

Element 6 Transportation

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Introduction

Harris County has seen tremendous growth in the last 10 years. In 2000, the population of Harris County was 23,695. In 2010, it is projected to grow to 30,155; and by 2030, to 56,277 (a 137 percent increase from 2000). This increase is illustrated in Table 1. Despite this growth, only 5,325 (or 22.5%) of the population worked inside the County in 2000, while 11,791 (or 49.8%) traveled to surrounding counties and cities to work. In the year 2000, County residents were employed in a wide variety of employment sectors within the region. As with population, job growth in the region and Harris County is projected to grow considerably by the year 2030, as illustrated in Table 2. With a diversifying population and new commercial and industrial development on the horizon in Harris County, there should be more opportunities for Harris County residents to find work within the County.

Table 1
Harris County: Population (2000-2030)

County/City	YEAR						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Harris County	23,695	26,925	30,155	35,226	40,302	48,263	56,227
Hamilton	446	501	556	611	668	723	1,112
Pine Mountain	1,141	1,212	1,282	1,409	1,537	1,766	1,995
Shiloh	423	437	450	475	500	542	585
Waverly Hall	709	780	853	952	1,052	1,192	1,332
State of GA	8,186,453	8,868,675	9,550,897	10,233,118	10,915,340	11,597,562	12,279,784

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Lower Chattahoochee RDC

Table 2
Harris County: Employment by Sector

Harris County: Employment by Industry											
Category	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Total Employed Civilian Population	6,564	7,409	8,253	10,037	11,821	13,884	15,948	19,187	22,427	27,513	32,599
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	277	292	306	201	96	25	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	468	586	703	749	794	922	1,050	1,251	1,452	1,767	2,082
Manufacturing	1,959	1,963	1,967	1,996	2,025	2,051	2,077	2,117	2,158	2,222	2,286
Wholesale Trade	252	261	270	356	441	515	589	706	822	1,005	1,188
Retail Trade	884	1,056	1,228	1,198	1,168	1,279	1,391	1,566	1,741	2,016	2,290
Transportation, Ware-Housing, & Utilities	414	484	553	506	458	475	493	520	547	589	632
Information	NA	NA	NA	NA	495	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	276	379	481	829	1,176	1,529	1,883	2,437	2,992	3,862	4,733
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative & Waste	146	222	298	512	725	952	1,180	1,536	1,893	2,453	3,013

Management Services											
Educational, Health And Social Services	852	881	910	1,551	2,191	2,717	3,242	4,067	4,892	6,188	7,483
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation & Food Services	545	367	188	582	976	1,145	1,314	1,580	1,846	2,263	2,679

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

Inventory and Assessment

Transportation Network

Interstates

Harris County is served by one interstate highway, I-185, which traverses the western side of the County in a north-south direction (*See Map 1. Transportation Map*). I-185 provides good access for Harris County to the surrounding interstate highway network. There are interchanges along I-185 at SR 315, SR 116/103, Hopewell Church Road, and SR 18. The four interchanges connect with all the arterial roads in the western half of the County, making it easily accessible from all parts of the County. I-85 crosses the northwest corner of the County, with an interchange at SR 18 less than a mile north of the County line. Direct access may need to be limited on 315, 27, Hopewell Church Road and other collectors and major highways.

