

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

To assist the Georgia Department of Transportation's Office of Intermodal Programs in providing rural public transit planning, the South Georgia Regional Development Center in cooperation with Echols County developed the Echols County Board of Commissioners Transit Development Plan. This plan is meant to assist Echols County with transit planning for any future public transit endeavors the county may have. While there are services for Medicaid clients within Echols County, Echols County currently does not have a public transit system. Therefore, this plan also serves as a feasibility study.

The Minimum Requirements developed by the GDOT's Office of Intermodal Programs requires Transit Development Plans to include:

1. An Executive Summary
2. An Overview and Demographic Analysis of the Region
3. Development of Goals and Objectives for Transit
4. Performance Evaluation and Existing Transit Service
5. Demand Estimation and Needs Assessment
6. Transit Alternatives and Recommendations including a Five-Year Capital and Operating Plan

As stated before, this plan will also serve as a feasibility study, including an estimated profit/loss for Echols County since the County currently does not have a public transit system. This Transit Development Plan should also serve as a guide for the Echols County Board of Commissioner's decision on the need to start a public transit system. It provides information to assist Echols County should they decide to seek funding for the creation of a public transit system.

## INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 5311 PROGRAMS

Since any rural public transportation system in Echols County will require funding from the Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation Program, an overview of the Section 5311 program is necessary. The Section 5311 Program offers local areas an opportunity to provide transit services improving access to business, commercial and activity centers. The program is administered by the FTA to provide assistance for rural public transportation. Federal funds are allocated to the states on a formula basis, and can be used for capital assistance, operating assistance planning, and program administration. The Georgia Department of Transportation is responsible for administering the program. GDOT is the recipient of these funds, and it in turn provides Federal funding (and a limited amount of state capital funding) to local sub-recipients in Georgia.

The State of Georgia has established the following statewide goals for the Section 5311 program:

- **Goal: Basic Mobility to Serve All Georgians:**
  - serving those persons with the most critical needs for access and mobility, especially those without alternatives.
  - providing service without any trip purpose restrictions or eligibility requirements including medical, social services, personal shopping, business, and employment trips.
  - serving all areas with appropriate levels of service, subject to the required local or regional participation.
  - addressing economic development—through employment trips, services to support local employment sites, new ones, etc.
  
- **Goal: Program Implementation:**
  - partnering with the FTA in the administration of the Section 5311 program, meeting all FTA program requirements.
  - managing a program of excellence that provides timely management direction, guidance, and reimbursement to allow local entities to provide quality service.
  - partnering with local or regional entities to plan services to meet locally identified needs.
  - partnering with local or regional entities to operate the services.
  - providing technical assistance to help local providers improve effectiveness, efficiency, safety, and quality of service.
  - providing technical information, policy analyses, and program management data to support transit program development.
  
- **Goal: Efficiency and Effectiveness:**
  - while maximizing ridership, recognizing that there are significant differences in population density, trip characteristics, and client needs (accessibility, assistance, etc.) which will affect usage.
  - subject to performance requirements appropriate to the area and type of service
  - with the appropriate type of service—demand-responsive, subscription route, route deviation, or fixed-route.

- using the appropriate vehicle type—accessible if needed, sedan, van, small bus, large bus.
- **Goal: Safe, Secure Quality Service:**
  - operating equipment that is within its design life, inspected for safety and overall condition
  - operated by staff meeting the highest qualifications—appropriate license (Commercial Drivers License (CDL) if required), safe driving and criminal records checked, drug and alcohol tested, etc.
  - operated by a staff that is trained to proficiency in all necessary skills:
    - Defensive Driving
    - Passenger Assistance
    - First Aid and CPR
  - providing a safe and secure service to the riders.
- **Goal: Accessible Service—Usable by Persons with Disabilities:**
  - providing service that is accessible (adequate number of accessible lift- or ramp-equipped vehicles).
  - using operators trained to proficiency in passenger assistance, lift use, restraints, mobility devices (folding, stowage, etc.).
  - user information and outreach to ensure that persons needing the service are aware of it and can obtain information.
- **Goal: Coordinated Provision of Transportation in Rural Areas:**
  - coordinated policies at the state level through interagency coordination.
  - coordinated at regional/local level—shared vehicles, shared ride, coordinated management—where it will result in more cost-effective, quality service that meets client and general public transit rider needs.

