



YOUR COG AT WORK

APRIL 6, 2020

LRCOG's office is closed to the public until further notice. However, our Aging, Transit and Planning and Economic Departments are working and ready to serve you.

We have a small number of staff who are working at the office on Monday-Friday during normal business hours to address questions, manage programs, and respond to emergency needs. However, most staff are teleworking at this time but are still receiving and responding to phone calls and emails. Regardless of our working environment, staff will continue to coordinate services to our clients and residents of the region. If you know of someone who may have an immediate need, please refer them to LRCOG's Aging and Disability Resource Center at 334-749-5264. We are here to serve the residents of Lee and Russell Counties during this challenging time.

LRCOG EVENT CANCELLATIONS/ POSTPONEMENTS

- ◆ **The Senior Fraud Summit**, scheduled for **April 22nd**, has been postponed. This event will be rescheduled.
- ◆ **The Community Aging Network meeting** on **April 24th**, has been cancelled.
- ◆ **The Senior Picnic** scheduled for **May 7th** has been cancelled.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- ◆ **For LRCOG staff**, call 334-749-5264.
- ◆ **For Lee-Russell Public Transit**, call 334-749-9092
- ◆ **For Phenix City Express**, call 1-877-743-3739 (1-877-Ride-PEX)
- ◆ **For EAMC COVID-19 line**, call 334-528-7425(SICK).
- ◆ **For State COVID-19 hotline**, call 1-888-264-2256.

DON'T FORGET THE CENSUS 2020 COUNTDOWN—LEE AND RUSSELL COUNTIES ARE COUNTING ON YOU-WWW.CENSUS.ALABAMA.GOV

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

HOME DELIVERED MEALS

- ◇ **210 clients are currently receiving Home Delivered meals through the program.** GA Foods continues to deliver these meals without any disruption related to COVID-19.
- ◇ Our meals coordinator remains in contact with recipients to ensure uninterrupted service.
- ◇ Some individuals have asked for meals to be temporarily suspended due to COVID-19. Deliveries will resume at their request.
- ◇ When calling clients, our meals coordinator is sharing with them the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for virus prevention.

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER (ADRC)

- ◇ The ADRC is the first point of contact for referrals to our agency. ADRC counselors connect individuals with all known community resources.
- ◇ The ADRC recently assisted the City of Opelika with a utility grant. **\$15,979 was expended helping over 140 households with utility costs.**
- ◇ The ADRC assists seniors with SNAP (food stamp) applications.
- ◇ The ADRC also works with Seniors to complete the Farmer's Market voucher applications. Seniors receive \$30 in vouchers to use at farmers' markets in the state.
- ◇ Individuals can reach the ADRC by calling **334-749-5264** for available resources in our region.

SENIORX PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE

- ◇ The program provides eligible individuals who are 55 year + or disabled with prescription medication at a reduced cost or at no cost.
- ◇ Between Jan-March 2020, **185 seniors** have had **280 prescriptions** processed with an overall **savings of \$338,356** to individuals enrolled in the program.
- ◇ Anyone interested in this program, please call the ADRC at our office.

MEDICAID WAIVER (MW) PROGRAM

- ◇ Medicaid Waiver case managers are in frequent contact with the **231 clients** currently active on the MW program.
- ◇ Home visits are only being conducted in cases of extreme need.
- ◇ Essential services, such as personal care, continue to be delivered. Direct service providers are following all safety precautions & screening workers for symptoms per Medicaid/CDC guidelines.

SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL

- ◇ **LRCOG's SMP Coordinator is contacting seniors to warn them of fraud schemes that have been recently reported.**
- ◇ There are reports of individuals going door-to-door and falsely telling seniors that they are there to test for the coronavirus.
- ◇ Additionally, scammers are informing seniors that they qualify for supplies through Medicare or Medicaid and then asking for personal info in order to "file" the claim.
- ◇ Individuals may call our SMP Coordinator to report possible fraud or to ask questions about how to deal with suspected scams.

RED FLAGS THAT SOMEONE IS A SCAMMER:

- ◇ Applying pressure for you to make fast decisions
- ◇ Threatening you with police action
- ◇ Pressuring you not to tell your friends or family about the call
- ◇ Asking for personal info like Social Security # or bank account numbers.

OTHER TIPS TO AVOID SCAMS

- ◇ Be aware that scammers can disguise their real number using fake caller IDs.
- ◇ Before giving out your credit card number or money, ask a friend or family member to help you verify the source of the caller or visitor.
- ◇ Do not give your personal information over the phone or to an unknown visitor unless you can verify their legitimacy.

