

# Limited English Proficiency Plan

## FIXED ROUTE SERVICE



## PARATRANSIT SERVICE



## FERRY SERVICE



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## I. Introduction

*Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency* was signed on August 11, 2000 to clarify Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It had, as its purpose, the goal to ensure accessibility to programs and services to otherwise eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language. This order affected not only Federal agencies, but also state and local agencies. Executive Order 13166 stated that individuals who do not speak English well and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English are entitled to language assistance under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter. These individuals are referred to as being limited in English proficiency, or "LEP."

*Each Federal agency shall prepare a plan to improve access to its federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons. Each plan shall be consistent with the standards set forth in the LEP Guidance, and shall include the steps the agency will take to ensure that eligible LEP persons can meaningfully access the agency's programs and activities. – Executive Order 13166.*

Not only do all federal agencies have to develop LEP Plans as a condition of receiving federal financial assistance, but recipients of federal funds, such as Chatham Area Transit Authority, must comply with Title VI and LEP guidelines of the federal agency from which funds are provided. Federal financial assistance including grants, training, use of equipment, donations of surplus property, and other forms of financial contributions from federal sources. Recipients of federal funds range from state and local agencies, to nonprofits, and other organizations.

Title VI covers a recipient's entire program or activity, which means all parts of a recipient's operations are covered. This is true even if only one part of the recipient receives the federal assistance. Simply put, any organization that receives federal financial assistance is required to follow Executive Order 13166. CAT must comply with these guidelines because it receives funding from the US Department of Transportation (US DOT) via the Federal Transit Administration. The US Department of Transportation published *Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient Persons* in the Federal Register dated December 14, 2005.<sup>3</sup> The US DOT policy recommendations explicitly identify transit operators as organizations required to follow the guidance.

The guidance applies to all DOT funding recipients, which includes state departments of transportation, state motor vehicle administrations, airport operators, metropolitan planning organizations, and regional, state, **and local transit operators**, among many others. Coverage extends to a recipient's entire program or activity, i.e., to all parts of a recipient's operations. This is true even if only one part of the recipient receives the Federal assistance. For example, if DOT provides assistance to a state department of transportation to rehabilitate a particular highway on the National Highway System, all of the operations of the entire state department of transportation—not just the particular highway program or project—are covered by the DOT guidance. – US DOT Policy

## Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient Persons.

To assist CAT in meeting Title VI and Limited English Proficiency requirements of both the Federal Transit Administration, CAT conducted a program evaluation to determine what activities would be most appropriate to ensure compliance with Limited English Proficiency requirements.

### **II. Elements of an Effective LEP Policy**

The US Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division has developed a set of planning elements that were incorporated into the design of this Limited English Proficiency Plan. These elements include:

1. Identifying LEP persons;
2. Identifying ways in which language assistance will be provided;
3. Training staff;
4. Providing notice to LEP persons;
5. Implementation of the Four-Factor analysis as identified by the US DOT.

### **III. Methodology for Assessing Needs and Reasonable Steps for an Effective LEP Policy**

#### **A. The Four-Factor Analysis**

The DOT guidance outlines **Four Factors** that recipients should apply to the various kinds of contact they have with the public in order to assess language needs and decide what reasonable steps they should take to ensure meaningful access for LEP persons. These factors are:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by a program, activity, or service of the recipient or grantee.
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program.
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to the LEP Community.
4. The resources available to CAT and overall cost.

The greater the number or proportion of eligible LEP persons; the greater the frequency with which they have contact with a program, activity, or service; and the greater the importance of that program, activity, or service, the more likely enhanced language services will be needed. The intent of US DOT guidance is to suggest a balance that ensures meaningful access by LEP persons to critical services while not imposing undue burdens on small organizations and local governments.

Smaller recipients with limited budgets are typically not expected to provide the same level of language service as larger recipients with larger budgets; this is the case for CAT which operates on a relatively small and constrained budget.

The DOT guidance is modeled after the Department of Justice’s guidance recommendations and requires recipients and sub recipients to take steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities to LEP persons. More information for recipients and sub recipients can be found at <http://www.lep.gov>. This plan uses the recommended four-factor analysis to form an individualized assessment of the CAT LEP plan considering the factors outlined above.5 Each of the following factors is examined to determine the level and extent of language assistance measures required to sufficiently ensure meaningful access to public transit services within Chatham County. Recommendations are then based on the results of the analysis.

