

INTRODUCTION

A successful metropolitan transportation planning process requires the active involvement of many stakeholders. Learn what the plan includes and who is involved in the process.

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Transportation: The Foundation for Winning the Future



Atlanta is one of the world’s most dynamic metropolitan areas, competing globally on the strength of our diverse population, robust economy, myriad cultural assets and attractive lifestyles. We will “win the future” through intensive collaboration that honors and leverages the uniqueness of our communities.

*Atlanta Region’s Plan Policy Framework
August 2015*

The Atlanta Region’s economy and overall quality of life relies on the ability to travel to, from and around our communities safely and efficiently. This capability is essential if we hope to achieve our shared vision of “Winning the Future”.

While trips are occasionally made simply for pleasure, such as a Sunday afternoon drive exploring a new part of town or a midweek evening stroll around the neighborhood for exercise, transportation is primarily a utilitarian aspect of our lives. We drive on the freeways or board buses and trains with a purpose. While the purpose may vary depending on the time of day or day of the week, there is almost always a mission in mind when we leave our homes. Commuting to a job,

delivering supplies, shopping for groceries, filling a prescription at the pharmacy, and attending a sporting event with friends are just a few examples of how the transportation system serves as the foundation for strengthening our economy and making the Atlanta Region and its communities better places to call home.

The *Atlanta Region’s Plan Policy Framework*, adopted by the Atlanta Regional Commission in August 2015, outlines six goals we must achieve to Win the Future:

- 1) Building the Region as a globally recognized hub of innovation and prosperity
- 2) Developing a highly educated and skilled workforce, able to meet the needs of 21st century employers
- 3) Ensuring a comprehensive transportation network incorporating regional transit and 21st century technology
- 4) Secured, long-term water supply
- 5) Developing additional walkable, vibrant centers that support people of all ages and abilities
- 6) Promoting health, arts and other aspects of a high quality of life

This document explores the third goal in detail, outlining where we are today with respect to transportation and what we need to do over the next 20+ years to keep our Region strong in a globally competitive economic environment. A safe and efficient transportation system is one of the key strategies that supports success in achieving all goals. This document incorporates those linkages throughout discussions on issues and potential solutions.



How a robust and diverse transportation system helps seven hypothetical residents of the Atlanta Region win their own individual futures



Devon is a recent graduate of a local university and is a highly motivated and skilled computer programmer. He wants to live in a bustling urban environment where he has many travel options and doesn't have to rely exclusively on a car. Midtown Atlanta, with its range of mobility options, was a great choice for him and the Region's economy will benefit by not losing his talents to another city.



Nikki is a single mom who works full time and wants to take evening classes to become a paralegal, so she can provide a better life for herself and her daughter. She can't afford car payments, but MARTA has bus and train routes that can get her to class on time. When she gets her degree and a new job, she hopes to buy a house and enroll her daughter in gymnastics classes.



Sam manages a bakery which supplies dozens of local groceries and restaurants with fresh bread and other products. Getting his products to local distribution centers and shops efficiently is critical to keep his business competitive and his employees working. His truck drivers appreciate well maintained roads that offer a variety of efficient routing options.



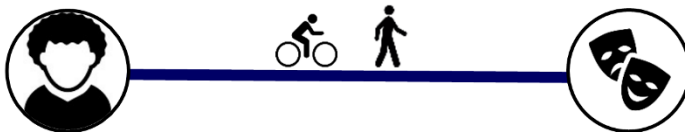
Alicia is a busy executive who travels around the country trying to drum up business for her Atlanta based firm. When she flies out of DeKalb Peachtree Airport, she is grateful for the HOT lanes which allow her to get there from her home in Gwinnett County quickly and reliably.



Carlos is an engineer who cares passionately about protecting the environment. He helps design roadways and parking lots which minimize negative impacts on our water supply. He employs techniques such as landscaping to absorb runoff and avoiding paving over areas important for recharging groundwater supplies.



Maria is a retired schoolteacher who lives on a fixed income and is no longer comfortable driving on busy roads. She wants to continue living in the same community near her friends and family, so the ability to walk and take transit to run errands, go to church and meet up at the local cinema is essential to keeping her active and healthy.



