

## ***Chapter 5: Transportation***

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### **5.1 Introduction**

The transportation element of the comprehensive plan is mandated by an amendment to the state enabling legislation, the *Priority Investment Act*. The Act states that the transportation element must consider

“Transportation facilities, including major road improvements, new road construction, transit projects, pedestrian and bicycle projects, and other elements of a transportation network. This element must be developed in coordination with the land use element, to ensure transportation efficiency for existing and planned development” (Priority Investment Act).

The Act is also intended to encourage traditional neighborhood design, which promotes walkability, interconnectivity and other transportation modes, such as bicycling. Currently, there is a new focus on multi-modal approaches, throughout the state and in the SCDOT. However, Edisto Beach is fortunate to have a network that extends beyond auto-focused transportation, but also includes bicycling, pedestrian and small vehicle (i.e. golf carts, etc.) modes. Both residents and visitors use these alternative transportation methods.

According to the Town and the South Carolina Department of Transportation, there are 20.33 miles of publicly maintained roads in Edisto Beach. The SCDOT maintains around 13.46 miles of road, and the Town maintains 6.87 miles of road. Four miles of the Town’s roads are unpaved. In addition to the public roads, there are about 4.5 miles of privately maintained roads in the Town number miles.

The main thoroughfare of the Town is Palmetto Boulevard (SC Highway 174). Palmetto Boulevard is the most oceanward road, running the entire length of the beach beginning at the causeway and terminating at Dock Site Road. Palmetto Boulevard is primarily a four-lane road which narrows to two lanes the last quarter of its length. Traffic congestion and dangers exist in the area where Palmetto Boulevard narrows from four lanes to two lanes.

Parallel parking is allowed on both sides of the road. As part of the Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the SCDOT is widening and repaving Palmetto Boulevard from Baynard Street to the end of state road maintenance at Dock Site Road. In contrast, the back roads of the Town are two-lane, residential streets, with several streets remaining unpaved.

Traffic notably increases during the tourist season but does not result in serious traffic congestion or parking problems. Traffic and parking concerns could, however, interfere with meeting some of the goals related to preservation of the natural resources.

## 5.2 Traffic Counts and Congestion

Traffic counts conducted by SCDOT in 2008 along Palmetto Road (S.C. 174) show low average daily traffic volumes within the Town limits (Table 9). These counts are Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes and take an average of the whole year, and do not present a picture of peak Town usage. SCDOT Counter #153 tallied the number of vehicles as they came into the Town and can be used to compare AADTs to peak season traffic counts conducted by the Town (Table 10).

**Table 9. Town of Edisto Beach - Annual Average Daily Traffic Count: 2001, 2002, 2008**

| Annual Average Daily Traffic Count (AADT)   |                      |           |                    |                    |              |
|---|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Town of Edisto Beach                        |                      |           |                    |                    |              |
| South Carolina Department of Transportation |                      |           |                    |                    |              |
| Street                                      | Location             | Counter # | AADT-<br>Year 2001 | AADT-<br>Year 2002 | AADT<br>2008 |
| Palmetto Blvd                               | S.C. 174 to S-683    | 335       | 2,200              | 1,300              | 1,700        |
| Palmetto Blvd                               | S.C. 174 to S.C.174  | 333       | 3,000              | 3,100              | 3,600        |
| Palmetto Blvd                               | S.C. 174 at Causeway | 153       | 5,700              | 4,500              | 5,900        |

**Source: SCDOT**

The table on the following page, Table 10, represents data collected from traffic counters during the holiday weekends. Provided are average daily counts taken from the causeway leading into town, Highway 174 and the main thoroughfare serving the Town, Palmetto Boulevard. For 2008, data was available for Jungle Road. The data collected reflects different recording locations and dates, as certain holiday weekends were not consistently recorded by the Town. It is noteworthy that traffic counts have remained relatively stable, indicating that the tourism traffic has stayed steady despite the current economic situation. The preceding two charts show that every-day business has also remained relatively steady in Edisto Beach.

