

# Chapter 10. Priority Investment Element

The *South Carolina Priority Investment Act (PIA)* was signed into law in 2007. The PIA amends *Title 6, Chapter 29 of the South Carolina Code of Laws*, also known as the *South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994*. The legislation introduced the two new elements of *Transportation* and *Priority Investment* to the comprehensive planning process. The Priority Investment Element is intended to facilitate the coordination of major capital improvements and provide direction for implementing recommended strategies of other Plan elements that call for capital improvements. The Priority Investment Element encourages local governments to examine future capital improvement needs, as well as identify planned funding sources for these improvements in the coming decade.

In addition to encouraging local governments to plan for long-term capital improvement needs and financing, the Priority Investment Element encourages stronger intergovernmental planning and coordination. Specifically, the legislation calls for comprehensive plans to include: *“a priority investment element that analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years, and recommends the projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools. The recommendation of those projects for public expenditure must be done through coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.”*

## A. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

While many of the public facilities such as governmental buildings and parks in Oconee County are owned and maintained by the County, many others are owned and maintained by entities such as the State of South Carolina, the School District of Oconee County, Tri-County Technical College, private utility providers, and the municipalities of Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster, Salem, and West Union. Many improvements to facilities throughout the County have been and will continue to be accomplished through coordination and cooperation with multiple public and private entities. Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one jurisdiction or organization can result in greater efficiency and less cost to taxpayers. Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to the success of an initiative, such as the development of a safe and efficient transportation network.

The *South Carolina Priority Investment Act* requires that the recommendation of capital improvement projects requiring public expenditure be done through *“coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.”* The Act defines adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies as *“those counties, municipalities, public service districts, school districts, public and private utilities, transportation agencies, and other public entities that are affected by or have planning authority over the public project.”* Adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies identified as providing public facilities or related services within Oconee County are listed in Table 10-1.



**Table 10-1. Adjacent and Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies in Oconee County**

Jurisdiction/Agency	Capital Improvement/Public Facilities/Services
<b>Municipalities and Adjacent Jurisdictions</b>	
Town of Salem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ County municipality</li> <li>▪ Provider of water service, law enforcement, fire service</li> </ul>
City of Seneca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ County municipality</li> <li>▪ Water Treatment Plant</li> <li>▪ Provider of water and electric service; law enforcement; fire service; garbage and recycling pick up</li> <li>▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities</li> </ul>
City of Walhalla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ County municipality</li> <li>▪ Water Treatment Plant</li> <li>▪ Provider of water service, law enforcement, fire service; garbage and recycling pick up</li> <li>▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities</li> </ul>
City of Westminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ County municipality</li> <li>▪ Provider of water, and electric service; law enforcement; fire service; garbage and recycling pick up</li> <li>▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities</li> </ul>
Town of West Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ County municipality</li> <li>▪ Provider law enforcement</li> <li>▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities</li> </ul>
Neighboring Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ City of Clemson (provider of water in small area of County)</li> <li>▪ City of Anderson</li> </ul>
Neighboring Counties (SC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anderson County, SC</li> <li>▪ Pickens County, SC</li> </ul>
Neighboring Counties (NC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Macon County, NC</li> <li>▪ Jackson County, NC</li> <li>▪ Transylvania County, NC</li> </ul>
Neighboring Counties (GA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Franklin County, GA</li> <li>▪ Habersham County, GA</li> <li>▪ Hart County, GA</li> <li>▪ Rabun County, GA</li> <li>▪ Stephens County, GA</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Government and Public Agencies</b>	
State of South Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) - owns and manages much of the Jocassee Gorges, manages Heritage Trust Program, assists U.S. Forest Service in management of Sumter National Forest</li> <li>▪ S.C. Department of Transportation (SCDOT) - statewide transportation planning; road maintenance and improvements for state roads and U.S. highways; distributes C funds</li> <li>▪ S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) manages state parks in County</li> <li>▪ S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) - public health, septic tank permitting, water/air quality permitting and management</li> </ul>