A rural transit system in Echols County should promote these established goals by the State of Georgia. Likewise, GDOT has established minimum criteria for transit programs in GDOT’s Rural Public Transportation Service Policy. These include:

- Services should not be duplicative of other transportation services;
- Vehicles should be utilized to reach a goal of 500 one-way passenger trips per vehicle month **or** be operated 120 hours per month **or** 1,000 vehicle miles per month;
- Vehicles should be available for public transportation service on a daily basis;
- Vehicle trips for contract, charter or subscription service should recover fully allocated costs;
- The system should aim to recover a minimum of 20 percent of its public transportation costs as a goal from farebox revenues generated through regular public transportation operations, with a minimum of ten percent farebox recovery required. **The total of all purchase of service agreements should recover the fully allocated operating costs.**

Additionally, GDOT recommends that service should be funded to the maximum extent possible by the generation of revenues through farebox.

Section 5311 can be used for capital and operational costs. Operational and capital costs are two different types of costs incurred for developing and continuing a rural transit system.

Local funding for capital acquisition will at a minimum be ten percent of the costs. Capital expenses under Section 5311 can include:

1. Vehicles,
2. Communication equipment,
3. Wheelchair lifts,
4. Equipment installation costs,
5. Computer equipment and purchase of software (laptops are not an eligible expense and monthly software maintenance or lease fees are an operating expense), or
6. Office equipment,
7. Smart Card Reader,
8. Fareboxes.

Ten percent of the public transportation operating costs must be provided from fare or other local dollars. The remaining 90 percent of the operating cost is considered the net operating deficit. Federal funding may be provided for up to 50 percent of the net operating deficit; the remaining 50 percent (or more) must be provided from local funds. Operating costs include, but are not limited to, driver, mechanic, and dispatcher salaries, licenses, vehicle insurance, drug and alcohol testing, uniforms, maintenance and repairs (includes oil, tire and parts) and fuel. Monthly service fees for cell phones and/or two way radio services are eligible operating expenses.

In the South Georgia region, all counties that have a rural transit system contract with a third party operator. Third party operators are experienced transit providers that are able to provide transit service effectively and efficiently. These counties use the Section 5311 funds to purchase capital equipment and contract with the third party operator for operation of the system. According to Mids, Inc., the most utilized third party operator in the South Georgia region, local governments generally only pay for vehicle insurance in operational expenses. It should be noted that operational expenses do not include capital costs. All other operational expenses are handled by the third party operator. The third party operator goal is to provide service efficiently in order to profit from the farebox revenues.

According to Mids, Inc. farebox costs generally are \$3 for trips that are less than ten miles, \$5 for trips that are at least ten miles, and \$0.50 for every mile outside of the county of service.

According to the *Georgia Administrative Guide for Rural Public Transportation Programs* (January 2007- June 2008 funding cycle), the following types of service are appropriate for rural public transportation programs:

- Demand-response or route deviation service. Demand-response is a type of service where individual passengers can request door-to-door or curb-to-curb transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Route deviation service operates along a public way on a fixed-route, but which may deviate from the route

occasionally in response to take a passenger to a destination or pick one up from an origin, after which it returns to the regular route.

- Contract and subscription service. Subscription service is a type of demand response service in which routes and schedules are pre-arranged to meet the travel needs of riders who sign up for the service in advance. Often these riders are clients of human service agencies, who contract with the transportation operator to provide the service on behalf of the agency. This type of service may be provided by a Section 5311 program only to the extent that it does not violate FTA Charter Bus restrictions.

### **ECHOLS COUNTY OVERVIEW and ANALYSIS**

Echols County is an unusual county in that its only incorporated area is within the boundaries of the courthouse. The rest of the Statenville area is unincorporated. Therefore, the U.S. Census does not reveal anything specifically regarding Statenville’s residential population. However, the largest area of housing, albeit small, is near the unincorporated community of Statenville.

