



PARKING MATTERS

 **PARKING MATTERS** | A Strategic Plan for
Parking + Mobility
in Savannah

Technical Report 3.2 REVIEW OF TRANSIT, BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES AND OTHER MOBILITY OPTIONS

Prepared for the
Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission
and the
City of Savannah Department of Mobility and Parking Services

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Prepared by
Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates in partnership with
Symbioscity | VHB | Carl Walker, Inc.

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Technical Report 3.2

Review of Transit, Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities and Other Mobility Options

This technical report discusses the mobility options available to and around central Savannah, with a specific focus on non-vehicular options that do not require use of the automobile parking facilities discussed in other technical reports. The purpose of identifying and studying these options is to understand how they complement vehicle travel as partner components in overall downtown mobility in Savannah.

The city is renowned for its street plan, and its complete grid of blocks and squares is a natural facilitator for walking, bicycling, and other low-impact travel options. This, combined with the recent growth in the tourism industry in Savannah, has led to a recognition of need for enhanced mobility options, many of which are currently provided through partnerships of public and private organizations.

Understanding these travel options will be key to developing a strategic plan for overall mobility in downtown Savannah, especially as limited opportunities exist for adding vehicle parking in the Historic District. Increasing demand for travel to destinations in the greater downtown area suggests that addressing parking alone cannot be the only solution to downtown's transportation needs.

A review of these mobility services is presented in the following sections:

1. Key Agencies and Organizations
2. Modal Options and Their Operations



KEY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

It is helpful to understand the role that particular agencies and organizations play in providing mobility options. Many of Savannah's services are not the responsibility of conventional public agencies such as city government departments or transit service providers.

CITY OF SAVANNAH MOBILITY AND PARKING SERVICES

The City of Savannah Department of Mobility and Parking Services oversees parking management and enforcement for all of the City's on-street parking as well as five off-street garages and one off-street lot; these services are discussed extensively in Technical Reports 5.1 and 6.1.

However, the department is also responsible for regulation of numerous mobility-related services, especially taxis and shared-ride or transportation network services such as Uber and Lyft. The department has also coordinated other services such as installing bicycle racks and conducting travel surveys and counts for cyclists. It partners with the Metropolitan Planning Commission/Coastal Region MPO on implementation of bicycle plans and projects.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION/ COASTAL REGION MPO

The Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO) is the federally-designated

MPO for the Savannah metropolitan area and as such is responsible for programming and allocation of federal transportation funding. Its partner organization, the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) has led numerous transportation planning initiatives for Savannah and is currently working with the City on implementation of a bicycle plan.

SAVANNAH MOBILITY MANAGEMENT, INC. (SAMMI)

Downtown Savannah does not have an established business improvement district (BID), or what would be legally organized in Georgia as a community improvement district (CID). Instead, it features a series of industry-focused organizations, such as the Downtown Business Association (focused on retail and professional services businesses) and the Tourism Leadership Council (a trade group for hotels and the hospitality industry) that share information and help to advocate for public policy and infrastructure enhancement.

In this absence of a conventional BID that augments services already provided by the local government, Savannah has created a unique agency, Savannah Mobility Management, Inc. (SaMMI), a 501(c)6 non-profit organization jointly governed by the City of Savannah and the Savannah Chamber of Commerce. SaMMI collects fees from member organizations and a surcharge on occupied hotel room-nights and combines these with public funding sources, primarily from the City of Savannah. The organization in turn offers a series of transportation services.

SaMMI was created with the development and adoption of the Savannah Visitor Mobility Plan in 2005, itself born out of a recognized need for improving mobility options for downtown visitors and better unifying the downtown built environment. The plan identified several transportation services intended to enhance overall mobility and reinforce the ‘Savannah Experience’ for visitors.

Funding for the services that SaMMI provides comes from two main sources: fees defined in the City’s 2006 Savannah Convention District Ordinance, including a lodging fee on occupied hotel rooms and a special property tax millage on Hutchinson Island properties; and supplemental funding from the City and private organizations. The first source of funding is distributed among all of the mobility services that SaMMI provides, where the supplemental funding is used to cover operations of the Savannah Belles Ferry discussed later in this report.

SaMMI provides the following services:

- Savannah Belles Ferry (discussed later in the section on modal options): a ferry crossing the Savannah River between two landings in the Historic District and one on Hutchinson Island
- River Street Streetcar: a small single-track streetcar line on the Historic District waterfront
- Dot circulator shuttle: one of three downtown shuttles connecting various locations around the Historic District
- Wayfinding: a unified wayfinding system using a design template adopted by the City of Savannah
- Distribution of passenger Information through printed media

CITY OF SAVANNAH TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND AMBASSADORSHIP

Some mobility services and functions related specifically to the tourist and visitor industry are managed by the City’s Department of Tourism Management and Ambassadorship, a recently-created department established to improve the visitor experience in Savannah and advance regulations for the tourism industry in a way that balances it with neighborhood quality of life.

Among the services that it offers are permitting and regulation of motor coaches, privately-owned and operated tourist trolley services, and Savannah’s pedicab (bicycle taxi) companies.

CHATHAM AREA TRANSIT

Chatham Area Transit (CAT) is the Savannah area’s public transit service provider and is a stand-alone authority operating within a designated service district. CAT provides fixed route and paratransit bus service, with 17 fixed routes in its system. Because of the location of its main facility, the Joe Murray Rivers Intermodal Transit Center, in the Parking Matters study area, 14 of the system’s routes serve the study area. Most of these operate in the core downtown historic district. These routes include an express service to the Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport and along Abercorn Street, one of the region’s major retail corridors outside of central Savannah.