**Table 10-1. Adjacent and Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies, *Continued***

<b>Jurisdiction/Agency</b>	<b>Capital Improvement/Public Facilities/Services</b>
<b>Relevant Government and Public Agencies</b>	
Appalachian Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transportation planning</li> <li>▪ Environmental planning, including Water Quality Management Plan</li> <li>▪ Economic development and workforce planning</li> <li>▪ Hazard mitigation planning</li> <li>▪ Aging support programs</li> <li>▪ Other Local government assistance</li> </ul>
Keowee Fire Special Tax District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Special tax district for the provision of fire service for 30-square mile area on/near Lake Keowee, including the Oconee Nuclear Station</li> </ul>
Oconee County Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Library system for the County with branches in Walhalla, Westminster, Salem, and Seneca</li> </ul>
Oconee Economic Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recruitment of capital investment and job creation in Oconee County</li> <li>▪ Development and marketing of industrial parks</li> <li>▪ Industrial retention program</li> </ul>
Tri-County Technical College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Oconee County higher education campus of the S.C. Technical College System</li> </ul>
School District of Oconee County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PreK-12 Public Schools</li> <li>▪ Adult Education</li> <li>▪ Career and vocational education</li> </ul>
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Management of Lake Hartwell and associated facilities, including shoreline management and four lakeside parks in Oconee County</li> </ul>
USDA Forest Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Management of the Sumter National Forest and associated facilities and much of the area surrounding the Chattooga River</li> </ul>
<b>Other Relevant Organizations and Agencies</b>	
Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provider of electric service</li> </ul>
Clemson Area Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public transit provider</li> </ul>
Duke Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provider of electric service - Oconee Nuclear Station, Keowee Hydro Station, Jocassee and Bad Creek Generating Stations</li> <li>▪ Management of Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee and associated facilities, including shoreline management</li> </ul>
Foothills YMCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nonprofit provider of recreation facilities and programs</li> </ul>
Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wastewater treatment plant, provider of sewer service</li> <li>▪ Municipalities are members of this authority</li> </ul>
Oconee Memorial Hospital (Prisma Health Upstate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hospital, provides EMS services</li> </ul>
Pioneer Rural Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-profit provider of water service</li> </ul>
Rosa Clark Free Medical Clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provider of affordable healthcare services for those in need of assistance</li> </ul>
Senior Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provider of senior services in Oconee County, including transportation</li> </ul>



## B. FUTURE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT NEEDS AND FUNDING SOURCES

A number of public infrastructure and facilities needs have been identified for Oconee County for the coming decade through the development of the required elements of the Comprehensive Plan, as well as previously developed plans and studies. These capital improvements include those that will be funded and accomplished by the County or its municipalities, as well as projects that will be funded and accomplished by other entities such as the Appalachian Regional Council of Governments, the School District of Oconee County, and local utility providers. Oconee County must continue to explore new partnerships and funding sources to meet capital needs, while ensuring that the most critical needs are met.

The top public infrastructure and capital investment priorities in the coming decade will require that Oconee County:

1. Provide quality public services, facilities, and infrastructure to accommodate the current and future needs of current and future residents, businesses, and visitors, to ensure health and safety and meet applicable local, federal, and state requirements.
2. Provide a modern, functional, and multi-modal transportation system to reduce traffic congestion and provide affordable transport for all citizens, particularly the work force.
3. Preserve, protect, and enhance the County's natural, cultural, recreational, agricultural, and historic resources.
4. Study and address the land use, transportation, and development issues related to fast growing and changing areas of the County.
5. Provide, maintain, and improve public recreation facilities to accommodate the current and future needs of County residents and visitors of all ages.
6. Provide the facilities, infrastructure, workforce, and support needed to attract and retain quality industrial and commercial development and diversify the County's employment and tax base.
7. Provide, maintain, and improve public education facilities to accommodate the current and future lifelong learning needs of County residents of all ages.

Anticipated funding from federal, state, and local sources for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years is outlined in Table 10-2 and is based on recent funding levels.