**Factor 1: The Proportion, Numbers and Distribution of LEP Persons**

The Census Bureau has a range of five classifications of how well people speak English. The classifications are “Language other than English: Speak English less than “very well”; Spanish: Speak English less than “very well”; Other Indo-European languages: Speak English less than “very well”; Asian and Pacific Islander languages: Speak English less than “very well”; and, Other languages: Speak English less than “very well.” For planning purposes, this plan considers people that speak English less than “very well” as Limited English Proficient persons.

<b>Selected Social Characteristics in the United States</b>	<b><u>Estimate</u></b>	<b><u>Margin of Error</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>	<b><u>Margin of Error</u></b>
<b>LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME</b>				
<b>Population 5 years and over</b>	<b>228,927</b>	<b>+/-20</b>	<b>228,927</b>	<b>(X)</b>
English only	214,606	+/-1,105	93.7%	+/-0.5
Language other than English	14,321	+/-1,108	6.3%	+/-0.5
Speak English less than "very well"	5,623	+/-628	2.5%	+/-0.3
Spanish	6,504	+/-663	2.8%	+/-0.3
Speak English less than "very well"	3,026	+/-471	1.3%	+/-0.2
Other Indo-European languages	3,721	+/-824	1.6%	+/-0.4
Speak English less than "very well"	843	+/-326	0.4%	+/-0.1
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	3,683	+/-580	1.6%	+/-0.3
Speak English less than "very well"	1,534	+/-318	0.7%	+/-0.1
Other languages	413	+/-232	0.2%	+/-0.1
Speak English less than "very well"	220	+/-163	0.1%	+/-0.1

**Factor 2: Frequency of Contact with LEP Individuals**

**2008/2009 Chatham Area Transit (CAT) LEP Survey**

Ridership statistics across all Chatham Area Transit services from July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009 indicated a weekly average ridership of 46,546, Saturday average of 7,100 and Sunday average of 2,882. During that same period, the most utilized route was ‘14 Abercorn’ with an average of 1830 riders per day while the least utilized route was the afternoon ‘20 Montgomery Tripper’ with an average of 14 riders per day.

### **June 2010 LEP Survey**

The June 2010 LEP survey included 66 CAT employees who interacted with consumers on a regular basis. The results of the survey indicate a growing number of LEP riders who utilize CAT services. The results of the June 2010 survey are summarized below. The responses and response rates may be viewed, in full, in the attached Exhibit A.

- On average, contact with LEP persons utilizing CAT is significant. In June 2010 approximately 60% of the surveyed employees reported contact with LEP persons.
- More than half (60.6%) of those surveyed reported at least one LEP person using CAT to commute daily.
- On an average day, CAT employees encounter approximately 258 LEP persons utilizing CAT services. This accounts for approximately 2% of the total ridership on a daily basis based on 10,979 passengers per day.
- Spanish is the dominate LEP language group, representing 71% of the LEP persons encountered.
- Twenty of the sixty-six surveyed employees reported a request for translation assistance.

### **Factor 3: The Nature and Importance of the Program, Activity, or Service to LEP Community**

As an agency providing public transportation for Savannah and Chatham County, GA, CAT participates heavily in public community outreach. CAT strives to meet the needs of its client base to make sure that all segments of the population, including LEP persons, have the opportunity to be provided public transit.

CAT has an organized advisory council that offers suggestions and/or observations about transit service. It is comprised of a former member of the CAT board, two frequent users of public transportation, a member of Living Independence for Everyone, LIFE, (representing the disabled community, and a representative of the Latin American Services Organization, LASO (representing the Latino community).

- Transit-related information is available in Spanish and posted on all buses. This information includes fares, half-fare policies and where to apply for a CAT half-fare identification card, and courtesy rules for riding the bus.
- CAT has published advertisements promoting transit in the leading Spanish-speaking newspaper, La Voz. Spanish-speaking customers can call CAT's phone number to get transit information in Spanish.
- CAT has a recording in Spanish available 24 hours each day that gives basic information on the transit system. Callers are prompted in Spanish to access this translated information.

- Two transit agents responsible for providing schedule and route information received training in Business Spanish to assist in responding to customer queries in Spanish.

