

Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization

Long Range Transportation Needs

November 25, 2008

Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission

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Commission**

Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to summarize the long range transportation needs of the region represented by the Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization. The Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization covers Barbour County, Coffee County, Covington County, and portions of Dale, Geneva, Henry, and Houston counties in southeastern Alabama.

In January and February 2003, the regulations that govern how States conduct transportation planning activities were revised to include the development and use of a consultation process with local officials in non-metropolitan jurisdictions. The revision affected the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 23, Part 450, Sections 450.104, 450.206, 450.212, 450.214, 450.216, and 450.224. In addition to developing a consultation process, States are required to provide for participation of these local officials in the statewide transportation planning process and in the development of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

In 2004, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) agreed to fund a two-year pilot project to determine the effectiveness of a non-metropolitan consultation process setup similarly to a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). MPOs conduct transportation planning processes in metropolitan areas with 50,000 or more people. The pilot project was the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization which was directed toward rural west Alabama including the six counties of Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, and Pickens.

With the success of the two-year pilot project, ALDOT agreed to take the consultation process statewide in 2006. Among the organizations participating with ALDOT in this process is the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, which coordinates the activities of the Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO).

This study is part of the formal consultation process. The RPO holds committee meetings to facilitate consultation between local officials and ALDOT. The committee meetings are the consultation tool of the RPO. Initially the committees consisted of a Policy Committee, a Technical Advisory Committee and seven county-level Citizens Advisory committees (CAC). However, in 2008 the RPO amended its by-laws as well as its public involvement plan to conduct public meetings rather than holding CAC Meetings since it was very difficult to get citizens to attend these meetings. The meetings and the work of the committees are documented as part of the planning process. The work of the committees includes developing several reports including this study. This study serves as a record of the consultation process between the local officials and the ALDOT as related to long range transportation needs.

The purpose of this study is to document the long range transportation needs of Southeast Alabama as identified by the elected and appointed officials in the area. The study should help ALDOT develop the Statewide Transportation Plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and schedule the construction of transportation projects based on their budget. However, it should be understood that this study is strictly advisory and no funds have been set aside to undertake any of the projects included in this study.

Methodology

The RPO followed a three task process to identify the long range transportation needs. These tasks were accomplished during FY 2008 and are represented by this report. It is the intent of the RPO to supplement and continue this effort into FY 2009 in order to develop a Regional Transportation Plan for the non-metropolitan area of Southeast Alabama. The potential tasks are summarized as follows.

For FY 2008

1. Identification of general problems and needs;
2. Adoption of the Long Range Transportation Needs document.

For FY 2009

3. Preparation of a regional socioeconomic summary
4. Development of a regional vision along with supporting goals and objectives
5. Identification of strategies and projects to achieve regional goals
6. Prioritization of strategies and projects,
7. Review and Approval of the draft Regional Transportation Plan,
8. Public review of the draft plan, and
9. Adoption of the final Regional Transportation Plan.

The RPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Policy Committee were involved in each task listed for FY 2008 and will be involved in the potential tasks listed for FY 2009. The committees had an opportunity to review the recommendations that were received. Since all of the RPO committee meetings are open to public and news releases are distributed prior to the meetings, the general public also have an opportunity to review these recommendations.

1. Identification of General Problems and Needs

In the spring of 2008, the first round of RPO meetings of the committees was held to address the long-term transportation needs within Southeast Alabama. The RPO staff sent out letters to members of the committees, and other interested persons for the purpose of gathering information regarding transportation problems and needs within the area. During the summer of 2008, the RPO staff summarized the identified problems and needs in this report.

2. Adoption of the Long Range Transportation Needs document

The RPO committees performed final review of this Long Range Transportation Needs document in August 2008. This document will be submitted to ALDOT with copies provided to the county and municipal governments within the region.

3. Preparation of a Regional Socioeconomic Summary

At the beginning of FY 2009, the RPO staff will begin the preparation of a regional socioeconomic summary that contains elements specific to transportation planning. This

socioeconomic summary is intended to provide a foundation for further transportation planning and attempt to establish and explain the relationship between economic and transportation planning.

4. Development of a Regional Vision along with Supporting Goals and Objectives

A vision is a broad view of what a group wants their community to be like in the future. The RPO committees will begin this step at late 2008 meetings. Goals are more specific statements that help define the vision. If the goals are met the vision statement will be realized. The RPO committees will begin developing their goals in their winter 2009 meetings.

5. Identification of Strategies and Projects to Achieve Regional Goals

Strategies and projects are specific tasks that can be categorized under an identified objective. In the case of the RPO, it is expected that the specific projects will be road, bridge, and transit-related since the plan is an advisory document to the ALDOT. The RPO staff will utilize ALDOT's project management system in addition to strategies and projects generated by the RPO consultation process.

6. Prioritization of Strategies and Projects

The RPO will identify the needed projects within its region in order to facilitate the implementation of the Plan. The list will allow the ALDOT to focus on the projects which have been identified by the local governments within its region. It will simultaneously allow the local governments to focus on their transportation development efforts. Each project will have a regional and a county priority. The regional priority is how a project is ranked against every project in the Plan.

7. Review and Approval of the Draft Regional Transportation Plan

The RPO will assemble the draft Plan during the spring of 2009. The draft Plan will be reviewed by the RPO committees through the spring and summer in anticipation of final adoption in late 2009.

