

Chapter 1 - Introduction



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What is the Atlanta Regional Commission?

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the metropolitan Atlanta region's planning and intergovernmental coordination agency. It serves a variety of different roles for the greater Atlanta region. 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).
- As an area of greater than 1,000,000 population, 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 Atlanta. 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 Board (ARWB).
- ARC also serves as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) providing services and policy guidance to address aging issues.

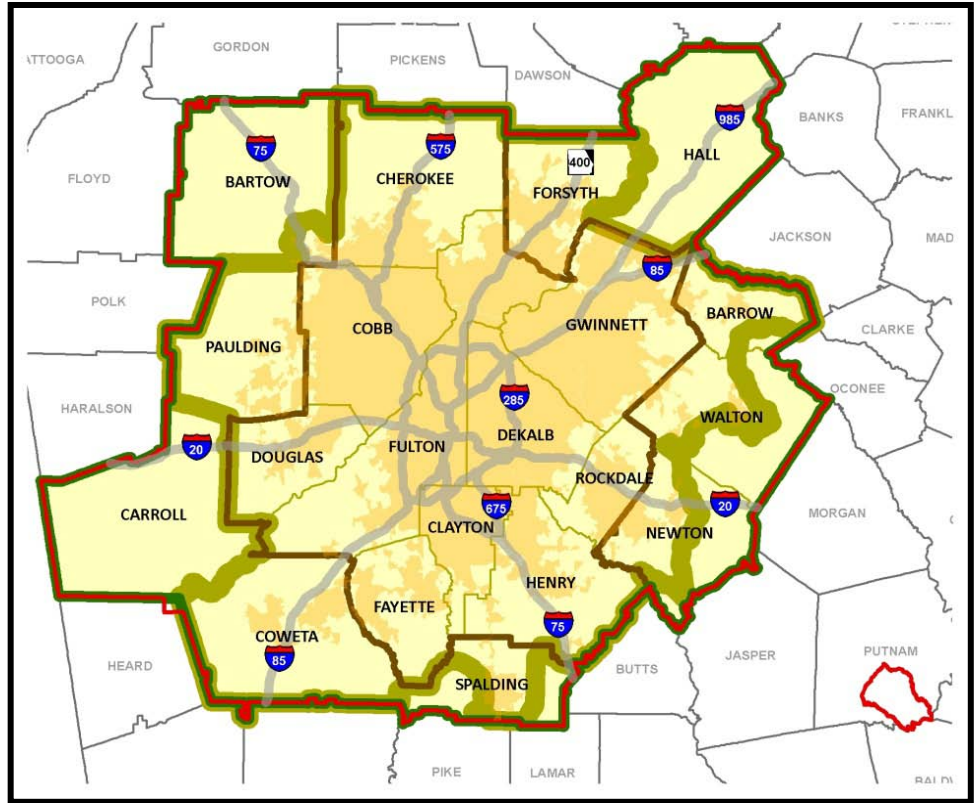
ARC is composed of local governments throughout the region. Its boundaries vary by planning responsibility and include 10 counties for purposes of its MAPDC and RC functions, all or parts of 18 counties for its MPO functions, all or parts of 22 counties for purposes of Clean Air Act nonattainment area planning, 15 counties for water planning purposes, and seven and 10 counties for workforce and aging planning purposes, respectively. Figure 1-1 illustrates the boundaries specific to the transportation planning in the Atlanta region.

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.



Working with the region's citizens, elected officials, and policy makers to develop and implement regional plans, ARC develops a regional vision to lead the region to a sustainable future.

