The Lowndes County Democratic Party resolves to support public transportation in and around Lowndes County, so that workers can get to their jobs, businesses can thrive, the environment can be preserved, and sprawl can be reduced, helping local governments balance their budgets.

Georgia Democrats believe that the American Dream of opportunity for all should guide government policies at all levels.

Many local citizens cannot afford a car, and others cannot afford the gas needed to get to work every day, nor can all local businesses afford to pay for those things for their employees.

In its monthly meetings in 2015, LCDP has already found much support for public transportation among its members and the general public. This current concern echoes what Lowndes County and all five of its cities wrote in 2006 in the Comprehensive Plan:


"With the exception of the MIDS ride request program, there is no system for public transit. In the past, there have been few areas of sufficient density to warrant such a system. Development focuses on character areas would establish the necessary density. Public opinion seems to support such a system."

In 2011, the Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority found in a Community Assessment report that lack of public transportation directly affects "industry recruitment and workforce".


Both the Development Authority and the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce expressed interest in this public transportation topic, along with local businesses, at a recent LCDP meeting.

At several LCDP meetings, elected and appointed officials and business leaders have shown interest in finding diverse and appropriate ways to fund public transportation, much as we already fund roads and bridges. Unlike public roads and bridges, public transportation does produce direct income in the form of ride fares, however like roads and bridges public transportation require ongoing subsidy for ongoing return on investment.

Georgia Democrats believe we have a moral obligation to leave our children and grandchildren with an earth as safe, beautiful, and majestic as the one bequeathed to us by our parents and grandparents.

Public transportation, such as busses or commuter trains, reduces the adverse environmental effects of automobile traffic, such as air and water pollution. Just as development follows new roads and bridges, public transportation will attract development towards transit corridors and densely populated areas with existing water, wastewater, and other infrastructure, and away from agricultural and forestry areas. Thus public transportation can reduce sprawl, promote community and the local economy, and preserve our environment, as noted in the Comprehensive Plan:

"As the area continues to grow, traffic of course increases. Continued sprawling of residential and strip commercial development will only increase road congestion. Greater attention should be given to the impact individual developments will have on the greater transportation system...."

"Focusing development on core areas will increase the amount of density and thus the viability of a public transportation system."

For many of the same reasons, LCDP also supports bicycle and pedestrian lanes, sidewalks, and trails.

As the Comprehensive Plan states:

"While increasing efforts are occurring to address this issue, a community-wide bike and pedestrian friendly mindset should be promoted. The City of Valdosta has incorporated a 3-mile multiuse trail, which it should continue expanding. However, throughout the county/cities, there is still a significant need for bike trails and sidewalks, especially connecting neighborhoods to commercial/ recreation centers. Additionally, there are
some existing bike/pedestrian facilities in need of repair and improvement."
Transportation is also an issue for senior citizens and even access to health care. As the Comprehensive Plan says:

"The increasing number of senior citizens will require greater attention to accessible housing, convenient community facilities, public transportation, and recreational opportunities."

Recreational opportunities include the many baseball and softball tournaments that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreational Authority has attracted to the county. Public transportation to the parks where those sports are played would help promote such tournaments, while improving local quality of life.

Finally, transportation issues extend beyond Lowndes County, as after all do both the Valdosta Urbanized Area and the Valdosta Metropolitan Statistical Area, plus the area from which workers commute and people pay SPLOST taxes.

As the Comprehensive Plan says:

"Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.""

The new state transportation law, HB 170, provides an opportunity for public transportation funding if local leaders can coordinate quickly. And indeed there is no need to wait on Atlanta or Washington to plan local transportation. Back in 1899 to 1924 Valdosta was the smallest city in the country to have an electric streetcar system. We can take that kind of initiative again, this time for the entire county and in cooperation with the surrounding region.

LCDP: Winning the Future in South Georgia

The Lowndes County Democratic Party promotes development of Party organization and activities, seeks and encourages qualified candidates for public office, supports Democratic nominees, performs such election functions as are required by law, maintains appropriate records, promotes and adds logistical support to the State Affirmative Action program, and raises funds for the above purposes.

See also the facebook page:
Public Transportation for Valdosta, Lowndes County, Georgia
https://www.facebook.com/PublicTransportationForValdosta

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