



— POSITION AVAILABLE —

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Apply by May 16, 2025*

Created in 1777, Chatham County is one of the oldest counties in the United States and has long been recognized as one of America's friendliest and most beautiful areas. In fact, in 2021 alone, Trazee Travel (a partner of Global Traveler) Savannah, the county seat, was ranked as the world's 2nd Friendliest City and as its 2nd Favorite Foodie City—#15 in the U.S. on U.S. News & World Report's Foodie list. TIME Magazine ranked it as one of The World's 100 Greatest Places of 2021, and both Redbook and Veranda ranked Savannah in their list of 10 Most Beautiful Cities to Visit in the United States. CEOWORLD ranked it in its Top 10 U.S. Cities Worth Exploring. We could go on and on, but suffice it to say Savannah/Chatham County are extremely well regarded as a wonderful place to live, work, play and raise a family. Hospitality is an art form here and found at every turn!

Residents take pride and simply love to share the area's charm.

The deliberate attention to quality of life began with the founding of Savannah as the capital of the 13th colony of Georgia. Claiming the land for King George in 1733, General James Oglethorpe designed the city to include 24 neighborhoods built around central, public squares. Although two have been removed, the remaining 22 continue to make Savannah a delightful place to tour on foot.





Although COVID has impacted tourism, Chatham County is an extremely popular destination and tourism is a major economic driver. In 2019, 14.8 million visitors (with 8.4 million overnight stays) generated an estimated \$3.1 billion in visitor spending. Hotel/motel tax collections for the city of Savannah, Chatham County and Tybee Island routinely account for approximately \$20 million.

Learning opportunities abound in the county with some very good public schools, a multitude of private schools, several diverse universities and a technical college. More than 35,000 students reside within a 50-mile radius, while pursuing a post-secondary education at more than 20 institutions of higher learning: from Georgia Southern University– Armstrong and Savannah State University to the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), the Savannah Law School, South University, and Savannah Technical College. Both Mercer University and the Medical College of Georgia have medical schools here.

Chatham County is a place to live, and thrive! Forbes listed Savannah as one of the best places to retire in 2020 and some of its neighborhoods are among the most desirable in the United States. With a cost of living below the national average (83.2 compared to 107.5 for Atlanta and 100 nationally per bestplaces.net), you can surround yourself with history, step back into small-town America, enjoy the security and luxury of a gated community, or reside in a laid-back bungalow overlooking the marsh. A very nice home can be purchased for \$200,000 to \$500,000.

Culture abounds in the area—Savannah has, for example, twice as many art galleries per capita as New York City! The Telfair Museum of Art is the South's oldest art museum. Built in 1819, it was a private home to the Telfair family until 1875 when it was willed over to the Georgia Historical Society. The museum now houses an impressive collection of more than 4,500 works of fine art.

Chatham County offers many opportunities to enjoy the water, from fishing (one of Fishing Bookers 12 Best US Fishing Cities for 2021) to sailing the Intracoastal Waterway. Tybee Island hosts one of the 25 Best Beaches in the US (Travel+Leisure 2021). Once a quiet beach town, Tybee is now a popular vacation destination offering five miles of sandy beaches and historic attractions like Fort Pulaski and the Tybee Island Light Station. Residents and tourists enjoy locally caught seafood, year-round festivals and events in a laid-back atmosphere. The sand and surf activities include paddle boarding, bodysurfing, kayaking,

dolphin tours, relaxation in the sand, or activities on “Savannah’s beach,” such as bocce, competitive volleyball and aerial kiteboarding.

Outdoor enthusiasts can charter a boat and fish the Gulf Stream, or take an eco-tour of Georgia’s beautiful barrier islands. The pristine coastline is known as the ocean’s nursery, where miles of marshland serve as a breeding and feeding ground for thousands of species from land, air, and sea. The Savannah National Wildlife Refuge has 29,000 acres of tidal marshes, rivers, and streams.