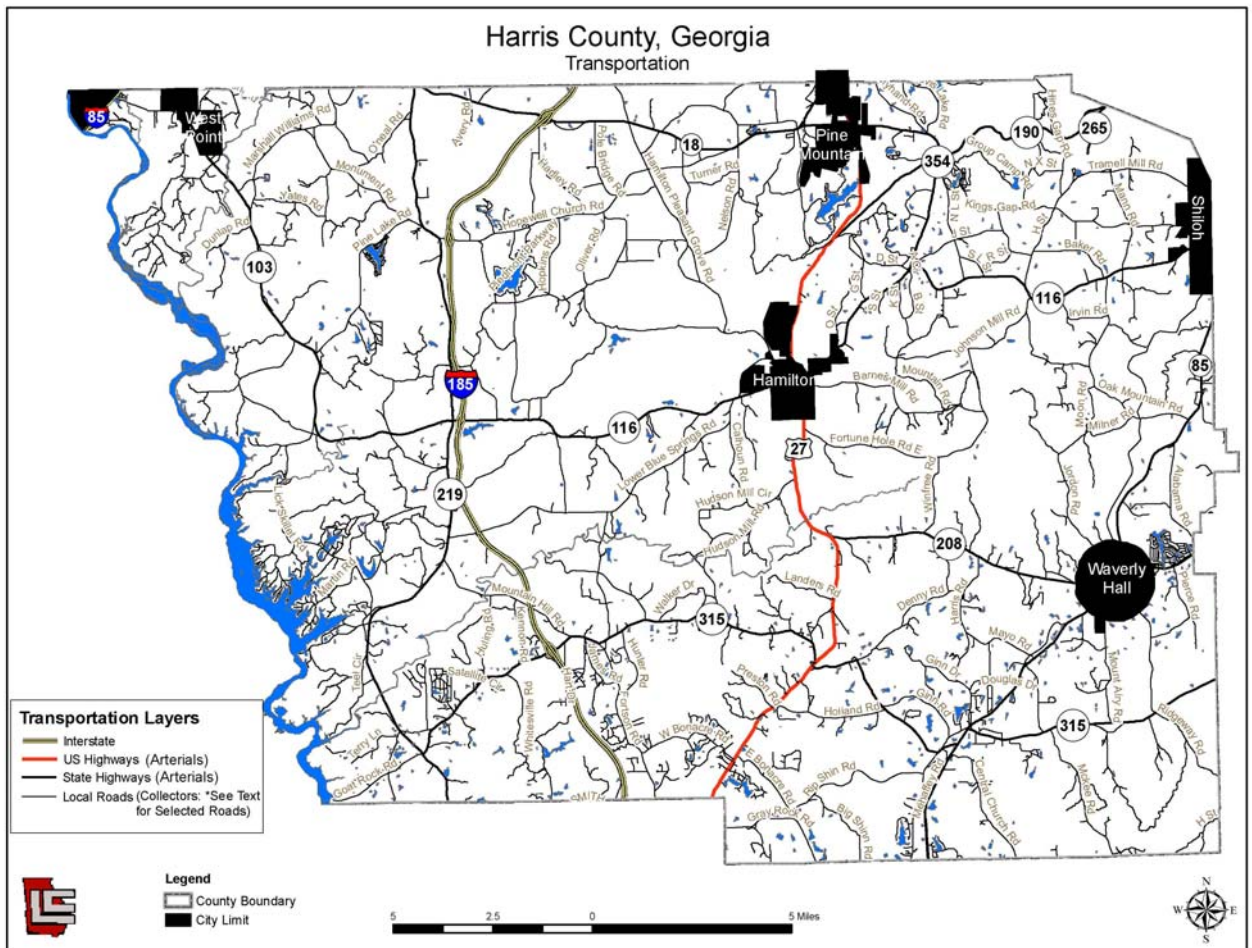
The extension of the I-185 corridor through the implementation of the Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP) will enhance the utility of the highway. As part of a statewide network of economic development highways, the I-185 corridor will extend south to Tallahassee, Florida and north to Chattanooga, Tennessee along a multi-lane route, which follows the current SR 1/US 27. When completed, the GRIP network will link the interstate highways and the major cities in Georgia with multi-lane roads that will facilitate traffic movement throughout the state. I-185 has been designated as the link in this system for Harris County.

Arterials

In addition to the interstate, Harris County is served by ten state routes: SR 1 (US 27), SR 18, SR 85, SR 103, SR 116, SR 190, SR 208, SR 219, SR 315 and SR 354. In Harris County, state routes form the arterial network that carries traffic through the community and to major trip destinations. These roads move through traffic north-south and east-west across the County, and they connect the towns and cities both within the County and in neighboring counties.

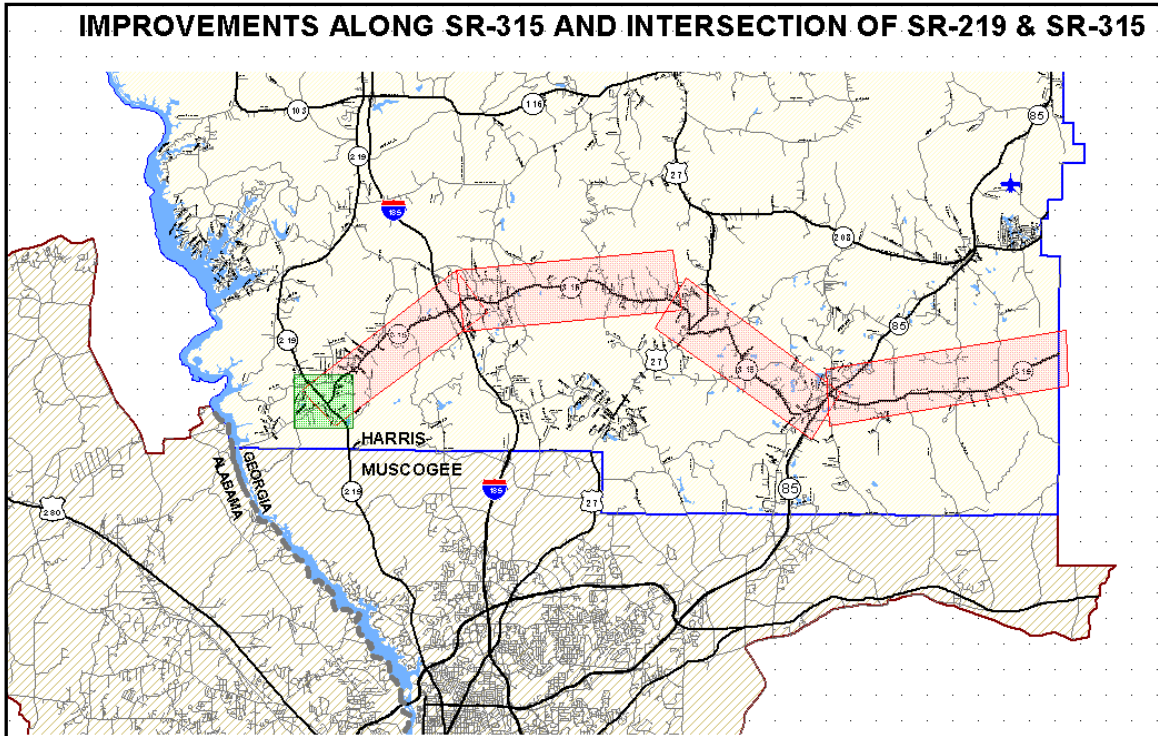
In general, the network of arterial roads is adequate to serve both the existing and projected volume of traffic within the County, with the exception of SR 315 corridor which needs intersection and alignment improvements. Georgia DOT traffic counts indicate that no arterial road is at or near its design capacity. The highest non-interstate count is in the Town of Pine Mountain where SR 1 and SR 18 utilize the same roadway and; the average count of 21,480 vehicles per day in 2007. There are 4 traffic count stations on that roadway.