MODAL OPTIONS

These agencies provide a series of transportation options, either as active services (such as transit) or through delivery of infrastructure projects that establish space in the public right-of-way for non-motorized users. These modal options for downtown are discussed in the following sections.

BICYCLE SYSTEM

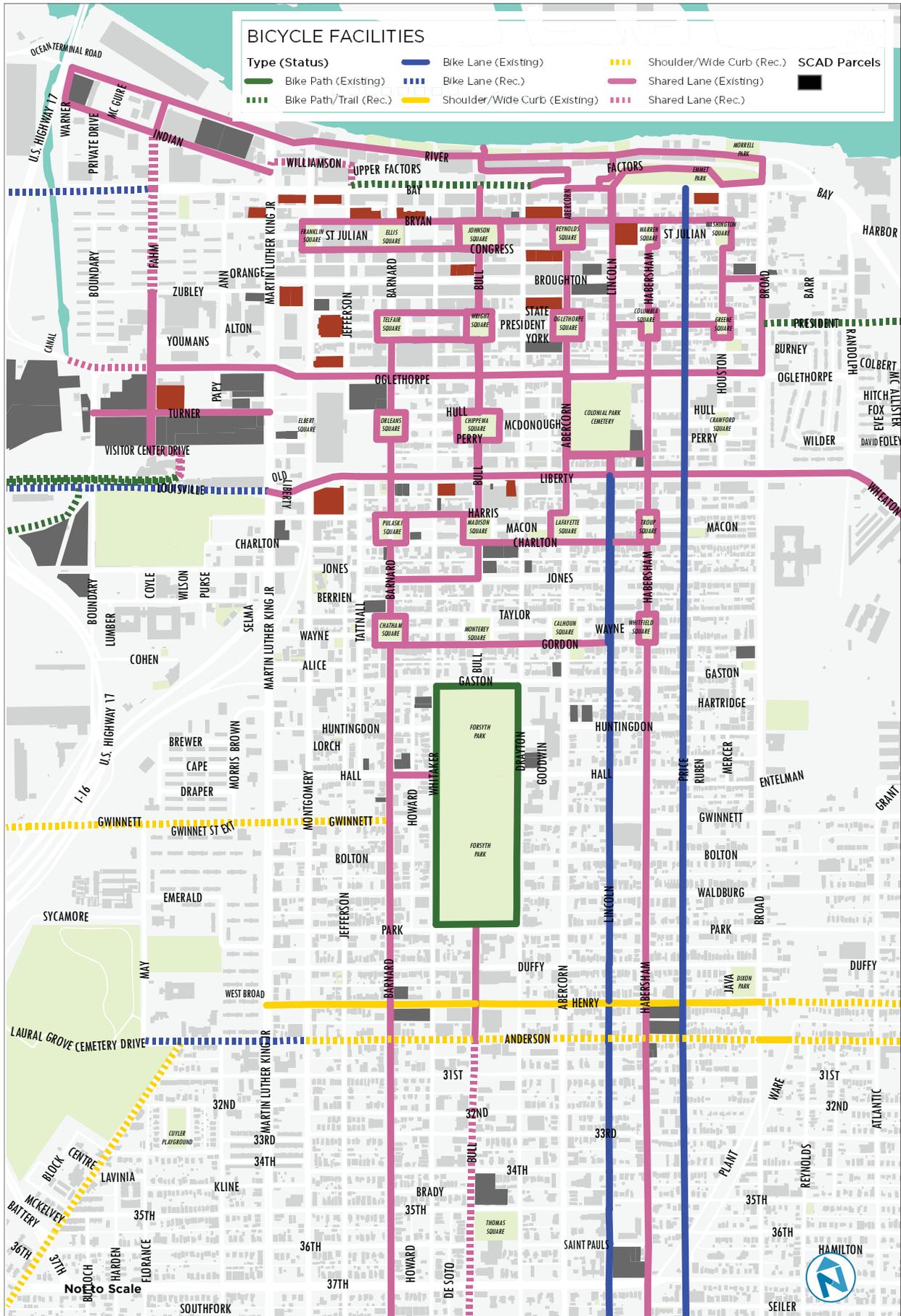
The bicycle route network in downtown Savannah currently consists of a limited number of on-street facilities, although the City and Coastal Region MPO have worked jointly toward implementing a more comprehensive system. Savannah's squares offer a unique opportunity for reducing vehicle speeds,

