

# RFATS

## Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study

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### **Background of RFATS**

The Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS) was created in the early 1960s to administer federal transportation funds in York County. The federal interstate highway system was under construction at that time and required the participation of local transportation groups to perform continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation studies to oversee such projects. The local planning group was initially called the Rock Hill Area Transportation Study (RHATS), and covered the eastern, urbanized portion of York County. The initial goal of RHATS was to develop a long range, twenty-year transportation plan for the area, identifying needed highway improvements through 1985.

Over the years, RHATS was changed to the Rock Hill/Ft. Mill Area Transportation Study or RFATS, to accommodate the addition of Fort Mill and Tega Cay into the transportation study area, thereby adding thousands of new residents. Although the name was changed, the goal of RFATS has remained the same. The study group plans for efficient, safe, and convenient movement of people, goods, and services, utilizing all available modes of travel in York County.

### **Regional Context**

York County is included in the larger Charlotte metropolitan area, which has a total population of over 1.5 million. Immediately south of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte, York County directly benefits from the growth of Charlotte. Interstate 77, one of the five major corridors converging on the Charlotte metropolitan area, bisects the study area. Thus, many of the transportation benefits and challenges in the RFATS Study Area are a direct result of being part of the larger metropolitan region.

As part of the ongoing, comprehensive planning process, the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) has been periodically updated to address transportation improvements and now extends through the year 2020. As an important step in this process, public input was gathered through the local RFATS Policy Committee, made up of locally elected officials, state legislators representing the area, the local SCDOT Commissioner, and a representative from the Catawba Indian Nation. The Long Range Transportation Plan identifies goals and objectives, assesses demographic data, and lists needed improvements to the area transportation system.

### **RFATS Area Planning Process**

Up until recently, transportation improvements have tended to focus on improvements to existing highways or the construction of new highways, usually as a response to growth or traffic congestion. Planning's primary objective was to "get ahead" of traffic problems by predicting future traffic based on current trends and scheduling improvements accordingly. Although two road projects may appear similar in scope, the reasons for each road project can vary. The reasons for an individual road project may include: economic development, improve safety, increase capacity, beautification, air quality improvement, and addressing structural obsolescence.

Transportation planning now tries to take a more proactive and comprehensive approach by accommodating community goals, objectives, identifying available financial resources, as well as growth projections into new plans. Federal transportation policies now favor a multimodal approach towards meeting the mobility needs that includes automobiles, buses, rail, and accommodating both pedestrian and bicyclist needs. Transportation planning is guided by federal legislation called the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) and provides funding for many non-traditional transportation related improvements such as trails and landscaping, as well as for roadway construction projects.

Planning is now done jointly by the local RFATS Policy Committee and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). These two groups along with representatives from other local agencies or groups interested in the study area's transportation issues, work together to create the transportation plan. The Policy Committee is responsible for adopting the RFATS Long Range Transportation Plan and updating it every five years. It is used to guide the preparation, adoption, and implementation of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is a five-year action plan for funding transportation infrastructure and services in the study area.

### **Long Range Transportation Plan**

The RFATS Long Range Transportation Plan was updated in 2003. An extensive public involvement effort was included as part of the plan update. Public meetings were held to identify transportation needs in early 2002 and extended into the late fall of the same year. Many important comments were received and weighed heavily on the types and locations of projects chosen for inclusion in the plan. Due to fiscal constraints, the adopted long range plan focused on safety and intersection improvements for many of the projected transportation projects.

### **Contact Information**

For more information about RFATS, please contact:

Jim Edwards, Transportation Planner  
City of Rock Hill Planning Dept.  
PO Box 11706  
Rock Hill, SC 29731-1706  
Phone: (803) 326-2432  
Fax: (803) 329-7228  
E-Mail: [jhedwards@ci.rock-hill.sc.us](mailto:jhedwards@ci.rock-hill.sc.us)

Bjorn Hansen, Transportation Planner  
York County Planning Dept.  
1070 Heckle Blvd., A-5  
Rock Hill, SC 29732-2863  
Phone: (803) 909-7224  
Fax: (803) 327-7227  
E-Mail: [bjorn.hansen@yorkcountygov.com](mailto:bjorn.hansen@yorkcountygov.com)