Table 10. Town of Edisto Beach- Peak Season Traffic Counts: 2006 -2009

Holiday Traffic County, 2006-2009

|                     | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   |
|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>New Years</b>    |        |        |        |        |
| Hwy 174             |        |        | 11,051 | 9,271  |
| Palmetto            |        |        | 6,530  | 7,800  |
| Jungle              |        |        | 7,104  | 3,658  |
| <b>Easter</b>       |        |        |        |        |
| Hwy 174             |        |        |        | 17,110 |
| Palmetto            |        |        |        | 14,029 |
| Jungle              |        |        |        | 5,785  |
| <b>Memorial Day</b> |        |        |        |        |
| Hwy 174             |        |        |        | 3,745  |
| Palmetto            |        |        |        | 11,215 |
| Jungle              |        |        |        | 2,654  |
| <b>July 4th</b>     |        |        |        |        |
| Hwy 174             | 47,630 | 17,008 | 18,788 | 19,706 |
| Palmetto            | 36,321 | 22,830 | 29,756 | 33,819 |
| Jungle              | 12,557 | 13,781 | 19,762 | 12,293 |
| <b>Labor Day</b>    |        |        |        |        |
| Hwy 174             | 25,488 |        | 26,182 | 28,664 |
| Palmetto            | 19,788 |        | 19,955 | 16,508 |
| Jungle              | 12,045 |        | 6,401  | 13,602 |
| <b>Thanksgiving</b> |        |        |        |        |
| Hwy 174             |        |        | 10,711 |        |
| Palmetto            |        |        | 7,594  |        |
| Jungle              |        |        | 5,094  |        |
| <b>Christmas</b>    |        |        |        |        |
| Hwy 174             |        | 9,118  | 10,907 |        |
| Palmetto            |        | 3,356  | 12,425 |        |
| Jungle              |        | 5,737  | 3,939  |        |

Source: Town of Edisto Beach

While the SCDOT average annual traffic counts note that approximately 5,900 vehicles come into the Town a day, the number of vehicles entering the Town per day may exceed 10,000 during the summer. The main area of traffic concern during the busy months is the intersection of Jungle Road and Palmetto Boulevard. Congestion occurs when vehicles leaving the island use Jungle Road and attempt to turn left onto SC 174. During the summer, another problem area for vehicles is the entrance to the shopping plaza adjacent to this intersection; this shopping center (including a restaurant) has no clear entrances and exits onto Palmetto Boulevard, and no turn lanes for drivers entering from that road. Finally, traffic that is slowing to enter the State Park (directly across from Palmetto Boulevard) or the Pavilion must turn left across oncoming traffic. During peak times, this can cause traffic to back up across the causeway.

While this is not a high-accident intersection (according to SCDOT safety standards), participation in a traffic management plan and implementation of improvements should be considered by the Town at some time in the future.

## **5.3 Alternative Transportation**

### ***Bicycling***

Bicycling is a popular activity in the Town of Edisto Beach. The flat terrain, mild climate, bicycle paths and resort atmosphere of the Town all encourage bicycle usage by both residents and visitors as both recreation and an alternative form of transportation.

As a result, the Town was awarded an Energy Conservation grant to extend the bike system, with an increased number of bicycle paths and lanes connecting residential, recreational and commercial areas. A comprehensive plan by the Town to further encourage bicycling would complement the South Carolina Department of Transportation's recent efforts to encourage the use of more bicycle and pedestrian routes throughout the state. The Town needs to develop a maintenance plan for the bicycle paths/lanes.

The Town of Edisto Beach's dedicated bicycle facilities consist of a five-foot wide, paved bicycle path running the length of the Vine Street right-of-way, where no road was ever built, and along roads throughout the Town (Map 4.1). There are 4.67 miles of bike paths throughout the Town. By using the bike path, bicyclists, pedestrians, and others using non-

motorized forms of transport can travel from the southern end of the Town (by Bay Point) to the north end of the Town (by the State Park and commercial center) without sharing traffic lanes with automobiles. In addition to these designated paths, bicyclists can also use the low-traffic side roads with relative safety. Bicyclists use Palmetto Boulevard, especially if they are going to the beach, but this road is less safe for bike travel. Since the implementation of the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, the bicycle paths have been extended out Highway 174 to Palmetto Road and bike lanes have been added to the resurfaced Jungle Road. In 2004 a bike path was added to the State Park which starts at Highway 174 and travels to the Interpretive Center, approximately 2.5 miles. Edisto Beach has done a noteworthy job of promoting bicycling in town, and the pursuit and further promotion of bike paths could even draw more bike-enthusiast, health-conscious visitors to town.

