

2016

ATHENS TRANSIT

FEASIBILITY STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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ATHENS TRANSIT, a leader amongst transit systems of comparable size, serves the general population of Athens-Clarke County, and coordinates with the University of Georgia transit system to serve the needs of its approximately 35,000 students, faculty, and staff. In order to continue to provide exceptional transit service and to identify inefficiencies or duplications of service, Athens Transit initiated a study to assess transportation needs and comprehensive service options.

The Athens Transit Feasibility Study explores the feasibility and efficiencies of future transit service in Athens-Clarke County and the surrounding metropolitan areas. The purpose of this study is to complete an assessment of existing conditions and operations, complete a needs assessment for service expansion and identify the feasibility, opportunities, and options for expansion and/or consolidation of services. The study goals include: ensuring demand is served, providing multi-modal options, implementing system efficiencies, finding fiscally prudent solutions, leveraging local funding, and identifying long-term funding sources.



STUDY TASKS

- Task 1:** Stakeholder Coordination
- Task 2:** Existing Conditions Assessment
- Task 3:** Determination of Latent Demand
- Task 4:** Identification of Transit Service Options
- Task 5:** Plan Recommendations
- Task 6:** Agency Coordination and Public Outreach

At the onset of the study, a Stakeholder Committee comprising representatives of local governments, service providers, UGA, the MACORTS MPO, the Regional Commission, major employers, GDOT Intermodal Division, and the Federal Transit Administration, was established to provide valuable insight and guidance. In addition, a robust public involvement effort was incorporated including presentations and workshops, public surveys, on-board transit ridership surveys and passenger counts. The insights gained from public and stakeholder input were combined with existing conditions, operational data, and staff input during the analysis process in order to develop recommendations.

ANALYSIS ELEMENTS

- Employment Densities and Locations
- School Locations
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
- Crash Locations
- Roadway Performance
- Parking Facilities
- Existing/Future Landuse
- Protected Resources
- Planned/Programmed Projects
- Public Survey Responses
- Latent Demand
- Ridership Propensity
- Population Demographics
 - » Gender
 - » Poverty
 - » Zero Vehicle Households
 - » Minority
 - » Age 65+
- Population Density
- Existing Transit Service
 - » Athens Transit
 - » UGA
 - » Private Providers

RECOMMENDATIONS

Branding/Marketing

» **Update the branding for Athens Transit.**

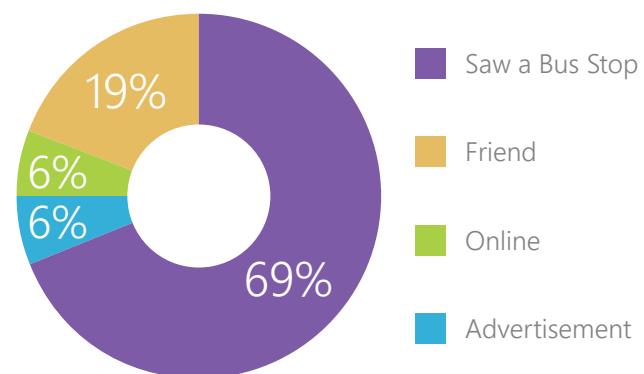
Athens Transit should seek professional services in order to develop a new logo, style guide, and brand for Athens Transit. This rebranding effort should also reflect that Athens Clarke County became a unified local government in 1990.

» **Update the 2008 -2009 Athens Transit Marketing Plan.**

An update to the Athens Transit Marketing Plan is critical in order to recognize the significant changes in technology and aptitude for choice ridership that have developed over the last 8 years.

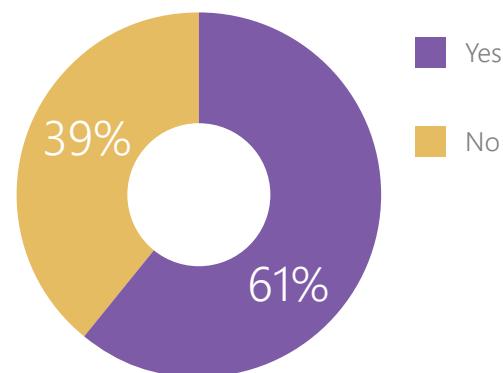
?

How did you first hear about Athens Transit Services?



