7: Freight

INTRODUCTION

The planning team assessed the existing freight network, trends, and public feedback to develop strategies that enhance the movement of goods within and through the region. As the GPATS region continues to grow and the economy places higher demands on the freight network, the condition and efficiency of freight movement into, out of, and through the Upstate will be a major contributor to the region's economic wellbeing.

The region's major freight corridors include I-85, I-185, I-385, US-25, US-29, US-76, US-123, SC-8, SC-153, and SC-418. These corridors connect commercial and economic hubs to locations within the Upstate and to other regions in the state and beyond. These highways are joined by railroads, airports, and pipelines to complete the region's freight network. The network's performance impacts growth and development as well as economic vitality.

Chapter 7 examines the regional freight network with a focus on truck and rail movement and provides a brief overview of existing trends and general recommendations. ***Improvements to the roadway network introduced in Chapter 4 will positively impact the movement of freight.***

Public Perception

The *Horizon 2040* planning process allowed the public to provide input on what they see, and would like to see, in various elements of the freight network. Based on public comments, the main concern was improving safety and congestion caused by freight traffic.

RELEVANCE TO THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Throughout the *Horizon 2040* planning process, the guiding principles provided checks and balances to ensure the recommendations reflected community values and the region's best interests. The freight element reflects the guiding principles in the following ways:

Culture and Environment

LRTPs must acknowledge the unique dynamics of goods movement. For this reason, *Horizon 2040* promotes context sensitive transportation solutions and consistency between transportation improvements, land use decisions, and economic development patterns.

Economic Vitality

Horizon 2040 supports regional economic vibrancy by making it easier to move people and freight within and through the region. This represents one way the LRTP supports broader economic goals in the region and helps position the area to be economically competitive.

Growth and Development

Horizon 2040 recognizes ways the transportation network affects development patterns, property values, and quality of life. Aligning transportation strategies with land use initiatives and promoting a more comprehensive and connected transportation system supports the movement of goods while not detracting from growth.

Mobility and Accessibility

A balanced transportation system that advances mobility and accessibility makes it easier for residents and visitors to move around the region. This type of transportation system helps keep people and goods moving efficiently by addressing the needs of those traveling locally and regionally.

Safety and Security

Increasing the reliability, predictability, and efficiency of the transportation experience with infrastructure projects and enhanced communication is a cornerstone of *Horizon 2040*. Increasing predictability of travel times will have a significant influence on the freight community.