For travelers, the county has a spectacular airport (rated as the #1 U.S. Airport per the Readers’ Choice Awards by Conde Nast Traveler) offering non-stop flights to Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas-Fort Worth, Denver, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Grand Rapids, Houston, Louisville, Miami, Milwaukee, Nashville, New York City, Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Tampa, Toronto, and Washington, DC among others. Airlines serving the airport include Air Canada, Allegiant, American, Delta Frontier, JetBlue, Silver, Southwest, Sun Country, and United.

Sultry summers, oaks dripping with Spanish moss and grand antebellum manors are the quintessential elements of the South and you will find all of them here. The charm of Chatham County makes it a wonderful place to visit or live. Whether you want beauty, culture, eccentricity, friendliness, or just to slow down the pace—you can have it all in Chatham County!

## HISTORY OF CHATHAM AREA TRANSIT

The story of public transportation in Savannah began in 1869 with the formation of the Savannah-Skidaway and Seaboard Railway Company, which was to provide inter-city streetcar service. The first cars were drawn by a horse and had room for twelve seated passengers.

1890 brought electric streetcar operations. The coming of the twentieth century saw the consolidation of the major local railway properties under the newly created Savannah Electric Company which handled all lighting, power, and transit operations.

The electric streetcars continued to flourish through the 1920’s and 1930’s but were eventually overtaken by buses going into the 1940’s. In January 1946, the Savannah Electric and Power Company sold its holdings to the Savannah Transit Company (STC), and streetcar operations were eliminated.



In July 1961, the Savannah Transit Authority (STA) was created by state legislation to provide public transit to the area. At that time, transit operations were still a breakeven, and sometimes profit-making service. That did not last with labor, fuel and equipment costs rising. Additionally, the greater availability of automobiles resulted in declining passenger levels through the 1960's. By the 1970's, federal and local subsidies were needed to keep the buses rolling.

In 1986, with steadily worsening operating and financial conditions, the state of Georgia passed legislation that allowed new transit authorities to be established and the creation of a transit service district along with a dedicated property tax to stabilize funding for its operations. In 1987 the Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) replaced the Savannah Transit Authority.

In 1989, the American Public Transportation Association acknowledged CAT as the best transit system in its size category in North America and presented CAT with the “Outstanding Public Transportation Achievement Award” for small transit systems.

In 1999, CAT and the City of Savannah signed an agreement whereby CAT began operating a free downtown shuttle, known as the “dot Shuttle”.

In 2001, CAT began to operate two trolley replicas on the CAT Shuttle route and assumed the operation of the Savannah Belles Ferry system which carries visitors, employees, and residents between Hutchinson Island and River Street.

In 2006, CAT saw the delivery of five new 30 foot and five new 35 foot low floor buses to replace buses ready for retirement. Also delivered were eight new replacement Teleride vans to transport people with disabilities.

In 2009, CAT received a federal grant and purchased eleven hybrid buses. In February 2012, CAT broke ground for its first downtown intermodal center. Almost simultaneously, reconstruction of CAT’s primary offices and facilities began, including the ground-breaking for the new Operations & Maintenance Facility.

In 2015, CAT was awarded a \$10.8 million grant from the Georgia State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) through its “Go! Transit Capital Program.” With the money, CAT purchased six (6) electric buses which arrived during the spring and

summer of 2021 and will be put into service in the next few months.

Today CAT is a multifaceted public transportation organization serving large positions of Savannah/Chatham County. Its Board is committed, and its staff is talented. It simply needs an outstanding leader and manager to take the organization into the future.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

See Table 1 for Chatham County Demographics.

Table 1: Chatham County Demographics

Distribution by Race		Distribution by Age	
White	48.7%	0 to 15	17.0%
Black	37.0%	15 to 25	13.8%
Asian	3.6%	25 to 45	29.3%
Native American	0.4%	45 to 65	22.7%
Some Other / Two or More Races	10.3%	65 to 85	15.4%
Total	100.0%	Over 85	1.8%
Hispanic (all races)	8.1%	Population 303,655	

Educational Achievements (25 & Over) and Other Statistics	
High School or Higher	91.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	39.1%
Median Age—Chatham County	37.8
Median Age—U.S.	38.9
Median Household Income—Chatham County	\$70,904
Median Household Income—U.S.	\$74,580
Poverty Rate	14.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023

## GEOGRAPHY

Chatham County lies on the Savannah River, approximately 20 miles upriver from the Atlantic Ocean and is on the border between South Carolina and Georgia.