Denial or delay of access to services or information provided by CAT would not have life-threatening implications for a LEP individual. It is also believed that denial or delay of access to services or information provided by CAT would not have serious implications on an LEP individual, in comparison to services such as health, emergency transportation, water, sewer, fire protection, police protection and other emergency services provided by other local governments or organizations.

#### **Factor 4: The Resources Available to CAT and Overall Cost**

U.S. Department of Transportation Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons published in the Federal Register: December 14, 2005 (Volume 70, Number 239) states:

*Certain DOT recipients, such as those serving very few LEP persons or those with very limited resources may choose not to develop a written LEP plan.*

While CAT does serve few LEP persons and has very limited resources, the decision has been made to develop a written Limited English Proficiency Plan because demographic trends indicate the number of LEP persons may increase within the area.

Funds available for LEP services at the present time are derived entirely from existing operating funds, and compete with other operational requirements of CAT.

#### **B. Stakeholder Interviews**

Extensive "one-on-one" interviews (in some cases with a consulting team met with multiple individuals) were conducted with various community leaders, elected officials, policy makers, and individuals or groups with a vested interest in transportation in the Chatham County region. All of these stakeholders share a concern for the future of the region as well as the mobility of its residents. (See Exhibit B)

Typically meetings lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, during which the open discussion focused on such topics as the quality of service provided by CAT, the transportation needs of the community and/or the clientele or residents represented by the individual(s) being interviewed, the perceived future transportation needs of the community and the region, and what changes have occurred in the past five years that have impacted transportation and travel in the region.

All of the interviews were conducted with the understanding that the comments made by individuals would be used to create a summary of findings based on input from all participants. This protocol encouraged greater candor during the interview process and ultimately allows for more valuable, productive input from the stakeholders.

### **Summary of Comments Received**

Typically, a set of key themes emerges from the numerous public comments. Customer feedback often relates directly to the rider's usual route, or the trip most recently taken, however many customers also provide general feedback applicable throughout the system. The most relevant and common themes collected during this effort are summarized below.

#### General comments:

- Some of CAT's operators are rude operators (particularly younger ones)
- Departure coordination between buses at transfer points is poor
- Passes should be sold in more places
- Many customers don't know where to buy passes or find schedule materials
- Buses sometimes don't even stop when customer is at bus stop
- Buses sometimes leave stops early
- Customers want a special transfer fare
- Drivers take long breaks mid-route [note: this may refer to operator road reliefs, but nonetheless indicates a potential scheduling problem ]
- Drivers don't help customers with information on routes other than their own
- Monthly passes should be good for 30 days from first use rather than for calendar month

#### Service comments:

- Need longer service span on Sundays (earlier and later hours)
- Need more weekend service on 3A Augusta
- Service to Tybee Island is desirable
- Service to Port Wentworth is desirable
- 13 Coffee Bluff should just serve Coffee Bluff; route is too long, infrequent
- Interest in an express bus from Oglethorpe Mall to downtown Savannah
- 17 Silk Hope needs more frequent service on Saturdays and Sundays
- 6 Crosstown needs more frequent service
- 14 Abercorn on-time performance is poor, particularly in afternoons
- Need a bench/shelter at 33rd & Waters, 69th & Paulsen
- 31 Skidaway needs more frequent Sunday service
- Wilmington Island needs a later evening trip (~9:40pm)

The comments received reflect both specific responses to ideas put forth regarding potential service changes, as well as concerns offered by CAT customers. Feedback gleaned during these sessions allowed CAT to test the viability of specific service changes as well as consider any alternatives that may not have been discussed.

#### **IV. Safe Harbor Stipulation**

Federal law provides a "Safe Harbor" stipulation so that recipients can ensure with greater certainty that they comply with their obligations to provide written translations in languages other than English. A "Safe Harbor" means that if a recipient provides written translations (as under circumstances outlined in paragraphs A and B of the publication *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons*<sup>8</sup>) such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written-translation obligations under Title VI.

Strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written-translation obligations under 'Safe Harbor' includes providing written translations of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered. Translation of other documents, if needed, can be provided orally. The failure to provide written translations under the circumstances does not mean there is noncompliance, but rather provides a guide for recipients that would like greater certainty of compliance than can be provided by a fact-intensive, four-factor analysis. For example, even if a Safe Harbor is not used, if written translation of a certain document(s) would be so burdensome as to defeat the legitimate objectives of its program, it is not necessary. Other ways of providing meaningful access, such as effective oral interpretation of certain vital documents, might be acceptable under such circumstances.