Andre relocated from Los Angeles to work in Atlanta's burgeoning film industry. Physical fitness has always been important to him, since being in good shape helps him move heavy equipment as part of his job. He uses the Region's network of trails, bike lanes and sidewalks extensively for exercise and even occasionally to get to filming sites.

The Atlanta Region's Plan Transportation Element



The transportation element of *The Atlanta Region's Plan* is a multifaceted set of projects, programs and strategies to help our Region win the future by maintaining and expanding our world-class infrastructure, sustaining and diversifying our competitive economy, and fostering and strengthening our healthy livable communities. Achieving these ideals requires the synthesis of a vast array of issues and the active involvement of all the Region's residents in developing and implementing a course of action.

Transportation is a single element of the overall plan, but one that impacts virtually every other element of the plan. The transportation system's performance impacts the quality of life of each of us. Since our travel needs and expectations are varied, the system comprises a vast array of mobility options, from sidewalks to roadways to rail lines. The intent of this transportation element is to ensure the travel needs and expectations of both today's travelers and future generations are met, regardless of age, abilities and income.

Relation to the Regional Transportation Plan

In this document, occasional references are made related to meeting the requirements of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is a product required by the federal government of all metropolitan areas over 50,000 population. It has a specific set of requirements

which must be met in order for federal transportation funds to be used within the area. This document meets all minimum RTP requirements, but goes above and beyond since it was developed within a broader planning context. In general, though, the reader should consider the terms "*The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)*" and "RTP" to be interchangeable.

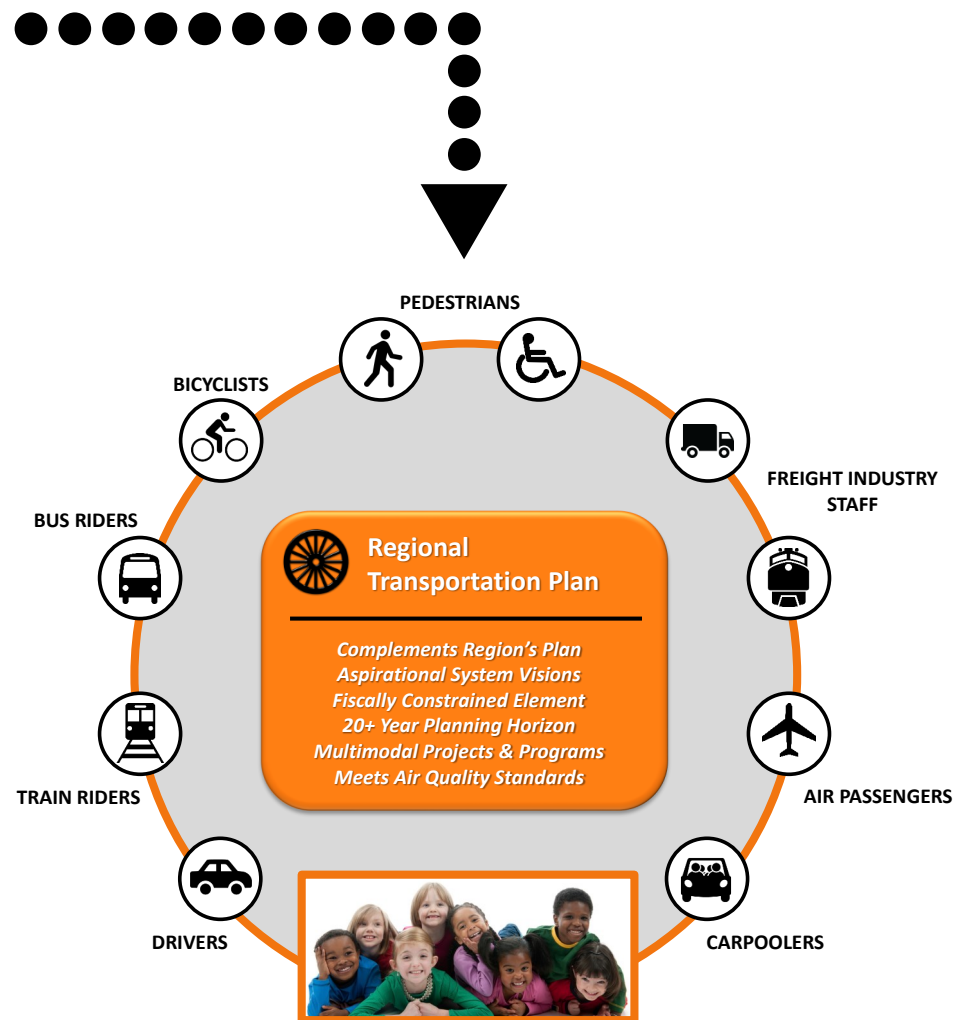
Relation to the Transportation Improvement Program