The County covers 632 square miles of which 426 square miles are land and 206 square miles are water. The Port of Savannah is the primary port on the Savannah River and the largest port in the state of Georgia. The U.S. Intracoastal Waterway is located nearby.

Chatham County, along with Bryan and Effingham Counties, comprise the "Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area". Jacksonville, FL, is two hours south, Atlanta three and a half hours northwest, Orlando, FL, four hours south and Hilton Head is just under an hour northeast.

## CLIMATE

Chatham County has a semi-tropical climate with usually warm, and frequently hot, humid weather. During the winter months, the average high temperature is in the low 60s F and the average low temperature is in the low 40s F. During the summer, temperatures vary from an average high around 90 F to an average low in the high 60s F. Summer afternoon showers often bring a little reprieve from the temperatures. The annual precipitation is 49 inches, the driest month is November at 2.4 inches, and the wettest is August at 7.20 inches. The county rarely receives snow. In recent years, however, it has been subject to the effects of tropical storms. While neither Hurricanes Matthew in 2016 nor Irma in 2017 passed directly over the county, they did cause millions of dollars of damage from flooding and wind.

## COMMERCE

The area's economy is based on six key components. The first is manufacturing. Gulf Stream Aerospace is the area's largest employer. The Port of Savannah is the second component. It is ranked fourth in North America in terms of container traffic and is among the fastest growing. It offers 9,700 feet of contiguous berthing space and over three million square feet of warehouse space is available within 30



miles of the port. Two major railroads, the Norfolk Southern and CSX, as well as Interstates 16 and 95, serve the Port.

The third component is tourism (mostly small businesses) and the fourth is the military. Hunter Army Airfield lies within the county's boundaries and is home to approximately 5,000 service men and women and units of the Army, Air National Guard, and Coast Guard.

Fifth is education. As noted previously, the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) has a significant presence in the community and hosts 12,000 students. Georgia Southern University enjoys an enrollment of over 6,300 and Savannah State University, established in 1890 and the oldest public historically black college or university in Georgia, enrolls 4,900. In all, 35,000 students attend colleges and universities in Chatham County or within a 50-mile radius.

Sixth is medical. Two nationally recognized medical centers deliver top-quality health care in the city: Memorial University Medical Center and the St. Joseph's/ Candler Health System. They attract people primarily from southeast Georgia and coastal of South Carolina.

See Table II for the area's largest employers.

## CHATHAM AREA TRANSIT

Chatham Area Transit (CAT) is the regional transit agency that provides service to the urbanized area of Chatham County. Covering 438 square miles with a population of 265,000, CAT offers traditional fixed-route service, paratransit (34 small buses providing door-to-door service for those with qualifying disabilities) and a free downtown bus and ferry system, the latter between Hutchinson Island and Savannah. Overall, it provides almost four million passenger trips annually, including 100,000 for persons with disabilities. It does so through 60 buses serving 16 fixed routes and 1,300 bus stops, 40 CAT Mobility Vehicles, and four ferry vessels (providing 750,000 passenger trips annually).

CAT is governed by a Board composed of nine members who represent Chatham County, the City of Savannah, and the communities therein (including the elderly and disabled). All the Board Members have the best interests of the community at heart, and none view CAT as a steppingstone to higher office. They are collegial and work well together. They respect each other and think highly of the authority's staff.