8. Public Review of Draft Plan

The RPO staff, with the assistance of the RPO committees, will hold public meetings and have the plan available on its RPO website to provide the general public an opportunity to participate in the plan development process. In addition public notices will be provided.

9. Adoption of the Final Regional Transportation Plan

The RPO committees will perform final review of the Plan during late 2009 with final adoption by the Policy Committee meeting. The final Plan will be submitted to ALDOT with copies provided to the county and municipal governments in the region.

Area Profile

The study area of the Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization consists of seven counties. These are Barbour County, Coffee County, Covington County and portions of Dale, Geneva, Henry, and Houston counties. In the table below are a few quick facts about these seven counties. The information in the table includes the entire area of the seven counties. Following the table is more detailed information regarding each of the seven counties.

Quick facts about the Seven Counties

Total land area in square miles	4,878.8
Total population in 2000	290,274
Estimated population for 2006	298,058
Interstate highway miles	-0-
State highway miles	1,300
County highway miles	5,892
Airports	12

Barbour County

Location and Area

Barbour County is located in southeast corner of the State of Alabama bordered by the State of Georgia. Barbour County was established on December 18, 1832 from former Creek Indian Territory and a portion of Pike County. Major highways within Barbour County are U.S. 82 and U.S. 431. Major state routes are State Route 10, State Route 30, and State Route 51. It is bordered in a clockwise direction by Quitman and Stewart counties, Georgia in the east, and by Henry, Dale, Pike, Bullock, and Russell counties in Alabama. Barbour County has a total area of 905 square miles, consisting of 885 square miles of land area and 20 square miles of water.

Physical Features

Land. The land in Barbour County is characterized as mostly agricultural and forest land. Barbour County lies in the Coastal Plain physiographic province. This area of the coastal plain is characterized by strongly dissected, nearly level and gently sloping to steep, upland topography. The soils formed during the Late Cretaceous to Recent ages. They are of sedimentary origin and consist chiefly of sand, gravel, silt, sandstone, and limestone.

Rivers. Barbour County contains the Chattahoochee, Pea, West Fork Choctawhatchee, East Fork Choctawhatchee Rivers, and their tributaries. The Chattahoochee River is the only navigable waterway in the district. It has two inland docks, one in Eufaula and another in Columbia, which is located within Houston County.

Highways. The federal highways in Barbour County are U.S. Highway 82 and U.S. Highway 431. U.S. 82 is a northwest-southeast route that enters Barbour County from Bullock County. It then travels through unincorporated areas of the County before entering Eufaula. From Eufaula,

U.S. 82 travels into the State of Georgia. U.S. 431 is a predominately north-south route that enters Barbour County from Russell County to the north, then travels through unincorporated areas of the County and Eufaula before passing into Henry County to the south. U.S. 431 is designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route as it carries traffic north towards interstate highway access in the Columbus, Georgia area.

Barbour County also has ten designated state highways which have been listed below: Alabama Highway 10 is a west-east route that enters Barbour County from Pike County, passes through Clio and Blue Springs, and continues in a southeast direction into Henry County. Alabama Highway 30 is a west-east route that travels from Clayton to Eufaula. Alabama Highway 51 is a north-south route that travels from Bullock County through Clayton, Louisville, and Clio, before entering Dale County to the south. Alabama Highway 95 is a north-south route that splits off U.S. 431 south of Eufaula and continues south into Henry County. Alabama Highway 105 is a north-south route that begins from Highway 10 and runs south into Dale County. Alabama Highway 130 is a west-east route that enters Barbour County from Pike County and ends in Louisville. Alabama Highway 131 is a west-east connector that branches off Highway 10 between Clio and Blue Springs and passes through Baker Hill before intersecting U.S. 431 south of Eufaula. Alabama Highway 165 is a north-south route that enters from Russell County and ends at U.S. 431 just north of Lakepoint Resort State Park. Alabama Highway 198 is a very short route that splits off Highway 30 just outside of Clayton and ends in the town center. Alabama Highway 239 is a northwest-southeast route that enters Barbour County from Bullock County, travels across unincorporated areas before terminating in Clayton. Alabama Highway 285 is a very short north-south route that runs from State Highway 165 through the Lakepoint Resort State Park.

Barbour County also has an extensive county road system. Many of these routes, especially U.S. 431, are heavily traveled, since Barbour County is a main route of travel for vacationers driving into the Florida Panhandle beaches from areas farther north.

Railroads. Barbour County has one Class III (short line) railroad within its jurisdiction, Georgia Southwestern Railroad, Inc. (GSWR). The Georgia Southwestern line runs east-west from White Oak to Eufaula and into the State of Georgia. Major commodities shipped are ceramic pellets and fertilizer.

Airports. Barbour County has two airports that serve municipal purposes: Clayton Municipal Airport and Weedon Field Airport, located in Eufaula.

Municipalities

There are six municipalities within Barbour County, which are briefly described within the following table. All but two have less than 2,000 in population.

Population of places in Barbour County in 2000

Place	Population
Baker Hill	329
Blue Springs	121
Clayton	1,475
Clio	2,206
Eufaula	13,908
Louisville	612

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population and Population Growth

Population growth. The population of Barbour County was reported by the Census to be 29,038 in the year 2000. This is an increase of 3,621 or 14.25 % people since 1990 when the population was 25,417.