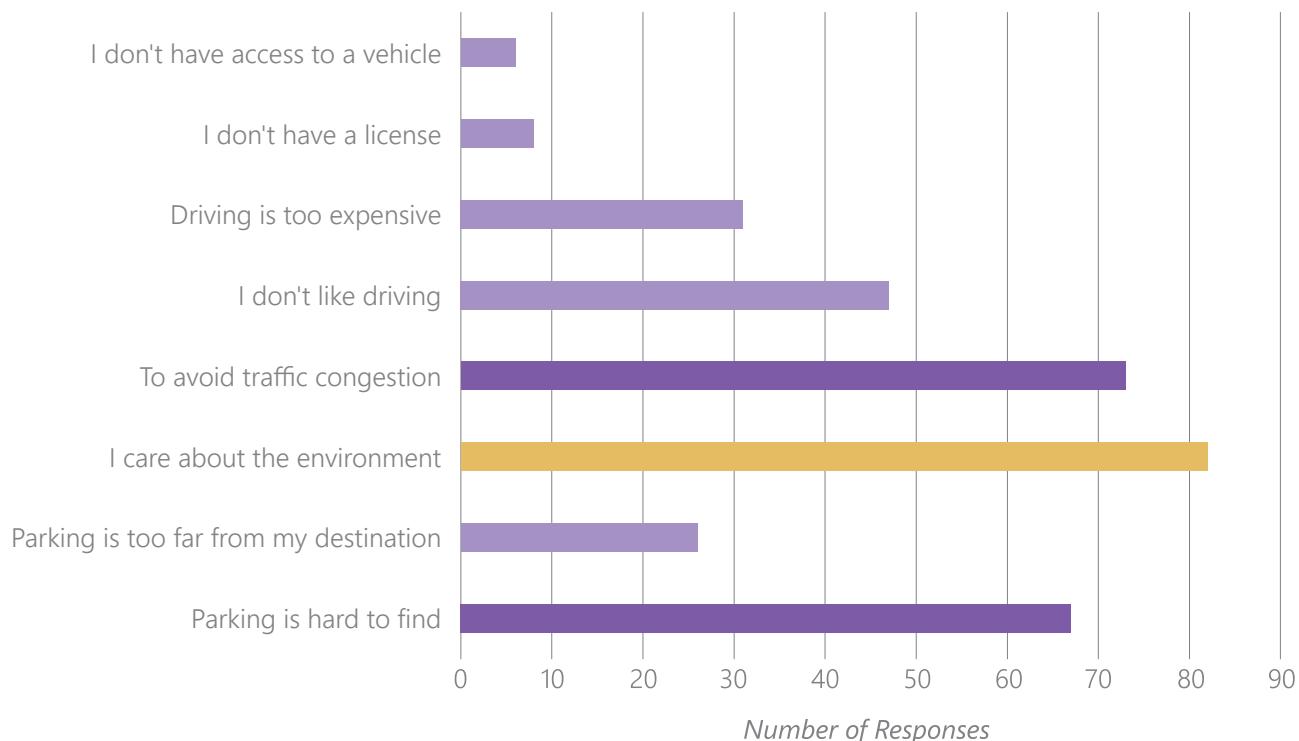
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Is there adequate information available to you about Athens Transit Agency?





Why would you use public transportation, such as Athens Transit? Select all that apply.



» **Hire staff to manage marketing and outreach initiatives.**

In order to effectively advance marketing and outreach initiatives, Athens Transit staff should be expanded to include 1 full time equivalent (FTE) position to manage all marketing and outreach efforts, including the update of the Athens Transit Marketing Plan.