Inclusion in the RTP means that a major regional project has been identified as a regional priority for funding and is part of the Region's long-term program. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) represents the implementation of a subset of near-term recommendations from the RTP. Federal law requires that a metropolitan area's TIP cover a minimum period of four years, but *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* includes six years of implementation priorities. The TIP associated with this current version of the plan covers fiscal years 2018 through 2023.

A project's presence in the TIP represents a critical step in the authorization of funding. As required by federal law, the TIP document must list all projects for which the sponsor intends to use federal funds, along with any other regionally significant projects, regardless of funding source. Regionally significant projects must be drawn from the Region's long-range transportation plan, and all projects in the TIP must help implement the goals of the long-range plan.



The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the transportation element of *The Atlanta Region's Plan*. By virtue of its development within a comprehensive planning framework, however, *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* exceeds the minimum federal requirements expected of a traditional RTP.



The plan ensures the region's transportation system will meet the needs and expectations of future generations, regardless of age, abilities and income.

Transportation Element Contents











In developing an RTP, ARC follows the federally-required transportation planning process, with a detailed focus on making decisions and project recommendations in a transparent and logical manner. A certification review is conducted every four years by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Atlanta Region’s transportation planning process was last certified on October 2, 2015.

On December 4, 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act federal funding bill into law. This legislation defined funding levels and federal priorities for

surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety and transit for five years: FY 2016 to FY 2020. More information on the programs and funding levels contained in the FAST Act can be found in the Finances section of this document.

The federal transportation planning section of the FAST Act listed ten planning factors which must be considered as part of the transportation planning process for all metropolitan areas. Each planning factor has been considered as part of the RTP development, as noted throughout various sections of this document.

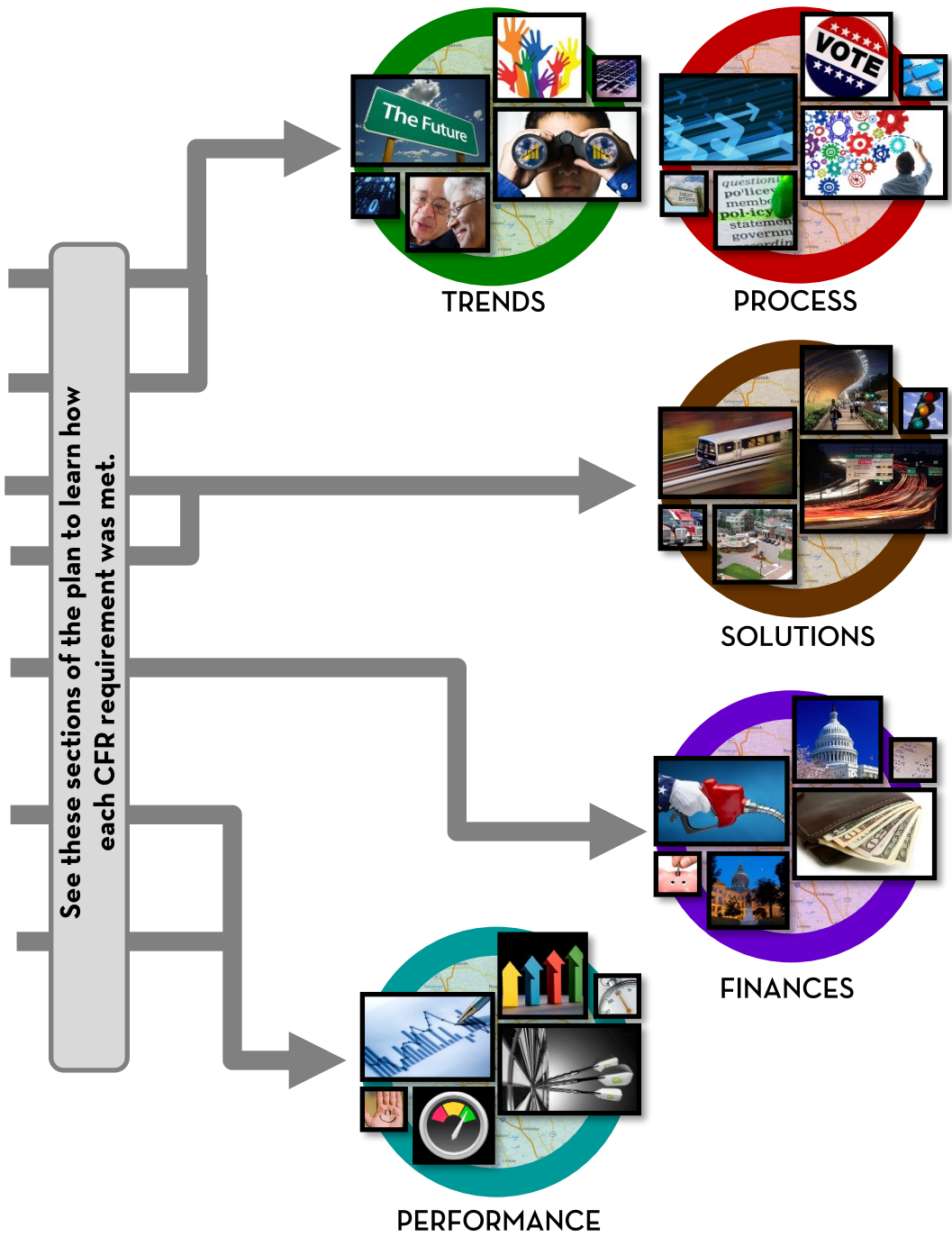
FAST Act Metropolitan Long Range Transportation Planning Factors