This Safe Harbor provision applies to the translation of written documents only. It does not affect the requirement to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals through competent oral interpreters where oral language services are needed and are reasonable. No LEP language groups in Chatham County constitutes the population threshold (5% or 1,000 persons) for which written translations of vital documents are required, and given the small number of LEP language group members, the CAT budget and the number of staff, it is deemed that written translations of all but a few core documents would be so burdensome as to defeat the legitimate objectives of our programs.

#### **V. Providing Notice to LEP Persons/Current and Proposed Actions**

USDOT LEP guidance provides that once an agency has decided, based on the four factors, that it will provide language services, it is important that the agency notify LEP persons of the services available free of charge, and in the language(s) LEP persons would understand. To this end, CAT will provide statements in public information and public notices language assistance or special accommodations will be provided to persons, with reasonable advance notice to CAT. CAT will provide to undertake the following actions:

- With advance notice of seven (7) calendar days, provide interpreter services at Focus Group and other public meetings. Interpreter services offered include foreign language and hearing impaired.

- Include in outreach documents, including notices, a statement that interpreter services are available at meetings, with seven days advance notice.
- Utilize a database of interpreters, primarily, but not exclusively, based on the Missouri Office of Administration cooperative purchasing agreement for translation services and verbal interpretation.
- Publish CAT and federal complaint forms on the website, make them available at public meetings, and reference the availability of these forms and where to get them, in the LEP Plans.
- Train CAT staff on the requirements for providing meaningful access to services for LEP persons.
- Request support from the Information Systems Department to include a Google Translation Gadget on CAT's webpage that will convert the page to any language available in the Google Translator, including Spanish.
- Publication of the text portion of Route & Schedule Guides in English and Spanish, on the CAT website.
- Publication of notices of bus route changes in English and Spanish on the CAT website and provide such notices on buses, in shelters and at the CAT office.
- Inform community-based organization and stakeholders of CAT services, including the availability of language assistance services, with notice.

## **VI. LEP Plan Access**

Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) is responsible for ensuring that all persons, including LEP persons are provided equal access to its available services and information. CAT is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and services are accessible to its LEP customers in compliance with Title VI. This includes, but is not limited to, providing resources, including bilingual staff, interpreters, and translated materials to ensure that information and services will be made available in the languages readily understood by all CAT customers.

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## Exhibit A – 2010 Chatham Area Transit LEP Survey

1. On average, how often do you assist customers with Limited English Proficiency?  
 \_\_\_ times per:     Day             Week             Month             Year

Response	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
None or N/A	23	29.5%
At least 1 per day	6	7.7%
2 per day	8	10.3%
4 per day	17	21.8%
10 per day	2	2.6%
1 per week	3	3.8%
2 per week	0	0%
3 per week	3	3.8%
10 per week	3	3.8%
1 or 2 per month	12	15.4%

2. On average, how many Limited English Proficient customers use Chatham Area Transit to commute daily?

One     Two     Three     Four     Five     6 – 10

Response	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
None or N/A	10	12.8%
1	8	10.3%
2	12	15.4%
3	7	9.0%
4 – 5	7	9.0%
6 – 10	31	39.7%

3. Which language groups do you encounter most frequently when working?

Check all that apply:

Spanish     German     Russian     Asian     Unknown     Other

Response	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
None or N/A	0	0%
Spanish	63	80.8%
Asian	5	6.4%
Indian	2	2.6%
Russian	3	3.8%
Unknown	15	19.2%

4. Have you ever requested translation or interpretation assistance?

- Yes  No

If YES, please check any that apply.

- In-person  Co-worker  Quick Guide  
 Telephone  Dispatcher  Other

Response	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
Yes	20	25.6%
No	58	74.4%

5. Have you ever received comments or feedback concerning the need to translate route schedules?

- Yes  No

Response	Number of Responses	Response Percentage
Yes	16	20.5%
No	62	79.5%

In the past, Chatham Area Transit has translated two heavily traveled route schedules, the 10 East Savannah and 14 Abercorn into Spanish. It is CAT's intent to translate all nineteen routes and service information into Spanish.

