

# COGNIZANCE

The official newsletter of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments

February 2023

Working together to advance our region

Aiken | Allendale | Bamberg | Barnwell | Calhoun | Orangeburg

## Update from the Executive Director

Welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of the Lower Savannah COG newsletter,

Council staff has gotten off to a quick start in 2023. The Human Service division is concluding the *Area Plan* detailing how we will work with our partners to provide aging services in the Region. In addition, our Mobility Management department is reviewing current Best Friends Express routes and identifying new user-friendly transit routes for the urbanized areas of Aiken County.

The Council is working across the region on comprehensive planning/zoning and economic development projects in Bowman, Allendale, Williston, Barnwell, Monetta, North Augusta, Jackson, Norway, and Denmark. In March, we conclude Needs Assessments in all six counties. And this month, with our state partners, we roll out the SC Brownfields Environmental Site Testing (SC BEST) program. This competitive program will pay to conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and other eligible environmental activities for local governments.

The Work Force mobile unit is traversing the region and can be seen in St. Matthews, Bamberg, Fairfax, and Blackville regularly. And Thoroughbred Country Tourism continues to market our region's events and restaurants to tourists throughout the Southeast.

Finally, and closer to home, roof construction is moving forward, and we look for completion before Masters' Week in April. All said, 2023 will be a busy and productive year for the organization as we work together to continue to meet the needs of our region, our communities, and our citizens.

Best wishes,

Bill Molnar  
Executive Director



## Upcoming Committee Events

Visit [www.lscog.org/events](http://www.lscog.org/events) for details.

- Feb 9** | LSCOG Board of Directors Meeting – Aiken County
- Feb 16** | LS Regional Aging Advisory Committee
- Feb 20** | **Presidents' Day - CLOSED**
- Mar 9** | WDB Youth Committee Meeting
- Mar 9** | LSCOG Executive Committee Meeting
- Mar 28** | WDB SC Works Committee Meeting
- Apr 4** | Workforce Development Board
- Apr 7** | **Good Friday - CLOSED**
- Apr 13** | Board of Directors Meeting - Orangeburg
- Apr 19** | Transportation TAC Meeting

# Administration

## SCCOG Conference – November 20-22, 2022

The SCCOG Conference in Myrtle Beach was a success! The hard work that the LSCOG team put in paid off. We had over 300+ registrants attend the conference.



Clockwise starting from top left: Machael Peterson, Dr. Jennifer Clyburn-Reed, Melissa Lindler; Ben and Peggy Kinlaw; Registrants attending one of the sessions; Emory Langston, Nora Sanders, and Dorothy Riley; Joe McKinney, NADO Executive Director

## Staff Retreat – Camp Gravatt

In December 2022, the LSCOG staff came together for a Staff Retreat. This year it was held at Camp Gravatt in Aiken, SC. The day was spent working together on team building exercises using ropes, balance beams, and more!



**Pictured left (clockwise):** Valarie Carter, Eric Carrier, Dana Luttrull, Judy Richburg, Vickie Richardson, and Susan Garen

**Pictured right:** Nora Sanders and Andre Anderson

## Human Services

The **SRSRA Retiree Resource Center** sponsored by the Savannah River Site Retiree Association is continuing to assist SRS retirees and their families with Medicare enrollments, SRS stipend benefits, and SRS claims for reimbursement with WageWorks, now called Health Equity. You can call the Retiree Resource Center's telephone message line and leave a message at **803.508.7065**, email them at [SRSRA@LSCOG.org](mailto:SRSRA@LSCOG.org) or drop claims materials in the document collection box in front of the LSCOG building.



### Medication Assistance Program

**The Medication Assistance Program (MAP)** is operating by phone two days per week with concentration on the current client's refills for medications. They can be reached at 803-508-7066.

### Medicare Part D Open Enrollment 2023, UPDATE

#### Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is granting a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for Exceptional Circumstances

Beginning January 1, 2023, the out-of-pocket cost for a month's supply of a "covered insulin product" for beneficiaries enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan will be capped at \$35. This \$35 cap will apply in all Part D coverage phased, including the deductible. All Medicare Part D plans, both stand-alone drug plans and Medicare Advantage plans, cannot charge more than \$35 for covered insulin products.

Beginning July 1, 2023, the out-of-pocket cost for beneficiaries who take insulin using a traditional pump covered by Original Medicare Part B as Durable Medical Equipment will also be capped at \$35 for a month's supply.

The Medicare Plan Finder may not reflect the changes to beneficiaries' out of pocket costs resulting from the new cost-sharing rules for covered insulin products.

CMS is granting a **Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for Exceptional Circumstances** to allow beneficiaries to add, drop, or change their Part D coverage if a better option is found after the Open Enrollment Period to cover insulin. This SEP will be available to all beneficiaries who use a "covered insulin product."

This SEP begins December 8, 2022, and ends December 31, 2023. Beneficiaries may use this SEP one time during this period for this reason. Call 1-800-MEDICARE to request a plan change with this SEP.