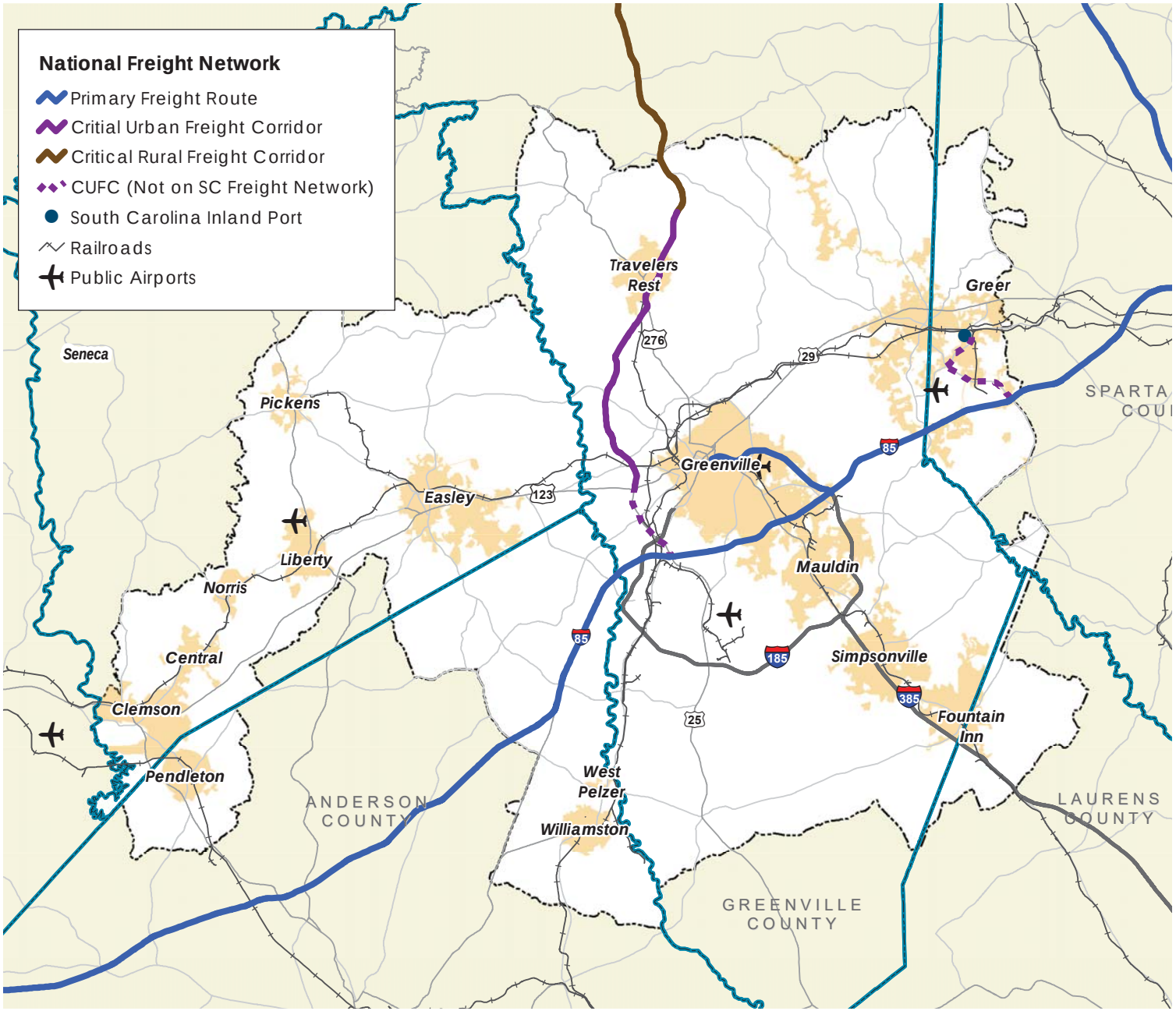
System Preservation and Efficiency

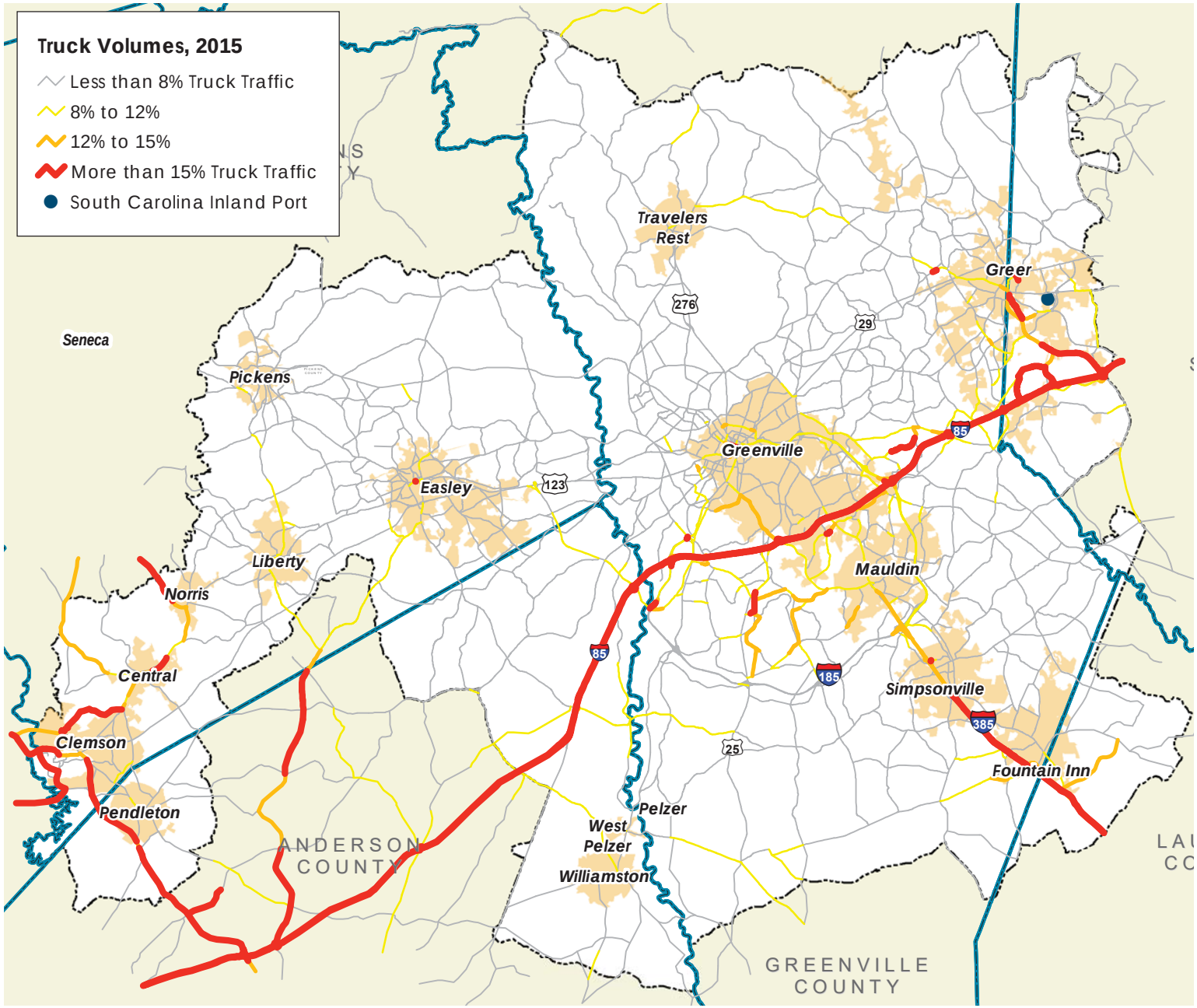
Horizon 2040 envisions a transportation network that prioritizes mobility to sustain and enhance economic goals. The plan's systems management approach maximizes infrastructure investments—those in the past and those to come—to ensure optimal use of the network. The freight community benefits from this focus.