 <p>Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.</p>	 <p>Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, people and freight.</p>
 <p>Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.</p>	 <p>Promote efficient system management and operation.</p>
 <p>Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.</p>	 <p>Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.</p>
 <p>Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.</p>	 <p>Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.</p>
 <p>Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.</p>	 <p>Enhance travel and tourism.</p>

In addition to the ten FAST Act planning factors, a number of more specific required elements of a metropolitan area transportation plan are defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). These transportation planning requirements are codified in Title 23 CFR 450.306 and CFR 450.322. In essence, an RTP must meet the following basic requirements:

1. Assess the needs of all system users, including drivers, transit patrons, bicyclists and pedestrians.
2. Be developed through a robust engagement process involving citizens, elected officials, public agencies and other key stakeholder groups.
3. Include a variety of strategies, programs and projects to best address the identified needs.
4. Include both a short-term element (minimum of four years) and a long-term element (minimum of 20 years).
5. Be fiscally constrained, meaning that projected revenues from reasonably available sources will be sufficient to cover the costs of the plan. A financially unconstrained aspirational vision may also be developed at the MPO's discretion.
6. Address all federally required performance measuring and monitoring requirements.
7. In regions which do not meet or are in maintenance for federal air quality standards, the plan must result in a transportation system which does not produce emission levels above specified amounts. Fifteen counties in the region are currently an ozone maintenance area, while 20 counties (plus two partial counties) are currently in maintenance for the fine particulate matter standard.

The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation) meets and exceeds all of these requirements.



The Role of the Atlanta Regional Commission


The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the metropolitan Atlanta Region's planning and intergovernmental coordination agency. ARC coordinates planning efforts across the Region in many areas such as aging, community services, environmental planning, governmental services, job training, land use and public facilities, as well as transportation planning. Many of ARC's responsibilities are defined by either state or federal legislation, while others have evolved over the years in response to a number of critical regional planning issues. The primary roles of ARC are summarized below:

- ARC is responsible for comprehensive planning under state law as the designated Metropolitan Area Planning and Development Commission (MAPDC).
- ARC is also defined as a Regional Commission (RC) to assist local governments with the planning process and to prepare and to implement comprehensive regional plans.
- ARC is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Atlanta Region. As the MPO, the ARC is responsible for developing a multi-modal, financially constrained transportation plan that meets all federal transportation and Clean Air Act planning requirements.
- ARC provides planning staff to the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (MNGWPD), whose mission is to develop comprehensive regional and watershed-specific water resources plans for implementation by local governments.
- ARC serves as the administrative agency for the Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board (ARWDB).
- ARC also serves as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), providing services and policy guidance to address aging issues.
- ARC also serves as the local administrative agency for the Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), responsible for preparing and coordinating the Region's response and recovery to homeland security issues.