**Map 1
Transportation Network in Harris County, Georgia**



Improvements are needed on some of the arterial roads to ease traffic flow. SR 315 serves as the major east-west route through the southern portion of the County, extending from SR 219 in the west to Talbot County in the east. Originally a series of local roads strung together to form a continuous route across the County, SR 315 needs to be improved to function as a coherent whole. There are gaps and jogs at SR 1 in Cataula and at SR 85 in Ellerslie. Because it serves one of the fastest growing areas in the County, a continual redesign of SR 315 should be undertaken to eliminate its deficiencies (*See Map 2. Corridor Improvements*). Highway 85 & 27 and SR 219 intersect with SR 315. All three of these intersections need to be addressed and redesigned for safety and connectivity issues. SR 315 and SR 219 is the location of one of the highest accident counts in the County. Existing driveways along highways are safety concerns and will need to be looked at along with context sensitive design when improvements are made along this corridor. The 2000 Census date shows the area surrounding SR 315 to have more growth than any other area in the County.

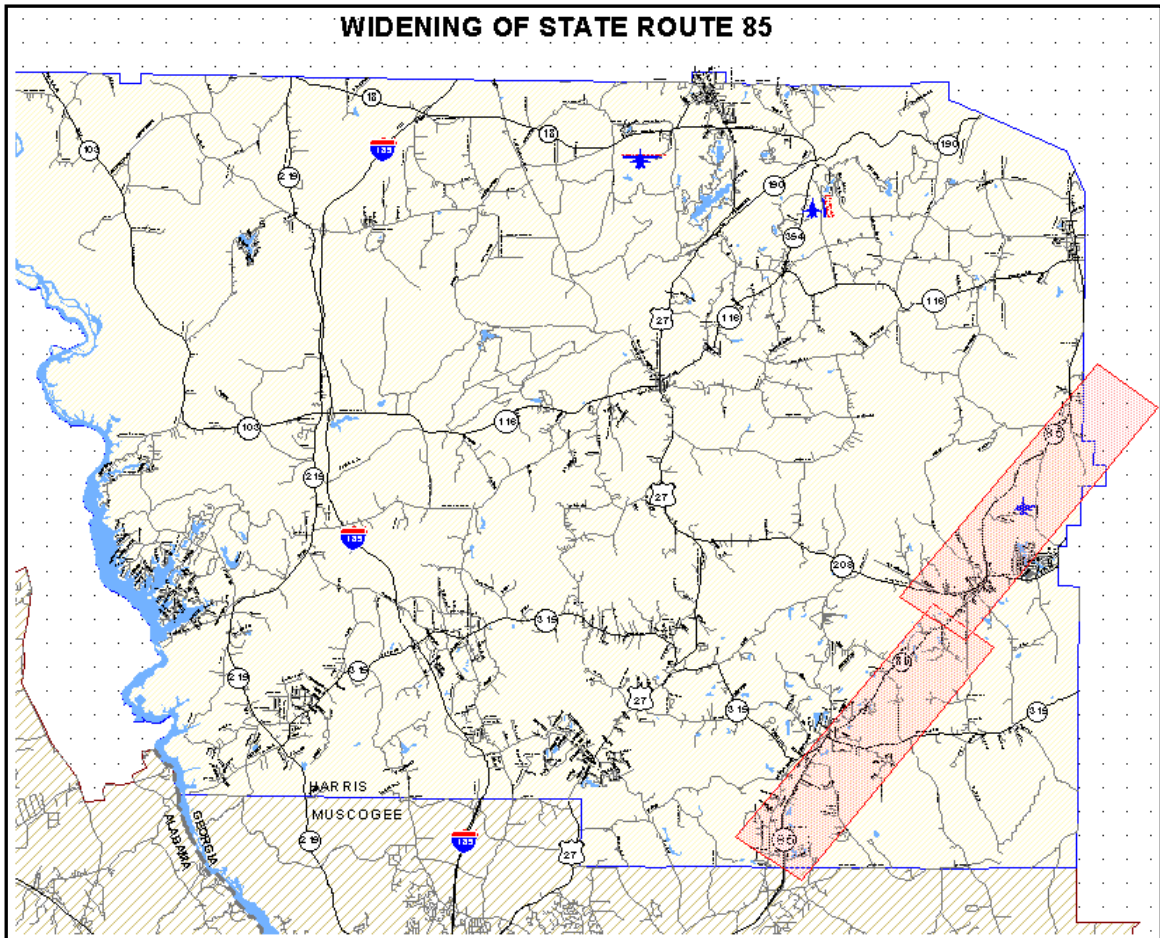
Map 2
SR-315 Corridor Improvements



Source: Columbus-Phenix City MPO

Highway 85 is the major north-south route in the eastern portion of the County. Its intersection with Harris Road, a collector running between SR 208 and Highway 85, remains a problem area where local, collector and arterial roads converge at the eastern end. The Ellerslie area is showing major growth according to the 2000 Census Data which has resulted in an increase in traffic along this corridor. The 2000 traffic count for this area of Highway 85 is 6,180 with a future count of 10,273. Georgia DOT had plans to possibly four lane Highway 85 from 315 to north of Waverly Hall, and held several public meetings with the residents of Ellerslie and Waverly Hall (*See Map 3. Proposed Widening of SR-85*). Due to public sentiment expansion plans thru Waverly Hall have been put on hold.