Historical and projected population of Barbour County

Year	Population	Percent Change
1970	22,543	---
1980	24,756	9.8%
1990	25,417	2.7%
2000	29,038	14.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Coffee County

Location and Area

Coffee County is located in the southeast part of the State of Alabama bordered by the counties of Pike County to the north, Dale County to the east, Geneva County to the south, Covington County to the west and Crenshaw County to the northwest. Coffee County is part of the Enterprise-Ozark Micropolitan Statistical Area and was named in honor of General John Coffee. The Coffee County area was originally part of Dale County. Coffee County was formed from the western part of Dale County in 1841. According to the Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 680 square miles, of which 679 miles is land and one (1) square mile is water.

Physical Features

Land. The land in Coffee County consists predominately of agricultural and forest land. Of the total acreage 114,638 is dedicated for agricultural and 301,900 for forest land.

Rivers. Coffee County contains the Pea River and a number of tributaries.

Highways. The major highways in Coffee County are U.S. Highway 84 and Alabama Highway 167. U.S. Highway 84 is predominately an east-west route that enters Coffee County from Dale County to the east, then travels through Enterprise, New Brockton, Elba and unincorporated areas within the County before passing into Covington County to the west. Alabama Highway

167 is a route that enters Coffee from Dale County in the southeast then passes through Enterprise and proceeds in a northerly direction into Pike County. U.S. Highway 231 also travels through the extreme northeastern portion of Coffee County.

Coffee County also has 13 other designated state highways which include: Alabama Highway 27 which is a predominately a north-south route that enters Coffee County from Geneva County, and continues in a northeasterly direction through Enterprise into Dale County. Alabama Highway 51 is a north-south route that commences north of the City of Enterprise at U.S. Highway 84 and continues in a northeasterly direction until it enters Dale County. Alabama Highway 87 is a north-south route that enters Coffee County north of Samson (in Geneva County) and continues in a northerly direction through Elba and a number of unincorporated areas into Pike County. Alabama Highway 134 is an east-west route that enters Coffee County from Dale County to the east, then travels through Enterprise and several unincorporated areas of the County before passing into Covington County to the west. Alabama Highway 189 is predominately a north-south route that begins in Kinston, located in the southwest corner of Coffee County, and runs in a northerly direction within the western part of the county through Elba and several unincorporated areas before entering Crenshaw County toward Brantley in the northwest part of the county. Alabama Highway 125 begins in Elba and runs in a northeasterly direction through several unincorporated areas before entering Pike County toward Brundidge. Other state highways within Coffee County include Alabama Highways 52, 88, 92, 122, 141, 166, and 203.

Additionally, Coffee County has an extensive amount of county roads and thoroughfares.

Railroads. There are two active railroads within Coffee County. Wiregrass Central Railroad runs from Enterprise to Dothan and the Alabama & Florida Railroad runs from the City of Opp through Kinston to Samson, located within Geneva County.

Airports. Coffee County has two airports that serve municipal purposes: Enterprise Municipal Airport and Carl Folsom Airport, located in Elba.

Municipalities

There are four municipalities in Coffee County which are described in the following table.

Population of places in Coffee County in 2000

Place	Population
Elba	4,185
Enterprise	21,178
Kinston	602
New Brockton	1,250

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population and Population Growth

Population growth. The population of Coffee County was reported by the Census to be 46,793 in the year 2007. This is an increase of about 11,921 people since 1970 when the population was

34,872. The general trend has been one of moderate population growth. According to the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama, the countywide population is expected to increase slightly over the next several years.

Historical and projected population of Coffee County

Year	Population	Percent Change
1970	34,872	---
1980	38,533	9.5%
1990	40,240	4.2%
2000	43,615	7.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Land use pattern. The general land use pattern in Coffee County is mostly rural agricultural, with scattered residential areas. There is a concentration of development within the Enterprise area.

Covington County

Location and Area

Covington County is located in the heart of south central Alabama and is bordered by Escambia and Conecuh counties in the west, Butler and Crenshaw counties to the north, Coffee and Geneva counties to the east, and Okaloosa and Walton, Florida counties to the south. It was named in honor of Brigadier General Leonard Covington of Maryland and was established on December 17, 1821. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the County has a total land area of 1,044 square miles, of which 1,034 square miles is land and ten (10) square miles is water.

Physical Features

Land. Covington County lies in the East Gulf Coastal Plain physiographic province. The geologic units that crop out in Covington County range from Eocene to Recent age. The geology is sedimentary in nature, consisting of limestone, sandstone, siltstone, claystone, clay, sand, and gravel. Covington County has a total acreage of 662,208 acres of which 505,800 acres have been categorized as forest land and 137,703 acres have been categorized as agricultural.

Rivers. Covington County contains the Conecuh and Yellow rivers, and a number of tributaries.

Highways. The major highways within Covington County are U.S. Highways 84, 331, and 29. U.S. 84 is an east-west route that passes through Opp, Babbie, Sanford, Andalusia, and River Falls. U.S. 84 is designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route, as it intersects with Interstate 65 west of Covington County in Conecuh County. U.S. 331 is a north-south route that passes through Florala, Onycha, and Opp. U.S. 331 is also designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route as it intersects with Interstate 65 in Montgomery. U.S. 29 is a northeast-southwest route that passes through Gantt, Heath, Andalusia, and Carolina. U.S. 29 has also been designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route as it carries traffic to U.S. 331 north of Covington County in Crenshaw County where evacuees then travel onto Interstate 65 in Montgomery.