## Map of Edisto Roads



While most of the Town's roads are safe for bicyclists, incidents of bicyclists failing to obey the rules of the road are increasing. Much of this is due to the resort nature of the Town of Edisto Beach. Cyclists that ride only occasionally may not know the rules of safe biking, and thus may commit errors that compromise their safety, including not yielding right of way, riding on the road versus using the bicycle path where available, riding on the wrong side of the road, using improper turn signals, and failing to ride in single file in traffic.

### ***Pedestrian Facilities***

Because of the small size of the Town and narrow width of the island, it is easy for residents and visitors to travel on foot to sites such as the beach. The low-traffic, residential nature of the back roads also encourages recreational walks.

The bike path also serves pedestrians, especially the shady Vine Street segment. Pedestrian conflicts with vehicles are not as likely on the back streets of the Town where traffic drives at a slower rate than on Palmetto Boulevard. With the addition of bike lanes to Jungle Road and the retention of a three-foot-wide bike path, a desirable area has been added for pedestrian usage. Sidewalk replacement has been completed on the 100, 200 & 300 blocks of Palmetto Boulevard. Additional sidewalks will be completed as funding becomes available.

### ***Golf Carts***

As a small, tourism related community, golf carts are a legitimate alternate transportation mode. These vehicles are “greener” than an automobile, alleviate much of the traffic congestion associated with peak tourism seasons, and function as an easy way to get around in smaller communities. Beach communities throughout South Carolina allow and promote golf carts as a transportation mode. It should be noted, however, that these vehicles should only travel on roads with a speed limit of less than 30, and that they should only be driven in daylight hours.

## **5.4 Parking**

Although parking is not as serious a problem in the Town of Edisto Beach as it has become in other coastal resort communities, adequate parking for beach access has become more problematic since the 1996 Comprehensive Plan. The Town currently has 38 designated public beach access points along the beachfront and has a parking lot on Jungle Road. Residents and visitors park on the public road and walk to the access points. The parking requirements are thus spread across a wide area, rather than being concentrated, and can easily be absorbed by the streets. One possible conflict involves the parallel parking permitted on both sides of Palmetto Boulevard. In this area, the parking and driving lanes are not clearly delineated. This leads to motorists driving in the same lane that is being used for parking, raising the possibility of collisions. In addition, the parking motorist exits the car into the lane of travel creating the possibility of a collision between car and pedestrian. The Town is currently pursuing a Beach Management Access Study to determine correct access points and address parking improvements.

## **5.5 Hurricane Evacuation**

The Town has an evacuation plan currently, and is working on their “emergency plan” as this document is being written. Because of Edisto Beach’s unique situation of being a coastal destination with only one main road (Highway 174), the Town continues to monitor its evacuation plans. Any changes in the transportation network should be coordinated with neighboring jurisdictions. By working with Charleston, Colleton, SCDOT and FEMA, the Town can be prepared for hurricane evacuation.

### **Goals**

- Ensure that the roads servicing and within Edisto Beach are capable of handling both full-time residential traffic and the seasonal traffic affecting the island.
- Ensure that no new roads or road paving adversely affect the storm water run-off and that all new, resurfaced or widened roads include safe bicycle lanes.
- Ensure both residents and visitors have access to alternative modes of transportation, particularly biking and walking.
- Improve the safety of residents and visitors choosing alternative modes of transportation.
- Promote the use of golf carts as an alternative mode of transportation.

### **Recommendations**

- Work with neighboring counties to plan, fund, and implement transportation improvements, while continuing peak season traffic counts.
- Implement stormwater management plan in order to ensure that roads are not affected by excess runoff.



- Work cooperatively with the state and federal governments to develop a strategy to fund existing and future transportation capital improvements needs on the Town's road network in a way that is environmentally sensitive, so that the image and character of the town is maintained.
- Maintain alternative transportation modes such as sidewalks and bicycle paths and pursue funding to increase these facilities. Any new residential development should provide paths for walking and biking within the town.
- Provide residents and visitors with pamphlets from the National Highway Transportation which promote helmet use, safe bicycling, safe use of golf carts and strategies for sharing the road.
- Work with the Lowcountry Council of governments and SCDOT to ensure that intersection and access improvements are planned as needed to improve Edisto Beach driving safety and traffic efficiency.
- Work with residents and visitors to make sure roads and paths are available for golf carts, and to make sure all safety rules are followed.