Figure 1-1: Atlanta Transportation Planning Boundaries



Color				
Boundary Name	Regional Commission (RC)	Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	Ozone Non-Attainment Area (8 hour standard)	Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) Non-Attainment Area
Number of Counties	10 counties	All of 13 counties; parts of 5 counties	20 counties	All of 20 counties; parts of 2 counties
Planning Responsibilities	ARC is the State designated Metropolitan Area Planning & Development Commission (MAPDC), with the responsibilities of an RC. Every Georgia county must be a member of a RC, RCs facilitate intergovernmental coordination and provide comprehensive planning assistance and other services to constituent jurisdictions.	The 2000 census identified an expansion of the Atlanta urbanized area that encompassed portions of 9 counties. MPOs develop transportation plans for the current and future urbanized areas. ARC serves as the MPO for all or part of these 18 counties.	In April 2004, EPA implemented a new 8-hour standard for ozone. ARC has coordinated since that time with GHMPO's planning efforts to demonstrate conformity for the entire non-attainment area.	EPA designated this non-attainment area in December 2004. In early 2006, ARC performed a technical analysis for the 20+ county non-attainment area which demonstrates conformity to PM 2.5 requirements.

Why are there multiple planning boundaries?

ARC's multiple planning boundaries can be confusing. There are several reasons for the boundaries, relating to planning requirements from the State of Georgia and the federal government, which define "region" differently for various programs (see table below).

What is PLAN 2040?

ARC recognizes that regional needs related to transportation, land use, environment, economy, housing, and human services are interrelated. PLAN 2040 is ARC's innovative effort to tackle these cross-cutting planning challenges in one guiding document. PLAN 2040 serves as both the regional transportation plan and regional comprehensive plan defining both transportation and land use policy and investment strategies to address regional needs across these multiple planning emphasis areas. Through a collaborative effort among local, state and federal planning partners, PLAN 2040 guides regional growth through its specific investment strategies and programs for metro Atlanta through the year 2040.



The vast majority of PLAN 2040 investment strategies are defined in the regional transportation plan. As the MPO for the Atlanta region, ARC is required by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to develop a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that covers a minimum 20-year time span. This long-range plan helps guide the prioritization and funding of transportation investments for the region and must be updated every four years in air quality nonattainment areas. Transportation planning is a continual process of examining the transportation challenges facing the Atlanta region and identifying a plan of action to improve transportation system performance. PLAN 2040 comprises an RTP consisting of a \$60.9 billion program (in year 2012 dollars) of projects and strategies that successfully addresses regional challenges. These investment strategies were directly informed by the rigorous comprehensive planning and technical analysis conducted as part of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA)-required Regional Agenda which defines the planning process for detailing housing, land use, and other strategies that influence regional growth and development.

PLAN 2040 meets all state and federal guidelines and regulations for regional comprehensive and transportation plans, including financial constraint, federal air quality requirements and an implementation program that defines roles and actions for the many parties in the region that implement regional plans and programs, including local governments.

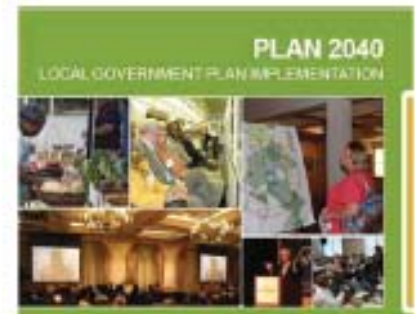
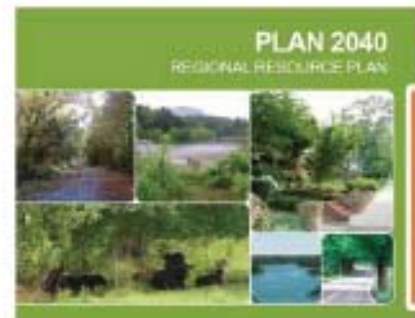
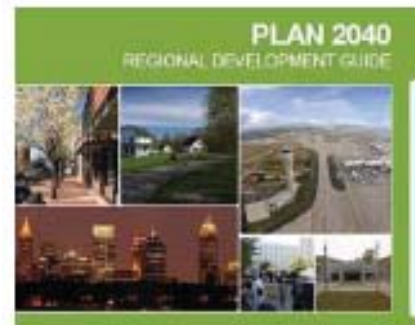
PLAN 2040 represents the most comprehensive regional plan prepared to date, presenting a unified vision addressing land use and transportation.