Table 10-2. Anticipated Annual Funding Sources

Funding Source	Description	Priorities Addressed	Anticipated Annual Funding*
Oconee County General Fund	Annually appropriated operating fund used to account for all financial sources and uses except those required to be accounted for in another fund. Funded activities constitute the core and administrative tasks of the County.	1, 3, 4, 5	\$29,306,258 <sup>1</sup>
Oconee County Economic Alliance Development Capital Projects Fund	Supports the future economic vision of the county, utilizing millage and amplifying private, federal, local, and nonprofit resources.	6	\$1,096,728 <sup>1</sup>
Oconee County Special Revenue Funds	Proceeds of specific revenue sources that are legally restricted for specified purposes; Includes special revenue funding for Tri-County Technical College (\$1,670,000) and Road Maintenance (\$1,171,920). State and local accommodations tax revenue is restricted to expenditures that attract tourism.	1, 2, 6, 7	\$6,161,587 <sup>1</sup>
Oconee County Capital Projects Funds	Financial resources to be used for the acquisition or construction of major capital facilities. Includes Economic Development Capital Projects Fund (\$769,000) and the Bridge and Culvert Fund (\$530,000) for replacement and repair of bridges and large culverts on County-owned roads.	1, 2, 6	\$1,299,000 <sup>1</sup>
C- Funds	Funds derived from a State user tax on gasoline sales and allocated to each county; Local funds allocated by County Transportation Committee for improvements to state and local roads and bridges, resurfacing, and other eligible transportation projects. Oconee County and its five municipalities request funding as needed based on the annual allocation amount. Requested funds are placed in the County's Special Revenue Fund.	2	\$1,951,600 <sup>2</sup> (State allocation, available on an as needed basis)
U.S Forest Service, National Forestry Title I	Grant funding provided by the USFS to counties with National Forest lands for transportation improvements.	2	\$220,000 <sup>1</sup>
ACOG Rural Transportation Improvement Program	Transportation improvement program that includes capital transportation projects for federally funded transportation facilities and transit projects.	1, 2	\$7.579 million in annual <i>Guideshare</i> funding for FY 2017-2022 for the Appalachian COG region <sup>3</sup>
SCDOT Transportation Alternatives Program	State funds allocated for non-traditional transportation related activities such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities and pedestrian streetscaping.	1, 2	FY 2018-2019: \$1.83 million for areas with population > 5,000 and < 200,000; \$2.6 million for areas with population < 5,000 <sup>4</sup>



**Table 10-2. Anticipated Annual Funding Sources**

Funding Source	Description	Priorities Addressed	Anticipated Annual Funding*
Grants	Grants are available from a number of public and private sources for a wide range of capital projects. Projects must meet eligibility requirements and are typically competitive.	All	Vary depending on the grant source, type of project, and requirements; most require matching local funds

\* Anticipated funding based on recent funding levels

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Oconee County, SC 2018-2019 Budget Document; <sup>2</sup>SCDOT, S.C. Secondary Program Apportionment of Funds for FY 2018-19; <sup>3</sup>ACOG, 2017-2022 Rural Transportation Improvement Plan, June 2016; <sup>4</sup>SCDOT, SC Transportation Alternatives Program, June 2019

### C. OCONEE COUNTY FACILITIES

Capital improvements are defined as major expenditures for construction of facilities, highways, parks, land acquisition, and related needs. For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, capital improvements focus on areas that apply more directly to land use, including paving, building, and land expenditures. The *2018-2019 Five Year Capital Plan for Oconee County* provides short and long-term capital expenditure goals (Table 10-4). Updated annually and included in the annual budget presented to County Council, the Plan provides a blueprint for future economic, land use, and infrastructure development and redevelopment. It is intended to assist in implementing policies and programs that accomplish the ideals set out in the County's mission and vision statements in a manner that ensures financial sustainability over the long term.

**Table 10-4. 2018-2019 Oconee County Five Year Capital Plan Projects**

Project Name	Department/Description	Funding Source/Year/Priority #
<b>Facilities</b>		<b>\$1,345,000</b>
<u>Restroom Renovation</u> Chau Ram High Falls	<i>PRT</i> Renovate restrooms for ADA compliance	<i>Dept. Budget</i> FY 2019 - \$285,000 FY 2019 - \$275,000
Airport FAA Guidance	<i>Airport</i> purchase property to reduce hazard, comply with FAA guidelines, use for additional hangars	<i>Other Funding Source</i> FY 2021 - \$285,000
Westminster Magistrate	<i>Magistrate</i> rebuild or renovate magistrate building	<i>Bond</i> FY 2020 - \$750,000
<b>Transportation Improvements</b>		<b>\$8,575,000</b>
<u>Culverts</u> Jess Crenshaw Road Avondale Drive Stribling Shoals Road Amanda Way	<i>Roads and Bridges</i> replacement with larger culvert	<i>See Table 10-5 for funding sources</i> FY 2019 - \$ 75,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2020 - \$350,000 <i>priority #2</i> FY 2021 - \$450,000 <i>priority #4</i> FY 2022 - \$250,000 <i>priority #5</i>