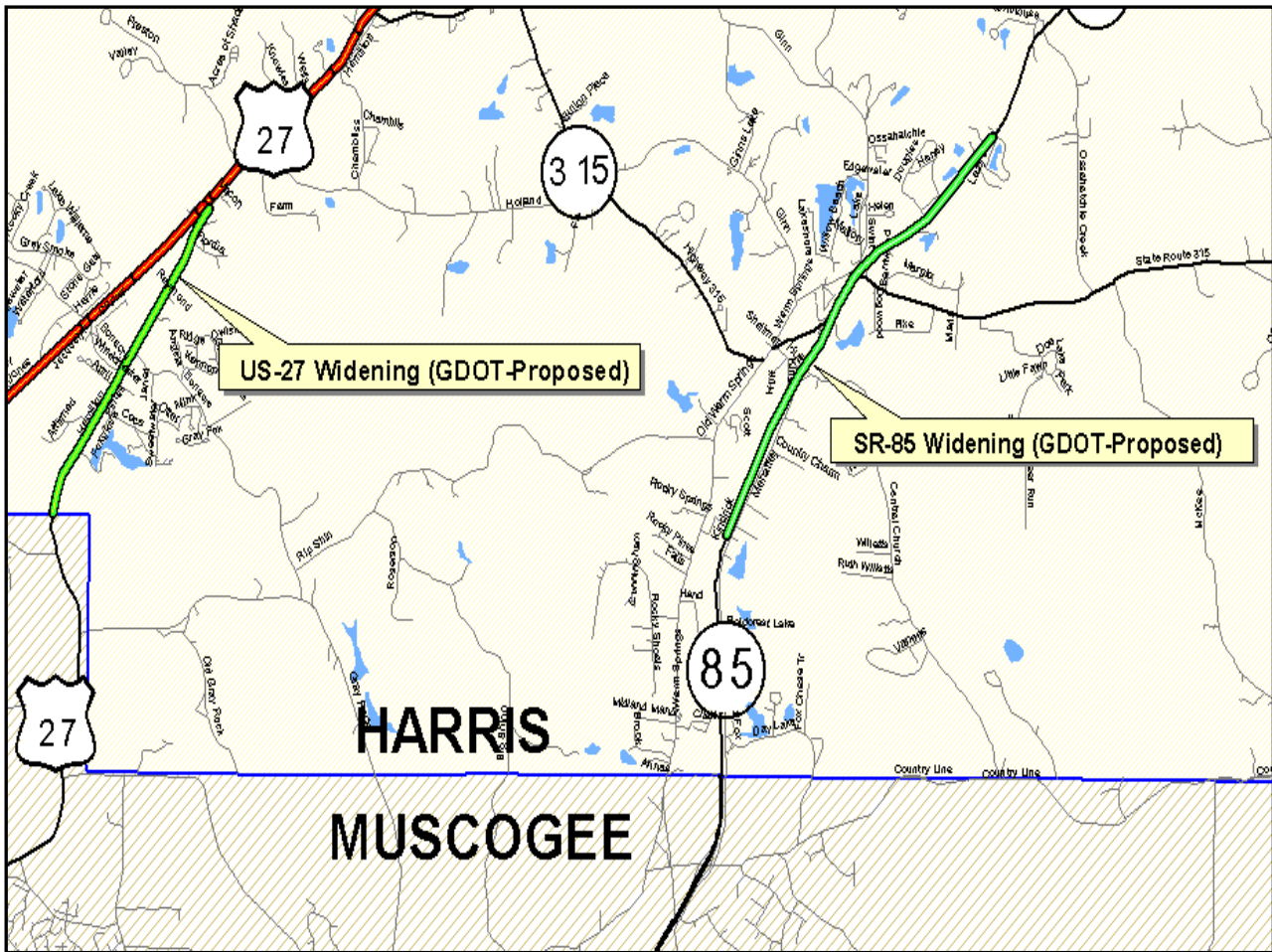
**Map 3
Proposed Widening of SR-85**



Source: Columbus-Phenix City MPO

SR 1 serves as the major north-south route through the County, and is also the main street for both Hamilton and Pine Mountain. The average daily traffic volume is one of the highest in the County. Between SR 208 and SR 116, the traffic count is 5,580 with a future count of 10,650. Due to the mixed functions of the road, there are conflicts between local and thru traffic. The construction of passing lanes and frequent intervals would alleviate some of