Covington County also has six state highways: Alabama Highway 55 is a northwest-southeast route that passes through Red Level, River Falls, Andalusia, Libertyville, Lockhart, and Florala. Highway 55 is designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route as it interests with Interstate 65 northwest of Covington County in Butler County. Alabama 134 is an east-west route that travels from Opp east into Coffee County. Alabama Highway 52 is a northwest-southeast route that travels from Opp southeast into Coffee County. Alabama Highway 54 is a southwest-northeast route that travels from Florala northeast into Geneva County. Alabama Highway 137 is a north-south route that travels from U.S. 29 south through the Conecuh National Forest into Okaloosa County, Florida.

Covington County has an extensive county road system and a system of National Forest roads with the Conecuh National Forest. Many of the county routes are heavily traveled due to fact that Covington County is the main method of travel for vacationers driving to the Florida Panhandle beaches. Also, residents of Covington County as well as residents of northwest Florida are required to use county roads as Hurricane Evacuation Routes in the event of a weather emergency.

Railroads. Covington County has three Class III (short line) railroads within its jurisdiction: the Alabama and Florida Railroad (AF), which runs west-east from Andalusia through Sanford, Babbie, and Opp into Coffee County, the Andalusia and Conecuh Railroad (ACRC) runs north-south from Andalusia to Shaw Industries, about three miles north of Andalusia, and the Three Notch Railroad Company, Inc. which runs southeast-northwest from Andalusia through River Falls and Red Level into Conecuh and Butler counties.

Airports. Covington County has two airports that serve municipal purposes: South Alabama Regional Airport (formerly Andalusia-Opp Airport) is in Sanford and Florala Municipal Airport.

Municipalities

There are fourteen municipalities located within Covington County, which are described in the following table.

Population of places in Covington County in 2000

Place	Population
Andalusia	8,794
Babbie	627
Carolina	248
Florala	1,964
Gantt	241
Heath	249
Horn Hill	235
Libertyville	106
Lockhart	548
Onycha	208
Opp	6,607
Red Level	556

River Falls	616
Sanford	269

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population and Population Growth

Population growth. The population of Covington County was reported by the Census to be 37,631 in the year 2000. This is an increase of 1,153 or 3.16 % people since 1990 when the population was 36,478.

Historical and projected population of Covington County

Year	Population	Percent Change
1970	34,079	---
1980	36,478	8.1
1990	36,478	-1.0
2000	37,631	3.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Land use pattern. The general land use pattern in Covington County is categorized as rural, with a mixture of forested, agricultural, and rural residential areas. According to the Alabama Agricultural Statistics Service Covington County has 4,900 acres categorized as residential, 380 acres as commercial, 425 acres as industrial, and 11,900 acres dedicated for transportation.

Dale County

Location and Area

Dale County is located in the southeastern corner of the State of Alabama and is bordered by Barbour County in the north, Henry County in the east, Houston County in the southeast, Geneva County in the southwest, Coffee County in the west, and Pike County in the northwest. It was named in honor of General Samuel Dale and established on December 22, 1824. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the County has a total land area of 563 square miles, of which 561 square miles is land and two (2) square miles is water.

Physical Features

Land. The land in Dale County consists predominately of agricultural and forest land. Of the total of 359,104 acres, 103,129 acres is dedicated for agricultural purposes and another 238,200 acres for forest land.

Rivers. Dale County contains the Pea, Choctawhatchee, and Little Choctawhatchee rivers, as well as a number of tributaries.

Highways. The major highways in Dale County are U.S. Highway 84, U.S. Highway 231, and Alabama Highway 167. U.S. Highway 84 is predominately an east-west route that enters Dale County from Houston County in the southwest corner of the county and proceeds through Level

Plains toward Enterprise, within Coffee County, and further into Covington County. U.S. Highway 231 travels in a southeast-northwest direction entering Dale County from Houston County, and passing through Midland City, Pinckard, Newton, and Ozark, before entering Coffee County. Alabama Highway 167 is a heavily traveled route that commences in the southwest corner of Dale County for a short distance from Geneva County and passes through Enterprise in Coffee County before proceeding in a northerly direction into Pike County.

Dale County also has nine other state highways: Alabama Highway 27 is predominately an east-west route that enters Dale County from Henry County in the east and travels through Ozark, as well as a number of unincorporated areas, before exiting into Coffee County in the west. Alabama Highway 51 enters Dale County in the northwest part of the county from Coffee County and proceeds in a northeasterly direction through Ariton before exiting into Barbour County. Alabama Highway 85 is predominately a north-south route that originates in Geneva County and travels through Clayhatchee before terminating in Daleville. Alabama Highway 92 is a short stretch of road that intersects with U.S. 84 in Houston County to the east and proceeds in a westerly direction through Clayhatchee until it intersects with AL 167 in Coffee County to the west. Alabama Highway 123 is predominately a north-south route that originates in Geneva County and proceeds in a northerly direction through Newton, Ozark, and Ariton before terminating where it intersects with U.S. Highway 231 near the Coffee County and Dale County border. Alabama Highway 134 is an east-west route that enters Dale County from Henry County and proceeds more or less in a westerly direction through Midland City, Pinckard, and Newton before terminating in Daleville. Alabama Highway 248 is an east-west route that begins in Enterprise and proceeds to Fort Rucker. Alabama Highway 249 commences at Fort Rucker and proceeds in a northerly direction toward the City of Ozark. Alabama Highway 105 travels from Ozark northeast into Barbour County.