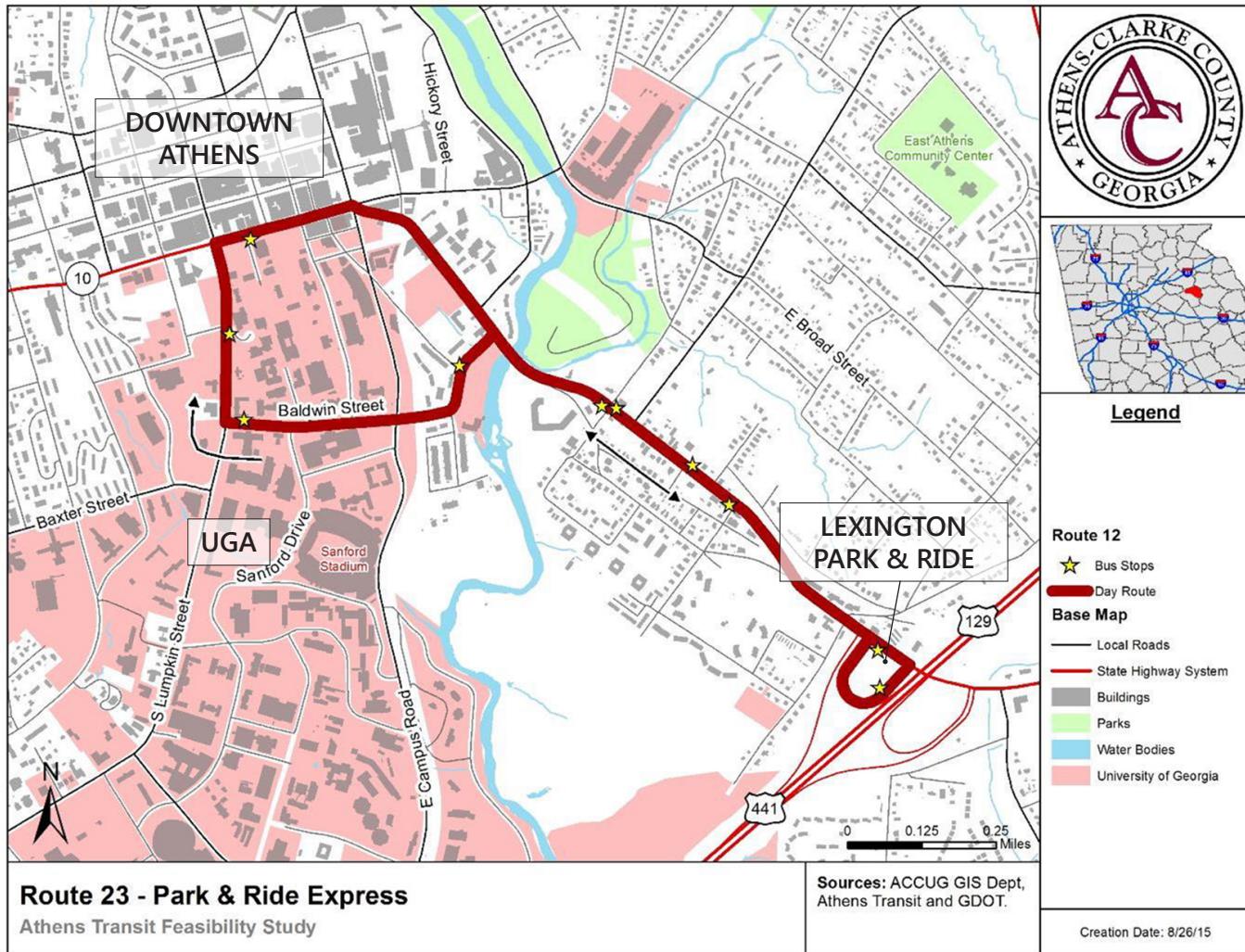
» **Route 23 Park and Ride marketing campaign.**

In order to address both the underperforming route utilization and the public concerns regarding parking and traffic congestion, a Park and Ride Marketing Campaign should be developed and initiated.

» **Route 23 Park and Ride utilization coordination.**

Availability of parking facilities on UGA campus and in Downtown Athens was identified as an issue, as existing demand has exceeded the available infrastructure. Focused coordination with the University and the Athens Downtown Development Authority should be established to promote the Lexington Park and Ride Facility as a resource.

A map is provided on page 4 demonstrating the Route 23 - Park and Ride Express service configuration. The route provides express service from the Lexington Park and Ride Facility to Downtown Athens and the University of Georgia campus.



User Enhancements

- » Incorporate the availability of wi-fi on buses.

Athens Transit recognizes the importance of adapting to the changing transit user needs and preferences. Athens Transit should establish a pilot Wi-Fi program for select routes and incorporate a survey "splash page" to assess the user experience and impacts to new/choice ridership. Once the pilot program has accrued sufficient user survey data, it should be assessed to determine its viability for continuation and/or expansion.

- » Leverage Wi-Fi technology for Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) integration.

Athens Transit should initiate additional research on ITS based technology providers in order to identify integrated monitoring and information sharing software to advance performance monitoring capabilities and advance user access to system information.

Figure 1 demonstrates the various components of ITS integrated technology systems.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

- » **Screen corridors identified by citizens as “unsafe” or “uncomfortable” for bicycle and/or pedestrian access to transit facilities.**

Areas identified by survey respondents as unsafe should be further assessed in order to identify project level improvements, and an internal project list should be established to document non-motorized project needs. Existing relationships with the MACORTS MPO and the Local Governing Agencies should be utilized to enter the resulting Non-motorized Project List into the established planning process for funding consideration.