the traffic flow problems for thru traffic and allow local traffic to proceed at a comfortable rate. The Georgia DOT has plans to widened SR 1/US 27, from Troup to Muscogee County, and I-85 (See Map 4. Proposed GDOT Projects Along SR 1/US 27 and SR 85). . This two-lane arterial along SR 1/US 27 would be a four lane with turn lanes and improvements at major intersections. This widening project would also alleviate traffic congestion problems for the schools in Hamilton.

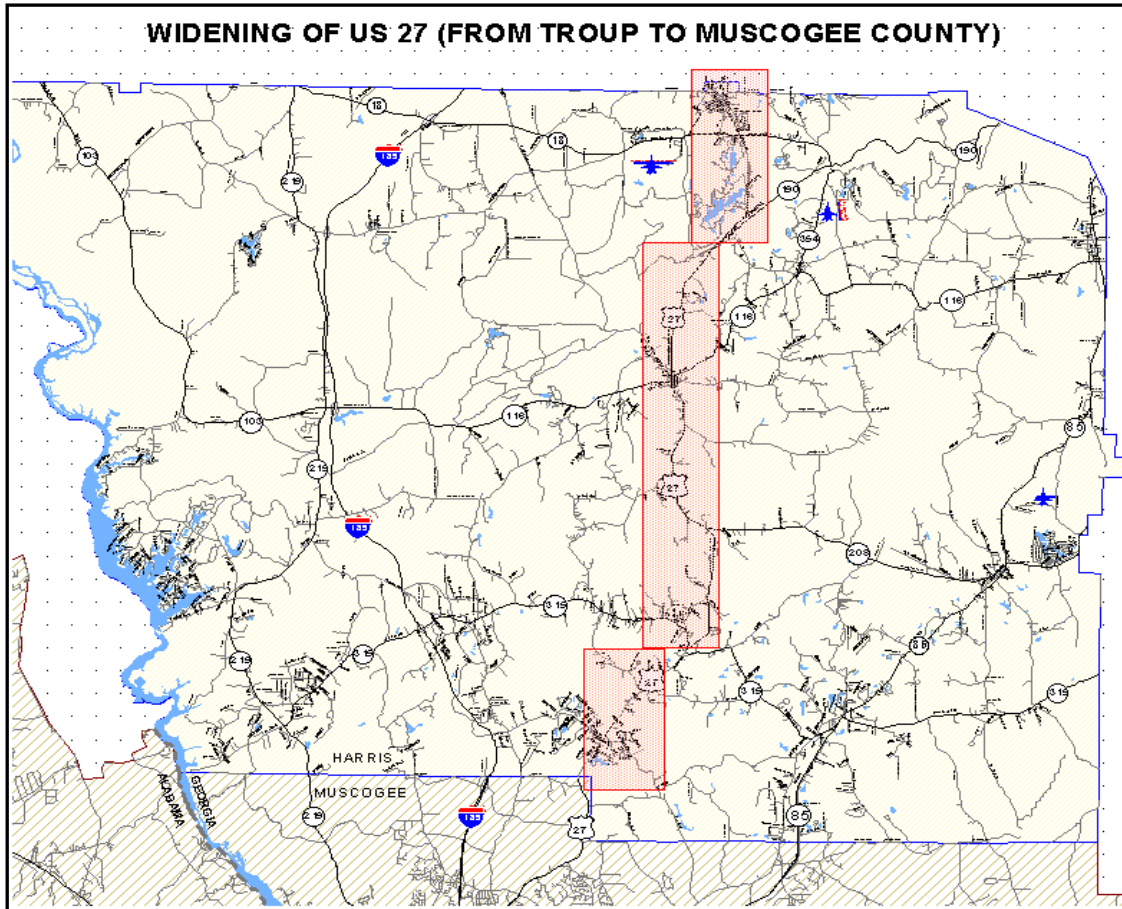
Map 4
Proposed GDOT Projects Along SR 1/US 27 And SR 85