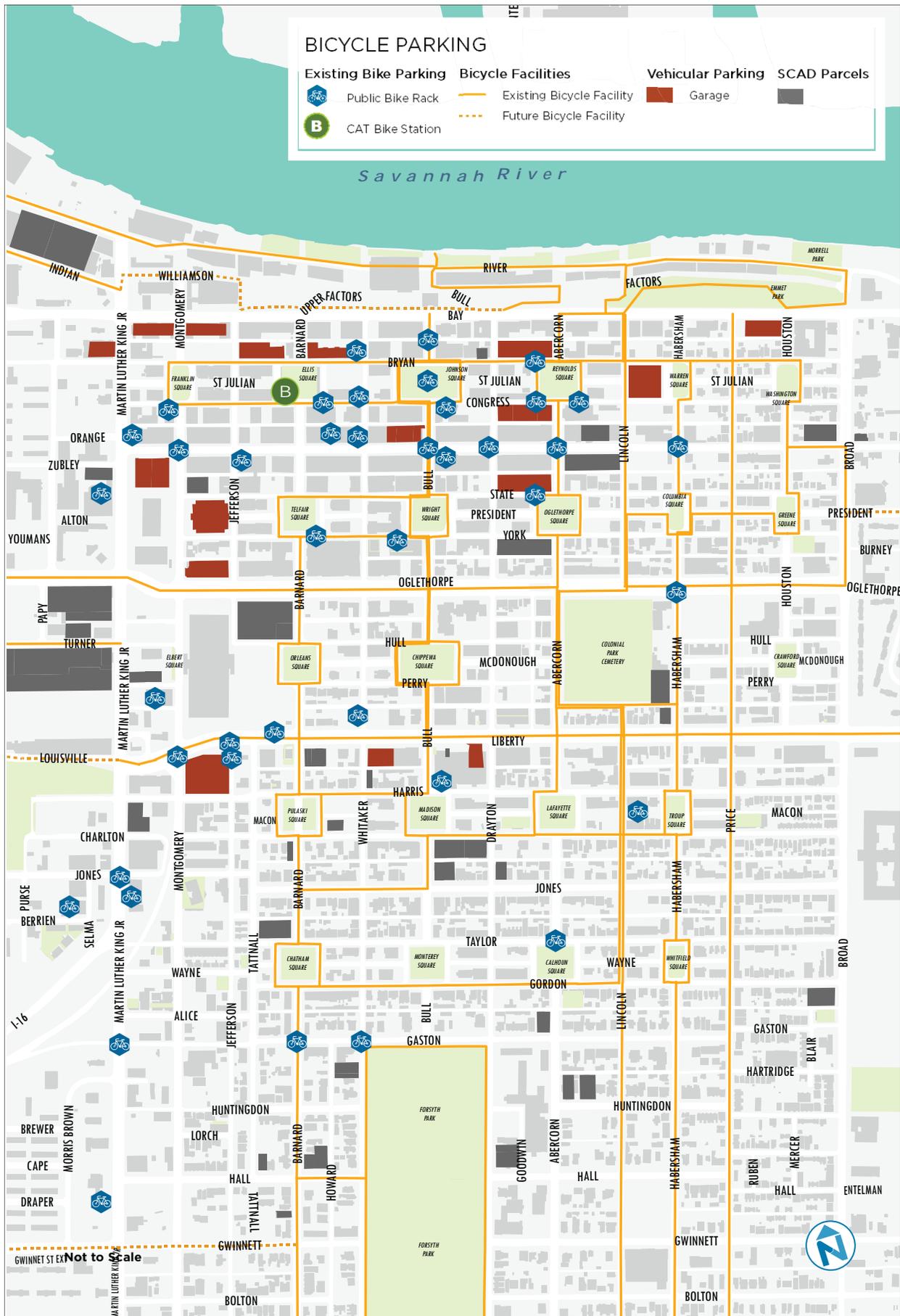
leading to a potentially safe street environment for cycling, and the city's flat terrain greatly reduces barriers to cyclist comfort—even if climate and weather are not always ideal for cycling. However, because of the unique nature of the street system and built environment, current plans call for a bicycle network to be achieved through a combination of off-street paths, on-street bike lanes, shared streets and marked shoulders. The map on the following page illustrates this network and the current status of its implementation.

In addition, the City, MPC/CORE MPO and the Savannah College of Art and Design have installed bicycle parking racks and other facilities throughout the Parking Matters study area, with ongoing additions continuing to happen during the course of the study. The map on page 8 illustrates locations of these along with the planned route system and the two existing CAT Bike bicycle sharing stations. Most bicycle parking locations are in the Historic District core, although other large concentrations are available at and around the Civic Center and Forsyth Park.



Bicycle parking outside of the SCAD Jen Library on Abercorn Street. Although SCAD does not track the number of registered bicycle users per year, it estimates that as many as 500 new bicycles are registered each semester.





SCAD Bicycle Use

The Savannah College of Art and Design currently enrolls approximately 9,000 students in Savannah, with most of them regularly accessing SCAD facilities in the Parking Matters study area. Although not specifically documented, it is generally accepted that SCAD's growth in student population has contributed to an increase in bicycle travel downtown. SCAD does not maintain numbers of students who register bicycles with the SCAD Public Safety Office, though it strongly encourages students to do so and estimates that a recent drive publicized among the student community yielded 500 new registrations.

SCAD has also invested heavily in providing bicycle parking at and near its buildings. The college does not track these locations, but it generally has parking available at most major facilities. Field surveys of these facilities on typical weekdays while SCAD was in regular semester session showed that they were in heavy use, as suggested in the image on page 6.

CAT Bike Bicycle Sharing Program

Chatham Area Transit has launched CAT Bike, a pilot bicycle share program in downtown Savannah, operated by the B-Cycle company and currently featuring two locations in the northwestern part of downtown near Ellis Square and the CAT Transit Center on Oglethorpe Street (shown in the map on the previous page). At the time of writing this report, the City and CAT have reached tentative agreement on the installation of five additional stations throughout the historic district, though these are not yet open to the public.

Like many bicycle sharing programs throughout the United States, CAT Bike is a subscription-based program that allows customers to check out bikes from fixed locations (hubs or stations) and to return them to the same or any other station with available capacity. Customers may subscribe annually, paying a single fee for an entire year, or on seven-day, three-day or 24-hour terms. Bicycles are checked out from stations using membership cards (for annual users) or credit cards of payment, and users are allowed 60 minutes of free use at a time with their



The CAT Bike program is a pilot bicycle sharing program with two locations in the Parking Matters area. At the time of this report, five additional locations were being considered for expansion of the system.

basic subscription. Any single period of use extending beyond 60 minutes incurs additional charges.