Railroads. Dale County has two railroads within its jurisdiction: the CSX Line, which proceeds south from Pike County through Ozark into Dothan, which is in Houston County and the Wiregrass Central Railroad which originates within Enterprise and terminates in Waterford, near Newton.

Airports. Dale County is the home of the Dothan Regional Airport which is adjacent to the Town of Napier Field. The Dothan Regional Airport is the only airport within southeast Alabama with a scheduled passenger service.

Municipalities

There are ten municipalities within Dale County, which are described within the following table.

Population of places in Dale County in 2000

Place	Population
Ariton	772
Clayhatchee	501
Daleville	4,653
Grimes	459
Level Plains	1,544
Midland City	1,703

Napier Field	404
Newton	1,708
Ozark	15,119
Pinckard	667

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population and Population Growth

Population growth. The population of Dale County was reported by the Census to be 49,129 in the year 2000. This is a decrease of 504 or -1.0 % people since 1990 when the population was 49,633.

Historical and projected population of Dale County

Year	Population	Percent Change
1970	52,995	---
1980	47,821	-9.8
1990	49,633	3.8
2000	49,129	-1.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Land use pattern. The general land use pattern in Dale County is mostly categorized as rural with scattered residential areas. According to the Alabama Agricultural Statistics Service Dale County has 6,750 acres categorized as residential, 400 acres as commercial, 625 acres as industrial, and 8,000 acres dedicated for transportation.

Geneva County

Location and Area

Geneva County is located in southeast Alabama and is bordered by Dale County in the north-northeast, Coffee County in the north-northwest, Houston County in the east, Jackson County, Florida in the southeast, Holmes County, Florida in the south, Walton County, Florida in the southwest, and Covington County in the west. Henry Yonge, who founded the city of Geneva, AL named it after his wife's hometown in Geneva, New York. When the county was established on December 26, 1868, it took the name of the largest settlement in that county. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the County has a total land area of 579 square miles, of which 576 square miles is land and three (3) square miles is water.

Physical Features

Land. The land in Geneva County consists predominately of agricultural and forest land. Of the total acreage 150,166 is dedicated for agricultural and 203,600 for forest land.

Rivers. Geneva County contains the Choctawhatchee and Pea rivers, as well as a number of tributaries.

Highways. The major thoroughfares within Geneva County are state highways: Alabama Highways 27, 52, 54, 85, 87, 103, 123, 153, 167, and 196. Alabama Highways 27 and 167 both have been designated as Hurricane Evacuation Routes. Alabama Highway 27 is a predominately a north-south route that enters Geneva County from the Holmes County, Florida and continues in a northerly direction into Coffee County. Alabama Highway 103 originates at the Florida/Alabama border with Jackson County and proceeds in a northerly direction past Fadette and Slocomb until it joins with AL Highway 123 just outside Wicksburg, in Houston County. Alabama Highway 123 originates in Hartford and travels in a northerly direction before exiting into Houston County. Alabama Highway 167 is a major route that commences in Florida and continues in a northwesterly direction through Geneva County before proceeding through Dale and Coffee Counties. Alabama Highway 85 begins just north of Geneva at Highway 27 and travels in a northerly direction into Dale County.

Alabama Highway 52 is predominately an east-west route that enters from Houston County and travels in a westerly direction through Malvern, Slocomb, Hartford, Geneva, and Samson before entering Coffee and Covington Counties. Alabama Highway 87 is a north-south route that enters Geneva County from Florida and continues in a northerly direction through Samson and unincorporated areas into Coffee County to the north. Alabama Highway 54 begins at its intersection with Highway 52 in western Geneva County between Samson and Kinston and travels southwest before entering into Covington County and eventually terminating in Florala. Alabama Highway 153 begins at its intersection with Highway 52 west of Samson and travels south before entering Walton County, Florida. Alabama Highway 196 is a short highway that serves as a business route between Highway 52 and Highway 27 in downtown Geneva.

Additionally, Geneva County has an extensive amount of county roads and thoroughfares.

Railroads. Geneva County has one railroad: the Alabama & Florida Railroad enters from Kinston, located in Coffee County, and passes through Samson and proceeds on to Geneva.

Airports. Geneva County has two airports that serve municipal purposes: Logan Field Municipal Airport, located in Samson, and Geneva Municipal Airport.

Municipalities

There are seven municipalities in Geneva County, which are described within the following table.

Population of places in Geneva County in 2000

Place	Population
Black	202
Coffee Springs	251
Geneva	4,388
Hartford	2,369
Malvern	1,215
Samson	2,071
Slocomb	2,052

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population and Population Growth

Population growth. The population of Geneva County was reported by the Census to be 25,764 in the year 2000. This is an increase of 2,117 or 8.95 % people since 1990 when the population was 23,647.

Historical and projected population of Geneva County

Year	Population	Percent Change
1970	21,924	---
1980	24,253	10.6
1990	23,647	-2.5
2000	25,764	9.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Land use pattern. The general land use pattern in Geneva County is categorized as mostly rural with a mixture of agricultural, forested, and residential areas. According to the Alabama Agricultural Statistics Service Geneva County has 3,600 acres categorized as residential, 275 acres as commercial, 530 acres as industrial, and 9,975 acres dedicated for transportation.

Henry County

Location and Area

Henry County is located within southeastern Alabama. The county was established on December 13, 1819 and was named in honor of Patrick Henry, a famous orator and Governor of Virginia. It is roughly bisected by U.S. Highway 431. It is bordered to the west by Dale County, to the north by Barbour County, to the east by Clay County and Early County, Georgia, and to the south by Houston County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 568 square miles. Nearly 562 square miles is land and another seven (7) square miles is water.