- » **Incorporate a non-motorized facility analysis during route modifications.**

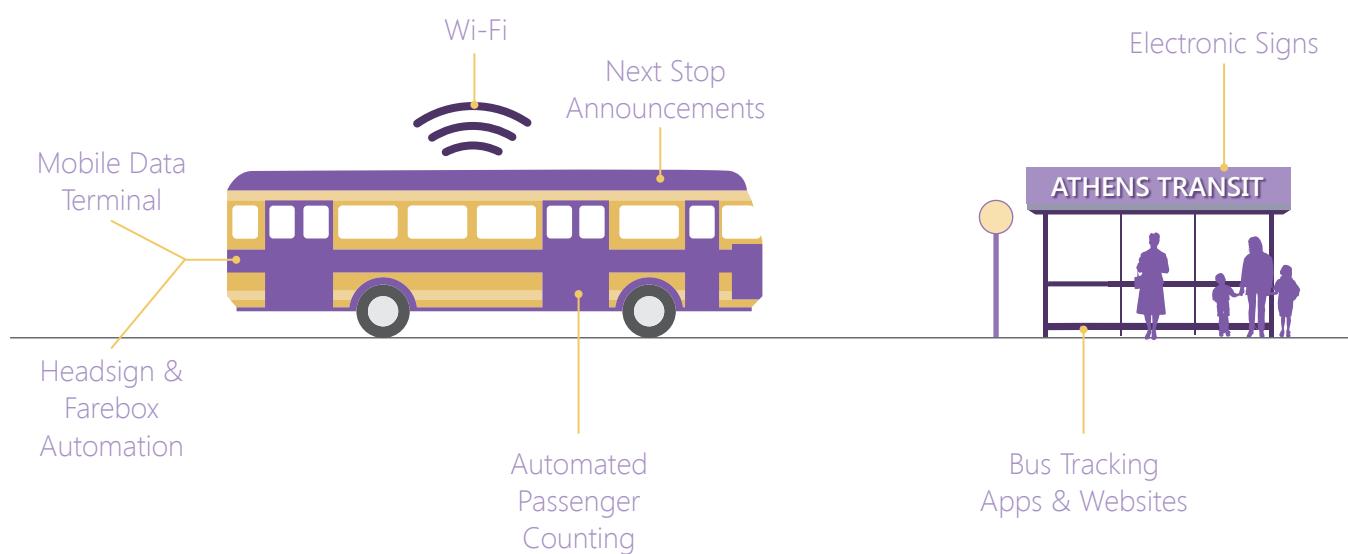
As Athens Transit initiates modifications to individual routes, a bicycle and pedestrian facilities screening should be conducted within a 1 mile radius of the current and proposed route alignment. The screening should identify deficiencies in sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and safety features such as street lighting and road crossings on, or adjacent, to public roadways.



- » **Conduct a system-wide bicycle and pedestrian accessibility study.**

As the transit service footprint expands into new areas, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility surrounding these expansions will be critical to connect residential and commercial areas to the service. A system-wide bicycle and pedestrian analysis should be conducted in order to define non-motorized goals and objectives, evaluate existing non-motorized facilities within the current and proposed transit service area, identify and prioritize projects, identify funding sources, and establish an implementation plan.

Figure 1: Intelligent Transportation Systems



Financial Resources and Strategies

» Identify funding sources to support service modifications and expansions.

A menu of funding options has been developed to be used as a resource for identifying those that are most viable for implementation of selected service options.

» Develop intergovernmental agreements to pay for costs of services to areas outside of Athens-Clarke County.

The study identifies service extensions located outside of Athens-Clarke County. If these service options are selected for implementation, funding agreements must be developed between the service provider and neighboring municipalities receiving service.



UGA COORDINATION/CONSOLIDATION

» Maintain two separate transit systems.

In examining the University of Georgia system in conjunction with the Athens Transit system, incompatible service objectives and operating characteristics constrain the ability to combine the systems. While current conditions and service models do not support full system consolidation,

there are existing opportunities for coordinated service on specific routes.

- Prince Avenue/Health Sciences
- South Milledge/Vet School and Equestrian Center

» Continued coordination with the University.

While the University and Athens Transit systems are committed to coordination and are recognized for their integrated service approach, there are areas identified for additional coordination to further explore efficiencies and integrated resources:

- Future route modifications and new services
- Opportunities for shared support infrastructure (e.g. alternative fueling stations, etc.)
- Operational policies and procedures (e.g. bus stop stacking, etc.)
- Long range alternative service modes beyond the horizon of this plan (e.g. rail)
- Marketing and outreach
- Parking resources (see Route 23 Park and Ride coordination recommendation)

» Establish an annual transit forum.

- In addition to coordination with the University and Athens Transit providers, an annual transit forum should be established to facilitate ongoing and focused coordination with all transit providers in the community.

TRANSIT SERVICE OPTIONS

» Select service options for additional analysis and refinement during the 2017 Transit Development Plan (TDP) update.

Over the course of the feasibility study, a number of service options were developed to increase efficiency on under-performing routes, eliminate large route loops for more direct service, and extend service into areas identified as having underserved ridership propensity.