Because of the current small scale of the program, data on bicycle use is limited, though the system is enabled with technological capability to report usage, where individual bicycles are checked out and returned, and average length of stay.

TRANSIT SYSTEM

CAT Fixed Routes

Chatham Area Transit (CAT) currently operates 14 fixed routes into the Parking Matters study area, all terminating at its central transfer facility, the Joe Murray Rivers Intermodal Transit Center, on Oglethorpe Street toward the western study area boundary. Service is operated from the Transit Center on a pulse scheduling system, with transfers occurring generally on the hour and half-hour. CAT operates most service between the hours of 5:00 AM and 10:00 PM on weekdays, with some routes providing later service and others providing service for much shorter spans of the day. Frequencies vary, though most routes operate on 30 or 60-minute headways, in peak and mid-day periods. With one exception (Route 25 at select times on Saturdays), no fare-based fixed route operates on headways of less than 30 minutes.

Base fares on the system are \$1.50 per trip with free transfers, though CAT also offers reduced fares for eligible users (per industry practice) and a variety of fare products for multiple trips. Three of these, a ten-ride pass and a seven- and 31-day pass, may be used on a reloadable smart card (the CAT Card) that also works with the CAT Bike bicycle sharing system (discussed in a later section of this report). In addition, CAT provides two express services: one for commuters that connects from the Transit Center to the Gateway Park and Ride on Interstate 95, and another with direct service to the Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport.

CAT is a relatively small system, with approximately 3.6 million unlinked trips per year on the overall system and 2.6 million on only the local fixed routes. This equates to roughly 3,500 riders on an average weekday, CAT does not collect ridership information by specific transit stops, although it has estimated levels of its ridership that originate or terminate within the Parking Matters study area (around 1,500 daily riders).

The map on the following page shows the location of the CAT fixed routes along with parallel shuttle services described in the following sections. The table on page 12 provides additional detail on CAT fixed-route and shuttle service frequency and ridership.

BASIC CAT SERVICE INFORMATION	
Fare Structure	
Base Fare (local routes)	\$1.50
Airport Express (Route 100X)	\$5.00 one way, \$8.00 round trip
Commuter Express (Route 114X)	\$2.00
Transfers	Free
Reduced Fares (Youth, Senior, Disability)	\$0.75
Day Pass	\$3.00
Ten-Ride Pass	\$15.00
Seven-Day Pass	\$14.00
Monthly Pass	\$50.00
Service Characteristics	
General weekday service span (times of day operating)	5:00 am - 11:00 pm
General Saturday service span	5:00 am - 11:00 pm
General Sunday service span	7:00 am - 7:00 pm



BASIC CAT SERVICE INFORMATION

CAT Fixed Routes							
Route Number and Name	Weekday Peak Frequency (minutes)	Weekday Midday Frequency (minutes)	Weekday Evening Frequency (minutes)	Saturday Frequency (minutes)	Sunday Frequency (minutes)	Annual Ridership	ESTIMATED Annual Ridership in Parking Matters Study Area
3 - West Chatham	30	60	60	60	--	198,616	8,515
4 - Barnard	30	90	60	60	--	143,982	21,090
10 - East Savannah	60	60	60	60	--	193,757	3,697
11 - Candler	90	--	--	--	--	19,607	6,765
14 - Abercorn Local	30	30	60	30	60	754,801	257,691
17 - Silk Hope	60	60	60	60	120	194,709	14,852
25 - MLK Jr. Blvd. / Westlake Apts.	30	30	60	20-60	30-60	331,603	72,836
27 - Waters	60	60	60	60	60	239,028	419
28 - Waters	60	60	--	60	--	191,882	57,770
29 - W. Gwinnett / Cloverdale	60	60	60	60	60	92,533	3,475
31 - Skidaway / Sandfly	30-60	60	60-120	60	120	250,956	6,648
Shuttle Services							
dot Shuttle	20	20	20	20	20	167,364	167,364
Liberty Street Parking Shuttle	10	--	20 (Friday Only)	20	--	24,877	24,877
River Street Streetcar	20-30 (PM only, Th-F)	20-30 (PM only, Th-F)	20-30 (Th-F)	20-30 (after 12P only)	--	34,342	34,342
Savannah Belles Ferry (discussed in Other Mobility Options)	20-30	30	20	20-30	20-30	763,705	763,705

Shuttle Services

Downtown is served by two fare-free shuttle routes open to any users: the Dot operated by SaMMI and CAT and a shuttle intended to serve the Liberty Street garage and promote its use by downtown workers and visitors wishing to reach destinations closer to the downtown core. These are described in more detail as follows:

- The Dot, operated by CAT under contract from SaMMI, is designed to link the streetcar and ferry services to hotels, the Civic Center, and parking facilities. The service currently features two vehicles in operation, with generally 20 minute intervals between service.
- Liberty Street shuttle, which provides connecting service between the Liberty Street garage and other downtown destinations.

All three of these shuttles generally serve the same geographic area (the Historic District), with occasional overlap in routes throughout the system and share some stops, both with one another and with the CAT fare-based fixed routes. The map on the following

page shows their routes and provides information on annual ridership on each.

River Street Streetcar

The City SaMMI operates a single-track streetcar line along River Street between Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and the Marriott Hotel (River Street's eastern end). Currently the service operates only Thursdays through Sundays from noon to 9 PM. Riders do not pay a fare, and SaMMI contributes 50 cents per rider to support operations.

