traffic is heavy on the far side of the intersection Passengers access buses closest to crosswalk Intersection available to assist in pulling away from curb No double stopping Buses can service passengers while stopped at a red light Provides driver with opportunity to look for oncoming traffic including other buses with potential passengers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicts with right turning vehicles are increased Stopped buses may obscure curbside traffic control devices and crossing pedestrians Sight distance is obscured for crossing vehicles stopped to the right of the bus. The through lane may be blocked during peak periods by queuing buses Increases sight distance problems for crossing pedestrians
Far Side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimizes conflicts between right turning vehicles and buses Provides additional right turn capacity by making curb lane available for traffic Minimizes sight distance problems on approaches to intersection Encourages pedestrians to cross behind the bus Requires shorter deceleration distances for buses Gaps in traffic flow are created for buses re-entering the flow of traffic at signalized intersections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intersections may be blocked during peak periods by queuing buses Sight distance may be obscured for crossing vehicles Increases sight distance problems for crossing pedestrians Stopping far side after stopping for a red light interferes with bus operations and all traffic in general May increase number of rear-end accidents since drivers do not expect buses to stop again after stopping at a red light
Mid block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimizes sight distance problems for vehicles and pedestrians Passenger waiting areas experience less pedestrian congestion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires additional distance for no-parking restrictions Encourages patrons to cross street at mid block (jaywalking) Increases walking distance for patrons crossing at intersections

Source: Table A-4, Appendix A, **TCRP**, original source: K. Fitzpatrick et al., *Guidelines for Planning, Designing, and Operating Bus-Related Street Improvements*. FHWA/TX-90/1225-2F, Texas Transportation Institute, College Station, TX. August 1990.

- **Bus Shelter Design**

Bus shelters—or stations—can be used to differentiate and brand service and to provide passenger information and amenities. The shelter design should have a common and consistent look across the system, but with allowance for differences to permit stations to harmonize with the local design guidelines. There are several manufacturers who specialize in specialized, modular shelters. Whether adapting a manufactured shelter or using a custom design, some general factors to consider include:

- The use of vandal-resistant and graffiti-resistant materials.
- The use of environmental design to assure a defensible space by providing good curb-side and street-side surveillance, day and night.
- Locating the shelter to prevent interference with pedestrian circulation.



- Designs that permit efficient, orderly and rapid flow of alighting and boarding passengers from the stop to the vehicle.
- Access to the shelter by persons using mobility aids, with a good spatial connection to the ramp or lift on the bus.

- **Bus Stop Options With On Street Parking**

When the area moves toward the concept of complete streets “Bus Bulbs” are certainly an option to be considered, especially when on street parking is available. Bus bulbs would also be an excellent retrofit to be considered for surface streets in the three cities were the system is operating in a situation that currently has on street parking. Bus bulbs are a section of sidewalk that extends from the curb of a parking lane to the edge of the through lane. When used as a bus stop, the buses stop in the traffic lane instead of moving into the parking lane. Advantages of a bus bulb include:

- Permits more on-street parking
- Decreases the walking distance (and time) for pedestrians crossing the street
- Provides better sight lines to bus patrons waiting for the bus
- Provides additional sidewalk area for bus patrons to wait
- Segregates waiting bus patrons from circulating pedestrian flow on the sidewalk
- Results in minimal delay to the bus and its on-board passengers by reducing bus merge delay
- Provides additional space for amenities including bus shelters

- **Highway 59 Northbound Stop Locations**

Bus bulbs as described here are not a recommended solution for SR 59, SR 180 or SR 182. If bus stops are constructed in the near term along SR 59 north of CR 4 it would be best to seek stop locations that have sufficient surface area to locate a prefabricated shelter. Suggested locations along SR 59 to be considered include: For this route bus stop locations should be “near-side” unless otherwise indicated. Near side means before the bus crosses the intersection. The stops identified start at the intersection of Beach Blvd and SR 59.

1. Mid block between 1st and 2nd Ave
2. 4th Ave
3. Windmill Ridge
4. 8th Ave
5. Zoo Dr.
6. Alabama Hwy 180
7. Between 15th and 16th Ave.
8. 19th Ave
9. 32nd Street
10. County Road 4, far side of intersection
11. Cypress Lake Dr
12. Franz Street
13. County Road 6, far side of intersection
14. County Road 8, far side of intersection
15. County Road 10, far side of intersection
16. Keller Road
17. Chestnut Drive
18. County Road 12, far side of intersection
19. County Road 20 (both intersections), far side of intersection
20. Tanger Outlet Entrance
21. Pride Drive
22. West 9th
23. Lawson Drive
24. East Michigan, County Road 26
25. Sunflower Avenue
26. Azalea Avenue



27. Roosevelt
28. Myrtle Avenue
29. Laurel, Alabama Hwy 42
30. Magnolia Avenue
31. Section Avenue
32. Berry Avenue
33. Hospital

- Highway 59 Southbound Stop Locations

The stops identified start at the Hospital and go south to Beach Blvd and SR 59.