## **Exhibit B – Focus Group Sessions**

### **City of Savannah Resident Focus Group**

A focus group convening residents representing different neighborhood associations in Savannah was held at the City of Savannah's Community Services Department on Abercorn Street. Nine residents attended the meeting, representing the following neighborhood groups: Beach Institute, Cuyler-Brownville, Feiler Park, Benjamin Van Clark, Carver Heights, and Ogeecheeton.

The discussion portion of the session was guided by several questions:

#### ***Q: How many of you use public transit to get to work or to other destinations in the Savannah area? How often?***

Some residents reported that they had used public transit in the past, and three stated that they use it only occasionally and indicated that it was currently not used as their primary means of transportation. One resident used CAT more than other participants as his primary means of transportation to get to work and to run errands on occasion (from the workplace) and found it adequate.

Most participants recognized the value of public transportation as a means of mobility for members of the community who do not own a car, have a physical or mental handicap, or may be elderly and less inclined or able to drive themselves to appointments, shopping, work, etc.

#### ***Q: How many of you have used public transit in other cities/communities?***

There were few participants that had extensive experience using public transit in other communities. One participant had used public transit in New York and in other cities.

#### ***Q: What discourages you from using public transit in Savannah?***

Participants listed the following reasons:

- Crime – participants had heard of incidents that occurred at bus stops and spoke specifically of youth using the bus stops as gathering places and intimidating riders. (Crime on buses was not considered a problem.)
- Timeliness – the buses do not always connect in a timely manner to transfer to another bus and allow passengers to reach their destination on time.
- Transfers – the cost of transfers used to be “cheap” but now it is too expensive.
- Convenience – the walk to the nearest bus stop is too far. One resident stated that she likes that the bus goes directly to the hospitals, but the distance from her house to the bus stop is too far.
- Inefficient routes – buses take routes that delay getting to the destination. For example, the CAT Shuttle runs in one direction and you would have to make the entire circuit to get to a destination that might only be one or two stops away in the opposite direction.
- One resident stated that her mother complained about noisy buses that rattle.
- Image – all residents stated that the advertising, particularly the ads related to firearm prosecution, is unattractive.

#### ***Q: What changes in local transit services would encourage you to use CAT?***

For the participants in the focus group, the primary improvements to CAT's service that might entice new or more frequent riders revolve around amenities and the convenience of bus service. More frequent weekend service was noted, along with a common concern about transfers and the lack of a specific transfer fare. Participants also suggested more bus shelters and benches or seating for passengers waiting for buses.

#### ***Q: Do you anticipate having to rely on public transportation in the next five years?***

A couple of respondents stated they anticipated having to use CAT in the future due to gas prices and a dislike for using their cars. One person stated that he anticipated using CAT in the very near future. One resident stated that she will continue occasional use with her grandchildren.

## **Teleride (Paratransit) Focus Group**

This focus group was held at the Georgia Infirmary/Adult Day Health Center. Participants included representatives of agencies serving Teleride clients as well as Teleride users. In the course of planning the focus group, agency representatives were asked to invite two or three Teleride or potential Teleride customers, however, only one agency was able to bring along a user. As a result, the group was smaller than expected.

At the outset of the meeting, participants were informed that although some of them might have provided input to CAT in the past, the focus of this session was to obtain input on how CAT can strengthen Teleride and improve the fixed route buses to make them more user-friendly for Teleride users.

The following questions were used as a discussion guide:

1. How many of you use or have used Teleride? Frequency? Circumstances (work, medical appointments, shopping).
2. What discourages you from using Teleride?
3. What are the aspects of Teleride that function particularly well?
4. Are there any additional aspects of Teleride that should be changed or strengthened?
5. How many of you use, or have used, the CAT fixed route buses? Please share your experiences with those buses, operators, routes, etc.?
6. What aspects of the fixed route buses and related services work effectively for paratransit riders?
7. Are there any aspects of the fixed route buses and related services that need to be altered?
8. Please share with us what it would take for you to begin using, or increase your usage of fixed route buses.
9. Do you have any additional recommendations for CAT?