ARC's membership includes local governments throughout the Region. Some counties are considered within all elements of ARC's work, while others are only involved in one aspect. Each jurisdiction's relationship to ARC is determined by planning boundaries established through various federal and state regulations. The boundaries defining ARC's work program include 10 counties for purposes of its MAPDC and RC functions, all or parts of 20 counties for its MPO functions, all or parts of 23 counties for conforming with the Clean Air Act, 15 counties for water planning purposes, seven counties for aging planning purposes, 10 counties for workforce planning, and five counties for security and recovery planning. The table on the opposite page illustrates the various boundaries for which ARC has some official level of planning and service delivery responsibilities.

Policy decisions are made by a Board and various committees comprised of local elected officials, senior management of partner agencies, and citizens. The actions taken by ARC's policy bodies are based on and supported by input and recommendations of a staff of approximately 200 professionals representing a broad range of skills and specialties. As part of the organization's work efforts, ARC provides professional planning initiatives to serve as a catalyst for regional progress by focusing leadership, attention and planning resources on key regional issues.

ARC's Planning and Service Delivery Areas

RESPONSIBLE PLANNING AGENCY		The Atlanta Urbanized Area Includes Portions of 23 Counties																						
		Cherokee	Clayton	Cobb	DeKalb	Douglas	Fayette	Fulton	Gwinnett	Henry	Rockdale	Barrow	Bartow	Carroll	Coweta	Dawson	Forsyth	Hall	Jackson	Newton	Paulding	Pike	Spalding	Walton
	Regional Commission / Metropolitan Area Planning and Development Commission	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange														
	Metropolitan Planning Organization	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	PARTIAL	○	PARTIAL	Blue	PARTIAL	Blue	○	○	PARTIAL	Blue	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	PARTIAL
	Area Agency on Aging*	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey														
	Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board*	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey														
	Urban Area Security Initiative*		Grey	Grey	Grey		Grey	Grey													Grey			
	Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District*		Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey			Grey		Grey		Grey	Grey			Grey			
Cartersville-Bartow Metropolitan Planning Organization												▼												
Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization																	▼	▼						

* Not depicted on associated map

The Atlanta Region's Transportation Planning Boundaries



Over the years, ARC has been tied to the transportation planning activities of the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) and the Cartersville-Bartow MPO (CBMPO) due to intertwining of urbanized areas and air quality nonattainment areas. Since 2004, ARC has performed the technical evaluation to demonstrate conformity for the entire Atlanta nonattainment area, thereby supporting the RTPs and TIPs for both the Atlanta and Gainesville regions. With the formation of the CBMPO following the 2010 Census, ARC served the same role.

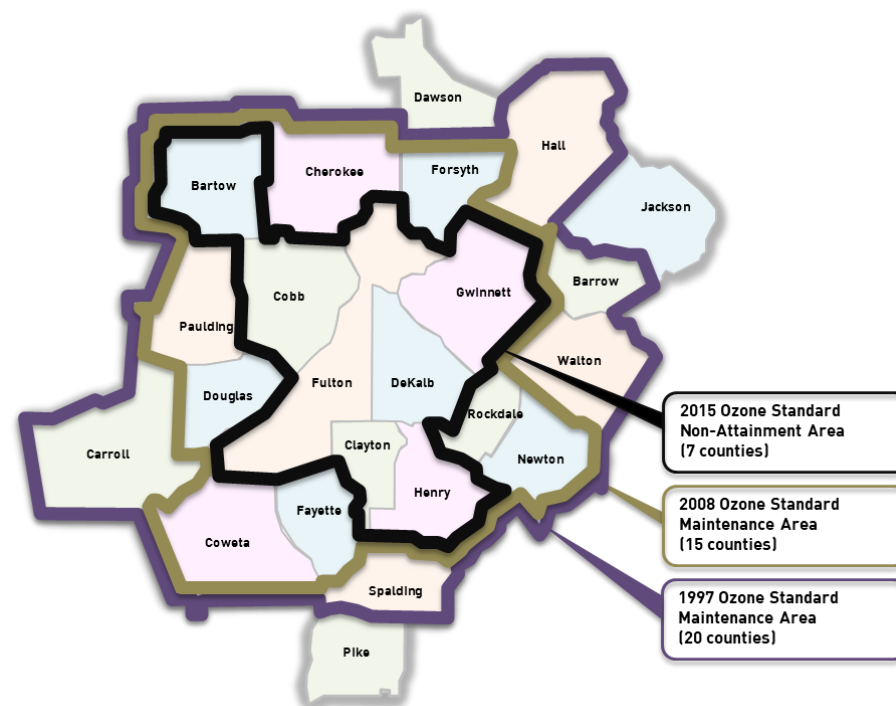
ARC's relationships with GHMPO and CBMPO continue to evolve as older air quality standards have been met and new standards are imposed. Court rulings have also impacted the technical analysis and documentation requirements.