ELDERLY NUTRITION PROGRAM (ENP) AND SENIOR CENTERS

- ◇ We have discontinued congregate services, but we are continuing to provide frozen or shelf stable meals to the senior participants at our 8 senior centers in Lee and Russell Counties. **As of March 24, approximately 9,500 shelf-stable and frozen meals were distributed to senior center participants. 21,100+ meals will be distributed by LRCOG in April to senior center participants.**
- ◇ Drive-thru stations to pick up meals are set up at each senior center for participants who normally drive to the centers. Public transit buses are being utilized to transport center managers to deliver meals to seniors who are not able to drive to the senior centers.
- ◇ Telephone wellness checks are made periodically to our most at-risk participants to see if they have emergency needs that can be addressed.
- ◇ Senior Center Managers are working at the centers from 8:30 a.m. -10:30 a.m. to maintain communication with the LRCOG's Nutrition Coordinator and ensure that all participants are receiving meals.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Nursing Home Facilities Update

- ◇ All visits to local facilities have been suspended. The only exception is for residents that are critically ill and need emotional support and comfort.
- ◇ Facility staff is doing all that they can to maintain as much social distance within the facility as possible. There are no group activities and residents are served meals in their rooms.
- ◇ As with all healthcare entities, the facilities are working hard to take care of the most vulnerable of our population.
- ◇ If anyone is having any difficulty being able to contact a resident or get information on the resident's well-being, **please encourage them to call LRCOG's Ombudsman at 334-749-5264 to look into the situation.**

ALABAMA CARES PROGRAM

- ◇ This program supports primary caregivers who are taking care of loved ones who are age 60+ or any age if a person has Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.
- ◇ Also through Alabama Cares, the Older Relative Caregiver program provides assistance to eligible grandparents and other older relatives (age 55+) that are taking care of child/children who are 18 and younger or child/children with a severe disability.
- ◇ Eligible primary caregivers and older relative caregivers can receive the following assistance:
 - 1) Information on available services
 - 2) Education, counseling, support groups, and caregiver training
 - 3) Respite care to caregivers to provide them a break to take care of personal matters
 - 4) Supplemental services such as meals, groceries, home repairs and supplies on a limited basis to complement the care already provided by the caregiver.
- ◇ **Individuals may call the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) to ask for information at 334-749-5264.**

PUBLIC TRANSIT

LEE-RUSSELL PUBLIC TRANSIT (LRPT)

- ⇒ We are currently operating LRPT Dial-a-Ride in Auburn, Opelika, Lee and Russell Counties.
- ⇒ Hours of operation: 6 am—6 pm CST.
- ⇒ You can make a reservation by calling **334-749-9092, 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM CST**, two weeks to one business day ahead. Have your name, date, time needed and specific destination ready.
- ⇒ We can accommodate passengers with special needs.
- ⇒ Until further notice, **fares have been suspended.** There is no cost to ride LRPT.
- ⇒ LRPT Passenger guide is available upon request or at <http://www.lrcog.com/LRPT.html>.

PHENIX CITY EXPRESS (PEX)

- ⇒ We are currently operating PEX's fixed route and paratransit systems in Phenix City.
- ⇒ Hours of operation: 8 am—4 pm EST.
- ⇒ Paratransit riders can make a reservation by calling **1-877-743-3739, 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM EST**, two weeks to one business day ahead. Have your name, date, time needed and specific destination ready.
- ⇒ We can accommodate passengers with special needs.
- ⇒ Until further notice, **fares have been suspended.** There is no cost to ride PEX.
- ⇒ PEX Passenger guides are available upon request or at <http://www.lrcog.com/pex.html>.

LRPT AND PEX SAFETY PROTOCOLS

- ⇒ Individuals with needs such as dialysis or oncology will travel one at a time and as always are allowed to have an attendant travel with them when required.
- ⇒ No buses will carry more than two passengers at a time.
- ⇒ Passengers are screened through a series of questions to determine if it is safe for them to ride the bus. Encouraging those who are sick to stay home.
- ⇒ Passengers will be advised to stay at least six feet apart from any other passengers and the driver while riding a transit vehicle.
- ⇒ Due to potential economic impact to our passengers and the need for increased social distancing between passengers and our drivers/office staff, **we are suspending payment of fares until further notice.**
- ⇒ Drivers are continuously disinfecting the inside of the vehicles. Bus washers are also disinfecting the buses inside bi-weekly as well.
- ⇒ The trips we are providing to citizens in the region are: 1st – Emergency Medical trips – Dialysis, oncology, etc.; 2nd – Work trips; AND 3rd – Basic necessity shopping trips to grocery stores, pharmacies.
- ⇒ However, we are closely monitoring guidance from the CDC and the Alabama Department of Public Health for their recommendations for the continued safe operation of the transit system.