Questions concerning the Medicare Part D enrollment please contact **Charlotte McNeely, SHIP Counselor, at 803-508-7033.**

\*Excerpted from State Health Insurance Assistance Program – Inflation Reduction Act Insulin FAQs

## Transit Operations

### 5310 Urban Transit Program

The very popular 5310 Urban transit program is back. Anxious riders have been patiently waiting for funding made available which provides much needed transportation for seniors (ages 60 and above) and/or individuals with a disability in the urbanized portion of Aiken County. In the past year this program has experienced an increase in interest and ridership. Seniors and/or persons with a disability wanting to

find out more about the program should contact Aiken Senior Life Services (ASLS) by calling **803-648-5447** extension **2340**.

### **Saturday Service Pilot**

Aiken County citizens have voted! The Saturday Service Pilot transportation program is finally here. Although there is a focus on transporting seniors, the Saturday shuttle serves all individuals living in and travelling to a destination within the urbanized areas of Aiken County between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM on Saturdays (except if the Saturday falls on a Holiday). Interested individuals can schedule a ride to go shopping, eating out, going to the movies, visiting friends etc. Please contact Aiken Senior Life Services to find out more about the program by calling **803-648-5447** extension **2340**. Funding for this pilot is made available through the SC Department of Transportation (SCDOT).

LSCOG is a recipient of FTA funding and encourages certified disadvantaged, minority, or women owned small businesses to participate in transit services procurement opportunities as they are available. For further information, please visit the LSCOG "Opportunities" website page to review advertised procurement opportunities.

## **Tourism**

### **SRS Museum Re-Opens**

The Savannah River Site Museum in Aiken has re-opened with an all-new exhibit – 'Defense, Deterrence, and Discover'. Sponsored by the National Nuclear Security Administration, the exhibit explores the legacy and the future of the Savannah River Site through educational displays and interactive activities.

[Learn More](#)



## **Planning, Community and Economic Development (PCED)**

LSCOG will be updating its Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan this year. Please take time to complete our survey by using the QR code or link below. Your response will be used to get a better understanding of the region's transportation needs.



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/P3LVM3C>

### **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**

It is that time of year to be thinking about potential infrastructure projects for your communities through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).

The Spring round of CDBG focuses on public infrastructure such as water, sewer, road, and drainage improvements. To be eligible to apply a community must meet one of the three national objectives: the activity or project must benefit low-to-moderate income persons, aid or prevent slum or blight, or meet an urgent need.





Projects must be improvements or upgrades only. Matching funds of 10% are requested of the applying entity unless otherwise approved. We are happy to talk with anyone about developing community needs into a project but please be mindful that project development takes time. The sooner you start planning the stronger the project.

If you are interested in applying for funding, please contact **Brooke Morris**, Community and Economic Development Projects Manager at **803-508-7069** or [bmorris@lscog.org](mailto:bmorris@lscog.org).

## NADO Impact Award for the Economic Assessment of the LSCOG Region

Dr. Joey Von Nessen, Research Economist for the Moore School of Business at University of South Carolina, recently presented the results of the Economic Assessment of the Six-County Region to the Lower Savannah Council of Governments Board of Directors.

The study was funded through the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) CARES Act Recovery Assistance. It assesses the economic history of the region as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It delves into key categories that are impactful to each community and the region such as population, education, occupations, and employment.

Dr. Von Nessen concludes with a set of recommendations for the region to help strengthen the ability to capitalize on existing and future growth. To view the full report and executive summary, please visit [www.lscog.org/economic-development](http://www.lscog.org/economic-development).



## Workforce Development and SC Works Centers

### POWER UP YOUR FUTURE 2023

Lower Savannah Council of Governments' Workforce Development will be holding two Power Up Events in March. The first Power Up Your Future event will be held in Orangeburg, SC. The event will be held at the Smith-Hammond-Middleton Memorial Center at South Carolina State University March 14, 2023, from 9AM – 11PM. High school students from Allendale, Bamberg, Calhoun, and Orangeburg Counties will be invited to attend. The second event will be held on March 16, 2023, at the USC-Aiken Convocation Center from 4PM – 7PM. This event is being held



for high school students from Aiken, Barnwell, and Edgefield Counties.



All registered students in attendance will have the opportunity to speak with employers and post-secondary training and educational providers as they make plans for the present and future, there will also be drawings for scholarships. Last year event sponsors gave away a combined total of \$5,500 in scholarships to seniors throughout the Lower Savannah Region.

## Meet the Staff

This is a new addition to our newsletter, meet the LSCOG staff that keeps everything running smoothly. This time we meet our newest employees.



**Ms. Judy Richburg** is new to LSCOG and will be the ADTRC Director.



**Ms. Ashley Baker** returned to LSCOG as the Assistant Finance Director.



**Ms. L.J. Peterson** is our new Housing Coordinator in the PCED division.



**Ms. Charlotte McNeely** is our new ADTRC SHIP Coordinator.



**Ms. Sydney Goff** is our Workforce and PCED Finance Manager.



Council of Governments

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