**Table 10-4. 2018-2019 Oconee County Five Year Capital Plan Projects**

Project Name	Department/Description	Funding Source/Year/Priority #
<b>Bridges</b> Cherokee Lake Road Bridge Alberts Road Bridge	<i>Roads and Bridges</i> ☐ Replace 45 <span>☐</span> span bridge Replace 33 <span>☐</span> span bridge	See Table 10-5 for funding sources FY 2020 - \$450,000 <i>priority #3</i> FY 2023 - \$250,000 <i>priority #6</i>
Yearly Road Construction	<i>Roads and Bridges</i> ☐ annual contract to pave 3 to 5 miles of road, including crack sealing and striping	See Table 10-5 for funding sources FY 2019 - \$1,250,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2020 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2021 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2022 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2023 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i>
Various Road Construction	<i>Roads and Bridges</i> ☐ annual construction of one gravel road constructed to pave	<i>Federal Funds</i> FY 2019 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2020 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2021 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2022 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2023 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i>

Source: 2018-2019 Oconee County Five Year Capital Plan

Oconee County owns and maintains a number of public properties. The locations of major facilities owned by Oconee County are listed in Table 7-1. Recreation facilities are detailed in Table 7-12 of the *Community Facilities Element*. Additional County facility improvement priorities are provided in the *Oconee County 2019 Strategic Planning Report*. The report is the result of the annual planning session attended by County Council, staff, and interested citizens to review the previous year's accomplishment and discuss priorities. Capital improvements identified in the Report are provided in Table 10-5.

**Table 10-5. Oconee County 2019 Strategic Plan Report Capital Improvements Priorities**

Priorities	Estimated Cost	Council Funding Recommendations
Construct Oakway School walking path	\$20,000	*
Greenway connection from Palmetto Trail to Green Crescent Trail	Not available	Grants, ATAX
Expand Oconee County Regional Airport runway and construct hangers	\$1,000,000	Bonds, property taxes on planes, hanger leases
Oconee County Park Upgrades	\$300,000 annually	Grants, ATAX
Utica Revitalization	\$250,000 annually	Grants,
Economic Opportunity Zones	\$250,000 annually	Grants
Identify possible location and conduct feasibility study for technology incubator/relocation of Oconee Economic Alliance office	\$1,500,000	Grants
Continue Development of Industrial Parks	Ongoing	Economic Development Millage/Fees in Lieu of Taxes



**Table 10-5. Oconee County 2019 Strategic Plan Report Capital Improvements Priorities**

Priorities	Estimated Cost	Council Funding Recommendations
Establish Bountyland Fire Substation	\$500,000	Fund approved FY 2016
Review Brown Building current and future use	\$30,000	Operational General fund
Plan Bountyland S.C. Hwy. 188/28 corridor	\$50,000	FY 2020 budget
U.S. Hwy. 123 Corridor Plan implementation	\$39,000	FY 2020 budget

\* Funding recommendation not provided

Source: Oconee County 2019 Strategic Plan Report

## D. TRANSPORTATION AND ROADS

Planning to meet current and future transportation needs is accomplished through programs at the state, regional and local levels. For Oconee County, transportation planning and funding allocations are provided by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Appalachian Council of Governments (CMCOG), and the Oconee County Transportation Committee.

### 1. Regional Rural Transportation Program

As the designated transportation agency for the non-urbanized areas of the Appalachian Council of Governments Region, the ACOG is responsible for carrying out the rural transportation planning process for the six-county region that includes Oconee County. The primary responsibilities of the ACOG are to:

- Develop a *Rural Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)* to provide the 25-year rural transportation vision; and
- Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) with a list of specific projects for which federal funds are anticipated.