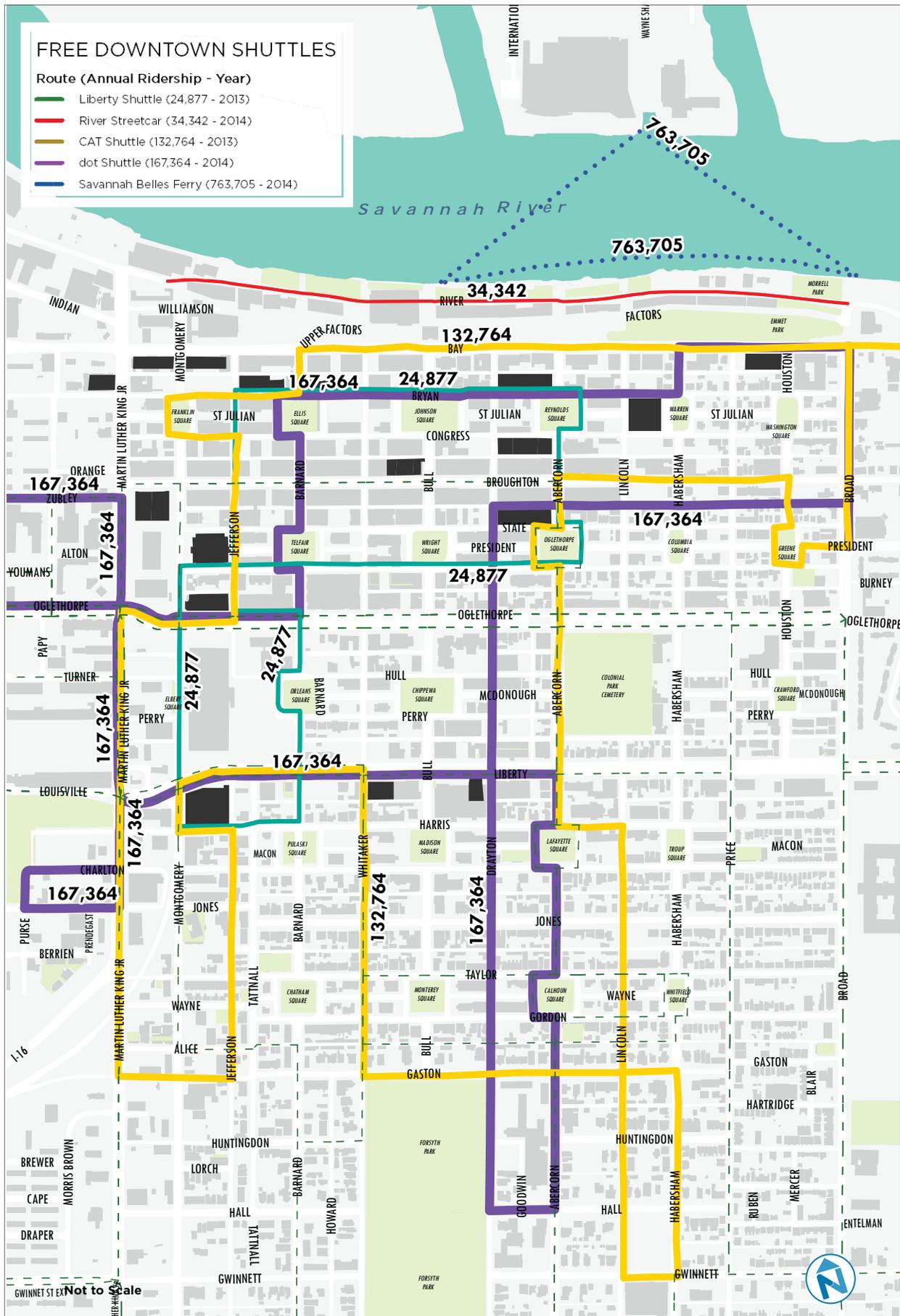
CAT has begun studying extensions of the streetcar and currently has presented two concepts: one for an eastern extension along President Street to connect to planned development, and another south along Fahm Street to connect to the CAT Intermodal Transit Center on Oglethorpe Street and to a proposed arena site west of the Parking Matters study area.

SCAD Transit

SCAD operates its own bus system, the Bee Line bus service serving students, faculty and staff and



