

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Several needs have been identified upon evaluating the existing conditions related to transportation within the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area. These needs encompass several aspects of the overall transportation system and need to be addressed in the Plan. These needs should also be addressed through polices to be adopted by the City for future consideration.

Efficient & Effective Transportation Network

Transportation facilities, infrastructure, and land uses are all interdependent at the City and community level. For most residents, businesses, and developers, ease of transportation is a primary determinant in location decisions. Similarly, transportation infrastructure and policy decisions are primarily based on serving geographical areas and meeting needs of the citizenry and business community. Transportation investment decisions can also be used as an economic development tool.

As mentioned in the Land Use Element, transportation facilities largely shape land use patterns and influence growth.

In order to ensure an efficient allocation of transportation resources, Rock Hill must coordinate transportation and land use planning activities. This can address the very inefficient “sprawl” pattern which has dominated development in Rock Hill.

Transportation infrastructure, or a plan for infrastructure, must be in place at or before the time of anticipated growth. Traditionally limited funding for high-cost transportation projects necessitates the implementation of a process for evaluating and prioritizing potential projects in order to “grab low hanging fruit”, or projects which can be readily completed at acceptable costs and have positive impacts.

Multimodal Transportation System

The predominant mode of transportation in the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area is the private automobile. This particular mode of transportation can exclude many residents however, including those who are under the legal driving age, those classified as low-income, or those with disabilities. In addition to the likelihood of excluding some residents, the current private automobile transportation system relies on oil, of which there is a finite supply and availability has been an issue in recent history, and may be an issue in the future. There is an increasing need to identify locations of low-income and disadvantaged populations and target those areas for multi-modal and alternative transportation facilities.

A well-connected, multi-modal transportation system supports improved air quality, mobility, quality of life, economic competitiveness, and sustainable growth. This need is reiterated in all Elements of the Plan.

Rock Hill must plan for a multimodal transportation system within the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area. An essential component to any multimodal system should be a “Complete Streets” approach to facility planning. Complete Streets is a roadway design template whereby facilities for different modes of transportation, such as bicycle and pedestrian, are accounted for within the street design (cross section). Such a design would include a roadway travel lane adjacent to a bicycle lane and sidewalk, including necessary separations for safety. Additionally, the City should consider “road dieting” as a means of multimodal facility planning. All facility design decisions should foster a cooperative relationship between recreational and roadway traffic. Appropriate signage and way-finding strategies need to be employed to ensure that transportation is safe and efficient for all modes.

III. Transportation Element

A multimodal transportation system must also include trails and greenways which allow for pedestrian connectivity and access to all destinations within the Planning Area. Through subdivision ordinances, Rock Hill has provided for the setting aside of previously identified greenways as development occurs. The City must continue to ensure that greenway routes and connections are preserved as development continues throughout the Planning Area.

Transit Service

Emerging population characteristics, density trends, and other regional factors indicate that there is a growing need for transit which links Rock Hill to other important regional destinations. Lack of access to transportation affects residents' access to job training, human services and employment. An effective transit service can provide access to these and other opportunities, as well as serve as an economic development tool for the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area.

The Economic Conditions Element the also cites lack of public transit in and around Rock Hill and limited Catawba River crossings as limitations to employment and education opportunities.

Currently 73.3 percent of Rock Hill's 30,927 working residents commute for work. The average travel time for commuters was 21.6 minutes, indicating that many Rock Hill residents are working in locations outside of the City's 2020 Planning Area. Transit can play a significant role in relieving the strain on existing roads and highways, as well as providing job access for many others. In order to establish an effective, efficient transit service, Rock Hill must identify major regional employment centers and establish a long term transit plan. The City must also periodically evaluate when and where densities and population characteristics meet thresholds which will support fixed-route or flexed-route service.

Environmental Health

Safety and health are major concerns with any local or regional transportation system. Transportation improvements within the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area must be evaluated and implemented with safety in mind. Through various community involvement efforts, bicyclists and pedestrians have expressed an interest in safer travel conditions. Bicyclists have stated that they would ride more if conditions were safer. This indicates a need for safer transportation facilities.

In addition to the safety afforded to residents on specific facilities, residents have expressed a desire for safety in transportation alternatives to and from destinations. Rock Hill is home to students of three post-secondary institutions, who often find themselves walking to destinations at late hours or through areas with above average incidence of crime. Elderly and very young residents (under the legal driving age) find themselves in similar situations. Alternative transportation modes and services, such as shuttle services on nights and weekends, can help to eliminate these safety concerns.

The need to adequately address air quality issues is also identified in the Natural Resources Element.

Another health concern associated with transportation is air quality. Nationally, decreases in air quality have been linked with increased incidence of pulmonary conditions and other respiratory ailments. Transportation policy within the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area should address vehicle idling reductions and clean air impacts.

Transportation Advocacy

Transportation advocacy will be essential to the success of current and future transportation policies and services. Rock Hill has historically benefited from a lack of major transportation network failures, as compared with other regions around the nation. As a result, transportation has not been a focal point of planning efforts at the local level. However as population growth and development continues

at the current rapid pace, transportation will quickly become an area of need. The challenge for local and regional planning efforts will be to gain support for transportation system enhancements *in advance* of system failures.

Communication and networking among transportation and other agencies will be a key to effective transportation advocacy. Increased attention to marketing strategies for under-used services, such as the existing 82X and 78X commuter bus services, will be necessary in order to inform the public of their availability.

Similarly, the importance of the Rock Hill/York County Airport will continue to grow, as usage demands on its facilities increase in the face of regional growth. The City and County must work with local and regional partners to market the Airport and make it more accessible to residents and businesses. A marketing plan will need to be developed for the Airport.

Airport needs are identified in the Airport Master Plan and reiterated in the Community Facilities and Priority Investment Elements.

Transportation Funding & Implementation

Identifying funding and implementation strategies for transportation initiatives will be essential to meeting current and future transportation needs. Due to the regional nature of transportation systems and transportation planning, Rock Hill currently partners with several local and regional agencies and is a member of the Rock Hill Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS). Many City transportation facilities fall under the purview of the RFATS Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The City needs to ensure that projects are implemented and funded as identified in the LRTP.

The City must also work to ensure that projects identified through York County's One-Cent Sales Tax Program, entitled "Pennies for Progress", are implemented as planned. Currently, several projects identified in the original 1997 round of funding have yet to be completed. Implementing the remainder of the 1997 projects and projects identified in the 2003 round will be essential. As these projects have proven to be critical to the local transportation system, the City must also continue to promote a 2011 round of Pennies for Progress funding. Another source of funding which the City and regional partners must plan for will come from the recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. \$20 million is expected to be available for regional transportation project which will affect Rock Hill's transportation system.

In addition to funding and implementing transportation projects, prioritizing these projects will be essential to meeting transportation needs as efficiently as possible. As previously mentioned, it will be important to identify and implement projects which make the most efficient use of available funding. It will also be essential to implement the recommendations of the Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan's Priority Investment Element, which will identify geographical locations of needed infrastructure.

By following the 2020 Priority Policy Directions identified in the Vision 2020 Plan Summary, Rock Hill can better address current and future transportation needs. These include:

- *Focus on Redevelopment and Infill*
- *Achieve Sustainability*
- *Plan for Dave Lyle Corridor East*
- *Enhance Mobility and Connectivity*
- *Promote Redevelopment and Infill Development Along Key Corridors*
- *Create Livable Places*

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