The primary transportation needs in Oconee County are detailed in the *Rural Long Range Transportation Plan 2040* that was adopted in 2016 and in the *Oconee County Transportation Element*. These needs include five intersection improvement projects with funding dependent on Guideshare program allocations. Potential projects for which funding has not been identified to date include six intersection improvement projects, three access management projects, four bridge improvement projects, eight road segments where the condition of the pavement is in need of repair, and two priority traffic signalization projects.

The *ACOG Rural Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)* is the region's six-year transportation improvement program for all capital projects or program areas receiving federal funding. The *2017-2022 RTIP* for the Appalachian COG region was most recently amended in 2019. As detailed in Table 8-6 of the Transportation Element, there are four RTIP projects in Oconee County, totaling \$300,000 for FY 2017, \$750,000 for FY 2018, \$2 million for FY 2019, \$850,000 for FY 2020, \$1.8 million for FY 2021, and \$2.75 million in FY 2022. These projects





include planning, right-of-way acquisition, and construction for intersection improvements on U.S. Highway 123 at Davis Creek Road, S.C. Highway 24 at Oakway Road, S.C. Highway 59 at S.C. Highway 182/243, and J.P. Stevens Road at West Cherry Road and at Martin Creek Road. The U.S. Highway 123 intersection project is ranked first in priority among all intersection improvement projects in the ACOG region.

## **2. SCDOT Transportation Alternatives Program**

Oconee County is eligible for transportation enhancement funding under the *Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)* administered by SCDOT. TAP projects are federally-funded, community-based projects that provide opportunities for local governments to pursue non-traditional transportation related activities such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities and pedestrian streetscaping projects that might not otherwise be possible. Transportation Alternatives funds generally comprise 80% of the total project cost, with a 20% match from local governments.

SCDOT funding is provided through three population-based programs. Jurisdictions with populations of less than 200,000 and greater than 5,000, including Oconee County and the City of Seneca, have a designated funding pool of more than \$1.8 million. SCDOT has designated \$2.6 million for areas with a population of less than 5,000, which includes the other municipalities in Oconee County. Projects proposed by governmental bodies located in areas outside of Transportation Management Areas, such as Oconee County and its municipalities, are considered under the statewide program, with distribution of funds determined by the SCDOT Commission. These projects are limited to a maximum of \$400,000.

## **3. C-Fund Allocation**

At the local level, C-Funds are available for construction, improvements, or maintenance on the State highway system; local paving or improvements to county or city roads; street and traffic signs; and other road and bridge projects. Resurfacing, drainage improvements, and sidewalk construction may also be accomplished with C-Funds. C-Funds are derived from a statewide 2.9925 cent per gallon user tax on gasoline sales that are deposited in the County Transportation Fund and allocated to the counties through a formula based on total number of vehicles registered and miles of road within each county. The allocation per gallon will increase by 0.3325 cent per gallon each fiscal year through 2021, when it will reach a total of 3.99 cents per gallon. At least 25% of the allocated C-Funds must be spent on state roads. Each county has a *County Transportation Committee* with members appointed by the county legislative delegation. The Oconee County C-Fund Committee has the authority to select and approve projects to be funded utilizing C-Funds. The C-Fund apportionment for Oconee County was \$1,951,600 in FY 2018-2019.



#### **4. Other Road Improvement Funds**

Oconee County assesses an annual millage of 2.1 for *road maintenance*. Road maintenance funding is used to maintain roadways including repair of pot holes and road shoulders and road resurfacing within the County. Revenue from the road maintenance millage was \$1,171,920 in FY 2019. An additional 1.0 mill is also assessed for the replacement and repair of bridges and large culverts on County-owned roads. Revenue from the *Bridges and Culverts* millage was \$530,000 in FY 2019.

Oconee County also receives grant funding from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for transportation improvements. *National Forestry Title I* funding is provided to counties with National Forest lands, with allocation based on gross receipts from all sources such as timber and special permits. The County received \$220,000 in FY 2019 from the National Forestry Title I grant.

### **E. PUBLIC K-12 SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

#### **1. School District of Oconee County**

The School District of Oconee County (SDOC) operates ten elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools, providing educational services for nearly 10,500 students in grades pre-K through 12. The District's Hamilton Career Center offers more than 20 career and technology education programs that support over 1,000 students from the District's three high schools as they prepare for transition to career and college. The District also offers adult education in the form of a diploma program, High School Equivalency classes, and career readiness instruction and testing.