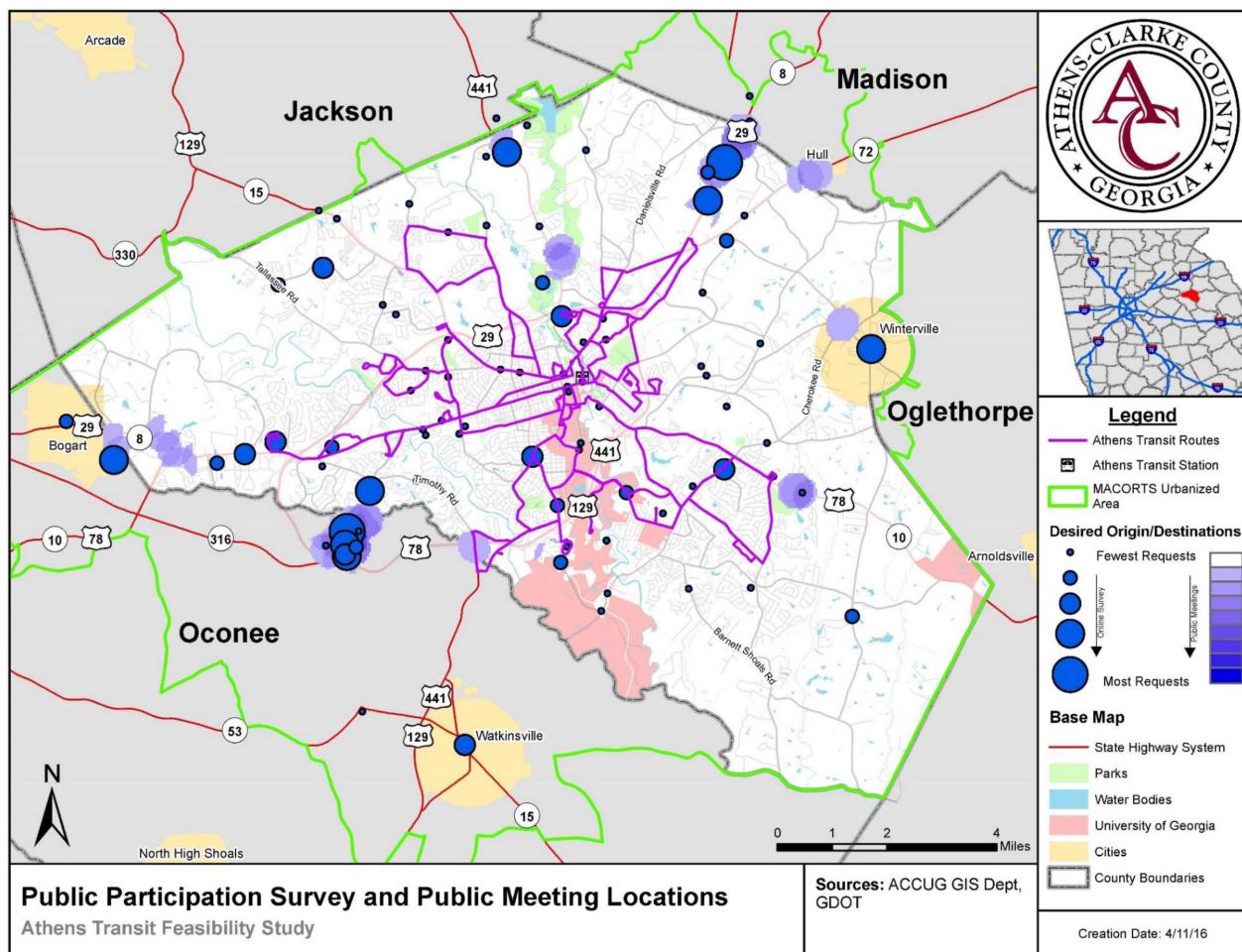
Figure 2 below shows desired service expansion areas identified by current and potential transit riders.

In order to disperse the fixed route transit service options over the next 15 years, the service options have been separated into short-, mid- and long-