1. Hospital
2. Fern Avenue
3. Berry Avenue
4. Marigold Avenue
5. Magnolia Avenue
6. Jessamine Avenue
7. SR 42
8. Myrtle Avenue
9. Azalea Avenue
10. After the Sunflower Avenue intersection in front of McDonalds
11. CR 26
12. 9th Ave
13. Pride Drive
14. Across from Tanger Outlet Entrance
15. CR 20, far side of intersection
16. CR 12, far side of intersection
17. Chestnut Drive
18. Keller Road
19. CR 10, far side of intersection
20. CR 8, far side of intersection
21. CR 6, far side of intersection
22. Beckham Street
23. Cypress Lake Drive
24. CR 4, far side of intersection
25. CR 4 just before the bridge
26. 20th Ave.
27. Clubhouse Drive
28. Cove Avenue
29. SR 180, far side of intersection
30. 12th Avenue
31. 8th Avenue
32. 6th Avenue
33. 4th Avenue
34. Beach Blvd

Capital Needs

- Vehicle Types

Typically, there are strong opinions in a community about the type of vehicle that should be used for local bus service. Customers would like to see a full size transit bus with all the amenities. Staff desires the same heavy duty type vehicle because it enhances customer comfort and is more durable. Policy makers question the need for a large bus given demand, concerns about cost and their overall perception of the system. A perfect balance is a vehicle that is appealing, mechanically reliable, and efficiently serves bus riders at low ridership times.



Because there are three distinctly different types of services discussed in this report, our team recommends different styles and sizes of vehicles for each of the different services. This approach will encourage ridership and political support by meeting the demand efficiently, providing an appealing “look” for the different services, and specially suiting each vehicle to the type of service and conditions it will encounter. All vehicles purchased or operated with federal money must be fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Foley Local Route

The overall expected demand on the Foley local route is expected to be relatively light for the short term. As such, a light duty small bus is recommended as the vehicle for the Foley fixed route service. This vehicle is mechanically sound, is more neighborhood-friendly in both looks and maneuverability, and is a cost-effective option. A typical vehicle is illustrated below:

Figure 13: Local Route Vehicle Exterior



Figure 14: Local Route Vehicle Interior

This vehicle will seat as many as twenty three (23) passengers and presents an attractive, non-intrusive image in the community. Passenger amenities are adequate with a nice ride quality. Most importantly, the vehicle will not appear as a “big city” transit bus, thus creating a positive, comfortable perception of the service. The vehicle should have a ten (10) year service life and costs in the range of \$150,000 to \$180,000.

Figure 15: Local Route Vehicle Access Ramp



Hwy 59, Orange Beach Express, and Beach Shuttle Routes



Figure 16: Fixed Route Vehicle Exterior

The balance of the recommended routes in both Options 1 and 2 are expected to attract high and consistent ridership. In order to accommodate the initial and future demand for these routes, our team recommends utilizing heavy-duty transit buses that can carry 35-40 passengers seated and 50-55 passengers with standees. For the new service, it is recommended that 30-foot to 35-foot, low-floor vehicles be purchased. These vehicles have a 12 to 15 year service life and the reliability to provide the intense, high demand quality that is needed for these routes. This type of vehicle costs in the range of \$300,000 - \$350,000 per vehicle.

Our team recommends purchasing low-floor vehicles for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, it is the most reliable system to meet the needs of ADA. Second, there are no lifts or associated components to repair and replace, thus making maintenance of these vehicles far easier and economical. Lastly, due to the nature of the environment, sand will be brought onto the buses and can quickly clog up the trenches in a traditional wheelchair location, rendering it inoperable or difficult to use and requiring constant attention to keep it free of debris.



Figure 17: Fixed Route Vehicle Ramp Access



Figure 18 : Fixed Route Vehicle Interior

Other than the price of a new vehicle, the biggest challenge to developing new service is the length of time it takes to have a vehicle built. The current lead time for buying new vehicles is 12-18 months. To implement the service soon, the options include procuring used vehicles or contracting the operation of the service to a third party and allowing them to provide the vehicles until the new vehicles arrive.



- Vehicle Amenities

Our team recommends that the cities consider adding fare boxes, electronic route destination signs, high quality flooring to handle sand and foot traffic, and bicycle racks.

Fare boxes can be as simple as a "drop box", in which customers drop their fare in and the bus driver takes a passenger count manually, or as sophisticated as an electronic registering fare box, in which the customer inserts the money, the driver presses a button for the count, and numerous iterations of reports can be generated. Electronic fare passes are also an option. Newer designs allow for waving over the fare box without swiping.

Electronic route destination signs are an important tool in both attracting customers and providing excellent customer service. The route signs with destination information provide the answer to the most important question a customer, particularly a new one, has: "Am I on the right bus?" These signs are also an important marketing tool as people will learn where the system operates and what destinations/areas it serves, allowing them to be enticed into trying out the system or passing on the information to someone who wants to ride.

High quality flooring will be especially important in this environment because of the high volume of foot traffic and the sand that will be carried onto the vehicles. By implementing more expensive and higher quality flooring at the outset, the cities will save in the long run by reducing the need to repair and maintain the floor.

Bicycle racks are an especially important accoutrement for the service recommended in the beach cities. Most importantly, bike racks allow people to use the service who live outside of walking distance to a bus stop. Additionally, it provides a convenient way for pleasure-riders to expand the areas in which they can ride their bicycles by transporting them to new venues.