CAT's 2025 proposed operating budget is \$37,058,045. Its most important revenue sources are fares (proposed \$1.6 million), other agencies (primarily the City of Savannah and Chatham County; proposed \$10.8 million), tax revenue (proposed \$16.5 million) and grants (proposed \$6.3 million). The Authority has a staff of 280 full time and 30 part time employees. The basic units are:

For 2025, Authority has a proposed staff of 304 full-time (FT) and 33 part-time (PT) employees. The basic units are:

- Fixed Route (98 FT and 10 PT employees, 14 administrative personnel)
- Paratransit (37 FT and 5 PT employees, 11 administrative personnel)
- Micro-transit (8 FT employees)
- CAT Connects (4 FT employees)
- Maintenance (39 FT and 6 PT employees, 11 administrative personnel)
- Marine Services (ferries; 10 FT and 5 PT employees)
- Call Center – Service Quality (13 FT and 2 PT employees)
- Board Administration (3 FT employees)
- Executive Department (12 FT)
- Human Resources (5 FT employees)
- Finance Department (9 FT and 2 PT employees)
- Security, Safety & Risk (16 FT and 3 PT employees)
- Systems Planning & Infrastructure Development (7 FT employees)
- Administrative Services (7 FT employees)

See Figure 2 for the Authority's organizational structure.

All are very knowledgeable and dedicated to performing their duties in an exemplary fashion. The Amalgamated Transit Union represents fixed-route Bus Operators, Maintenance employees and paratransit Teleride Drivers. The contracts for all of these

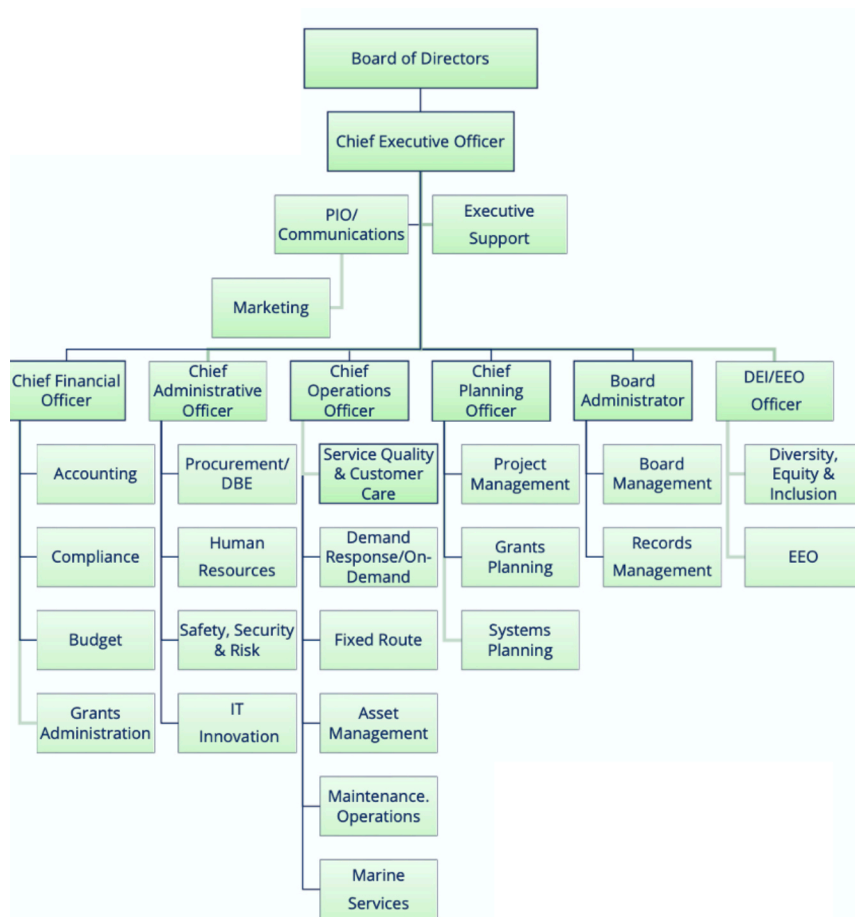


Table 2: Principal Employers, Chatham County, GA

Employer	Industry	Number of Employees
Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation	Aviation	11,301
Savannah-Chatham Board of Education	Education	5,700
St. Joseph's/Candler	Healthcare	4,652
Ft. Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield	Armed Forces	4,300
Memorial University Medical Center	Healthcare	3,869
Walmart	Retail	3,300–4,999
Georgia Southern University - Armstrong	Education	2,864
Colonial Group, Inc.	Oil and Gas Operations	2,241
City of Savannah	Government	2,147
Chatham County	Government	1,831

Source: Chatham County, GA 2023 CAFR

Figure 2: Chatham Organizational Chart



expire July 1st. Negotiations have not begun, but it is expected that the ED will play a pivotal role in reaching an amicable working relationship with the ATU starting with negotiations through the duration of the contract.