Physical Features

Land. The land in Henry County lies in the East Gulf Coastal Plain physiographic province. The geologic formations that outcrop in Henry County include Residuum, Lisbon, Tallahatta, Hatchetigbee, Tuschoma, Nanafalia, Clayton, and Providence Sand Formations. The geology is sedimentary in nature.

Rivers. Henry County contains the Chattahoochee River and a number of tributaries.

Highways. The major highway in Henry County is U.S. Highway 431. U.S. Highway 431 is a north-south route that passes through Abbeville, Newville, and Headland. U.S. Highway 431 is designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route, as it takes traffic north of Henry County eventually into the Columbus, Georgia area where evacuees have interstate highway access.

Henry County also has five state highways: Alabama Highway 10 runs mostly west-east direction and travels from a westerly part of Henry County through Abbeville into Georgia. Alabama Highway 27 is a southwest-northeast route that enters west-central Henry County and ends in Abbeville at Highway 10. Alabama Highway 95 is a north-south route that begins in Barbour County traveling south through Abbeville and Haleburg into Houston County. Alabama Highway 134 is a west-east route that travels from Dale County eastward through Headland and other areas of Henry County, then into Houston County at the southeastern corner of Henry County. Alabama Highway 173 is a north-south route that begins at Highway 27 and travels south through Newville ending at Highway 431 in Headland.

Henry County has an extensive county road system. Many of these routes, especially U.S. Highway 431, are heavily traveled, due to Henry County being a main mode of travel for vacationers driving from points north to the Florida Panhandle beaches.

Railroads. Henry County has one Class II (short line) railroad within its jurisdiction: the Bay Line Railroad, LLC (BAYL) runs southwest-northeast from Dale County through Headland, Newville, and ends in Abbeville. Major commodities shipped include forest products, paper products, steel/pipe, and aggregates.

Airports. There are two airports in Henry County that serve municipal purposes: Abbeville Municipal Airport and Headland Municipal Airport.

Municipalities

There are four municipalities in Henry County, described in the following table.

Population of Places in 2000

Place	Population
Abbeville	2,987
Haleburg	108
Headland	3,523
Newville	553

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population and Population Growth

Population growth. The population of Henry County was reported by the Census to be 16,310 in the year 2000. This is an increase of over 3,000 people since 1970 when the population was 13,254. Over the last 35 years, the county has experienced an increase in population growth. In 2006, it was estimated that Henry County had a total population of 16,621, or a 1.9% increase from 2000. Most of the increase is occurring near Headland.

Historical and projected population of Henry County

Year	Population	Percent Change
1970	13,254	---
1980	15,302	15.5
1990	15,374	0.5

2000	16,310	6.1
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Land use pattern. The general land use pattern in Henry County is categorized mainly as rural with mainly rural residential areas, as well as agricultural and forested areas. Concentration of some residential development has been experienced along U.S. 431.

Houston County

Location and Area

Houston County is located in the southeast corner of Alabama and was named in honor of George S. Houston, a previous Governor of Alabama. The county is the youngest county in Alabama and was established on February 9, 1903. It is bordered to the east by Early and Seminole counties in Georgia, by Jackson County, Florida in the south, by Geneva County in the west, and Henry County to the north. The Little Choctawhatchee River forms the boundary line in the northwest part of the county with Dale County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 580 square miles of land and two (2) square miles of water.

Physical Features

Land. Houston County lies on the Coastal Plain with an elevation that ranges from 120 feet above sea level in the southeastern corner to about 345 feet above sea level at a point near Webb in the north-central part of the county. The topography is mainly level to gently sloping, with scattered hilly sections found in the northern part of the county. Houston County is primarily agricultural with peanuts, cotton, and corn being the principal crops. Small grains, melons and vegetables are also abundantly grown. Beef cattle, hogs and dairy cattle are the main livestock in Houston County.

Rivers. Houston County contains the Chattahoochee River, Choctawhatchee River, Little Choctawhatchee River, and a number of tributaries. State dock facilities are located at Columbia in northeastern Houston County. The Chattahoochee River is the only navigable waterway within the region.

Highways. The major highways in Houston County are U.S. Highway 84, U.S. Highway 231, and U.S. Highway 431. U.S. Highway 84 is predominately an east-west route that enters from Georgia and passes through a number of incorporated municipalities, including Gordon, Ashford, Avon, Cowarts, and Dothan before entering Dale County. U.S. Highway 231 is predominately a four lane north-south route that enters from Jackson County, Florida and travels through Madrid and Dothan, before exiting into Dale County. U.S. Highway 231 has been designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route, as it takes traffic north of Houston County eventually into Montgomery area where evacuees have interstate highway access. Highway 431 is a north-south route that begins in Dothan and passes through Kinsey, before exiting into Henry County. U.S. Highway 431 also has been designated as a Hurricane Evacuation Route as it takes traffic north eventually into Columbus, Georgia area where evacuees have interstate highway access. U.S. Highways 231 and 431 are heavily traveled, due to Houston County being a point of travel for a

number of travelers and vacationers driving from points north to the Florida Panhandle beaches in the south.