One important aspect that should be included and has been identified in system costs is a tracking system for the vehicle in the fleet. We have reviewed one in particular developed by Trans Loc Inc (<http://www.transloc-inc.com>). They have created a niche market for themselves in developing real time tracking systems for campus bus systems. In Alabama they are currently on both the Auburn and Alabama campus bus systems. This system or a competitor system can offer a high level of information to administrators and passengers allowing them to make more intelligent decisions about using public transportation. And this information can then be displayed in office lobbies, restaurants and even downloaded to a cell phone. This would be a "Disneyland" type of amenity for the South Baldwin Transit system to consider.



Appendix

- Stakeholder Questions

Are: All? Most? Some? Few? Of the transportation needs in Baldwin County being met today?

Describe what you see as the specific gaps in the transportation service provided in Baldwin County.

Is there a need for transit services in Baldwin County?

yes no

If yes, why is there a need?

Who would be the likely users of public transportation services in Baldwin County? (Please rank by most likely)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior citizens | <input type="checkbox"/> Persons with disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students | <input type="checkbox"/> Commuters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working poor | <input type="checkbox"/> Other - describe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General public | |

What are the specific locations for which transit service should be provided to?

Do you see any barriers to implementation of expanded public transit services?

Yes (if so, what are they?) No

Are there specific governmental bodies, elected officials or agency personnel who do not really support transit services and/or who may actively work against implementation of efforts to strengthen the transit services?

Why do you think they oppose transit services? Do you agree with their opinion?

Since funding will be needed for transit service, do you think the community will support a local tax to fund the service?

Do you think that the need for fixed route public transit systems and paratransit services will increase or decrease in the future?

If we lived in a perfect world, what is your idea of a perfect transit system? How would you organize/structure the system? What are the major sources of funding?

In order for this study to be successful, what must be included in the final product? What should be avoided?

One of the things we're interested in is how the current public transit system is currently perceived in the community. More specifically: first, how do you think the BRATS transit system is perceived by those who use it? Second, how do you think BRATS is perceived by citizens who observe it, but don't use it? And third, how do you perceive BRATS yourself from your vantage point of being a business/community leader?

What words would you use to describe?

Baldwin Rural Area Transportation Services (BRATS)
Southern Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC)



How far do you live from where you travel everyday for work, entertainment, etc.? What is the closest public transportation to your home?

Do you currently provide any transportation services for your guests or employees?

Do have a charge for this service? If yes, how much for whom?

Is employee parking a problem at your facility?

Have you observed if most of your employees drive themselves to work or do they carpool with fellow workers?

Would you be willing to contribute to your employees cost of transportation?

- Rider Questions

BRATS Customer Survey Route: _____

Please fill out only one survey during your transit trip today

How many one-way trips on a BRATS bus have you made in the past 7 days (Please circle one answer)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How satisfied are you with the BRATS bus service (Please mark only one answer)?

Very satisfied	
Somewhat satisfied	
Somewhat dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	

In a normal week, how many days of the week do you ride (Please circle one answer)? 1 2 3
4 5 6 7

How many blocks is the nearest bus stop from your home (Please mark only one answer)?

0-2	
3-4	
4-5	
More than 5	

What is the degree to which you rely on the bus?

Completely	
Mostly	
Somewhat	
Rarely	

Do you have a car to use? Yes No



What are the two (2) main reasons you use BRATS? (Please mark no more than two responses)

Is a convenient alternative to my car	
I do not have access to a car for my trip	
A disability prevents me from driving	
I do not have a license to drive	
I do not like to drive	
I prefer not to cope with traffic	
I enjoy the stress-free time while riding the bus	
Parking at my destination is a problem	
Concern for the environment	

Other (Specify): _____

What was your reason for riding BRATS today (Please mark only one answer)?

To/From Work *	
To/From School	
To/From Medical	
To/From Shopping/Errands	
To/From Recreation/Leisure Activity	

Other (Specify): _____

*If employed, enter the zip code of your work location:

Will you transfer today? Yes No

Rating of Current Bus Service: Please complete the following table with checkmarks in the appropriate box.

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Safety of Drivers				
Courtesy of Drivers				
Bus Schedules				
Website to Access Information				
Vehicle Cleanliness				
Vehicle Condition				
Service Reliability (is the bus on time?)				
Transfer Convenience				
Frequency of Service (how often the bus comes)				
Feeling of Security (do you feel free from harm?)				
Condition of passenger shelters and benches				
Number of passengers shelters and benches				
BRATS customer service				



What three (3) specific features or improvements would encourage you to use BRATS more often?
 (Please mark no more than 3 responses)

More frequent service	
Less travel time to my destination	
Longer service hours (e.g. evenings, weekends)	
Reduced need to transfer	
Service to more destinations	
More reliable service (e.g. buses are on-time)	
Lower fares	
Improved bus stops and passenger shelters/benches	
Better maintained buses	
Improved customer service	

Other (Specify): _____

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

We would now like to ask you a few final questions for statistical purposes only to help us classify our survey results.

Please tell us your home street address and phone number (this information WILL NOT be released – it is for transit planning purposes ONLY):

Home Address: _____

Home Phone Number: _____

Are you:	Under 19	_____
	19 – 25	_____
Male _____	26 – 44	_____
Female _____	45 – 65	_____
	66+	_____

Do you consider yourself?