## THE ISSUES

CAT is presently fiscally sound and has been reasonably well run. Its fleet is in good condition and its primary facilities were built within the last 10 years. The Board feels the most important challenge is bringing stability to the top of the organization. Specifically, it has had four directors in the past thirteen years, one of which was sentenced to jail time for a bribery and kickback scheme. The Board is committed to hiring the right person—someone who will put the best interests of the community first, who will continue to grow public confidence in CAT, and who will make a long term commitment to the organization.

The second issue is long term financial viability. While COVID caused major disruptions, it also led to funding that otherwise would not be available. Thus, while in the short term CAT is fine, the long term is less certain. Outside funding sources are not guaranteed, particularly in the current political climate. Pressures exist to keep taxes low and other funding sources are likely to face increasing limited resources. Hence, CAT will need to constantly strive to achieve the ideal balance between service (hours of operation, routes, and quality) and revenues (fares, taxes, agency revenues and grants).

Part of the next CEO being successful will be reviewing the entire organization to ensure its resources are allocated in a way that most benefits the public. Is it operating as efficiently and effectively as it could? Are



there areas where improvements can be made? Are CAT's functions properly staffed? Are the right procedures in place and are they being followed? Are the right people in the right jobs?

Part of that effort will be looking at industry innovations and bringing them to CAT. Many potential riders are not close to a bus stop. Can innovation around first & last mile, or something similar be used to bring people to where CAT goes and to take people from where CAT stops to where they need to go?

Further, the agency needs to find alternative, reliable revenue streams. These may involve public/private partnerships and economic development. Transit Oriented Development is one option. This effort may include cooperating with other governments to maximize the utility of HUD funds.

Related to the prior issue is the potential expansion of service. When the Authority was formed as a transit district, a number of communities in the north end of the county opted not to participate. These include Pooler, Port Wentworth, Bloomingdale and part of Garden City. As Pooler is becoming a warehouse hub, it would be beneficial to the region if public transportation served it. Further, none of the nearby counties participate in the authority. As the population of the region grows, it will be important to expand beyond the transit district's current boundaries to provide service and alleviate traffic. In the past, CAT has had discussions with some of these communities. The goal should be to find win-win solutions that would make CAT a regional transportation system, not one that serves primarily the city.

Finally, and probably most importantly, CAT is eager to build a true team composed of the employees, management and the Board where everyone feels valued. The organization truly wants to be the best it can be and to serve the public. Getting a competent, new Executive Director will be the first step in creating this team and a culture where customer service is paramount, and change is welcome.

## THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The Board is seeking an outstanding leader and manager — someone who will be passionate about making CAT the preeminent transit authority in the nation. The individual will be strong, energetic, proactive, honest, humble, intelligent, articulate, open minded, responsive, and, as one Board Member put it, ridiculously competent.

CAT has much to offer and simply needs someone to help it realize its potential. The Board is seeking a CEO to partner with it, other local officials and community to take CAT to the next level—and beyond. He/she will be a teambuilder and a consensus builder. Relationships have been damaged and need to be repaired. The Board is looking for a uniter, not a divider. They want to establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the CEO. Doing so will require a high degree of integrity and transparency. When the CEO makes a mistake, he/she will be comfortable admitting the error and fixing it. Honesty will go a long way towards building that positive relationship.

CAT is like a three legged stool—the Board, the staff and the community. All need to be kept informed and heard. In particular, the staff needs to know of Board priorities and direction so they can then provide the services the public needs and expects. Town hall meetings may be one tool that is used with both the public and the employees. Taking CAT to work and listening to the employees will be another. While CAT has taken a few knocks, it has a wonderful story to tell. The next CEO needs to promote that story, in the community and in the field with the staff. As another Board Member put, communication is the oil that makes an organization run smoothly. People need to know the Executive Director is listening.