Five of the participants had used CAT's fixed route buses and Teleride in the past, but only one used the fixed route buses regularly. None of the participants was a daily Teleride user; the most frequent use had been once or twice a week. However, agency representatives reported that their clients used Teleride regularly. When asked about their experiences, with Teleride participants reported the following:

- Drivers talk on their cell phones while driving
- Drivers do not have name tags so it is difficult making complaints against rude drivers
- Drivers are usually 45 minutes behind schedule
- Many drivers are rude, but there are some that courteous
- Drivers arrive early and leave when passengers are not ready
- The three-day advance notice for service is restrictive and does not encourage use
- Website for complaints does not work
- When participants were asked about their experiences with the fixed route buses, and how CAT could make the buses more accessible, they reported the following:
  - One participant stated that like Teleride, there are both rude and courteous drivers, but she prefers using the fixed route buses
  - Many drivers still do not announce stops or routes, and riders have to inquire about the vehicle's destination
  - The lack of appropriate sidewalks and curb cuts in Savannah prohibits use of the buses
  - Some drivers lack the experience of the Teleride drivers with regard to restraining wheelchair passengers
  - One participant stated that if the #14 was more timely he would use it
  - Transfers would make the buses more appealing
  - On one occasion, the driver did not offer assistance when the participant fell
  - Aspects of Teleride and fixed route service that work well:
    - Lifts in the new buses are extremely beneficial.

## **Recommendations for CAT**

Some of the recommendations were repetitious, but participants provided the following input:

- CAT should train both Teleride and fixed route drivers on how to properly restrain wheelchair passengers and to make announcements (fixed routes) to orient passengers on stops and destinations
- CAT should implement a confirmation number and track patron complaints
- CAT should address the entire transit system to fully address Teleride
- Express buses should vary, for example some should have a couple of stops rather than just one destination to encourage ridership
- CAT should consider traveling off the main route (making a loop through specific areas) as some riders live too far off the main routes
- The participants seemed to share similar experiences with both Teleride and the fixed route buses. Generally, there seemed to be some frustration that CAT received similar input in the past and little has changed. One participant felt that CAT's fixed route buses work better for her than Teleride and stated that she would continue to use the regular buses.
- Agency representatives who participated seemed to be dissatisfied primarily with reliability and flexibility (e.g., drivers arriving early and leaving when the passengers were not ready).
- Three of the participants were both agency representatives and disabled.

## **Employer Focus Group**

Generally speaking, the employers at the focus groups felt that few of their employees use the bus, even though most were served by a route. Discouraging factors, discussed previously, include bus schedules not in sync with schedules for shift work, perceptions that riding the bus may not be safe, and inconvenience for customers who must transfer one or more times each trip to reach their destination. Several employers did express interest in transit as a potential tool to help their employees reach job sites, to expand their employment markets, and to manage growing parking demand at facilities.

At the end of the focus group session, CAT's attending representative provided information on the Transit District which included an overview of how the district was created, funding, and the participating municipalities. Focus group attendees were informed that if CAT does not currently serve sites where some of their company activities occur, then they should advocate for such services through their local elected officials.

Employers are encouraged to think about options beyond the traditional fixed route bus service when considering the mobility of their workers and customers. Van and car pools are two common approaches to employee transportation; however other alternatives exist, including offering incentives to use transit in lieu of free parking, flex hours and telecommuting.

## **Tybee Island Resident Focus Group**

This focus group was held at the Tybee Neighbors Association's regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The participants were separated into two focus groups and met in different rooms.

Twelve residents agreed to participate in the CAT focus group with two Tybee Council members present. The Council representatives stated that they wished to sit in and listen, but were active contributors to the discussion.

Residents consisted of a combination of retirees and those still in the workforce. One stated that she commuted daily into Savannah for work using a private vehicle. While several had used public transportation in the past in other communities, none, with the exception of a disabled participant, used CAT. One participant had worked for transit authorities in other cities and another had been a planner/architect in Savannah.

The following is a summary of the questions and responses that framed the discussion:

**Q: Are you aware of any efforts to include Tybee Island in CAT's Transit District?**

Most of the residents were familiar with past requests from Tybee Island businesses to CAT to serve the community. One resident felt that since the issue had been "voted down," there was no need to discuss the matter further. One participant countered that it had been a couple of years since that decision.