What was your total household income in 2005?

White	_____	Less than \$24,999	_____
Black	_____	\$25,000	- _____
Hispanic	_____	\$49,999	- _____
Asian	_____	\$50,000	- _____
Indian	_____	\$74,999	- _____
	_____	\$75,000	- _____
	_____	\$99,999	_____
Other	_____	\$100,000 +	_____



Are you:

- Employed Full-Time _____
- Employed Part-Time _____
- A Full-Time Student _____
- A Homemaker _____
- Retired _____
- Unemployed _____

Other (Specify):

- Visitor Survey

Dear Visitor:

Thank you in advance for completing this survey, and thank you for helping us improve transportation in South Baldwin County. As you might imagine, a vacation community tracks a great deal of information concerning the people that visit the area. In the many years that we have sampled visitors to our area we have come to know many of your likes and dislikes and we strive to constantly improve area services and attractions. We have learned where you like to go while visiting the area, why you came to visit, the type of accommodations you use, what activities you enjoyed while you were here and how long you usually stay when visiting. What we do not know is how you travel while you are visiting us.

To help us, we would like you to think about a typical week during your visit and then respond to the questions. And once again thank you for your participation.

If you have any questions during this survey please email xxxxxxxx.net and we will respond within 24 hours.

This question concerns the area attractions you frequent while visiting South Baldwin County, please check all that apply. Our purpose in asking this question is to formulate a time of day demand for roadway capacity.

Check as many as apply:



✓	Attraction	How many trips per week?	How many people per trip?	Time of Day			
				AM	MD	PM	NT
	Rivera Center						
	The Track						
	Gulf State Park						
	Waterville						
	Fort Morgan						
	Pensacola Naval Museum						
	USS Alabama						
	Dauphin Island						
	Mobile Bay Ferry						
	Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo						
	Bon Secour Wildlife Refuge						
	Bellingrath Gardens						
	Bayou Village (Gulf Shores)						
	Eastern Shore Center (Spanish Fort)						
	The Wharf (Orange Beach)						
	Special events, such as festivals						
	Other (specify):						

When you leave your vacation residence and travel to one of the many attractions, what do you consider the most annoying transportation problem you experience during your trip? Please rank between 1 and 10 with "1" being the most annoying):



#	
	It takes too long to get where I'm going
	There is too much traffic
	There is limited parking available
	Fuel and parking costs are high
	It is not very easy to make my trip
	Same as #3?
	I have to drive when I would rather walk
	I have to drive when I would rather take a bus
	I have to drive when I would rather take a bicycle
	Other:

What do you consider most important when traveling in South Baldwin County? (Please rank between 1 and 10 with "1" being the most important):

#	
	Traveling a shorter distance
	Getting to my destination in less time
	Not having to drive all over to find parking
	Fuel and parking cost
	Making my trip easier
	Parking Availability at Your Destination same as #3?
	The ability to walk rather than drive
	The ability to take a bus rather than drive
	The ability to ride a bicycle rather than drive
	Other:

Would you consider using public transportation to any or all of the locations identified in Question 1?
If yes, which locations?



✓	Attraction
	Rivera Center
	The Track
	Gulf State Park
	Waterville
	Fort Morgan
	Pensacola Naval Museum
	USS Alabama
	Dauphin Island
	Mobile Bay Ferry
	Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo
	Bon Secour Wildlife Refuge
	Bellingrath Gardens
	Bayou Village (Gulf Shores)
	Eastern Shore Center (Spanish Fort)
	The Wharf (Orange Beach)
	Special events, such as festivals
	Other (specify):

If no, why not?

--	--

****If no, skip to Question 8****

What would it take for you to use public transportation to these locations? You may select more than one from the following lists or add your own thoughts.

	On Time
	On Time and Every 20 Minutes
	On Time and Every 30 Minutes
	On Time and Every 45 Minutes
	Computer Aided Signs that informed you of the next scheduled bus arrival?
	Other:



If the bus met your travel time requirements would your trip have to be?

	Bus Must Be Faster Than Traveling By Auto
	Bus Must Be Equal Than Traveling By Auto
	Bus Could be Slower Than Traveling By Auto but no more than (Insert Time in Minutes)_____
	Other:

If the bus met your requirements for on time performance and trip length what would you consider a fair cost per person for a one way trip?

	\$.50
	No Charge
	\$1.00
	\$1.50
	\$2.00 or more
	Other:

If the bus met your requirements so far, what distance would you be willing to walk to get on the bus?

	¼ mile or less
	¼ mile to ½ mile
	½ mile to ¾ mile
	¾ mile or more
	Other:

Would you be willing to drive your car to a park and ride location to access public transportation for a special event, such as the shrimp festival?

Yes

No

What would you be willing to pay per person for special event service from a park and ride location?

\$2.00 or less

\$3.00

\$4.00

\$5.00 or more

Would easy access to public transportation affect your decision on where to stay in South Baldwin County?

Any other comments?



