

# IN THE CENTER

*Serving Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry and Richland Counties*



## RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN TAKES SHAPE

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

CDBG Awards	2
'Be Smart' Program Enters Phase 2	2
CMCOG Receives Clean Cities Award	2
Wetlands Mitigation Bank	3
Brownfields Grant Application Submit-	3
Elder Abuse Cases On The Rise	3
Hazard Mitigation Plan Under Development	4

Central Midlands COG is updating its approach to rural transportation planning. For the first time, TransCad transportation modeling software is being used to produce a Rural Transportation Plan for the Region – technology which, until now, had only been used in the urban planning areas in South Carolina.

In the past, rural transportation projects were identified at the local level and prioritized for funding at the COG, before having funding allocated by SC DOT. Using a model to determine transportation needs will result in a more technical, methodical and more realistic approach to the planning process, as the model requires the input of an array of demographic data and traffic count information for both the base year (2000), and the horizon year (2025).

This revised approach has been designed to allow local citizens more opportunity to identify potential projects and comment on proposed improvements. Four preliminary



CMCOG Rural Transportation Study Area

public workshops are to be held in February.

Wayne Shuler, Interim Transportation Director, says the new approach "will give us a much more complete document, giving us a comprehensive look at transportation issues in the rural parts of our region."

CMCOG staff have already built the model, which is now being calibrated. "The output

from the model will be most enlightening," says Gregory Sprouse, GIS Manager, as "it will identify road segments which are expected to fail capacity by 2025."

Ultimately, this new approach will offer a similar process to that used in the urban plan, which should allow for better distribution of the \$2.4 million available each year for rural transportation planning activities.

### In The News at CMCOG...

We would like to welcome our newest board members:

Steve Brakefield -  
Fairfield County

Carnell Murphy -  
Fairfield County Council Chairman

Billy Derrick -  
Lexington County Council Member

Kenny Bingham -  
Lexington County Legislative Delegation

Peggy Butler -  
City of West Columbia Council Member

## COMMERCIAL PROPERTY GROWTH HEALTHY IN 2003

Despite all the recent economic upheavals experienced throughout the state, the commercial real estate market in the Central Midlands Region remains relatively healthy. Although the overall amount of vacant leasable office space increased for the region as a whole from 17.4%

to 18.1% over the last year, in Downtown Columbia, vacancy rates fell from 12.8% to 12% according to CMCOG's 2003 Commercial Real Estate Report.

In the retail sector, vacancy rates showed only a slight increase from 9.5% to 10.1%.

Evelyn Gealy who compiled the report says that Downtown Columbia office vacancy rates are "amongst the lowest in the country. Vacancies are relatively low despite the tough economic climate. In 2004, we expect to see a continued strengthening of the commercial real estate market."

## REGION RECEIVES MORE THAN \$1 MILLION IN GRANT FUNDS

In December 2003, received grant funds totaling \$1.125 million when all five of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications submitted from around the region were funded.

"We're absolutely thrilled to have had all five applications approved, said Robin Cooley, Senior Planner & Grants Coordinator at Central Midlands COG. "These projects will mean a lot to the local governments and residents in these communities."

- Newberry County - \$371,753 to rehabilitate the former Carver Elementary School near Whitmire for use as a community center
- Town of Whitmire - \$260,000 to upgrade the Town's water treatment plant
- Town of Winnsboro - \$20,000 to perform a study of the Town's housing stock

The successful applicants from the Fall 2003 funding cycle were:

- Fairfield County - \$185,000 to rehabilitate 9 houses in the Winnsboro Mill Village
- Town of Lexington - \$288,300 to rehabilitate 9 houses in "The Hill"

Application requests for the Spring 2004 funding round are due March 18th. Contact Robin Cooley (803-376-5390) for more details.



Home to be Renovated with CDBG funds

Please visit our newly updated website  
[www.centralmidlands.org](http://www.centralmidlands.org)  
 "Our Data, Your Resource!"

## AWARD WINNING "BE SMART" PROGRAM ENTERS SECOND PHASE

CMCOG's award-winning "Be Smart" Program begins its second phase later this year and continues the collaboration of Clemson Extension Services, SC Department of Consumer Affairs and Central Midlands Area Agency on Aging.

held throughout the region to receive information on how to protect themselves against problems such as identity theft and Medicare fraud.

nity to ask questions to the agencies participating in this Program. Phase 1 of "Be Smart" can also be seen on video and is available to the public via the Central Midlands Area Agency on Aging.

In Phase 2, almost 400 senior citizens attended sessions

The "Be Smart" Program was also presented at the recent Celebration of Life After 55 Exposition in January at the SC State Fairgrounds. Almost 600 people had the opportunity

Information on both Phase 1 and Phase 2 is available from Carol Abrahamson (803) 376-5390.

The Central Midlands Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman has developed a guide for families of residents in Long-Term Care Facilities.

"Navigating Through The System" provides a wealth of information regarding Family Councils, Resident's Rights, the Omnibus Adult Protection Act and much more.

## CMCOG HONORED WITH CLEAN CITIES AWARD

At a ceremony at the SC State Museum in January, CMCOG was recognized as a leader in improving air quality, and enhancing public awareness of alternative fuels through its commitment to and participation in the US Department of Energy's Clean Cities Program.

of vehicles powered by alternative fuels, thereby reducing the dependency on imported petroleum. There are currently more than 1,200 alternative fuel vehicles operated by fleets within South Carolina, with an additional 2,000 new AFVs expected to be on the road by 2008.

the newest "Clean City" in the country by the US Department of Energy. Approximately 80 similar coalitions exist nationwide, comprising more than 47,000 stakeholders. For more information on the Clean Cities Program visit [www.palmettocleanfuels.org](http://www.palmettocleanfuels.org).