Source: Columbus-Phenix City MPO

The current accident data shows SR 1 to have a high accident rate south of SR 315, and at the intersection of SR 116 and SR 1. An intersection improvement and better signalization at SR 1 and SR 116 would improve congestion from the high school and businesses in the area. The current condition of this intersection allows traffic to back up in all four directions during morning and afternoon peak hours. The growth along SR 1 is most apparent in Cataula with several subdivisions along the corridor. This portion of SR 1 is 3-lane; however, intersection improvements would improve the flow of traffic (See Map 5. Improvements Along SR 1).

**Map 5
Improvements Along SR 1**



Source Columbus-Phenix City MPO

The development of the Kia plant in West Point, Georgia has created a wave of development in the northwest section of Harris County along SR 103, between SR 18 intersection and Whitten Road. This section of SR 103 will need operational improvements to handle future traffic. The City of West Point just recently annexed this area.

An enhancement project for Harris County is the designation of SR 190 as a Scenic Highway. This road stretches across the ridge of Pine Mountain from SR 1 to SR 85W in Manchester. The route passes through FDR State Park and has established scenic overlooks. Harris County will also consider making SR 18 from Jones Cross Roads to Hopewell Church Road and Hamilton Pleasant Grove Road scenic highways. I-185 has been designated as a Scenic Highway by the State of Georgia.

Collectors

Collector roads in Harris County were originally designed as local roads to provide access to adjacent properties. The growth in population and an increase in traffic have changed the primary function of these roads.

Eighteen roads in Harris County currently function as collectors: Barnes Mill Road, Oak Mountain Road, Old West Point Road, Pine Lake Road, Warm Springs Road, West Bonacre Road, East Bonacre Road, County Line Road, Davis Lake/Myhand Road, Fortson Road, Hines Gap Road, Hamilton-Mulberry Grove Road, Harris Road, Hamilton-Pleasant Grove Road, Hopewell Church Road, Kings Gap Road, Licksillet Road, Lower Blue Springs Road and Mountain Hill Road.

Most collector roads carry in excess of 1,000 vehicles per day, which is well below their designed capacity. There are two inadequacies in the collector road system: gaps in the network and conflicts between through and local traffic. The gaps in some areas that are served by collector roads are primarily the result of land ownership patterns. Existing roads border large undeveloped tracts that have such low usage that they remain dirt roads. Due to low population density in the northwest corner of the County, the lack of collectors is primarily an inconvenience.

One of the major problems that Harris County has with collector roads is the conflict in the functions of carrying through traffic and of providing access to adjoining properties. With traffic volumes in excess of 1,000 vehicles per day, the conflicts between through traffic and local traffic occur during turn movements to access properties (at driveways). Along state arterial roads, the Georgia DOT determines the distance between curb cuts, thus reducing the number of points conflicted. The general rule is that there may be one driveway for every 299 feet of frontage; however, for large acreage subdivisions or divisions within a family, the determining factor is adequate sight distance. Distance between driveways on County (collector) roads is controlled by a road frontage requirement of 50 feet. Harris County reduces conflict between thru and local traffic by limiting the number of access points to abutting properties.

Any type of improvements on major arterial and collectors would result in better connectivity and reduce the amount of congestion in some areas. A majority of these projects would also be major safety improvements, especially for SR 219 and SR 315. There may be some concern about an increase in volume and speed, which undermines safety on the roads. The design of the roadway will incorporate speed as well as safety when determining what type of improvement are needed. If the improvements are on a major arterial where there are subdivisions or schools, then sidewalks should be part of the design. The design should also incorporate establishment of an appropriate landscaping system for public rights-of-way County-wide to reduce maintenance of street signs and power lines and to create and maintain clear paths of vision and movement along all traffic arteries. This should be incorporated when the design work is done for road improvement projects.

Local

The majority of roads in Harris County serve as local (minor) streets whose primary function is to provide access to adjacent property. The County has three types of local roads: thru roads with low traffic volumes, dead-end roads, and subdivision streets.

Dead-end roads are frequently unpaved and built on roadbeds, which do not meet current County standards. They serve low-density rural residential and agricultural uses. In some instances, major subdivision development often necessitates a virtual rebuilding of the road to carry the increased traffic. The County needs to continue to upgrade and pave the dirt roads as needed. There are 98 miles of dirt roads and 375 miles of improved roads in the County.