Houston County also has six state highways: Alabama Highway 52 is mostly an east-west route that enters from Geneva County, and travels through Dothan, Webb, and Columbia before exiting into Georgia. Alabama Highway 53 is a northwest-southeast route that begins in Dothan and travels in a southeasterly direction through Cottonwood before exiting into Jackson County, Florida. Alabama Highway 95 is mostly a north-south route that enters Houston County near Columbia and travels in a southerly direction through the eastern part of the county, including Gordon, before it exits into Jackson County, Florida near the Chattahoochee State Park. Alabama Highway 92 has a short section in western Houston County, beginning at U.S. Highway 84 in the Wicksburg community, before exiting into Dale County. Alabama Highway 109 begins at its intersection with U.S. Highway 231 between Dothan and Madrid before passing through Rehobeth and exiting into Jackson County, Florida. Alabama Highway 123 is a north-south route that enters Houston County from Dale County, intersects with U.S. Highway 84 in the Wicksburg community, and exits into Geneva County.

Houston County also has an extensive county road system.

Railroads. Houston County has several railroads: the Norfolk Southern Railway proceeds from Dothan through Columbia into the State of Georgia; the Hartford & Slocomb Railroad, goes from Taylor to Dothan; CSX Trans Inc. commences in Dale County and proceeds through Dothan and east, roughly parallel to U.S. Highway 84, into the State of Georgia.

Airports. Houston County does not have any municipal airports located within its boundaries. The Dothan Regional Airport is just located over the county line inside Dale County.

Municipalities

There are 12 municipalities in Houston County, which are described in the following table.

Population of Places in 2000

Place	Population
Ashford	1,853
Avon	466
Columbia	804
Cottonwood	1,170
Cowarts	1,546
Dothan	57,737
Gordon	408
Kinsey	1,796
Madrid	156
Rehobeth	993
Taylor	1,888
Webb	1,298

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population and Population Growth

Population growth. The population of Houston County was reported by the Census to be 88,787 in the year 2000. This is an increase of over 7,000 people since 1990, when the population was 81,331.

Historical and projected population of Houston County

Year	Population	Percent Change
1970	56,574	---
1980	74,632	31.9
1990	81,331	9.0
2000	88,787	9.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Land use pattern. Houston County's land use is primarily urban residential and commercial in the northwest portion of the county, while the remainder of the county is primarily rural residential and agricultural. According to the Alabama Agricultural Statistics Service, Houston County has 4,900 acres categorized as residential, 380 acres as commercial, 425 acres as industrial, and 11,900 acres dedicated for transportation.

Needs Assessment

In the early spring of 2008, the committees of the Rural Planning Organization began discussing the long range transportation needs for Southeast Alabama. These discussions concentrated on many needs and concerns of the region which were consolidated into information as outlined by this report. The comments were grouped primarily according to the highway corridor or highway corridor segment in which the need or concern was located. In July 2008, the Technical Advisory Committee discussed each corridor in detail and qualified the needs and concerns as to 1) area of impact, 2) priority, and 3) timeframe. The area of impact could be state, regional or local. Most items listed were regional. The priority for a need could be low, medium or high. The suggested timeframe could be short-term (less than five years), long-term (more than five years), or ongoing. The recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee were then submitted to the Policy Committee for their consideration and adoption. The recommendations of needs and safety concerns are outlined below:

- *Four-Lane U.S. Highway 84 from Dothan to Interstate 65*
- *Four-Lane Alabama Highway 167 from Florida State Line to Troy*
- *Four-Lane Alabama Highway 52 from Geneva to Dothan*
- *U.S. Highway 431 Eufaula By-Pass*
- *U.S. Highway 231/Interstate I-10 Connector from Alabama/Florida State Line to U.S. 231 North of Dothan*
- *Four Lane U.S. Highway 331 from Brantley to the Florida State Line*
- *Four-Lane Alabama Highway 134 from Enterprise to Opp*
- *Four-Lane U.S. Highway 29/Alabama Highway 137 from Andalusia to the Florida State Line*
- *Upgrade all structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges*
- *Establish integrated rural transit system*
- *Enhance local airports*
- *Promote development of main line and short line rail*
- *Support maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure*

By far, most of the needs discussed were in regard to highways, therefore, that is the main focus of this report. The Technical Advisory Committee noted that there were general concerns regarding airports, transit, waterways, and railroads that required further discussion. Regarding airports, there are twelve airports in the region. Also, the Chattahoochee River is considered an asset to the region, but even more of a river transportation opportunity. The Chattahoochee River is the only navigable waterway in the district. It has two inland docks, one in Eufaula and another in Columbia. There is a need to improve and increase docks and begin to better utilize the Chattahoochee River. Those needs and concerns will be included in the 2009 issue of this report. As a general concern, there is anticipated to be a moderate increase of jobs within Southeast Alabama. With moderate population growth and land development within Southeast Alabama that will come from jobs growth, road surfaces throughout the region will likely need to be extensively improved within the next few years.

Four-Lane U.S. Highway 84 from Dothan to Interstate 65

U.S. 84 is the major link for east-west transportation of goods and services in Southeast Alabama. Most of this federal highway has been upgraded to four lanes of travel. Presently this route is under construction, design and being upgraded to provide four lanes of travel throughout the region. It is strongly recommended that upgrading of this route should be expedited.

