

Getting to Project Implementation

Applying Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework to Rural Transit Regionalization

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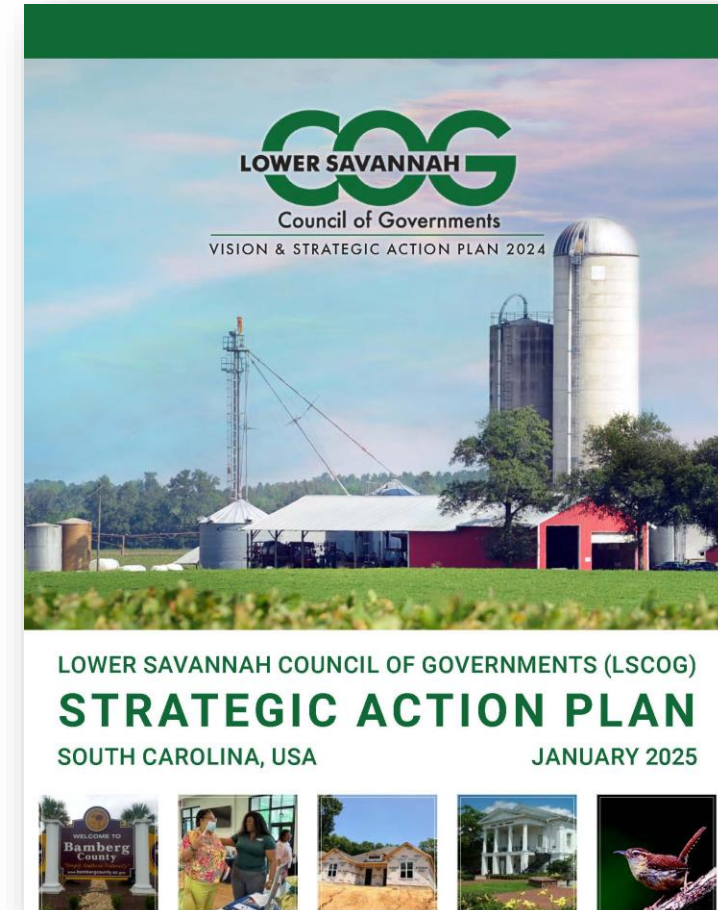
Why This Matters

- Transportation planning identifies transportation needs.
- Public policy determines whether those needs are ever addressed.
- Many rural regions understand their transportation challenges, yet relatively few successfully implement regional solutions.
- This presentation examines how Lower Savannah moved from recognizing a rural transit crisis to pursuing regional implementation using John Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework.

Lower Savannah COG Strategic Action Plan

Six Pillars:

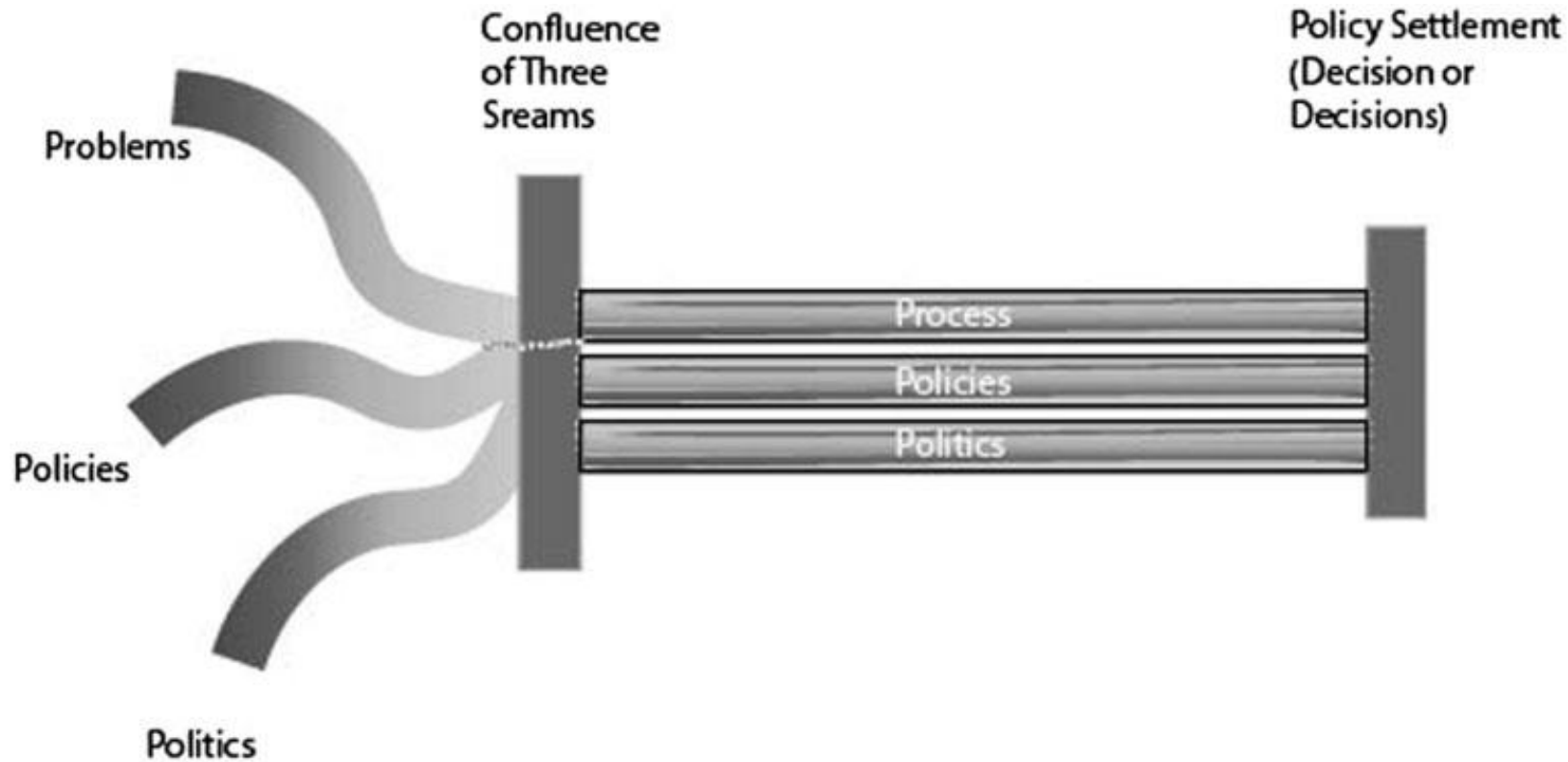
1. Promote and advocate the larger regional value proposition
2. Activate the economic development in high potential emerging areas
3. Support transition and adaption in distressed and disadvantaged areas
4. Unleash staff and organizational capacity
5. Build larger consortium of partners and funders
6. Build a more cooperative, responsive and flexible organization



The Lower Savannah Region has a “three speed” economy

1. Strong performing areas close to population centers
2. High potential emerging areas
3. Distressed and disadvantaged areas

John W. Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework



****Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework explains how policy change becomes possible through the convergence of the problem, policy, and politics streams.****

John W. Kingdon's Multiple Stream Framework of Policy Formation and Implementation

Problem Stream	Recognition of a problem requiring government attention.
Policy Stream	Research, development, and evaluation of potential policy solutions.
Politics Stream	The political climate, public support, and decision-makers' willingness to address the issue.
Policy Window	The three streams converge, creating an "open window" for policy change. The issue reaches the policy agenda, and policy decisions are made.
Implementation	The selected policy is implemented, monitored, and refined as needed. Implementation extends beyond Kingdon's original framework and is included here to demonstrate the transition from policy adoption to real-world application.

Problem Stream: A Growing Rural Transit Crisis

Three small County Councils on Aging (COAs) in the distressed area provide aging, nutrition, and **transit** services as part of their respective county governments.

- **Demographic Pressures:** Significant population decline across all three counties has reduced local capacity.
- **Institutional Capacity:** One County Council on Aging permanently closed on March 31, 2026. A second County Council on Aging is experiencing ongoing financial instability.
- **Community Impacts:** Rural public transit services are becoming increasingly unsustainable, limiting access to employment, healthcare, nutrition, and other essential services.