#### Population

Table 1 shows population numbers for Echols County, the South Georgia Regional Development Center’s region, and the State of Georgia from 1960 to 2000. Table 2 puts the information into perspective by showing the percent change of population for four separate decades. From 1990 to 2000, Echols County gained a significant number of people migrating into the county, helping the county increase in population 24.4 percent that decade. Although Echols County’s population is less than 4,000 currently, it is classified as a Metropolitan County by *The Georgia County Guide*, due to it’s proximity to the Lowndes/Valdosta and is part of that MSA. It is speculated that Echols County and the growing Valdosta metropolitan region are actually growing faster than U.S. Census data indicates. Much of the growth in the area is from residents moving up from adjacent Florida. Since Echols does not have any physicians, a hospital, a nursing home or a bank, much of this older influx is likely to seek housing where these services are readily available. In addition, almost all residents moving into a new area are seeking protection of property values, without any type of land use regulations or subdivision regulations Echols will not be as desirable. However, it is assumed that Echols County will continue to grow in population.

Table 1 Population Change

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Echols County	1,876	1,924	2,297	2,319	3,754
RDC	150,165	157,500	186,200	195,717	227,421
State	3,943,116	4,611,479	5,484,527	6,522,645	8,229,820

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 - 2000.

Table 2 Population Change Numbers and Percentages

	1960 - 1970		1970 - 1980		1980 - 1990		1990 - 2000	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Echols County	48	2.6	373	19.4	37	1.6	458	24.4

RDC	7,335	4.9	28,700	18.2	9,248	5.0	31,704	16.2
State	668,363	17.0	873,048	18.9	1,038,118	18.9	1,707,175	26.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 - 2000.

Assuming that these trends will continue, the South Georgia Regional Development Center created a population projection based off of past data. Table 3 shows what this projection predicts for Echols County. This projection reveals that Echols County will continue to grow and will increase by 64 percent from 2000 to the year 2030.

The 2000 Census also revealed a county with a very low population density (9.3 people per square mile) and housing density (4 housing units per square mile). Any new transit system must pay special attention to this low population density.

Table 3: Future Population

	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Echols County	3,729	4,124	4,561	5,044	5,579	6,170

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1960-2000. Analysis: South Georgia Regional Development Center 2006

Table 4 shows population projections for ten different age groups. The demographic category that would benefit from a rural transit system the most would more than likely be the category that includes people age 55-64 years old. In 2000 nine percent of all residents of Echols County were 65 and over with a population of 340. By 2030, this demographic category is expected to increase by 119 people.

Table 4: Population Projections by Age

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
0 – 4 Years Old	217	196	174	238	301	322	343	364	385	406	427
5 – 13 Years Old	379	390	401	491	580	630	681	731	781	831	882
14 – 17 Years Old	200	161	122	171	219	224	229	233	238	243	248
18 – 20 Years Old	110	113	116	157	197	219	241	262	284	306	328
21 – 24 Years Old	160	143	126	200	274	303	331	360	388	417	445
25 – 34 Years Old	342	366	389	503	617	686	755	823	892	961	1,030
35 – 44 Years Old	263	291	318	428	538	607	676	744	813	882	951
45 – 54 Years Old	203	223	242	329	416	469	523	576	629	682	736
55 – 64 Years Old	162	188	214	243	272	300	327	355	382	410	437
65 and over	261	247	232	286	340	360	380	399	419	439	459

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs Data Views (<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/>) 2006

## Workplace Destinations

Table 5 shows commuting statistics for Echols County in comparison to other counties in the region and the State of Georgia. Echols County has the highest percentage of commuters in the entire region and has had the greatest percentage increase in commuters since 1970. In fact, more people who live in Echols work in Lowndes County than work in Echols County. In 2000, 1,203 people left their home county of Echols County to work in Lowndes County. Of all the counties in the state, Echols County ranked the highest in terms of percentage of population that worked outside of their county of residence.