**Q: Are there trends in residential and commercial development that might impact the need for public transportation on the island in the next five years?**

The consensus was that there was an increase in residential units over the past few years, primarily condos and single family units. However, commercial activity had remained relatively stable. Many of the residents felt that because most of the current are, and future residents will be, high income earners, they would always have access to private transportation. One resident felt strongly that the demographics are changing and as the population ages, the need for public transportation would increase. That resident's view was countered by another resident who felt that older people would not take a bus into Savannah as the city frightens them.

**Q: Do you want public transportation on Tybee Island? Why? Why Not?**

(The following responses were provided after it was explained that residents might have an option for CAT services on a "pilot" basis and that there are options to the regular full-size buses. Once this was done, more participants appeared interested in exploring services to the area.) Five of the fourteen (14) participants felt that they would support CAT on the island, for the following reasons:

- Low income workers employed at the nursing home and hotels need public transportation as they are currently dependent on ride-sharing, which is sometimes unreliable.
- The current population will age and/ or may develop disabilities that would make them dependent on public transportation.
- Tourists without cars have to rely on taxis to get to Tybee which is expensive. Public transportation would allow for greater accessibility to beaches.
- The rising cost of gas would encourage use of public transit in the future.
- The remaining participants objected to CAT serving Tybee Island, offering the following comments:
  - Inclusion in the Transit District would increase taxes. One resident stated that it would be \$16 a year; another stated that it would be as high as \$50 based on what he understood was the millage rate.
  - The demographics on the island do not support public transportation.
  - Bus service would bring "riff-raff" who would break into homes.
  - Residents would be paying taxes to subsidize an authority that needs increased revenues to support CAT's services in other districts.
  - The primary focus should be Tybee Island residents, not businesses. CAT would only serve a small group of people employed in businesses.
  - Buses cause pollution.

**Q: If you do want public transportation, who would be the primary users?**

Participants felt that service workers – hotels, nursing homes, some elderly and the disabled would represent the primary demand for new bus service.

**Q: What areas would you like served?**

Around the island and to areas that are isolated, e.g., Spanish Hammock

**Q: Would you want the service to come into downtown Savannah? Other areas?**

Service to downtown Savannah and to Wilmington Island would be desirable.

**Q: What is your perception of CAT in general?**

One resident stated that she uses CAT regularly and has found the agency sensitive to the disabled and the staff polite and helpful. The remaining comments were as follows:

- “CAT is poorly managed, politically motivated as demonstrated by the controversy over the transfer station, which needs to be placed in the old Sears building.”
- “Who are they trying to protect with the dark windows, those riding the buses or are they trying to hide the fact that there are so few riders?”
- “It will be of little use to the people on Tybee.”

**Q: Do you have any general comments or suggestions regarding CAT’s services or the Transit Development Plan?**

One resident simply stated “Stay off Tybee.” Another said that although she found CAT a good service, she did not like having to call for TeleRide services four days in advance. Those in favor of CAT services on the island stated that they would like to form a task force to explore the cost to residents, and to gather more information about services, types of buses/vans available, and interest. They were also open to a pilot/trial run to determine the feasibility of permanent transit service.

The primary issues discussed in the session and presented them to the entire group of members at the end of the meeting. Cat’s Executive Director, Mr. Carl Palmer, then spoke to the residents about CAT’s mission and approach to coming into new neighborhoods. He stated that CAT is dedicated to serving the public and its services are need driven, i.e., a response to requests for transportation, rather than for the sole purpose of increasing ridership. He stressed that CAT does not go where it is not wanted.

**Public “Drop-In” Sessions**

During the development and refinement of service and route recommendations, five public “drop-in” sessions were conducted by the study team to solicit feedback from CAT customers. These informal public interview sessions were held at three major activity locations in the CAT system: the Downtown Loop (Broughton and Montgomery Streets in Savannah), the Oglethorpe Mall, and the WalMart on Montgomery Cross Road. Study team members were able to speak with over 200 CAT customers over the course of the five sessions, discussing general issues and feedback as well as specific route recommendations as they related to individual customers.

- 12pm – 3pm Oglethorpe Mall
- 4pm – 7pm Downtown Loop (Broughton & Montgomery Streets)
- 7am – 10am Downtown Loop
- 11am – 2pm WalMart (Montgomery Cross Road)
- 3pm – 5pm Downtown Loop