Construction began in April 2019 on the School District's new Hamilton Career and Technology Center. The \$35 million, 140,000 ft<sup>2</sup> Center will be co-located in the Oconee County Industry and Technology Park with the new Oconee Campus of Tri-County Technical College. Completion of the Center is anticipated in August 2020. Once the new facility is completed, the current Hamilton Career Center building will be repurposed as the home of the Oconee Academy alternative school and Adult Education. The \$400,000 renovation will also accommodate the District's maintenance and food services departments, as well as the early learning program. The remodeled building is expected to be ready for occupation in August 2020.

SDOC has two additional projects slated for the coming decade. Construction of a new Seneca Middle school is planned at an estimated cost of \$40 to \$45 million, with completion anticipated in August 2023. An addition is planned for the James M. Brown Elementary School that will add six to eight classrooms and a gymnasium at an estimated cost of \$8 to \$10 million, with projected occupancy in August 2025.



## **2. Tri-County Technical College**

*Tri-County Technical College* (TCTC) is the fifth largest of the 16 public, two-year colleges that comprise the South Carolina Technical Education System. The Oconee County campus in the Oconee County Industry and Technology Park opened in 2018. The campus will house the School District's new Career Center. The campus includes a new \$5.5 million, 37,000 ft<sup>2</sup> instructional and administrative building. Although the College will monitor usage and space needs on the Oconee County campus, there are currently no plans for new construction in the next decade.

## **F. WATER FACILITIES**

Access to water services is available in many areas of the County through seven primary public providers: the cities of Clemson, Seneca, Westminster, and Walhalla; the towns of Salem and West Union; and Pioneer Rural Water District. Water is also provided by several individual systems. Seneca Light and Water draws surface water from Lake Keowee, the City of Walhalla from Coneross Creek, and the City of Westminster from the Chauga River. Water for the City of Clemson, the towns of Salem and West Union, and the Pioneer Rural Water District is purchased.

The City of Walhalla began construction on a new water treatment facility in January 2019 that will draw water from the Cane Creek Branch of Lake Keowee, with a capacity of 4 MGD. The cost of the new facility is \$20.8 million, with completion expected in the fall of 2020.

The City of Westminster has applied for a ConserFund loan from the S.C. Office of Regulatory Staff to upgrade its pumps to five variable frequency drive pumps that will be more energy efficient. Completion of the project is anticipated in 2020 at a projected cost of \$414,556.

## **G. WASTEWATER FACILITIES**

The availability of sewer service is limited in Oconee County, with access concentrated in the developed areas in and near the cities of Seneca, Westminster and Walhalla, along the U.S. Highway 123 corridor between Seneca and Westminster, the S.C. Highway 11 corridor that connects Walhalla to U.S. Highway 123, and along the S.C. Highway 59 corridor extending south from Seneca. Access to wastewater treatment is provided by five primary providers, the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA), the Town of West Union, and the cities of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster. Public wastewater treatment is provided at OJRSA's Coneross Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, with a capacity of 7.8 MGD.

The OJRSA is working with Oconee County on an expansion of the wastewater conveyance system to the Fair Play community in the southern area of the County. The purpose of the project is to provide reliable sewer service and enable economic development opportunities along the I-85 corridor. The S.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority has approved \$935,566 and the



Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce has approved \$3.7 million in funding for the estimated \$5.29 million project. Oconee County will also be contributing \$655,570, including engineering and permitting, for the project. Construction is expected to take approximately two years, with completion anticipated in 2021. This project is included in the *Oconee County 2019 Strategic Planning Report* (Table 10-5).

## H. RECREATION FACILITIES

Oconee County owns, operates and maintains three public parks and leases eight public boat ramps. The parks all include campsites with water and electricity, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and other recreation opportunities. While Chau Ram County Park includes a 40-foot waterfall, suspension bridge, and miles of hiking trails, High Falls and South Cove County Parks offer waterfront access to Lake Keowee, including boat ramps, fishing piers, and swimming areas.