Table 5: Commuting Comparisons State and Region

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Increase Since 1970
State	25.3	29.7	37.9	41.5	16.2
Ben Hill	9.4	9.2	14.2	21.4	12.0
Brooks	18.8	31.6	40.8	51.5	32.7
Cook	17.0	22.7	32.4	40.2	23.2
Echols	45.7	57.4	83.5	85.0	39.3
Irwin	21.9	34.6	47.6	56.6	34.7
Lanier	43.1	45.2	50.7	65.3	22.2
Lowndes	4.4	7.1	9.1	8.6	4.2
Tift	5.5	6.3	10.6	15.5	10.0
Turner	11.4	12.2	32.0	38.3	26.9

Source: US Bureau of the Census 1960-2000. Analysis: South Georgia Regional Development Center 2006

Table 6: 2000 Echols Place of Work Destinations

County of Work	Number
Echols	249
Lowndes	1,203
Hamilton, FL	82
Madison, FL	10
Clinch	35
Lanier	30
Thomas	13
Tift	8
Elsewhere	39

Source: US Bureau of the Census 2000

Table 6 shows where the residents of Echols traveled to for work. The most popular workplace for residents of Echols County is Lowndes County. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Snapshots (<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/Snapshots/>), the five largest employers within Echols County as of 1999 were David Corbett Farms, KMA Employee Leasing Inc., R&H Farms Inc., Walter Michael DeLoach, and Zellwin Produce Company Inc.

### Economic Characteristics

Many counties in South Georgia often overestimate the importance of agriculture to their community. However, Echols County's economy is greatly impacted by agriculture. Unlike many Georgia counties, the percentage of people living in Echols County working in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining has increased significantly since 1980. This economic sector employs the highest percentage of residents in Echols County (23.2 percent) as seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Employment by Industry

Category	1980	1990	2000
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	16.2%	12.7%	23.2%
Construction	6.3%	4.5%	10.8%
Manufacturing	34.5%	26.4%	13.6%
Wholesale Trade	4.0%	5.1%	8.1%
Retail Trade	9.0%	16.6%	12.3%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	6.8%	7.1%	3.0%
Information	NA	NA	0.3%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	2.2%	3.3%	2.0%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	1.6%	3.1%	2.6%
Educational, health and social services	9.6%	10.1%	12.5%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	3.5%	0.2%	5.3%
Other Services	1.8%	4.6%	2.4%
Public Administration	4.4%	6.4%	3.9%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs Data Views (<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/>) 2006

Table 8 shows the per capita and average household income for Echols County and the State of Georgia. The State of Georgia's numbers include people's and household's incomes in urbanized areas such as Atlanta, so it is not surprise that Echols County's per capita and average household incomes are much lower than the State of Georgia as a whole. This indicates that there may be a higher need for transportation services as lower income residents would benefit most from a transportation system.

Table 9 shows the household income distributions. Well over half of all Echols County households make less than \$30,000 a year in income. This combined with the fact that 22.3 percent of all Echols County families were below the poverty level in the 2000 Census. For the 2003/2004 school year 59 percent of the students enrolled in the county public school system were classified as economically disadvantaged as determined by eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Program. For the same time period it showed that only 4.7 percent were classified as Limited English Proficiency, but antidotally, this number is much higher.

Table 8: Per Capita and Average Household Income

	1980	1990	2000
Echols County Per Capita Income	\$4,273	\$8,915	\$15,727
State Per Capita Income	NA	\$13,631	\$21,154
Echols County Average Household Income	NA	\$25,260.22	\$46,182
State Average Household Income	NA	\$36,810	\$80,077

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs Data Views (<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/>) 2006

Table 9: Household Income Distribution

Category	1990	2000
Income less than \$9,999	21.1%	13.4%
Income \$10000 - \$14,999	14.6%	13.5%
Income \$15000 - \$19,999	10.0%	9.3%
Income \$20000 - \$29,999	21.1%	20.9%
Income \$30000 - \$34,999	7.4%	5.6%
Income \$35000 - \$39,999	7.1%	3.7%
Income \$40000 - \$49,999	7.6%	8.0%
Income \$50000 - \$59,999	5.7%	6.7%
Income \$60000 - \$74,999	3.5%	10.4%
Income \$75000 - \$99,999	1.3%	3.2%
Income \$100000 - \$124,999	0.3%	1.9%
Income \$125000 - \$149,999	0.0%	0.6%
Income \$150,000 and above	0.4%	2.9%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs Data Views (<http://www.georgiaplanning.com/dataviews/census2/>) 2006

### **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION of EXISTING SERVICES**

As stated before, currently there are no public transportation systems in place in Echols County. However, there are some other services within the county including Department of Human Resources and Medicaid client trips.