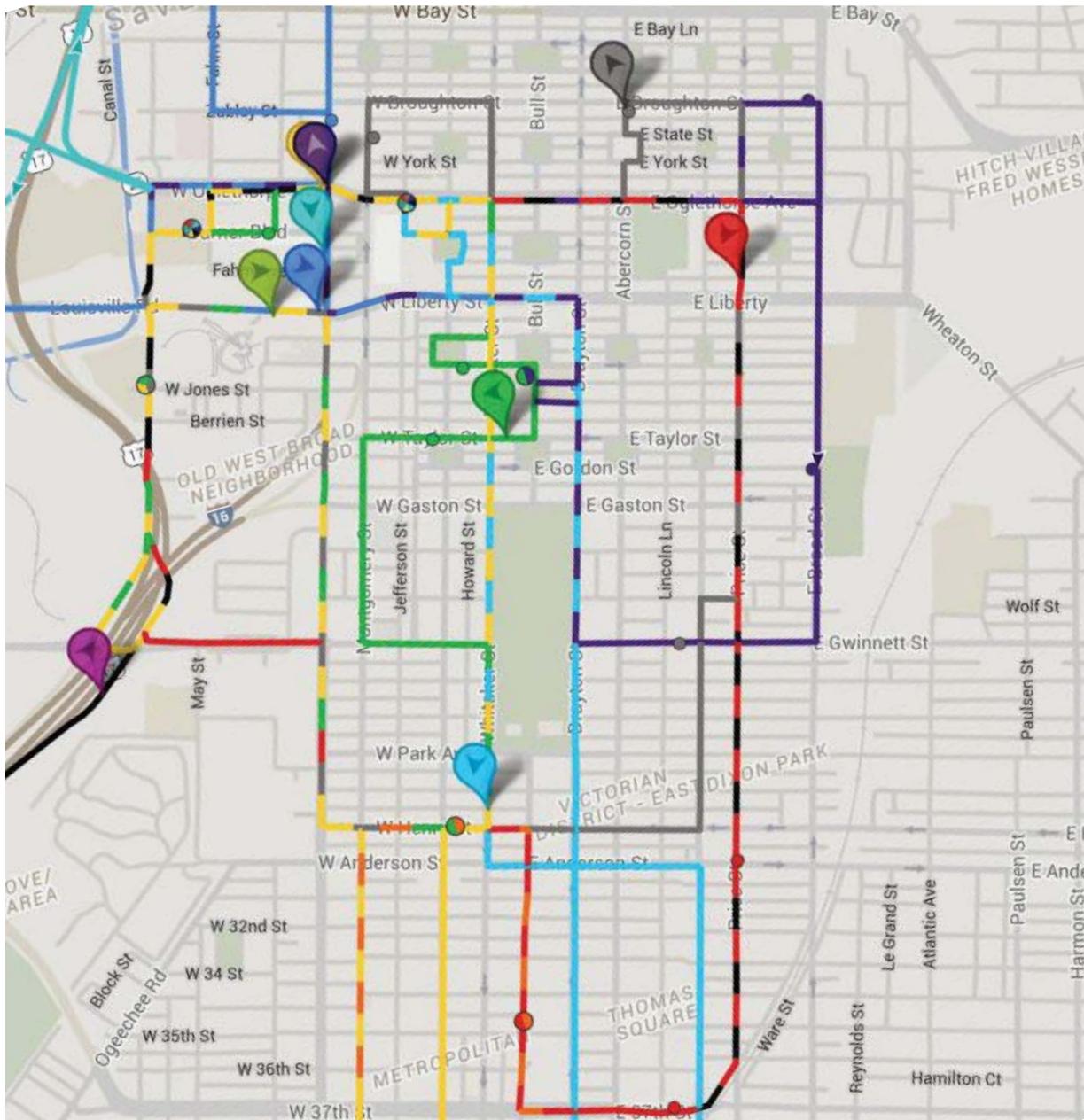
SaMMI's River Street Streetcar provides service along River Street Thursday through Sunday afternoons. Although the service currently only spans the length of the Historic District waterfront, CAT and SaMMI are studying expansion.



connecting the College's facilities around central Savannah. This system is not open for public use and requires a SCAD identification card in order to board. The system currently operates 10 routes, extending as far south as Derenne Avenue and connecting to other remote facilities outside of downtown such as the Savannah Film Studio.

Usage data for the system are not publicly available, but the service runs throughout the weekday as well as after class hours and are free of charge for SCAD students, faculty and staff.

SCAD provides a real-time bus arrival and location service through TransLoc, with internet and mobile applications for tracking bus locations.



PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

With one of the country's best-known street plans, Savannah enjoys the benefit of a connected grid of blocks in its downtown. All downtown streets are equipped with sidewalks, and the squares of the historic district also feature walkways and paths that help to shorten travel distances on foot and provide direct routes.

However, not all sidewalks are of the same level of comfort and design quality, and navigation on foot is critical for a downtown with numerous destinations.

Sidewalk Condition

Sidewalks in downtown are generally complete and meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), although as with any mature built environment with street trees, condition of some sidewalks is compromised by tree root growth, soil settling or other environmental factors. Additionally, as might be expected in an older urban area, many street rights-of-way are narrow and leave little sidewalk space, especially on lower-traffic side streets in the core business district.

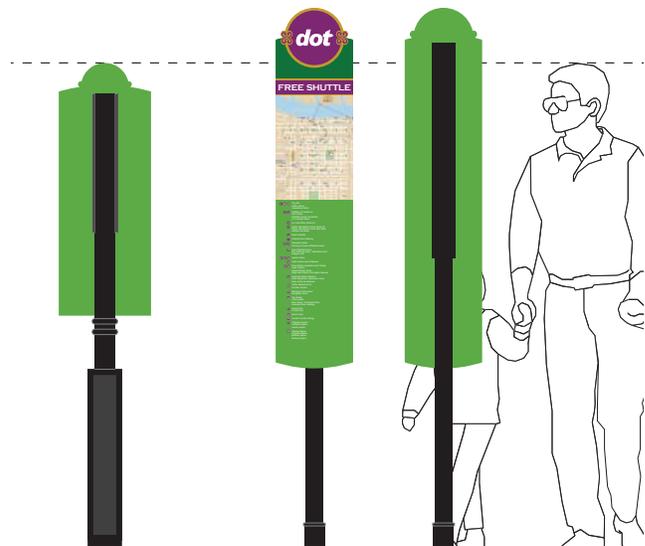
Savannah has generally managed this and other sidewalk challenges well, and continues to invest resources in upgrades and expansions of pedestrian infrastructure. The City benefits from a Chatham County Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for capital improvement projects; this SPLOST was first approved in 1985 and renewed most recently in 2013. The project list for this tax included approximately \$23 million for road projects, to include sidewalks. This has included nearly \$1 million in crosswalk enhancements and signal timing changes at intersections on Bay Street to allow advance pedestrian crossings and in ADA-compliant curb ramp upgrades and installations in the Historic District.