Problem Stream: Why the Crisis Matters

- Rural residents are unable to fully access federal and state Aging/Nutrition and Transit services because of **limited transit options**.
- Approximately 60–75% of transit trips provided by the Bamberg County Council on Aging are work-related, demonstrating that reliable transit is **essential for employment access and workforce retention**.
- Small rural local governments and service providers often **lack the human, financial, and administrative capacity** to effectively manage Aging/Nutrition and Transit programs.
- The LSCOG 2024 Strategic Action Plan recognizes that the region's distressed and disadvantaged communities, located farther from major population centers, face unique challenges and **require greater capacity building, regional collaboration, and creative solutions** to improve essential services.

Tri-County Population Trends, Poverty and Senior Rates



	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Census	2025 Estimate	2000–2025 Difference	2020 % of Persons in Poverty	2025 % Persons 65 yrs+
Allendale County	11,211	10,419	8,039	7,179	(3,856) -34.4%	31.6%	23.5%
Bamberg County	16,658	15,987	13,311	12,756	(3,694) -22.2%	24.2%	24.4%
Barnwell County	23,478	22,621	20,589	20,794	(3,048) -13.0%	24.3%	20.6%
South Carolina	4,012,012	4,625,364	5,118,425	5,490,316	1,478,304 36.8%	13.3%	19.7%

Policy Stream: Existing Regional Policy Framework with Board Support



LSCOG 2024 Strategic Action Plan:

- Support transition in distressed and disadvantaged areas – **build a strong internal alliance** between Allendale and Bamberg counties where the “LSCOG take[s] a role to facilitate between these two counties and partner the small counties and communities together. This would be focused on **identifying areas where resources could be shared**, or collaboration could help build critical scale...”
- Prioritize convening work on transit and housing solutions – “there is also a need to **continue to support the transportation network** to build access to viable local workforce and **connect workers to new employment opportunities**.”

Policy Stream: Regional Transit Overview

- In 2000, LSCOG formed a Regional Transit Management Agency and later received pilot funding to be a regional Mobility Management center. The pilot never transitioned to a freestanding program for several reasons including the lack of a “crisis,” lack of sustainable funds and lack of local and state political support.
- The region has several rural/urban transit providers.
- Urban and rural transit in Aiken County is provided by the non-profit council on aging (COA).
- Urban transit in Orangeburg County is provided by a large multi regional private company and rural transit is provided by non-profit social service organizations.
- A regional transit system provides transit services for workers to Hilton Head Island hotels and resorts.

Policy Stream: Regional Transit Overview (continued)



- The remainder of the transit services are run by several small agencies.
- The Lower Savannah Council of Governments is also the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). As such, the Lower Savannah AAA is the regional subrecipient for federal and state Aging/Nutrition and **Transit** services through the South Carolina Department of Aging (IIIB, HCBS, etc.).
- The LSAAA holds the three counties' service contracts for Aging/Nutrition and **Transit** services of approximately \$1.2M annually.
- Allendale, Bamberg and Barnwell counties receive either directly or indirectly \$2.1M in federal 5311 Rural **Transit** funds annually with state and local matching funds.

Politics Stream: Building of the Partnerships

Federal, state and local governments agree that there is a significant rural transit problem in South Carolina and that the Lower Savannah Region is the tip of the “iceberg.” Partnerships and conversations are ongoing between LSCOG and others:

- South Carolina Department on Aging
- South Carolina Department of Transportation – Office of Public Transit
- South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce
- South Carolina Legislative Delegations
- US Senate Banking Committee – Surface Transportation Bill (transit)
- Federal Senate and House of Representatives Delegation

Politics Stream: Political Feasibility, Political Climate and Public Opinion

- There is federal delegation support from both political parties for either potential funds or legislative assistance.
- A regional state senator is behind the effort to fund a [regional transit study through the Council and SCDOT](#). The funding is tied up in the current state budget process.
- The state DOT is highly supportive of a study to explore the regionalization of transit services.
- One participating county is reluctant to support regionalization of services because of the loss of local control and pride.
- Barnwell County, the one that lost its COA, is very supportive of regionalization of services.