Mids Inc., a third party transportation operator, reported very few DHR trips in Echols County. This is in part due to decreasing use of transportation services in the region by DHR in general and also due to the low amount of recipients of DHR programs in Echols County such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. In fact, the Division of Family and Children Services reports only ten families that received TANF benefits in FY 2000. Despite the fact that Echols County has a significant number of people living in poverty, very few people receive TANF benefits. This is likely due to the fact that Echols County has an extremely low unemployment rate (2.1 in 2004). Common knowledge of the area also suggests that the community attitudes may disfavor assistance programs such as TANF and favor other alternatives such as church and familial assistance.

The Medicaid and DHR transportation operations are considered adequate for the needs of the clients. Echols County also provides transportation services for senior citizens to travel to the local senior citizen center. This service is considered adequate for senior citizens wishing to travel to the senior citizen center, but does not address senior citizen's other transportation needs.

The high numbers of commuters from Echols County generally use their own vehicles or obtain rides from other people. It is possible to use the Valdosta taxi services to travel from Valdosta to Echols County, however, this option is relatively expensive.

In summary, while current services meet the public's needs for specific purposes, there are no formal companies or organizations that provide transportation services for the citizens of Echols County for general needs. Most rides are worked out on an informal basis of ride sharing or paying for a neighbor's gas and sharing the trip. There is reportedly a resident of the county that

provides an off-the-record taxi service and makes regular runs into Valdosta for shopping and other errands.

### **DEMAND and NEED**

The Data and Analysis section describes a county with a growing population, a high percentage of commuters, and a low per capita income and average household income. Echols County has a significant low-income population. These traits suggest a county that could potentially benefit from a rural transit system. However, in Echols County the low population coupled with the far flung, spread out nature of the residences and the informal system that is apparently meeting all the needs of the residents indicate that full consideration, in terms of the population needs and cost / benefit analysis is warranted.

Echols County contains commuters that could potentially use the transit system, but many of the trips, if not most, would be for other reasons. Non-Medicaid receiving residents would benefit greatly from having easier access to hospitals and pharmacies located in Lowndes County. Other residents could also potentially use the transit system to travel either to Statenville or Valdosta for commercial purposes. Many residents in Echols County not only travel to Lowndes County for work but also for major grocery shopping, the presence of a mall, various retail other establishments, and restaurants in Lowndes County.

There are several factors that could negatively effect the operations of a transit system. The county’s low population and low population density could mean low demand and higher operational expenses. Residents of Echols County have also traditionally relied on self-sufficiency, family and friends to provide their transit needs. Table 10 shows how Echols County compares to the State of Georgia and the surrounding Georgia counties of Lowndes, Lanier and Clinch in vehicular availability. **Echols County only has 54 households with no vehicles** and just 393 households with one vehicle, but has 578 households with two vehicles and 239 households with three or more vehicles. Echols County, has few commercial businesses and a strong reliance on other counties for jobs. This has forced residents to become self-sufficient in their mobility.

Table 10: Vehicular Availability

	Echols	Clinch	Lanier	Lowndes	State
% with no vehicles	4.3	15.4	9.8	8.1	8.3
% with one vehicle	31.1	30.1	34.4	34.0	32.3
% with two vehicles	45.7	36.9	35.9	39.1	39.8
% with three or more vehicles	18.9	17.6	20.0	18.8	19.6

Source: US Bureau of the Census 2000

For low-income families, it can be a tough challenge for them to meet their transportation needs even if they have one or even two vehicles. These families face the challenge of long trips to work and to businesses that put many miles on vehicles that may or may not be pre-owned and already worn down. Likewise, a family that only has one mode of transportation faces just the challenge of meeting the transportation needs for the whole family. It should be recognized, though, that residents of Echols County have adapted well to their geographic circumstances and

leaders have consistent expressed that they do not see the need for a rural transit system as an alternative option.

### **COST ESTIMATES**

A rural transit system includes capital expenses and operating expenses. Table 10 shows the estimated expenses for several vehicles that would be included in capital expenses. Given Echols County’s population, one vehicle may be enough for their transit system. However, if demand warranted it, two vehicles may need to be considered for purchase to boost efficiency. Echols County would also need to consider purchasing a mobile radio and a computer, printer and necessary software as well.