- Community Outreach Survey

Community Outreach Questionnaire

Thank you so very much for participating in today's event. We have distributed this survey to everyone in attendance. You may either fill it out at today's session or you may take it home review it and submit your answers online. If you wish to take it home and fill it out online you may go to the Slade L.E.T. Planning website. The web address is <http://sladeletp.com>. You will see in the middle of the page an item labeled South Baldwin County Resident Survey; just follow the link below the heading and complete the survey online. And thank you for your help and cooperation.

In your opinion, how would you answer if you were asked to describe if the public transportation needs are being met in Baldwin County?

All the needs are being met

Most the needs are being met

Some the needs are being met

Few the needs are being met

Describe what you see as gaps in the public transportation service provided in Baldwin County.

Access to transportation

Scheduling conflicts

Safety concerns

Affordability

Is there a need for more public Transportation services in Baldwin County?

Yes

No

Who would be the likely users of public transportation services in Baldwin County? Please check all that apply.

Senior citizens

Persons with disabilities

Students

Working poor

General public



What are the specific locations public transportation should serve?

Major Employers
Tourist Attractions
Home
Downtown
Shopping Areas
Hospital
Post Office
Schools
DMV
Grocery Store

Do you see any barriers to implementation of expanded public transit services?

Inability to walk to the bus stop
Scheduling conflicts
Access
Cost
Public perception

Are you currently employed?

Yes
No
No answer

How do you currently travel to work?

Private Automobile
Ride with another
Take the bus

Do you ride to work alone?

Yes
No
No answer



Would you ride public transportation to your place of employment?

Yes

No

No answer

Do you think that the need for fixed route public transportation services will increase or decrease in the future?

Increase

Decrease

If we lived in a perfect world, what would you consider as important in perfect public transportation system?

On time

Clean

Safe

Looks nice

All of the above

What would be the major sources of funding for the perfect system?

Property tax

Increase fares for ride

Impact fees

Gasoline tax

Government funding

How far do you live from where you travel everyday for work?

0 – 5 miles

5 – 10 miles

10-15 miles

15-20 miles

20-25 miles

25-30 miles

Over 30



What is the closest public transportation to your home?

Less than 1/4 mile

1/2 mile

1 mile

2 miles

I do not know

How many licensed drivers are in your household? _____

How many registered automobiles are in your household? _____

What do you consider most important when traveling in South Baldwin County? Check any that apply:

Getting to my destination in less time

Not having to drive all over to find parking

Fuel and parking cost

Making my trip easier

The ability to walk rather than drive

The ability to take a bus rather than drive

The ability to ride a bicycle rather than drive

Traveling a shorter distance

What would it take for you to use public transportation to these locations? You may select more than one from the following lists. Check any that apply:

Bus every 10 minutes

Bus every 20 minutes

Bus every 30 minutes

Bus every 45 minutes

OR, the time between buses is important, but I could wait longer if I knew exactly when it was due to arrive. If there was a sign or kiosk to tell me when the next bus was due to arrive.

Other _____

If the bus met your requirements for on time performance and trip length what would you consider a fair cost per person for a one way trip? Choose only one of the following:

No charge



\$.50

\$1.00

\$1.50

\$2.00

No answer

If the bus met your requirements so far, what distance would you be willing to walk to get on the bus? Choose only one of the following:

¼ mile or less

¼ mile to ½ mile

½ mile to ¾ mile

¾ mile or more

Other

No answer

Would you be willing to drive your car to a park and ride location to access public transportation or to share a ride to work? Choose only one of the following:

Yes

No

No answer

Would easy access to public transportation affect your decision on where to live in South Baldwin County?

Yes

No

No answer

If the bus arrived frequently enough to meet your needs, would your trip have to be: choose only one of the following?

Bus must be faster than traveling by auto

Bus must be equal than traveling by auto

No answer

If the bus arrived frequently enough to meet your needs, would your trip have to be: choose only one of the following?



Bus could be slower than traveling by auto but no more than (Insert time in Minutes)
_____minutes

Other

No answer

Why would you not use public transportation?

Access

Convenience

Comfort

Feasibility

Would you use public transportation to mitigate traffic congestion and lower auto emissions?

Yes

No

No answer

What would attract you to use public transportation?

Access

Convenience

Comfort

Price of Gasoline

What price per gallon for gasoline would persuade you to use public transportation?

What price per gallon for gasoline would persuade you to carpool?

How many persons of all ages are in your household?



To which activities would you like to be able to ride public transportation?

Work

Entertainment

Shopping

Hospital

Home

Would you walk or ride a bicycle to public transportation?

Walk

Bike

Neither

If you would like to stay involved, we will place you our email list. Please put your email address here.