Politics Stream: Political Feasibility, Political Climate and Public Opinion (continued)

- Bamberg County COA is doing well and is against regional consolidation. They were offered the opportunity to administer Barnwell County's services but refused the offer. Their county council reaction to consolidation is unknown.
- Citizens in Barnwell County are upset about the loss of transit services in the county.
- Local citizens are not as concerned about who is providing the services as long as the services are being provided across the region.

Policy Window: Evaluating Preferred Solution

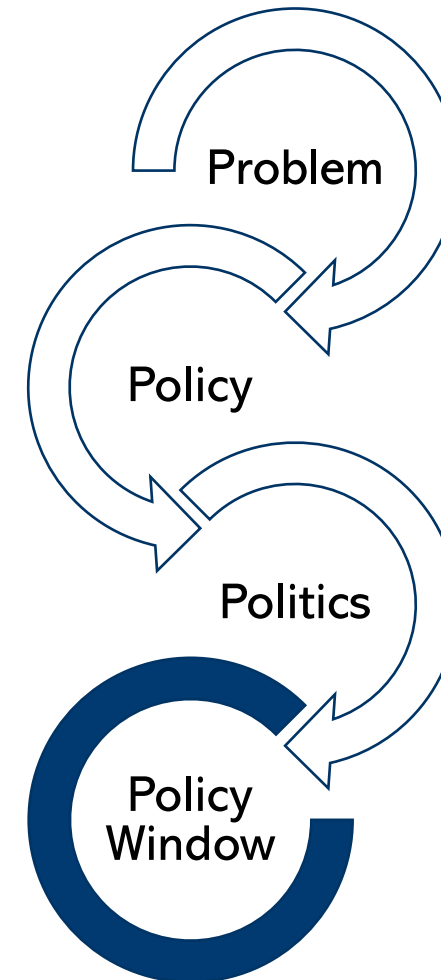
Why Regionalization?

- Building on the Strategic Action Plan, LSAAA already administers the regional Aging, Nutrition, and **Transit** contracts, providing an existing governance and administrative framework.
- A tri-county model was selected over a bi-county approach because the three counties share similar demographic and economic characteristics, and including a third county provides greater economies of scale.
- A single regional provider would reduce duplication of administrative functions, improve operational efficiency, strengthen long-term sustainability, and enhance service delivery.

Solution: LSAAA issued an RFQ for integrated Aging, Nutrition, and Transit services for the tri-county region.

Policy Window – Setting the Alternatives

- Regionalize nutrition and transit services in the tri-county area with our contracted funds (AA)
- Regionalize transit services in the tri-county area
- Regionalize (rural) transit in the entire COG region
- Provide nutrition/transit in just the a bi-county region
- Continue the current fragmented system



Policy Window – Policy Formation and Decision Making



LSCOG's Role as the Policy Entrepreneur recognizing the opportunity, brings stakeholders together, and advances a feasible solution.

Recognizing the Opportunity

Recognized that the transit challenges were regional in nature and extended beyond individual county boundaries.

Built on the 2024 Strategic Action Plan to establish a policy foundation for regional collaboration.

Building Partnerships

Convened local, state, and federal partners to identify challenges, evaluate alternatives, and build support for change.

Continued building consensus among counties and stakeholders throughout the process.

Leveraging Regional Capacity

Leveraged its role as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to coordinate existing contracts, funding, and administrative capacity.

Advancing Implementation

Developed a feasible regional implementation strategy, including issuing an RFQ for integrated Aging, Nutrition, and Transit services.

From Policy to Implementation

Implement the new policy:

- Issued a regional Request for Qualifications (RFQ).
- Transition aging, nutrition, and transit services under one regional provider.

Measure performance using:

- Ridership
- Cost efficiency
- Geographic coverage
- Workforce accessibility
- Customer satisfaction

Refine as needed:

- Use performance monitoring to refine the regional model over time.

Lessons for Rural South Carolina

- Regional transit challenges are governance challenges as much as transportation challenges.
- Strategic planning positioned the region before the **Institutional Capacity** crisis occurred.
- Regional institutions can build capacity where individual counties cannot.
- Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework provides a practical explanation for why policy change became possible.
- The Lower Savannah experience offers a practical model that other distressed rural regions can adapt to their own circumstances.

Questions?

Thank you
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