Such capital equipment is eligible for funding under the Section 5311 grant program. The minimum required local funding for eligible capital equipment is 10 percent. However, this amount may be higher depending on the availability of state and federal funds.

Table 10: Capital Equipment Cost Estimates

Capital Equipment	2006	2007	2008
Standard Van	\$25,000	\$25,500	\$26,000
Conversion Van	\$38,500	\$39,000	\$39,000
Conversion Van w/ Lift	\$42,000	\$42,500	\$43,000
Shuttle Van	\$33,000	\$33,500	\$34,000
Shuttle Van w/ Lift	\$37,000	\$37,500	\$38,000
Shuttle Bus	\$37,000	\$38,000	\$38,000
Shuttle Bus w/ Lift	\$42,000	\$42,500	\$43,000
Mobile Radio	\$1,500	\$1,700	\$1,800
Computer, Printer and Software	\$3,000	\$3,200	\$3,300

Counties that have developed a rural transportation program in the South Georgia region contract a third party operator. Many third party operators, such as Mids Inc., provide services to the counties at no cost to the local governments. Operational expenses are paid for by fares received, and if necessary, the federal funds that are offered from up to 50 percent of the net operating deficit. Any other losses are paid for by the company, and any profits are gained by the third party operator.

Mids Inc., the most frequently utilized third party operator in the South Georgia region, explains that the average operating cost per month per vehicle is \$3,500. Therefore, if Echols County contracted with a third party operator, it can expect operational costs to be \$3,500 a month for one vehicle, which translates into \$42,000 a year.

In order to offset these costs, third party operators attempt to provide a large amount of transportation services as efficiently as possible. Third party operators try to at least break even on operational costs, and try to profit if possible. Echols County could attempt to provide the service on its own, but the operational costs could become higher.

Mids, Inc. explains that the cost for customers depends upon the distance traveled and whether or not a trip is within the count of operation. Echols County residents could expect a fare of \$3 for

trips that are under ten miles and a fare of \$5 for trips that are over ten miles. Mids, Inc. charges an extra \$0.50 a mile for every mile that is past the county border for out-of-county trips. However, it may be possible for Echols County to enter into a contract with a third party operator that will allow residents to travel to and from Lowndes County for an affordable rate.

**ECHOLS COUNTY BREAK-EVEN ESTIMATE**

Based on GDOT provided information:

- Use 2008 figures
- Buy one shuttle van with lift \$38,000
- Mobile Radio 1,800
- Computer, printer, software 3,300
- Total \$43,100
- Minimum local required match of 10% \$ 4,310
- Annual operating expenses \$42,000
- GDOT will reimburse ½ of operating expenses **\$21,000**

Assume:

- Each trip is a two way trip, out of the county, which means more than ten miles therefore, \$5 per trip = **\$10** round trip
- Each trip that is over the border of the county an additional **\$.50** per mile is charged
- Statenville to the border is 12 miles. From the border to downtown Valdosta is 16 miles, further to the mall, movies, and other shopping. Therefore, 16 x 2 = **32** miles at \$.50 per mile for each trip
  - Using the above numbers, this means each trip would cost the patron a minimum of **\$26**.
- The transit van would operate **250** days per year. Monday – Friday, except for 10 holidays.

Farebox break-even of ridership, for the first year of operation:

1. person at \$26 x 250 days a year =	\$ 6,500
2. people	13,000
3. people	19,500
4. people	<b>26,000</b>
GDOT reimbursement	- 21,000
Initial investment	<u>- 4,310</u>
	<b>\$ 690 to Mids-Inc.</b>

**Conclusion:** It would take 4 people riding everyday of operation for Echols County break-even. Using the GDOT figures, it would cost patrons \$26 a trip. Antidotal reports suggest that the cost to people needing rides is currently much less, therefore they would opt not to use the shuttle van. Churches, families, friends, and the informal taxi services are meeting the basic transportation needs at this time. The Commissioners and all others polled did not see a need for a rural transit 5311 program.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS and GOALS**

Based off the findings of this feasibility study, it is recommended that Echols County not pursue the operation of a rural transit system; there is not the economic incentive nor the political will to do so at this time. It is recommended that in two years the feasibility of a rural transit system for Echols County be re-evaluated.