In addition, in 2014 the City launched a Downtown Streetscape Initiative intended to further these efforts and contribute to economic development and quality of life downtown. This area focused on the core of

the Historic District from the Savannah River south to Liberty Street, with special focus on Broughton and River Streets. This Initiative has spurred streetscape projects on President, River and Broughton Streets since its inception.

Wayfinding

Downtown Savannah has a comprehensive wayfinding program, originally called for in the Visitor Mobility Management Plan. The City adopted the design template for the system in 2007 and implementation began in 2008. To date, the program has added signage to all of the City's parking garages



Elements of Downtown Savannah's wayfinding system.

and four visitor information centers. However, funding has not remained consistent for implementation of this program and as of 2013 it is not fully implemented, with outstanding items including vehicular directional signage, pedestrian kiosks, maps and other directional signage.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Taxi Services

In a visitor-rich downtown such as Savannah’s, taxis have potential to play a key role augmenting mobility options, especially for distances that are outside of a typical comfortable walking distance. However, unlike many other cities, taxis in Savannah are not operated on a medallion-based system wherein a fixed maximum number of taxis is allowed. Instead, taxis operate on a permit system with requirements defined in City ordinance and there is no limit defined in local ordinance on how many of these permits may be issued. Drivers of taxis must be at least 18 years of age, have no criminal convictions commonly associated with motor vehicle operation (such as reckless driving or driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol), must be a citizen of the United States or authorized to work, and pay a nominal permit fee. Permits are renewed on an annual basis and require ongoing background checks and motor vehicle reports. In addition, the City ordinance requires operating companies to have fixed business addresses and a land-line telephone for taking service requests during listed business hours.

The taxi industry in Savannah has evolved under this system because of local interest in promoting free enterprise-based small business development through independent taxi services. The City has issued over 300 permits so far and features many more small taxi operators than size-comparable cities with fixed-supply systems. There is little information on taxi usage available, as the City’s Department of Mobility and Parking Services does not collect this information as part of its permitting process.

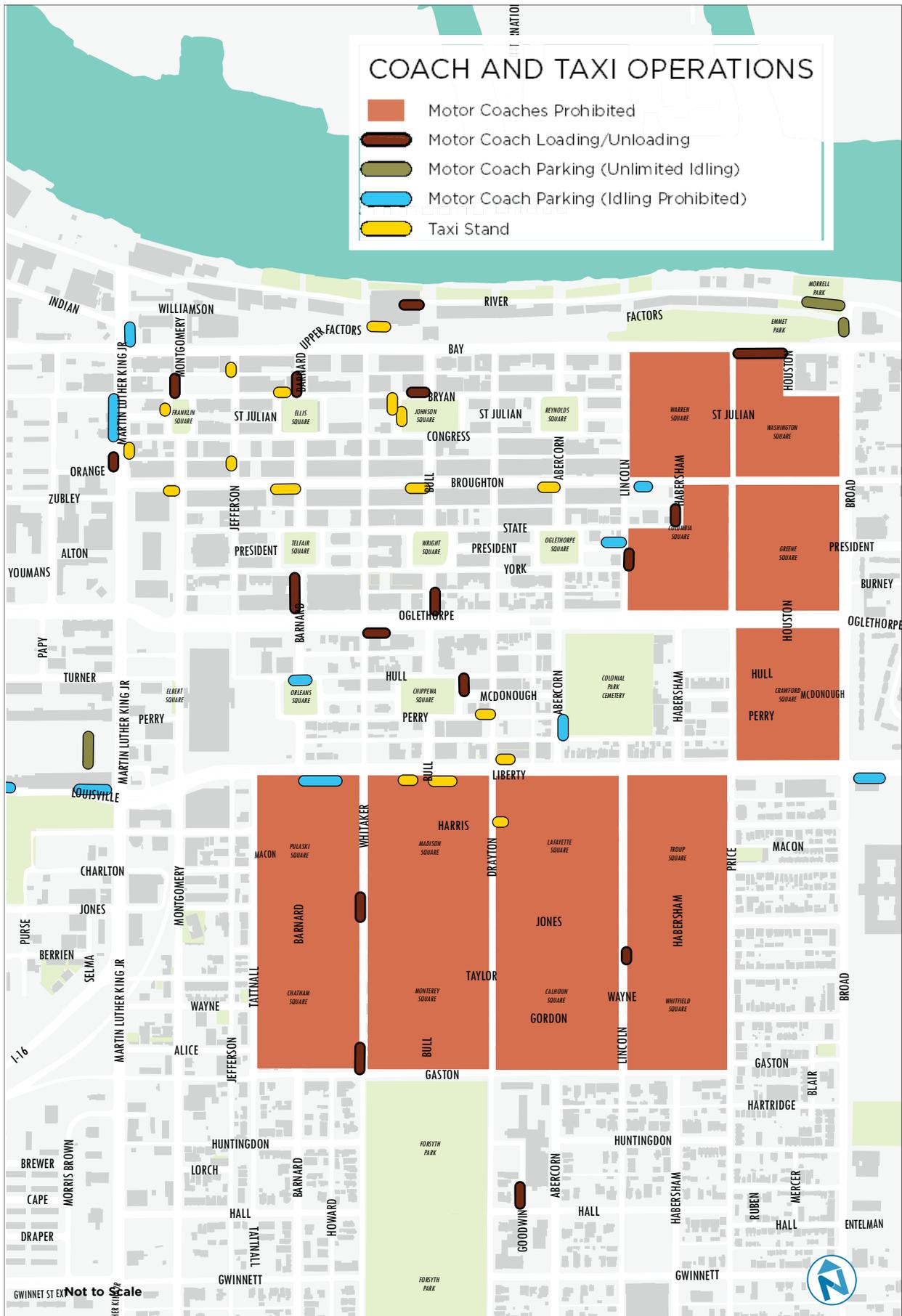
BASIC SAVANNAH TAXI INFORMATION	
Base fare (first 1/6-mile)	\$2.00
Additional distance (per 1/6 mile)	\$0.33
Additional time	\$0.35/min (\$21.00/hour)
Surcharge for trips to airport	\$2.00
Flat rates from downtown hotels to airport	\$28.00