Oconee County purchased a 218-acre parcel of land adjacent to Chau Ram County Park in the summer of 2019, at a cost of \$765,000, including \$500,000 in grant funding. The purchase will enable the County to plan for expansion of camping and hiking opportunities, as well as mountain biking. Master planning for the site is expected at a later date.

Oconee County is working with Duke Energy on the possibility of an expansion to the High Falls County Park. The potential expansion would add 36 acres of land in a lease agreement with Duke Energy. A master plan for High Falls II has been completed in partnership with Duke Energy and is awaiting funding availability. The expansion will include a new campground, boat ramp, rental cabins, and associated infrastructure at an estimated cost of \$5 to \$7 million.

## I. AIRPORT

Aviation services for Oconee County and the surrounding area are available at the Oconee County Regional Airport (CEU) on Airport Road in Seneca. The Airport is owned and operated by Oconee County and includes a 5,000 feet by 100 feet paved runway with a precision GPS instrument approach and a non-precision GPS instrument approach. Airport staff report a dramatic increase in airport use in recent years spurred by local manufacturing companies, new home owners, vacationers, construction crews, military traffic, and visitors to Clemson University events. Air traffic related to Clemson games requires that CEU utilizes a temporary control tower on game day weekends and for the Greer approach as needed.

Plans for the Oconee Regional Airport include relocation of Mt. Nebo Road out of the Runway Protection Zone to the Airport. The Road will be re-routed around the Mt. Nebo Church parking lot to connect with Harbin Acres Road. The project serves two purposes – to improve safety in CEU's airspace safety buffer and to provide additional aircraft parking on an adjacent area for peak air traffic times such as Clemson home football games. The project will be funded primarily by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program, with



additional funding provided by the S.C. Aeronautics Commission and Oconee County. This project is included in the *Oconee County 2019 Strategic Planning Report* (Table 10-5).

## J. LIBRARY

The Oconee County Public Library system includes four facilities: the main branch in Walhalla constructed in 1979, the Seneca branch that was built in 1953 and expanded in 1983, the Westminster branch constructed in 1979, and the Salem branch that shares space with the Salem Town Hall.

In 2014, the Library developed a facility plan to build, replace, or upgrade aging facilities to serve the current and future needs of the community. The following projects are listed in the order of priority, with funding sources yet to be identified. Estimated project costs were provided in 2014 and are subject to increases. However, though the Library Board approved this plan, the Oconee County Council has not voted on the plan.

- Replace the aging Seneca Library with a new 32,000 square foot facility at an estimated cost of \$9 million.
- Renovate and expand the aging Westminster Library by 3,250 square feet for a total building size of 8,300 square feet at an estimated cost of \$1.3 million.
- Select and purchase sites for new Salem and Fair Play library locations, with estimated costs of \$110,000 and \$150,000, respectively.
- Renovate and reconfigure the aging Walhalla main library at an estimated cost of \$1 million.
- Construct new 7,000 square foot facilities for the Salem Library and the Fair Play/South County Library at an estimated cost of \$1.9 million for each building.

## K. COORDINATION AND NOTIFICATION

As required by the provisions of the *South Carolina Priority Investment Act*, Oconee County notifies and coordinates with adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when recommending expenditures on public infrastructure and facilities projects. Throughout the development of the *Priority Investment Element*, Oconee County consulted the numerous municipalities, adjacent jurisdictions, and relevant agencies listed in Table 10-1. These consultations addressed current public capital facilities needs and the past, on-going, and future capital facilities projects that currently serve or are planned to serve the residents and employers of Oconee County. A draft of the *Priority Investment Element* was also sent to each identified jurisdiction and agency for review and comment prior to adoption. Existing plans from other jurisdictions or agencies that impact the provision of capital facilities and related services for County residents were also consulted and incorporated by reference in the appropriate Comprehensive Plan elements.