Area of impact: State/Region
Priority: High
Timeframe: Short-term

Four-Lane Alabama Highway 167 from Florida State Line to Troy

AL 167 serves as a major connector between Troy and Panama City Beach, Florida. It is the primary source for north/south transportation of goods and services for Coffee County, Geneva County, and Holmes County, Florida. There are numerous steep grades along this route that are difficult for heavily loaded trucks to maintain speed, resulting in impeded traffic flow. In addition, FL 79 and AL 167 serve as a major evacuation routes from Panama City, as well as other surrounding beach areas. This route needs to be upgraded to a four-lane to adequately serve all needs as described above.

Area of Impact: State/Regional
Priority: High
Timeframe: Short-term

Four-Lane Alabama Highway 52 from Geneva to Dothan

State Highway 52 is a major arterial route connecting Geneva County, Covington County, and other surrounding areas to the Dothan service area. An ongoing project will extend the four-lane section from Taylor to Malvern. The four-lane section should be extended through Slocomb, Hartford, and on to Geneva in the near future. The proposed I-10 Connector will accelerate development of the east end of Geneva County creating more traffic on this major arterial connector to Dothan.

Area of Impact: Local
Priority: High
Timeframe: Short-term

U.S. Highway 431 Eufaula Bypass

The U.S. Highway 431 four-lane projects from Phenix City to Barbour County are near completion. Upon completion of this project, U.S. Highway 431 will be four-lane from Phenix City to the Ross Clark Circle in Dothan, except through downtown Eufaula where high congestion continues to exist. The construction of a four-lane bypass around/through the City of Eufaula is Barbour County's highest priority. Since this highway system is used extensively as a commercial route and seasonally as beach access, it would have a significant impact on the entire region. A great deal of traffic originates in North Alabama and North Georgia.

Area of Impact: Regional
Priority: High

Timeframe: Long-term

U.S. Highway 231/Interstate 10 Connector from Alabama/Florida State Line to U.S. 231 North of Dothan

This proposed roadway will facilitate traffic flow to provide a by-pass around Dothan, as well as providing a direct route/link that connects U.S. 231 and I-10. It will also greatly benefit the local Dothan traffic pattern by relieving the commercial truck and traveler density coming from both U.S. 231 and U.S. 431 that must utilize Ross Clark Circle/SR Route 210 to have interstate highway access as well as travel south.

Area of impact: State
Priority: Medium
Timeframe: Long-term

Four-Lane U.S. Highway 331 from Brantley to Florida State Line

This major north-south route is in desperate need of additional lanes, especially with the recently completed Opp Bypass. In the spring and summer months, the traffic on this route is tremendous as tourists flock to the Gulf Coast. This project has been discussed from many years and would be a great asset to the State and would simultaneously be used as a Hurricane Evacuation route.

Area of impact: State/Region
Priority: Medium
Timeframe: Long-term

Four-Lane Alabama Highway 134 from Enterprise to Opp

Alabama Highway 134 in Covington and Coffee counties is considered a significant asset to both counties as it is the primary traffic artery throughout the counties and connects the region from east to west. Making Alabama Highway 134 a four-lane route from the east to the west would benefit the travel from the Andalusia/Opp areas through Enterprise to Dothan.

Area of Impact: State/Region
Priority: Medium
Timeframe: Long-term

Four-Lane U.S. 29/Alabama Highway 137 Andalusia to the Florida State Line

This is a major arterial route for vacationers and also an evacuation route. This route has favorable terrain and minimal floodplain involvement for making a possible economically feasible four-lane road.

Area of Impact: State/Region
Priority: Medium
Timeframe: Long-term

Upgrade all structural deficient and functionally obsolete bridges

Establish integrated rural transit systems

Enhance local airports

Promote development of main line and short line rail

Support maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure

Overall, the Southeast Alabama region is considered to have a generally good highway system. The roads are in fairly to good shape and many of the roads in rural areas are paved. Among the best things noted regarding general maintenance issues are the good striping and pavement marker maintenance and reasonably aggressive resurfacing programs. Ongoing problems that need to be addressed include:

- 1) Resurfacing
- 2) Shoulder maintenance
- 3) Vegetation management
- 4) Signage
- 5) Turning lanes
- 6) Guard rails
- 7) Traffic lights

Among the best and most effective opportunities and needs for overall improvement to the highway system is resurfacing, improvement of railroad crossings, and signals, and additional bridge replacement.

<i>Area of impact:</i>	Local
<i>Priority:</i>	High
<i>Timeframe:</i>	Short-term

Continuing Efforts

The Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization was established as a statewide extension and continuation of a pilot project performed at the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization. This document is being completed at the end of FY 2008. An agreement between SEARP&DC and ALDOT for FY 2009 has been finalized and continues the rural transportation planning process within the Southeast Alabama region.

The RPO staff and committees will monitor the social and economic trends in the region in order to expand this document in the preparation of a Region-wide Transportation Plan. Changes to existing trends could require the addition, deletion, or re-prioritization of strategies or projects. Any necessary adjustments can be accomplished through amendments adopted by the Policy Committee.

As the transportation planning process continues to be funded, the RPO will continue to review and update this document. The staff and committees will periodically work through each of the tasks to verify and recertify the outputs of each. The Policy Committee will be expected to adopt the Region-wide Transportation Plan in September 2009 and every five years thereafter. The RPO committees will continue to meet in the future if the planning process is funded. The committee meetings will continue to be the main consultation tool in the process. Future meeting will be held on a semi-annual basis and the meetings will follow an established agenda. This will allow local officials and officials with the ALDOT to discuss transportation issues and programs. The meetings will continue to offer the same public involvement opportunities. The RPO staff will continue to document the meetings and the work of the committees.