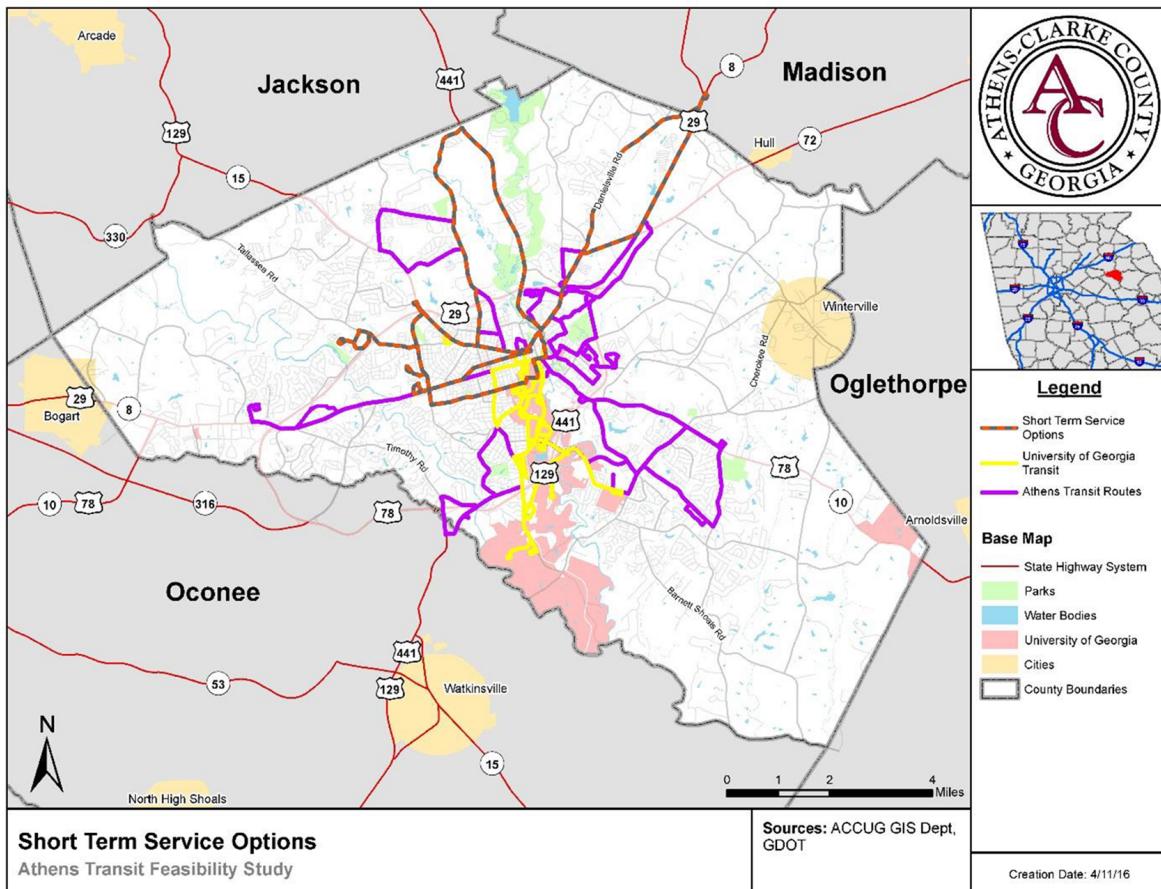
term time frames. Short-term options include the potential re-structuring of existing fixed routes and new fixed route services in the northern portion of the service area. Mid-term options include additional re-structuring of existing routes, new fixed route service and frequency improvements on highly productive routes. The long-term service options include the implementation of new fixed routes, frequency improvements and additional weekend service. These options could be implemented between 10 and 15 years from the finalization of this plan.

Maps and tables detailing the Short, Mid, and Long-Term service options are provided on the following pages of this summary.