New roads for major subdivision development are expected to be local (minor) streets and are constructed to those standards. When a proposed subdivision is large and to be built in phases or when there is little frontage on the County road system, new roads often exceed desirable traffic

volumes. Roads with traffic volumes in excess of 500 vehicles a day are not desirable where there is continuous residential development and curb cuts along the frontage. Roads expected to carry in excess of 1,000 vehicles per day should have fewer curb cuts and greater width than are required for local roads. For large residential subdivisions, dispersal of traffic to more than one point of ingress/egress is necessary to maintain acceptable traffic levels and to provide an alternative access. For subdivisions where this is not possible, new roads carrying in excess of 1,000 vehicles per day should be built to collector road standards.

There are safety issues regarding very narrow County roads. These roads need to be identified and marked for improvement. A majority of these roads can be repaved with the shoulders widened.

Roads And Bridges

There are 98 miles of dirt roads and 375 miles of improved roads in the County. The County has 42 bridges, eleven of which are in good condition and meet current state standards. Thirty-one (31) of the 42 bridges in the County will have to be upgraded to meet stricter regulations.

Needs Assessment

Airport

The Harris County Airport is located two miles southwest of the Town of Pine Mountain. Access to the airport is provided from Sky Meadows Drive off of SR 18. The airport is a Level II General Aviation Airport, a business airport of local impact. In 2009, numerous improvements will be made to the airport which will include a 10-space T-hangar and fuel farm. These improvements will allow the airport to triple its number of based aircraft. Eighty percent of airport operations are transient general aviation with 20% locally generated. The airport is owned/operated by the County; which is responsible for the runway and maintenance of the grounds.

Harris County Airport is assessed in the Georgia Statewide Aviation System Plan as a Level II General Aviation Airport. Level II airports are considered the foundation of the state airport system's service and utility to the communities of the state. They are also the foundation level upon which the 30-minute accessibility across the state is based.

Needs Assessment

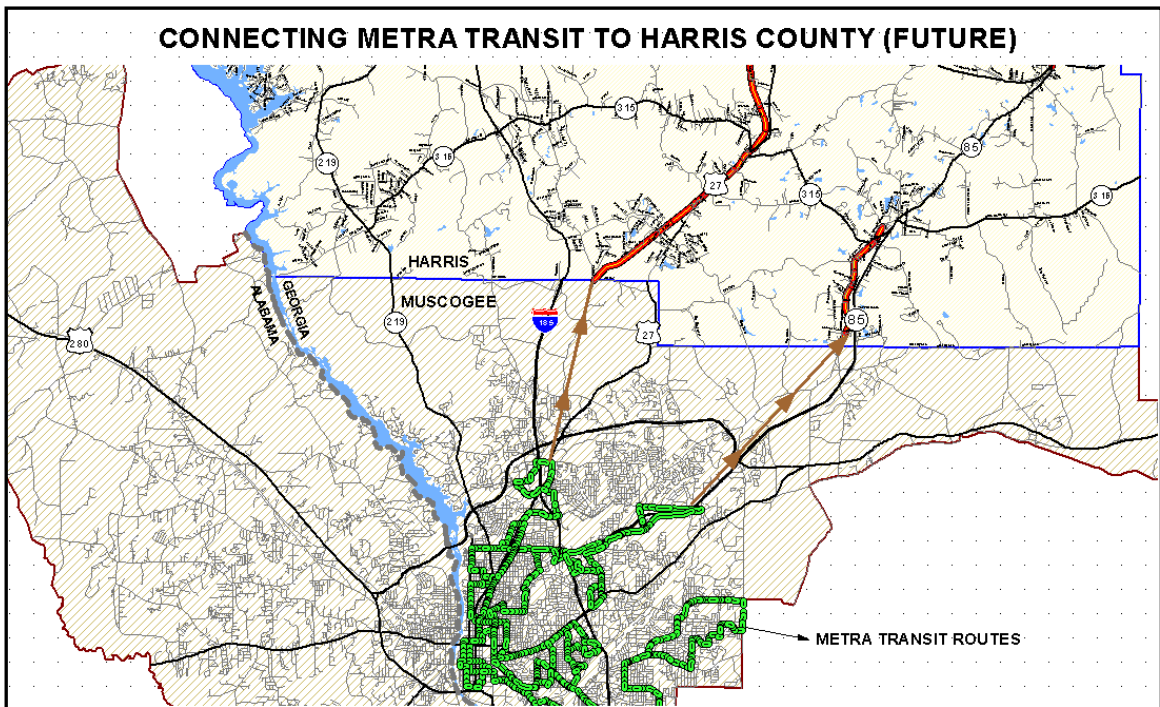
With the improvements noted above, the airport operations are expected to increase. A second T-hangar will be needed in the future.

Public Transportation

Currently, Harris County does not have any type of Public Transportation. According to a recent survey, public transportation was not a priority for the residents of the County. As the County grows, the need for public transportation may increase. With a majority of the population working in Columbus, there could be a Ride-to-Work program set up. This type of program could possibly obtain funding from local businesses that have employees that live in Harris County. Park & Ride stations could be established along Highway 27 and Highway 85. These would be the main transit routes that would connect METRA transit (Columbus, GA) to Harris County in the future (*See Map 6. Public Transportation Connections in Harris County*).