The Board does not want to be involved in day-to-day operations. Instead, it wants to hire a strong Executive Director who will carry out its priorities while being kept in the loop. It expects the next CEO to be not just its employee but also an advisor. The Board Members realize they are not experts in transportation and hope the next CEO will be a practical visionary—someone who can look over the horizon, understand what the future will bring and position CAT in a way that it can take advantage of coming opportunities. It wants to find someone who is innovative and will bring new ideas to CAT.

The ideal candidate will be confident and comfortable telling the Board what it needs to hear, not what it might like to hear. He/she will understand politics but not be involved in them. Given CAT's recent past, the next CEO will be someone of the highest character, someone whose integrity is above reproach, and someone without any hint of scandal.

The individual will be someone who takes a fresh look at the organization and who is always looking for ways to improve processes and services. The manager will be analytical and a problem solver with a holistic perspective. He/she will understand the importance of process and procedures but also a





healthy sense of impatience. Common sense will be paramount while having a pleasant sense of humor is a plus.

When it is time to make a decision, the CEO will not hesitate. That said, he/she will do the necessary groundwork, so no one is surprised. Customer service will be important, and he/she will lead by example. Customers are not always right but need to be treated with dignity and respect, and deserve a good faith effort in finding a solution to their problems. The next Executive Director will realize the community values reliability and predictability. He/she will be very comfortable with the media.

The individual will understand human behavior and motivation. He/she will be a mentor and encourage the staff members to realize their full potential. The ideal candidate will be firm and fair. The CEO will set expectations, provide resources, step back and let employees do their jobs. The individual will be collaborative and not a micromanager. Instead, he/she will expect to be informed, insist deadlines be met and hold staff members accountable for results.

In terms of knowledge and experience, the ideal candidate will have a strong background in leadership and management along with a sound knowledge of public transportation—operations, maintenance, system development, finance (including funding mechanisms) and community and intergovernmental relations. As noted, CAT's future success depends in large part upon its ability to leverage its resources and work with others to achieve synergy.

The ideal candidate will have a bachelor's degree in business administration, public administration, transportation or related field, and seven to ten years of increasingly responsible experience as a senior level transportation agency executive. While not an accountant, the next CEO will understand municipal and transportation finance and act as a diligent steward of the agency's finances.



Finally, the Board is looking for someone who recognizes CAT as the wonderful opportunity that it is and embrace it. It wants an outstanding professional to whom it can make a long term commitment.

#### THE PRIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The most recent permanent CEO left to become the City of Savannah's Chief of Planning and Economic Development after approximately two and a half years with CAT.

#### INTERNAL CANDIDATES

While one or more internal candidates may apply, the Board is absolutely committed to getting the best possible person. The next Executive Director will be selected based on the Board's evaluation of the finalists' credentials, knowledge of the industry, experience, interpersonal skills, and aptitude. Experience with CAT specifically will not be a significant factor.

#### COMPENSATION

The starting salary range is targeted to be \$206,000 to \$230,000. Fringe benefits are generous.

#### RESIDENCY

Residency within the county limits is not required but expected. The Executive Director must be available to respond in case of an emergency.

#### HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your resume and cover letter to [Recruit42@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit42@cb-asso.com) by May 16th. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Scott Krim at (801) 628-8364 or Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

#### THE PROCESS

Town Hall meetings are expected. Candidates will be screened in May and June. Interviews are anticipated to be held in late June.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Applicants' names will not be released without first obtaining the permission of the candidate. That likely will not occur until after the finalists have been selected and interviewed.

#### OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

CAT is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages women, minorities and veterans to apply.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about CAT, please visit the following website:

[www.catchacat.org](http://www.catchacat.org)

For additional information about Chatham County and / or Savannah, please visit:

[www.savannahchamber.com](http://www.savannahchamber.com)

[www.savannah.com/savannah-historic-district](http://www.savannah.com/savannah-historic-district)

[www.chathamcdc.org](http://www.chathamcdc.org)

[www.seda.org](http://www.seda.org)

[www.sdna.wildapricot.org](http://www.sdna.wildapricot.org)