As of May 2019, three different standards for ground level ozone are of current relevance to the Atlanta Region's transportation planning process.

- 1997 Ozone Standard - Included 18 of the 20 counties within the Atlanta MPO boundary, as well as Bartow County and Hall County. This standard has been revoked effective April 2015, but reinstated in February 2018 as the result of a federal lawsuit. All previously impacted counties met this standard and the 20 counties are now currently classified as a maintenance area.
- 2008 Ozone Standard - Included 14 of the 20 counties within the Atlanta MPO boundary, as well as Bartow County. All previously impacted counties have now met this standard and the 15 counties are now currently classified as a maintenance area.
- 2015 Ozone Standard - Seven counties have been identified as being in nonattainment for this newest standard, six of which are within the Atlanta MPO boundary (Bartow is the exception). Designation of these counties as a marginal nonattainment area became officially effective in August 2018.

As of October 2016, when a new standard was implemented for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), all counties within the Atlanta MPO boundary are now classified as being in attainment for this pollutant. Previously, 18 of the 20 counties within the MPO area had been classified as being in nonattainment, as well as Bartow County and Hall County. Since the previous standard under which the nonattainment designation was made was revoked in conjunction with implementation of the new standard, there is no PM_{2.5} maintenance area for which ongoing analysis and reporting is required at this time.

Air Quality Analysis Boundaries



Transportation Plan Approval Process

ARC does not develop *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* in a vacuum. In order for the plan to be implemented, it must be approved through five sequential votes.

The first three approval steps are internal to ARC, with the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) acting first to confirm that the plan meets all technical requirements and has produced recommendations acceptable to practitioners such as planning, engineering and public works staff of constituent governments and other stakeholder agencies. TCC's recommendation is then considered by the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC), which is a policy committee of the full ARC Board. These elected officials and other agency executives represent the MPO's official position on the plan. Finally, the full ARC Board approves the plan.

Following ARC approval, federal law requires that the short-range component of the plan, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be approved by the Governor. In Georgia, this responsibility has been delegated to the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). No state action is required on the long-range portion of the plan.

The final step involves consideration of a "conformity determination" by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). A positive conformity determination means that the plan meets all federal metropolitan transportation planning requirements, including being fiscally constrained, multimodal in nature, and developed through a rigorous stakeholder engagement and outreach process.

In areas where air quality does not meet standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), or are classified as maintenance areas, that agency works with USDOT during the review process to verify that the plan will do its part to help the Region attain those standards. Three separate technical documents, the Activity Based Model Specification Report, Activity Based Model Calibration Report, and Conformity Determination Report (CDR), are used to present ARC's technical analysis methodologies and results for consideration by USDOT and EPA in issuing conformity determinations.

The flowchart on the opposite page outlines the overall transportation plan development process, building off the previous regional plan (*PLAN 2040*) which was last updated in early 2014. Each of the milestone approval dates for this planning cycle are shown.



