

By: Jody A. Thompson, Environmental Educator  
Alabama Sea Grant/Auburn Marine Center

Soon, Envision Coastal Alabama will hold a regional transportation summit, pulling together broad interests from six counties to discuss transit issues, specifically public transit as it relates to employment, tourism, and equal access to these facilities.

Many people think of public transit as a means of transportation for those who cannot drive or do not have access to an automobile. However, many vibrant cities utilize a variety of public transit methods, ranging from buses to water taxis, from pedestrian sidewalks to light rail systems. Communities such as Chattanooga, TN, Portland, OR, Atlanta, GA, and the Washington, D.C. area rely on public transportation for a majority of residents and tourists.

Transit is not only about transportation. It is about quality of life. Studies have shown that in communities that encourage walking with the installation of sidewalks and zoning of mixed use areas, residents are healthier and weigh less than in communities that do not. Utilization of public transportation cuts down on automobile emissions and fewer new roads mean less stormwater runoff, directly affecting air and water quality.

Not only can public transit be healthy for a local economy, it can also be healthy for a community's quality of life.