Figure 2: Desired Service Expansion Areas



SHORT-TERM SERVICE OPTIONS

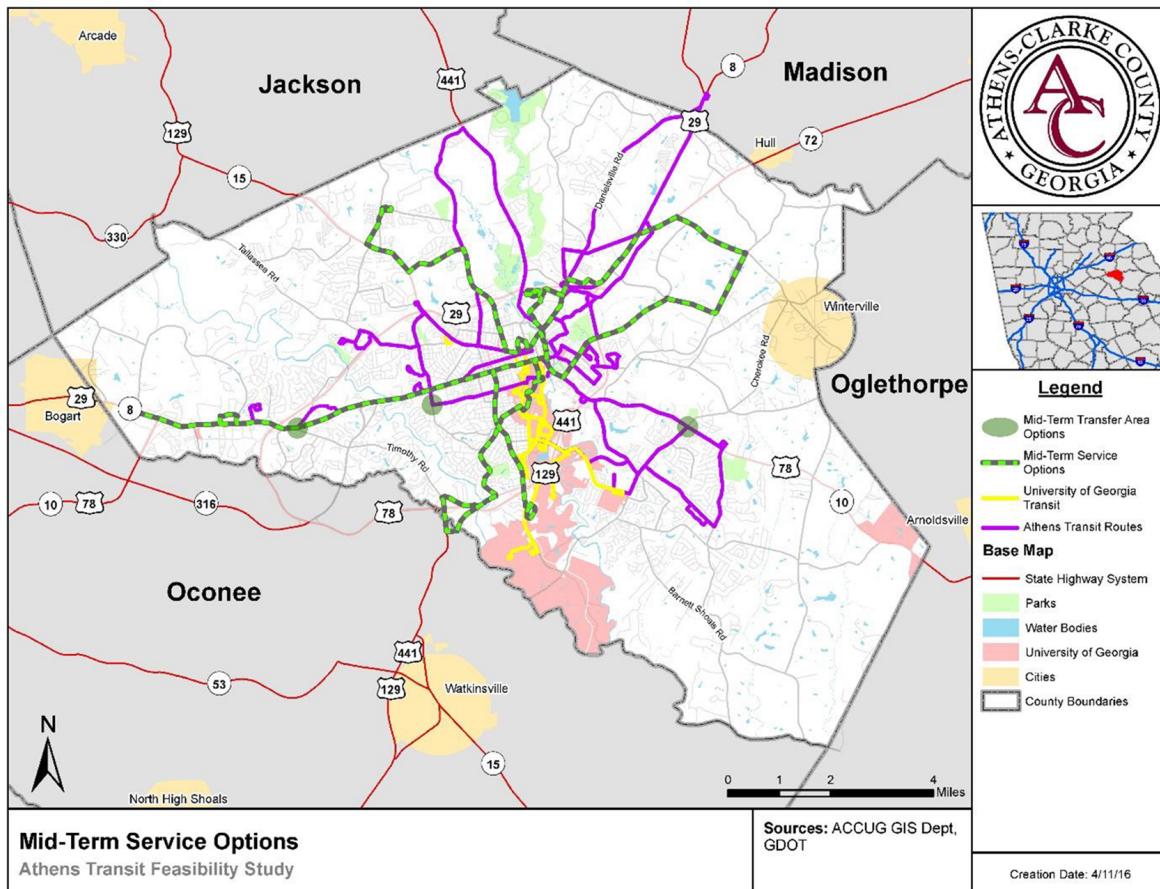


Service Option	Annual Operating Costs ¹	Capital Costs ²	Additional Vehicle
Short-Term			
Route 5 Reroute	--	--	No
Route 6 Reroute	--	--	No
Route 7 Reroute	\$192,579	--	No
MLK Parkway/Commerce Road/ Newton Bridge Road New Service	\$467,114	\$600,000	Yes
US29/Danielsville Road New Service	\$467,114	\$630,000	Yes
Sub-Total	\$1,126,807	\$1,230,000	

¹ Annual operating costs are estimated using \$79.07 per revenue hour for full size bus and \$77.26 per revenue hour for cutaway vehicle use, 255 weekday service days and 102 weekend service days, when appropriate.

² Capital costs are estimated using \$30,000 per new bus shelter along new service routes. This cost is based on ATS' cost on average for standard equipment, (sign, post, trashcan, bench, shelter, maps and customer info), site work, engineering drawings, labor, etc. Full size buses are estimated at \$450,000 per vehicle while cutaways are estimated at \$70,000.