Existing Freight Network

The FHWA-designated freight network in the GPATS region consists of major highways connecting to the South Carolina Inland Port, which opened in 2013, and several commercial airports. It forms the major transportation and logistical connection for South Carolina and the entire Southeast.

Currently, the GPATS area has 135 miles of rail in use, which connects Greenville with Charlotte and Atlanta via Amtrak and serves as a major portion of the Southeast freight network. Rail service at the South Carolina Inland Port in Greer is provided exclusively by Norfolk Southern.





Truck Traffic

As the number of trucks on local roadways grows, it becomes increasingly important to guide them to appropriate routes within the network. The SCDOT Freight Plan included several such routes within the GPATS region in the state's primary freight network, as identified by the map at right. The Freight Plan also identifies two bottlenecks—the I-85/I-385 interchange and the Woodruff Road/I-85 exit. Improvements are being constructed at both exits as part of the I-385 Gateway project so regional freight conditions are expected to improve.

Relevance to the Region

Freight is critical to the regional economy due to the large amount of manufacturing and the region's growing role in state and national logistics. Located between Charlotte and Atlanta and providing easy access to significant interstate highways, the GPATS area continues to attract industry. I-85 is the busiest freight route in the state, with more than 16,000 trucks per day in 2010 (more than twice the volume on I-95, the second busiest route). In addition to trucking, the GPATS region has two Class I railroads, several short-line railroads, and four airports within its boundaries.

South Carolina Inland Port

The GPATS study area is home to the South Carolina Inland Port, which connects to an expansive rail network that allows shipping to and from major cities, such as Atlanta and Charlotte. As a result, decisions concerning the local freight network have impact beyond the Upstate. According to the SCDOT 2014 Statewide Freight Plan, Greenville and Spartanburg Counties were the second and third largest inbound freight destinations in South Carolina—behind only Charleston County. This was caused mainly by port-related traffic and the manufacturing companies headquartered in the Upstate.

According to the South Carolina Ports Authority (SCPA) 2015 Annual Report, SCPA brings $26.8 billion to the Upstate's economy, a large portion of this to the GPATS region.

The South Carolina Inland Port opened in 2013 in Greer, SC.

Future Trends

Truck freight is projected to grow as more businesses with shipping needs move to the Upstate and GPATS study area. Continued expansion of Southeast ports will put pressure on the South Carolina Inland Port and associated infrastructure. The SCDOT Freight Plan expects the total freight tonnage to grow 81% by 2040. According to the most recent data available, the SCPA projected a 23% increase in container volume for the 2016 fiscal year. As a result, the South Carolina Inland Port may increase freight traffic on Upstate roadways as those loads are transferred to trucks to reach final destinations.

General growth in traffic volumes will also increase potential conflicts at rail crossings. GPATS should monitor these trends and target roadways for improvement as necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The movement of goods within and through the Upstate will continue to grow, and freight mobility should remain a high priority of future improvement projects. GPATS should monitor increases in freight activity to ensure infrastructure is in place to efficiently move goods through the region or deliver them to end users. Improvements, such as corridor management, road maintenance, and traffic mitigation, will help priority corridors serve existing and projected freight movements. These improvements also will help prevent freight traffic from spilling over into unsuitable areas, yielding a safer environment for all users.

General Recommendations

Successful freight movement planning efforts incorporate roadway recommendations that increase capacity along select routes. Roadway network improvements should facilitate freight movement; however, GPATS should also consider additional strategies.

State Coordination

The SCDOT Freight Plan identified I-85, which runs through the Upstate, and I-385, located near Greenville, as priority corridors for future freight improvements. GPATS should continue to coordinate with the state as these improvements become necessary and opportunities for these projects become available.

Rail Crossings

The region's numerous active rail lines make railroad crossings more frequent and increases the potential for conflicts. While many crossings have been improved, many remain marked only by signs. GPATS, in partnership with the state and rail providers, will continue to reduce the risk associated with at-grade crossings.

Regional Freight Plan

A super-regional freight plan should evolve through collaboration between policy makers, planners, and stakeholders and a more in-depth review of operations data. The plan, a partnership between metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) and councils of governments (COG), should establish freight needs and strategies for action.

Transportation Technology

The region should continue to invest in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) improvements and find ways to deliver real-time information to freight carriers and the public. Properly designed and executed ITS solutions that provide real-time updates will give all users time to react as traffic conditions change.

Industry Collaboration

Efforts to identify and prioritize improvements based on safety and security should continue to include input from the freight sector. Locations with high truck/automobile conflicts should be monitored to reduce injuries and loss of property.

Freight Security

In addition to safety, stakeholders should continue finding ways to securely move goods within and through the Upstate. Communication with agencies and stakeholders is essential to a proactive approach to security issues. This process requires an effective working relationship with planning officials, law enforcement, emergency response personnel, and freight providers.