Taxis in central Savannah may wait only at designated curbside stands, and these are illustrated in the map on the following page. They must be arranged by contacting the company and do not, as a rule, stop for passengers when flagged on the street.

Motorcoaches

Many visitors to Savannah—over 80,000 per year according to most recent available data— access downtown via motor coach (long-distance bus) and the City has designated a series of curbside locations for loading and unloading and different locations, mostly on the edges of the Historic District, for idling and longer-term parking. These vehicles require a permit to operate in the City, with different specific permit types available for buses intended for tours or for transportation in and out of the city. Permits are required for all motor coaches 34 feet or longer and any motor coach traveling within the historic district.

Although coach operators may obtain touring permits that allow them to carry passengers through the Parking Matters study area, the City has placed restrictions on routes where coaches may not operate, primarily in residential neighborhoods.



The City partnered with Armstrong Atlantic State University in 2013 to study the motor coach transportation industry downtown and assess its overall economic impact. The findings of the study underscore the importance of these services in downtown, estimating an average of \$745 in tax revenue per coach permit issued and a total economic impact of \$35 million.

The map on the previous page illustrates locations of designated coach loading and unloading areas.

Tourist Shuttle Services

Several private shuttle operators also provide service in and around central Savannah, oriented to visitors and the tourism industry. These services are regulated by the City's Department of Tourism Management and Ambassadorship.

Generally speaking, these services are not focused on providing scheduled transportation service for passengers, as many feature guided tours as part of the shuttle ride that are oriented to passengers remaining on the shuttle for the duration of the tour. There are hop-on, hop-off services provided as well.

Transportation Network Companies

Savannah has recently seen transportation network company (TNC) service providers enter the city, with Uber being the first company to begin operations.

The regulations for these programs have changed in the recent past. The City of Savannah adopted an ordinance in 2015, the Transportation Network Ordinance, that legally recognized the ability of these companies to operate in Savannah and requiring them to obtain permits similar to those issued for taxis and a physical local address in which they would operate. The companies were required to maintain an indemnity insurance policy for each vehicle in use through the TNC, and individual drivers were required

to carry general liability policies defined at certain threshold limits.

Not long after adoption of this ordinance, the Georgia General Assembly passed a pair of laws in its 2015 session, House Bills 190 and 225, that superseded any local legislation throughout the state for TNCs. The spirit of the legislation was similar to that of Savannah's ordinance, with a focus on public safety, driver background checks and establishment of maximum fares. However, HB 225 reduced regulation on limousine services and taxi drivers, in the interest of creating a more uniform regulatory environment and allowing more direct competition between taxis and TNCs.



Vessels for the Savannah Belles Ferry service.

Savannah Belles Ferry

CAT and the Georgia International Maritime Trade Center Authority (GIMTCA) jointly operate a ferry crossing the Savannah River between the Historic District and Hutchinson Island. The ferry calls at two locations on the downtown side of the river, City Hall and the Marriott Hotel (the Waving Girl landing), and at the Trade Center landing on the Hutchinson River side. Service operates on a schedule and generally runs from 7 AM to midnight, although service to the Marriott Hotel landing only operates between 8 AM and 6:30 PM. The ferry service has an average of 650,000 boardings per year, a significantly higher number than the 390,000 boardings per year planned for in the Savannah Visitor Mobility Plan.

In the past, CAT supplemented GIMTCA and SaMMI funding for the ferry with funds from the Federal Transit Administration's Jobs Access and Reverse Commutes (JARC) program, though with the elimination of specific funding for that program in the current MAP-21 federal transportation legislation, this was no longer available. As a result of this, service on the ferry was reduced from what was envisioned in the Visitor Mobility Plan, and the City of Savannah provides additional funding to supplement operations. The City and SaMMI have continued to operate the service, however, and are proceeding with a restoration of the City Hall landing as of late 2015.

CONCLUSIONS

Central Savannah has an extensive range of mobility options and services, many of which are useful to both visitors and local residents or commuters. The Parking Matters study will seek to identify ways that these services could be more closely coordinated so that expanding downtown business and visitor activities continue to be well connected and visitors have access to destinations without needing to rely on automobile use.

It is particularly important for transit services in downtown Savannah to appeal to riders so that they are seen as a useful and practical means of transportation. Although the core business district of Savannah is relatively compact, the larger Parking Matters study area extends beyond a distance that most people are comfortable walking. Transit services such as the Dot and Liberty Street shuttles are helpful links to extend distances that people may travel without needing to drive, but they must operate at frequencies that users see as convenient.

Bicycle use in Savannah also has potential that should be further explored, primarily in the current efforts to expand the CAT Bike bicycle sharing program. Savannah's excellent street network and flat topography present a desirable environment for cycling. Current efforts of the City and MPC to implement a bicycle plan will help to complete this network, and should take into account the growth of the CAT Bike system in selecting routes and facilities.