

## **Citizen-Based SPATS Transportation Enhancement Master Plan Will Provide Quality-of-Life Improvements**

By Lisa Bollinger, SPATS Intermodal Transportation Planner, Spartanburg County Planning Department

SPARTANBURG COUNTY – It was a hubbub of activity – a planner’s dream of citizen involvement. Approximately 60 citizens attended the Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> SPATS (Spartanburg Area Transportation Study) *Transportation Enhancement Visioning Workshop*. Spartanburg County citizens identified and prioritized ways to creatively link future transportation enhancements (sidewalks, greenways, bike trails, and beautification projects) to be funded in the SPATS area in the next ten years.

Participants entered the meeting room and found a menagerie of visuals and renderings, from colored designs to maps of the SPATS area.



Walls were lined with examples of transportation enhancement designs, educational videos that outlined local beautification and alternative mobility visions, and posters that

reviewed potential enhancement opportunities. SPATS urban area maps and illustrations were on display that featured base data (streets, utility corridors, etc.), past enhancement projects, and principal destinations (schools, parks, shopping, etc.). One map even provided a planning exercise in itself. After plotting the location of their home with a dot sticker, citizens were then able to relate their immediate world to the larger SPATS urban area. These various planning tools helped citizens visualize possible links between their home and the places they travel to most.

In the meeting’s short two hours, a dynamic planning process unfolded. Citizens were challenged by Lisa Bollinger, SPATS Intermodal Transportation Planner, to think of their everyday trips and which of those trips could be undertaken by foot or by bike. In typical planning fashion, consultant Howard Landers of HDR Engineering outlined the master planning process, reviewed the inventory of mobility and beautification enhancement efforts to date, and recognized the work of resource groups

in these areas. Citizens were treated to a pictorial inventory of SPATS' special places, current enhancements, and examples of enhancements from other areas.

Due to the large number of citizen participants, Landers split breakout groups into those focused on mobility and on beautification, respectively. Facilitators for breakout groups included Jim D'Amato (SPATS Senior Transportation Planner), Debbie Clark (Heartwise), Yon Lambert (Palmetto Conservation Foundation), Eron Smith (HDR), Dan Curley (HDR), and Lisa Bollinger (SPATS). They led citizens in identifying enhancement opportunities and priorities, listing groups or organizations that could provide matching funds, and developing general vision statements for mobility and beautification. One person from each breakout session reported to the overall group, and everyone was able to see community priorities surface.



At the second "Alternatives Workshop," participants will review HDR's recommendations based on citizen priorities from the first Visioning Workshop. The chosen alternatives will create a "plan and program strategy" for implementation. The second workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm in Conference Room 6 of the County Administration Building. Heartwise and Palmetto Conservation Foundation are generously providing refreshments for the workshops.

The Transportation Enhancement Master Plan will guide Spartanburg County in creating new travel patterns, link interesting destinations, and reduce congestion on our roadways. Once complete, the plan will provide coordinated quality-of-life improvements that will be vital to Spartanburg County's future competitive standing in the region.