Comments:



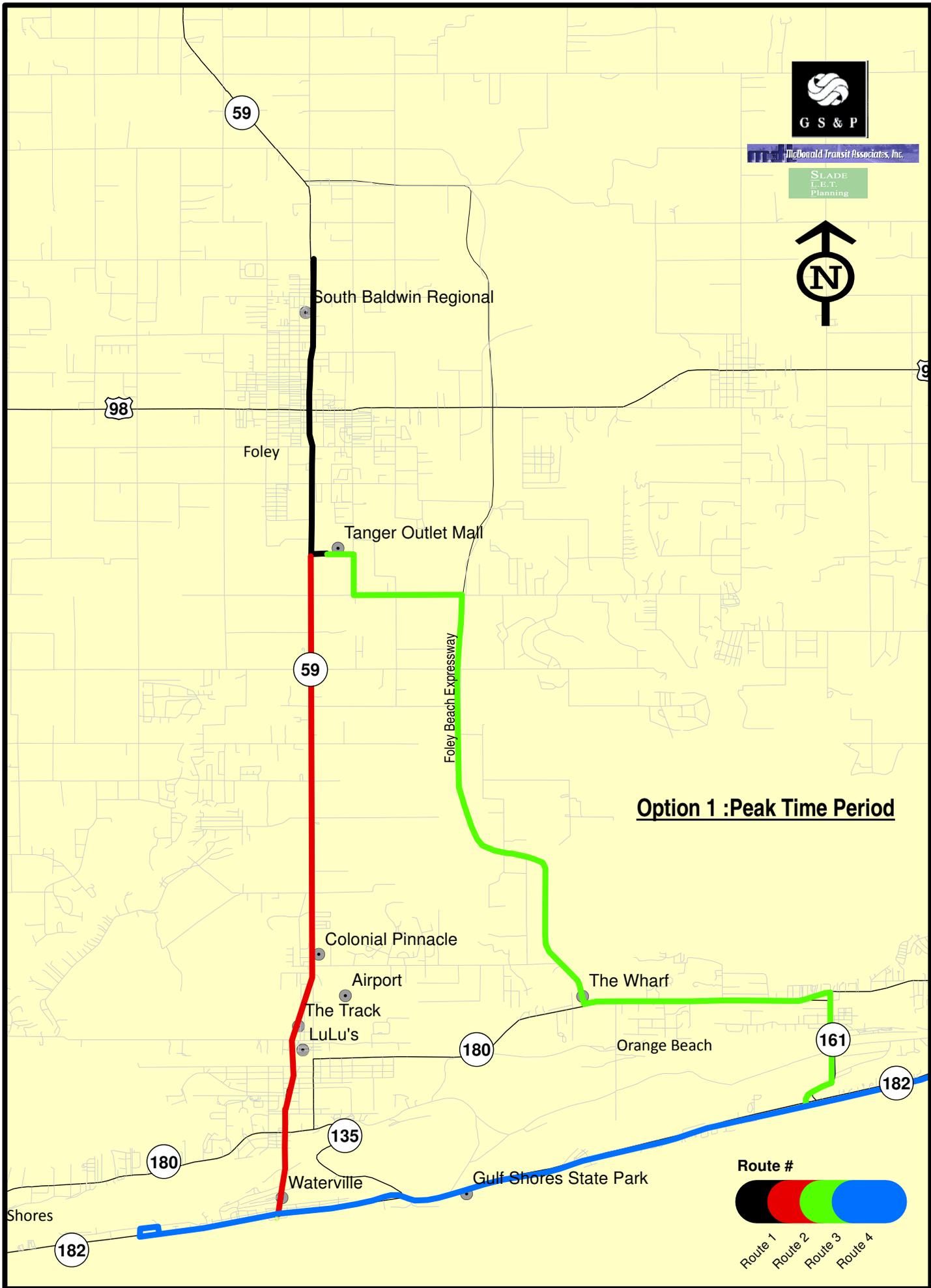
Route Maps





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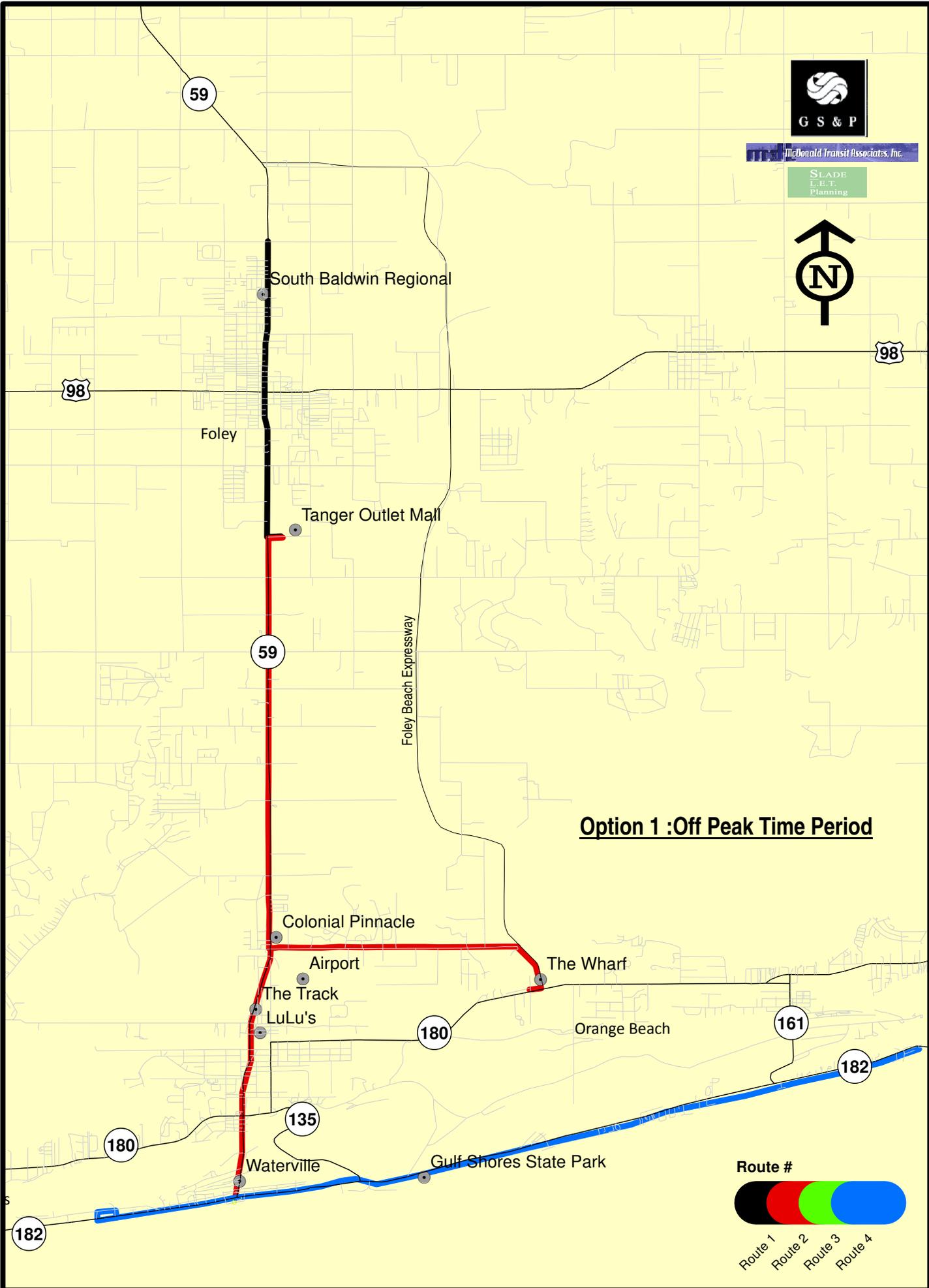
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Planning