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DIVISION D HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

The PED Department continues to work on Phase 2 of the update of the Division D Hazard Mitigation Plan, which currently focuses on Autauga, Elmore, and Montgomery counties. The first draft of Phase 2 involves data collection, contacting stakeholders, ranking hazards, and surveying the public. All of this information will be compiled into Phase 2 draft. At this time, we are working remotely with everyone involved in the project by using online surveys and Power Point presentations with notes. As this project continues, video chat and/or conference calls will be utilized with our stakeholders to ensure their knowledge/concerns are heard. Public engagement will take place via surveys, phone calls, or emails to ensure that the citizens living in Autauga, Elmore and Montgomery counties are a part of the planning process. Phase 1, which included Lee and Russell Counties, was turned into AEMA in February for review comments.

BROWNFIELD WORKSHOP

- A Brownfield Workshop will be hosted by LRCOG in partnership with Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and Alabama Brownfield Association (ALBFA) on **Wednesday, May 20th**. More details will follow.
- The event will take place remotely at this time. ADEM will focus on Brownfield 101 and ALBFA will discuss a brownfield case study.
- It will be open to local officials, chamber of commerce, Auburn University Master of Community Planning students, commercial real estate agent and developers and other interested parties.

AUBURN-OPELIKA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (AOMPO)

Staff is preparing for the May 2020 Auburn-Opelika MPO meeting as well as updating the Highway Functional Classification Map for the MPO, to ensure roads are classified appropriately.

JOB ACCESS REMOTE COMMUTE (JARC) PROGRAM

- JARC is still providing transportation options for low income clients who are “essential” employees, so that they can still maintain their jobs.
- The goal of JARC is to improve the self-sufficiency of low income individuals who need transportation in order to gain and/or maintain employment by connecting them with reliable and affordable transportation.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND (RLF)

- The RLF works with businesses in Lee and Russell counties to finance start-up and expanding small and medium-sized businesses.
- Working with a private lender and the borrower, we can lend the funds to help local businesses start, expand and grow.
- Our goal is to create and retain jobs and help businesses with financing that they need in the bi-county area.
- We can offer attractive financing packages to prospective borrowers that can decrease debt service through lower interest rates and longer payment terms.
- The RLF Board and the RLF Manager are working on Temporary Economic Disaster COVID-19 Policy to help address the current economic conditions.
- If you would like to learn more about this program, call our office to speak to the RLF Manager.

ALABAMA COUNTS—CENSUS 2020

- Your voice matters. We all have a say in the outcome of the 2020 Census, and it can end with **Alabama's fair share of funding and with fair Congressional representation.**
- All you have to do is complete and return your 2020 census form.
- In mid-March 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau mailed information on how to complete your census form in three ways—**Online, By Phone, or Paper Form.**
- Late April 2020, you will receive a reminder postcard and May 2020 the US Census will follow up with households that did not respond.
- The information you submit will be basic household information and is private and will not be used against you in any way or for any other purpose. It is against the law for your info. to be shared or used by another agency.
- **SHOW THEM THAT YOU COUNT, THAT LEE AND RUSSELL COUNTIES COUNT, AND THAT ALABAMA COUNTS BY COMPLETING YOUR CENSUS FORM TODAY!!**

Grant Applications in Progress

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Grants

Staff is working on two CDBG applications for the City of Phenix City and the Town of Hurtsboro. These grants focus on blight removal and storm water management. The CDBG grant deadlines have been pushed back to July 10th due to the current pandemic. We are waiting for confirmation from the Town of Smiths Station about a possible application.

Delta Regional Authority (DRA) Applications

Staff is working with the City of Phenix City on a possible DRA application. Grant deadline is May 31st. DRA funding is designated for projects in Russell County only.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grants

LRCOG staff submitted an EDA Planning Grant at the end of March in order to begin preparation of a Lee-Russell Council of Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

If any of our members governments are interested in applying for these or other grants, you can call Tracie Hadaway, Planning and Economic Development Director, for additional information and funding requirements at 334-749-5264.