## L. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Priority Investment Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<b>Goal 10.1. Identify and prioritize long range public infrastructure and facilities needs.</b>		
<b>Objective 10.1.1. Continue to plan for and prioritize public infrastructure and facilities needs.</b>		
<u>Strategy 10.1.1.1.</u> Continue to update the County’s Five-Year Capital Plan as part of the annual budget process to provide the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County citizens.	• Oconee County	2025
<u>Strategy 10.1.1.2.</u> Review, update, and adopt the Infrastructure Master Plan.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 10.1.1.3.</u> Utilize the County’s Five-Year Capital Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Infrastructure Master Plan	• Oconee County	2030
<u>Strategy 10.1.1.4.</u> Create and update plans and cost estimates that address specific infrastructure priorities with accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 10.1.1.5.</u> Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed upgrades resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the population growth of Oconee County.	• Oconee County	2030
<u>Strategy 10.1.1.6.</u> Prioritize infrastructure and facilities needs and capital investment.	• Oconee County	Annually
<b>Objective 10.1.2. Continue a comprehensive capital projects planning and implementation process to address future conditions and needs.</b>		
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.1.</u> Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.	• Oconee County	On-Going
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.2.</u> Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.	• Oconee County	On-Going
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.3.</u> Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.	• Oconee County • Housing Developers	On-Going
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.4.</u> Upgrade solid waste and recycling facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.	• Oconee County	2030
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.5.</u> Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required and needed.	• Oconee County	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.6.</u> Work to address the age-related challenges and needs that may arise among Oconee County’s aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• Aging Services</li> <li>• Faith-based Communities</li> <li>• Healthcare Providers</li> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.7.</u> Upgrade and maintain the County road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County’s growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• SCDOT</li> <li>• ACOG</li> </ul>	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.8.</u> Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• CatBus</li> <li>• SCDOT</li> <li>• ACOG</li> </ul>	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.9.</u> Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation and to promote ecotourism opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• SCDOT</li> <li>• ACOG</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> </ul>	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.10.</u> Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but establishes the facility as a premier small airport.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.11.</u> Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities in Oconee County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• Arts Organizations</li> <li>• School District of Oconee County (SDOC)</li> </ul>	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.12.</u> Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional, and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, historic sites, and expand efforts to promote these features for tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• SCPRT</li> <li>• SCDOT</li> <li>• Historic Preservation Organizations</li> </ul>	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.13.</u> Maintain and update the County’s geographic information system (GIS) and related data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	<p>On-Going</p>
<p><b>Objective 10.1.3. Support adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</b></p>		
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.1.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of Oconee County municipalities in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> </ul>	<p>Annually</p>





Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.2.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of adjacent and relevant jurisdictions in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• Neighboring Counties and Municipalities</li> <li>• State and Federal Agencies</li> <li>• ACOG</li> </ul>	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.3.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of relevant agencies in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• SDOC</li> <li>• Tri-County Technical College (TCTC)</li> <li>• Cultural Organizations</li> <li>• Utilities</li> <li>• Aging and Social Services providers</li> <li>• Healthcare providers</li> </ul>	<p>2030</p>
<p><b>Goal 10.2. Pursue funding and partnerships to support identified public infrastructure needs.</b></p>		
<p><b>Objective 10.2.1. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvement and new infrastructure.</b></p>		
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.1.</u> Identify and work to establish alternative revenue sources such as special tax districts and the local option sales tax.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.2.</u> Broaden utilization of grants to assist with capital projects and leverage existing resources to provide matching funds for grant opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.3.</u> Explore and pursue other revenue sources such as user-based fees, special assessments, impact fees and other sources to help fund infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.4.</u> Work with state and federal leaders to change formulas for state and federal funding that rely on Census figures that fail to account for the large percentage of non-resident property owners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.5.</u> Encourage and seek partnership opportunities to eliminate unnecessary redundancies, strengthen funding proposals, and establish public/private partnerships to meet public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• Adjacent/Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies</li> <li>• Private Industries</li> </ul>	<p>On-Going</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<b>Goal 10.3. Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies in planning for capital improvements.</b>		
<b>Objective 10.3.1. Notify and coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies when recommending projects for the expenditure of funds for public infrastructure and facilities.</b>		
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.1.</u> Improve communication and cooperation between the County and municipalities, state and federal agencies, and other public and private entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	On-Going
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.2.</u> Coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies on updates to the Oconee County <i>Priority Investment Element</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• Adjacent/Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies</li> </ul>	Annually
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.3.</u> Notify and coordinate with appropriate adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies when recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• Adjacent/Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies</li> </ul>	2030
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.4.</u> Consider relevant existing plans from adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oconee County</li> </ul>	2030