MID-TERM SERVICE OPTIONS

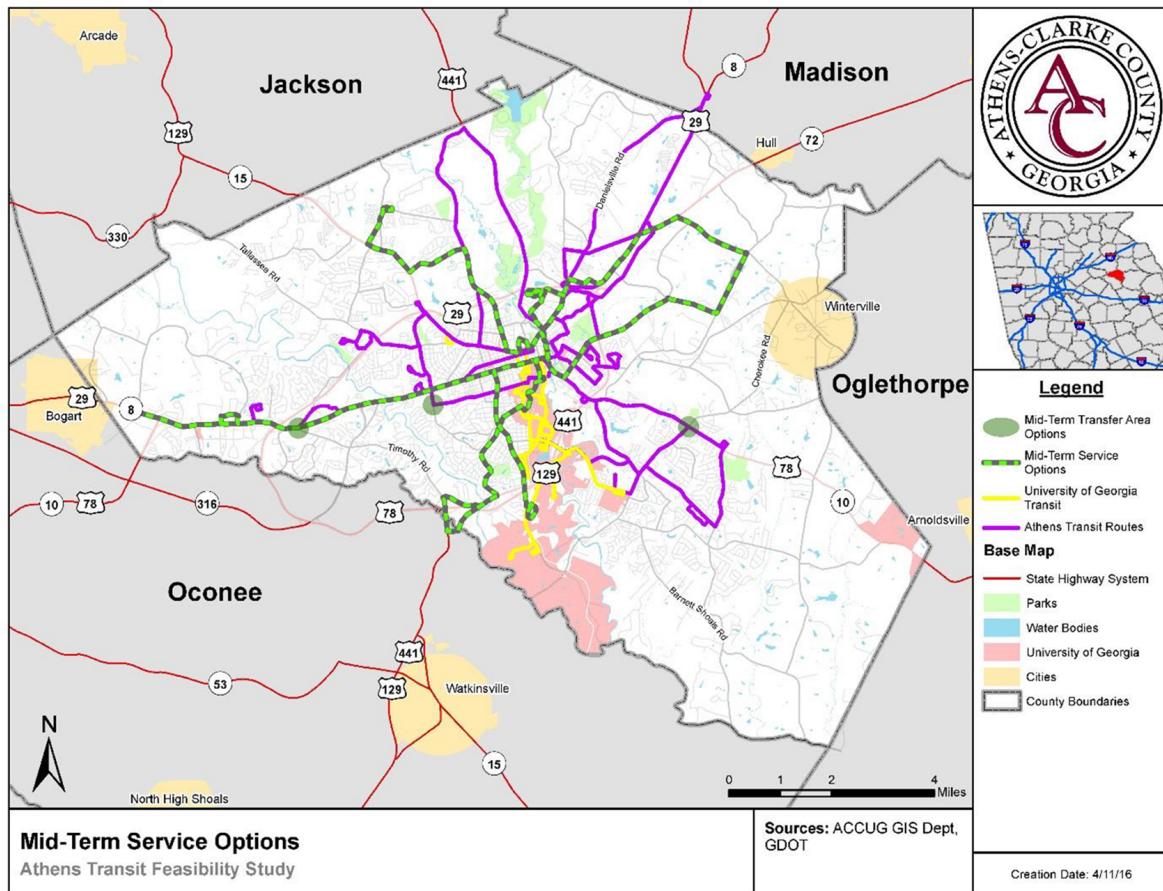


Service Option	Annual Operating Costs ¹	Capital Costs ²	Additional Vehicle
Mid-Term			
Route 8 Reroute	\$100,847	--	No
Route 9 Reroute	\$41,125	--	No
South Lumpkin/Milledge Avenue New Service	\$476,792	\$510,000	Yes
Atlanta Highway/Caterpillar New Service	\$950,669	\$200,000	Yes
Eastside Flexible Route New Service	\$475,334	\$130,000	Yes
Route 5 Frequency	\$490,451.44	\$450,000	Yes
Route 7 Frequency	\$452,881	\$450,000	Yes
Route 9 Frequency	\$476,792	\$450,000	Yes
Route 25 Frequency	\$497,152	\$450,000	Yes
Route 26 Frequency	\$663,844	\$450,000	Yes
Decentralized Transfer Points	--	\$1,500,000	No
Sub-Total	\$4,625,888	\$4,590,000	

¹ Annual operating costs are estimated using \$79.07 per revenue hour for full size bus and \$77.26 per revenue hour for cutaway vehicle use, 255 weekday service days and 102 weekend service days, when appropriate.

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LONG-TERM SERVICE OPTIONS



Service Option	Annual Operating Costs ¹	Capital Costs ²	Additional Vehicle
Long-Term			
Route 1/3 Frequency	\$501,052	\$450,000	Yes
Route 2/24 Frequency	\$597,473	\$450,000	Yes
Route 8 Frequency	\$467,114	\$450,000	Yes
Route 12 Frequency	\$1,215,037	\$450,000	Yes
Route 14 Frequency	\$961,080	\$450,000	Yes
Route 20 Frequency	\$502,952	\$450,000	Yes
Route 21 Frequency	\$756,902	\$450,000	Yes
Route 22 Frequency	\$756,913	\$450,000	Yes
Route 27 Frequency	\$679,286	\$450,000	Yes
Route 28 Frequency	\$317,316	\$450,000	Yes
Decentralized Transfer Points	--	\$1,500,000	No
Sub-Total	\$7,231,917	\$4,620,000	

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The findings and recommendations from the Athens Transit Feasibility Study will be incorporated into the 2017 Transit Development Plan ensuring a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process. Due to the potential impact of major transit service changes on current riders and the general public, FTA regulations require fair and equitable considerations prior to implementation. ATS will ensure all regulations are complied with prior to any service changes.

For a copy of the full Athens Transit Feasibility Study report please visit the Athens Transit website at www.athenstransit.com.

For additional information about Athens Transit:

Multimodal Transit Center (MMTC)
Administration/Customer Service
775 East Broad Street
Athens, Georgia 30601

Phone Numbers

The Bus Information (706) 613-3430

The Lift Information (706) 613-3435

Administration (706) 613-3437

COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE



2016 Urban Community Transportation System of the Year

May 25, 2016, Athens Transit/Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County was honored as the 2016 Urban Community Transportation System of the Year by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) at their annual conference in Portland, Oregon.



2015 Georgia Transit Association's Innovation Award

December 10, 2015, Athens Transit/Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County was presented with the Georgia Transit Association Innovation Award, at the annual conference in Jekyll Island, Georgia. The award recognizes a strong commitment to outreach and public involvement, as well as innovative strategies and techniques used by Athens Transit.

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RS&H