Option 1 :Off Peak Time Period

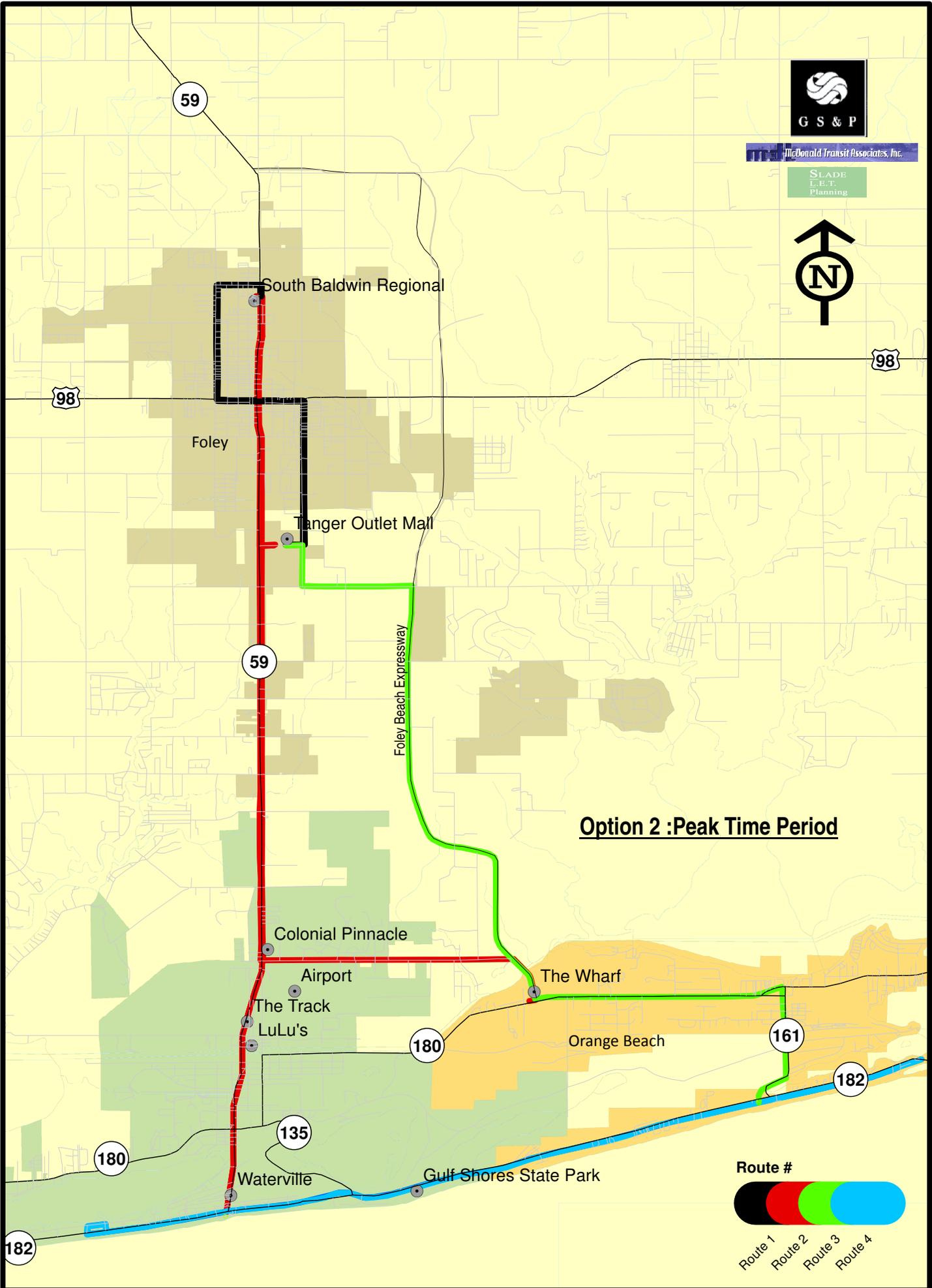
Route #

- Route 1 (Black)
- Route 2 (Red)
- Route 3 (Green)
- Route 4 (Blue)



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Planning



Option 2 :Peak Time Period

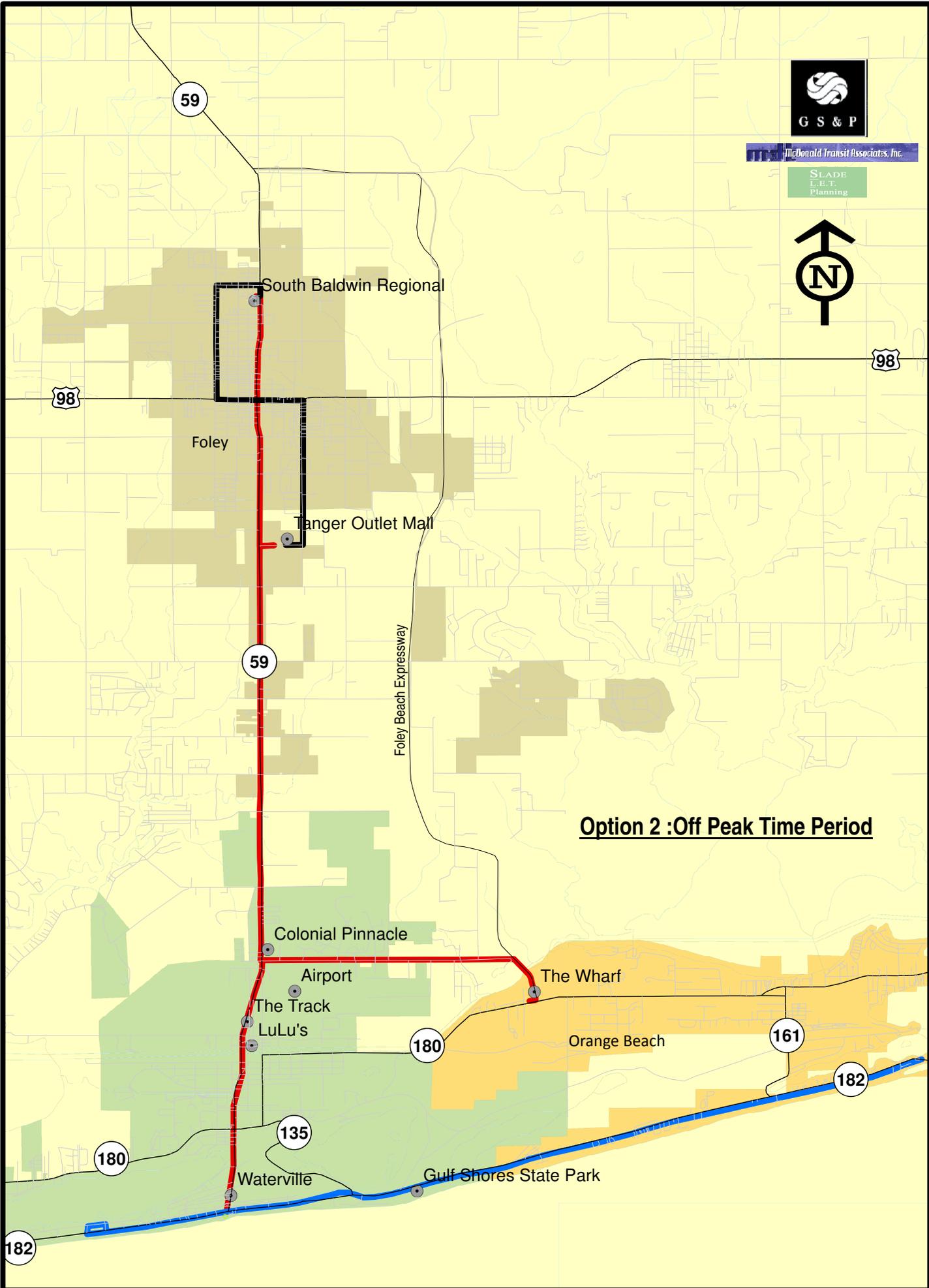
Route #

- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 3
- Route 4



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Option 2 :Off Peak Time Period

59

98

98

59

180

161

182

180

135

182

South Baldwin Regional

Foley

Tanger Outlet Mall

Foley Beach Expressway

Colonial Pinnacle

Airport

The Track

LuLu's

The Wharf

Orange Beach

Waterville

Gulf Shores State Park