Several years ago, METRA met with community action agencies and discussed possible public transportation. The agencies were interested; however local funding was an issue. A representative from the Georgia Department of Transportation talked with the group about rural funds that may be available. The funding would be based on the level of service needed for the County.

Map 6
Public Transportation Connections in Harris County



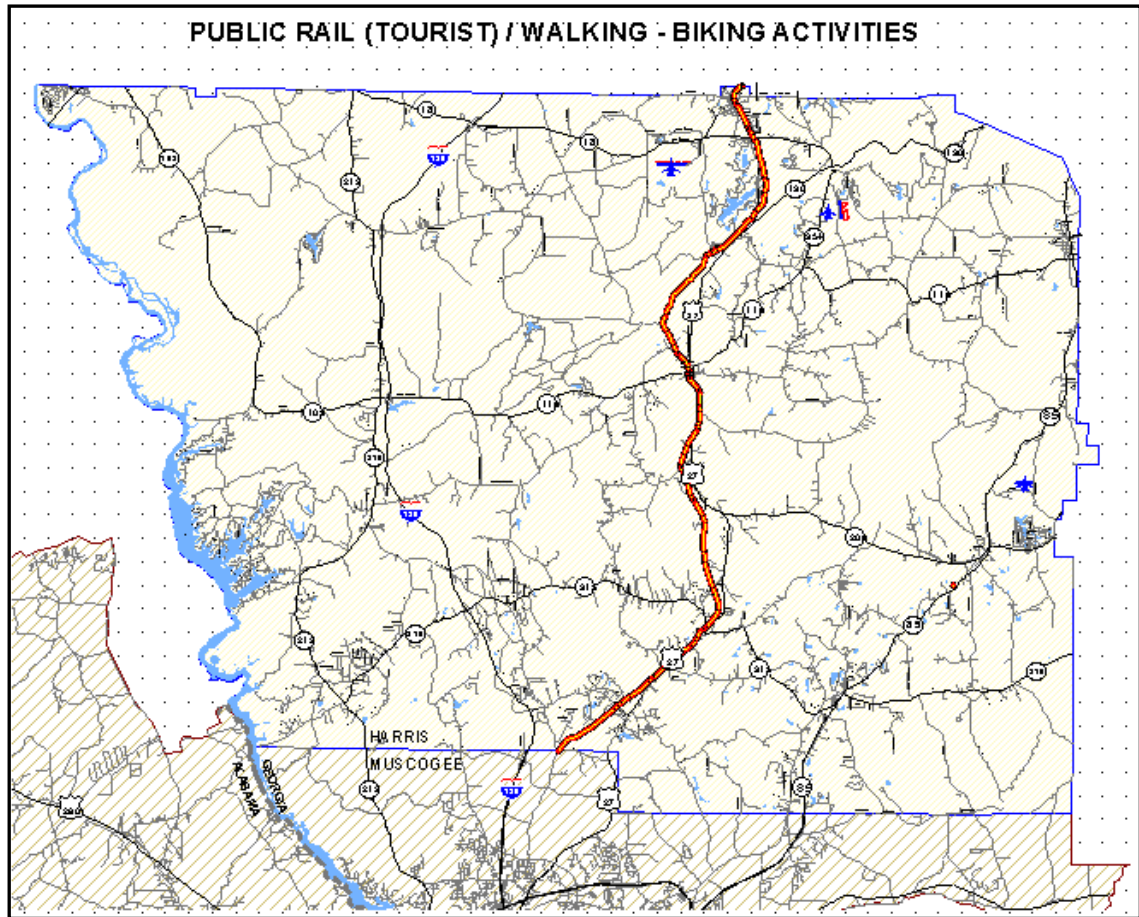
Source: Columbus-Phenix City MPO

Public Rail/Walking – Biking Activities

An abandoned Georgia Southwestern rail line runs parallel with US 27 through the County. Harris County has purchased the abandoned Georgia Southwest rail line and intends to convert the line to a linear bike/pedestrian trail and /or utility easement. In the eastern part of the County, there is an abandoned rail line that at one time was being developed for a commuter rail. This line was to extend from Muscogee County, through Harris County all the way to Griffin, Georgia. There is already an existing commuter rail from Griffin to Atlanta. Plans were put on hold due to funding issues and the lack of commuters may be a problem. The commuter rail would offer the residents of Columbus and Harris County an alternative to driving to Atlanta.

Hamilton, Waverly Hall and Shiloh have walking trails. Pine Mountain/Callaway Gardens offers several walking/biking trails inside the Gardens. When the County built Moultrie Park in Hamilton they included a walking trail around the park. Pate Park also has a walking trail (See Map 7. *Walking-Biking Activities*). F. D. Roosevelt State Park also has numerous hiking trails.

**Map 7
Walking-Biking Activities**



Source: Columbus-Phenix City MPO