Model Report

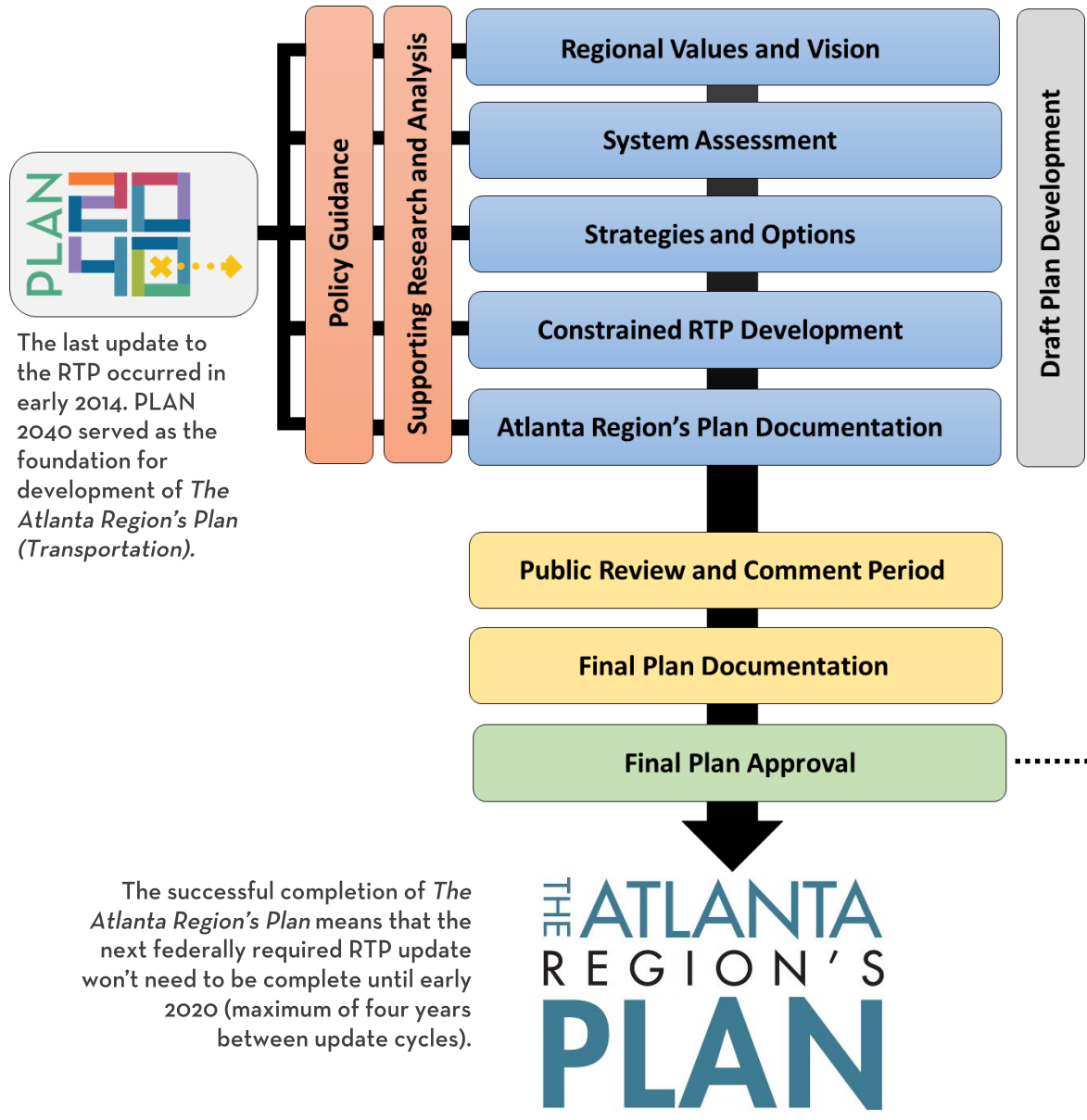
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Conformity Report

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The Atlanta Region's Plan Development and Approval Process



The last update to the RTP occurred in early 2014. PLAN 2040 served as the foundation for development of *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)*.

The successful completion of *The Atlanta Region's Plan* means that the next federally required RTP update won't need to be complete until early 2020 (maximum of four years between update cycles).

Draft Plan Development

Approval of the TIP/RTP requires five separate actions by ARC and its planning partners.

- ARC Transportation Coordinating Committee February 5, 2016
- ARC Transportation and Air Quality Committee February 11, 2016
- ARC Board February 24, 2016
- Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (TIP only on behalf of Governor) March 9, 2016
- USDOT / EPA Conformity Determination March 16, 2016

Seven amendments and twelve rounds of quarterly administrative modifications to the plan have occurred since it was originally adopted.