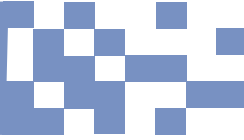


THE Vision's Voice TRANSPORTATION



presented by The Cliffs Communities
by Becky Mann

Ignore some issues and they go away. Ignore other issues and they become problems. That's where Greenville stands with the issue of transportation. It is a long-ignored issue, says Pat Haskell-Robinson, one on the verge of an implosion. "Unless not only planning is done, but financing for the plan is also found, we are not going to be able to continue our economic growth," she says.



An graphic explanation of the many facets of Vision 2025. For more information, contact Russell Stall with Greenville Forward at 233-8443 or rstall@researchwrks.com

Continuing as we are means attracting new businesses and giving existing businesses an environment in which they can expand. It means giving people access to jobs, shopping, recreation and entertainment. And it means allowing businesses access to employees and the goods and services they need to remain in business. Haskell-Robinson, who chaired the Vision 2025 transportation component, believes that our economic development efforts will begin to flounder if we don't act on transportation issues soon.

Transportation has been ignored so long that it may be difficult to play catch-up. In fact, Haskell-Robinson says, a few years ago, the state was behind in transportation funding by about a billion dollars. The years since have seen more of the same, with millions of federal dollars disappearing due to a lack of matching state and local funds.

We're not the only area that has ignored transportation. "All we have to do is look north to Charlotte or south to Atlanta and see what has happened there – spiraling growth that had no accompanying transportation plan. Greenville and the Upstate have the same problems," she says. "There is no growth plan for the Upstate, and there has been no coordinated transportation planning going on. Growth, transportation and the environment are integrally intertwined."

To reach the Vision 2025 goal of having a regional multimodal system that includes roads, mass transit, aviation, light and fast rail, bicycle and pedestrian ways, not only will the individual components need to be planned, but there will need to be an entity that brings everything together. The plan will need to look beyond individual counties to a regional planning process. Thus, the Vision calls for an Upstate Regional Transportation Authority to serve as a coordinating body.

Among the individual components that would go into a multimodal plan, Haskell-Robinson says, some are moving forward and some are stalled. Fast rail is making progress, with a task force in place that is working to make sure that the Upstate is part of a nationwide system. Aviation is another transportation component that is doing well, she says. Bicycle and walking trails are also receiving attention. But little is going on with development of a light rail system, and our public transit system is struggling, unable to expand routes without needed

funding. Haskell-Robinson hopes that the GPATS Long Range Transportation Plan, being executed by the Greenville County Planning Commission, will make progress on a multimodal plan.

Change can only happen, Haskell-Robinson says, if mindsets are changed, and that is a difficult process. People need to know what a multimodal system is and what it can do for them. They need to have confidence that the system will take them where they want to go in the time they have to get there. Having a plan doesn't mean anything if you don't have the money to make it a reality. So while the general public is being educated, the General Assembly needs to understand transportation issues and their ramifications as well.

The issue matters to Haskell-Robinson because she has looked ahead to what is needed to move the county forward and to keep it moving forward.

"I know, having looked at other areas, that if we do not plan and work toward a multimodal transportation plan and do it fairly rapidly, the Upstate will suffer. This is not something that we can wait on. Now is when we must do the transportation planning with an accompanying plan to fund it, because once you reach a point where everything is at a stalemate and it's in gridlock, it's too late. It takes years to develop and put in place a comprehensive transportation plan. By then, our economic development will have moved to those areas that offer effective transportation," she says.

Vision 2025 goals, including those for transportation, are moving forward with the help of Greenville Forward, an organization intended to make sure that the Vision becomes a reality. For more information, go to www.greenvilleforward.com or call Russell Stall, executive director of Greenville Forward, at (864) 233-8443.



As Vision 2005 paved the way in the 1980s for the incredible quality of life Greenville enjoys today, Vision 2025 spearheads projects that will further elevate our city, culturally and commercially. The Vision's Voice is one of the many ways that The Cliffs is committed to promoting growth in Greenville.

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