The Clean Cities Program was created with one over-riding mission: to advance the use

The Palmetto State Clean Fuels Coalition (comprising 9 counties) was also designated



## CMCOG TACKLES BROWNFIELDS PROJECTS

Brownfield sites are defined as real property, of which the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.

Central Midlands Council of Governments has applied for a \$200,000 in federal grant funds from the Environmental Protection Agency to advance the goals of Brownfield redevelopment in the region. CMCOG will utilize the funds for the identification of Brownfield sites, assessment of their condition and the development of concepts for site remediation. CMCOG will work with local governments

to establish a Central Midlands Brownfields Task Force that will work to create an awareness of Brownfields redevelopment efforts and create sustainable reuse plans for identified sites that are prioritized for redevelopment plans. Efforts will be made to redevelop sites throughout the Central Midlands region with concentration on major needs areas.

Central Midlands COG plans to build on the foundation of the US EPA Brownfields program by continuing the efforts made to reuse property for capital investments, help increase local tax bases of local governments and create jobs by involving citizens in the

redevelopment process. Ongoing efforts to spur economic development for local governments will be met by assisting in the implementation of long-range planning efforts of the respective locale in the identification of reusable vacant properties.

For more information on Brownfields, contact Tiaa Booker, Senior Planner on (803) 376-5390



**Brownfield Sites Have Redevelopment Potential**

## WETLANDS MITIGATION BANK PLANNED

Central Midlands Council of Governments is in the process of selecting a consultant to develop a wetland and stream mitigation bank for the Central Midlands Region.

The bank would be available to property owners interested in selling mitigation credits.

The COG would assist the property owner by determining the number of credits available on the property, and selling the credits to interested buyers needing to mitigate wetland and stream encroachment as part of their development.

The COG issued an RFP in

late December 2003 and hopes to select a consultant in early February.



**SC Wetlands need protection as Development continues.**

## ELDER ABUSE CASES CONTINUE TO RISE

In FY 2002-03, the Central Midlands Regional Long - Term Care Ombudsman Program logged 1,255 cases; the highest number of cases reported in 9 years. This represents a 172% increase from the 461 cases reported in 1994-95.

The Ombudsman program investigates, or causes to be investigated, reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation on behalf of residents in

long term care facilities. Quality of care issues, improper discharges and residents rights issues are also addressed and investigated.

Anna Harmon, Regional Ombudsman Program Coordinator, attributes two main reasons for the increase in the number of cases reported. "There are now more long term care beds in the region than and the public is now

more aware of the courses of action open to them if they suspect family members in long term care facilities are being abused or neglected," said Ms. Harmon.



*"The challenges associated with Brownfields Redevelopment can be compared to solving the Rubik's Cube; however, it's not as simple as peeling off the labels. It takes patience and time to address all the complexities."*

**Joe Alexander**  
**NC Research Triangle Institute**



The official newsletter of CMCOG

Central Midlands Council of Governments  
236 Stoneridge Drive

Phone: 803-376-5390  
Fax: 803-376-5394

Email: webmaster@centralmidlands.org

Visit us on the Web!  
www.centralmidlands.org

Central Midlands COG  
welcomes our newest  
staff members

*LaToya Buggs* is our newest Ombudsman Investigator. Ms. Buggs received her BA from Paine College in Augusta, GA and joins us permanently having worked with us previously on a temporary basis.

*Roland Bart* joins us as Senior Transportation Planner. Mr. Bart comes to us from the SC Department of Transportation. Mr. Bart also previous worked as a transportation planner with the Gastonia, NC MPO.

Articles contributed by  
CMCOG staff

CMCOG BOARD MEMBER

c/o CENTRAL MIDLANDS COG

236 GREYSTONE BLVD

COLUMBIA, SC 29210

## REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UNDER DEVELOPMENT

In response to the 2000 Disaster Mitigation Act, the South Carolina Councils of Government were contracted by the SC Emergency Management Division to prepare regional Hazard Mitigation and Risk Assessment Plans. The federal legislation was enacted to ensure that mitigation action plans are adopted at the local level. The primary components of the plan include: a comprehensive natural hazard risk assessment, a social vulnerability study, and an inventory of potential mitigation goals and projects.

The CMCOG Planning and Research Departments are using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a key component of the planning process. GIS is used to analyze historical weather patterns and 2000 census data to create a series of maps illustrating where natural hazard events are occurring and how these events are affect-

ing the communities of the central midlands region. Natural Hazards such as hurricanes, wildfire, hail, tornados, and earthquakes are all included in the analysis.

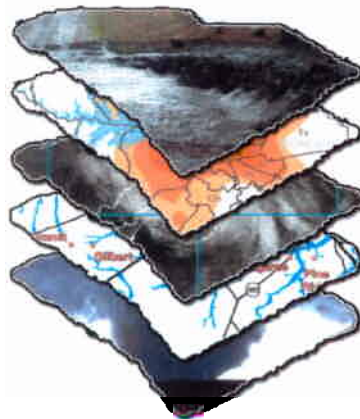
Countywide planning committees are using the hazard maps

and demographic data to identify potential mitigation projects within their local jurisdictions. These core-planning teams consist of representatives from local governments, school districts, state agencies, utility companies, emergency management personnel, and the general public.

Upon completion, a draft of the plan including letters of initial support from participating town, cities, and counties will be submitted to the Emergency Management Division of the S. C. Adjutant General's office.

A final draft of the report should be completed by the end of June 2004.

Any questions or input into this process should be directed to John Huffman at the offices of Central Midlands Council of Governments.



GIS is used to mitigate against natural disasters.