PLAN 2040 increases awareness of how land in the region is developed and used and how land use is linked with transportation system performance. It provides an understanding of the characteristics that improve travel conditions and create positive environments for living, working and travelling in the region. It is a comprehensive and coordinated strategy for regional development with complimentary, multi-modal transportation system investments to support sustainable regional growth in the future.

The PLAN 2040 document is structured around two primary products. It fulfills the requirements of the Regional Agenda as mandated by the Georgia DCA and the RTP as mandated by US DOT. PLAN 2040 is a compilation of several key components that are available on-line at:

www.atlantaregional.com/plan2040

- The **Regional Assessment** confirms the region's needs and identifies critical findings that lay the groundwork for policy and program development during subsequent steps in the comprehensive planning process.
- The **Stakeholder Involvement Plan** lays out a strategy that ensures that PLAN 2040 reflects the full range of regional values and desires by involving a diverse spectrum of stakeholders in developing the plan.
- The regional **Vision** includes the Vision, Goals, Objectives and Principles that guide PLAN 2040.
- The **Regional Development Map**, also known as the Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM), lays out the region's vision to accommodate anticipated growth. The UGPM is comprised of Areas and Places. Areas describe predominant land use patterns throughout the region. Places reflect concentrated uses that have generally defined boundaries and provide greater detail within Areas.
- The **Regional Development Guide** elaborates on the UGPM by providing a defining narrative for each regional Area and Place. Among other things, it includes a written description, pictures, listing of specific land uses desirable in each Area and Place, and identification of Implementation Priorities, which are measures to achieve the desired development patterns. The Regional Development Guide also addresses implementation of the Georgia Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) for the Atlanta region.
- The **Regional Resource Plan** describes how activities and planning of local governments, land trusts and conservation or environmental protection groups and state agencies' activities in the region will be coordinated and how identified Regionally Important Resources (RIRs), such as areas of conservation and recreational value, historic and



cultural resources, and areas of agricultural and scenic value, will be managed.

- The **Local Government Plan Implementation** document includes Performance Standards for Local Governments. The standards are divided into minimum and excellence achievement thresholds.
- The **ARC Implementation Plan** document includes the Regional Sustainable Five Year Work Program, as well as new regional needs and strategies ARC will undertake to implement PLAN 2040.
- The **Regional Implementation Partners** document identifies activities that will be undertaken by regional partners to support the implementation of PLAN 2040. Activities of state agencies, quasi-governmental organizations, and non-profit groups are documented through a Five Year Work Program similar to ARC's Implementation Plan.
- This **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)** examines the region's transportation needs through the year 2040 and provides a framework to address anticipated growth through systems and policies. The RTP provides a comprehensive statement of the regional future transportation needs as identified by local jurisdictions, the State and other stakeholders. It contains strategies aimed at improving mobility and access, and defines both short- and long-term transportation strategies and investments to improve the region's transportation system.
- The **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, contained within the RTP, provides a financially constrained six year program of improvements between 2012-2017. While federal planning requirements require the first four years of the TIP to be balanced by year, subsequent years of the TIP and long-range element of the RTP (beyond 2018) are balanced by funding periods.
- The **Conformity Determination Report (CDR)** demonstrates that the region's transportation strategies meet federal air quality requirements. This document is included in Volume II.

In addition to fulfilling regional planning requirements set forth by DCA and US DOT, PLAN 2040 is also consistent with and supports the Georgia Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan (SSTP) that was completed in 2010. The SSTP identifies a strategy to transform Georgia's transportation to support GDP growth and increase jobs across the state. Additional discussion of the SSTP is included in Chapter 2.

PLAN 2040's Sustainability Focus

During early 2010, ARC released the PLAN 2040 Regional Assessment, including specific findings that were communicated to the ARC Board and Committees and stakeholders. Numerous meetings and interviews with elected officials and stakeholders took place throughout 2010 and were used to review the PLAN 2040 Regional Assessment Findings and frame the needs of the region.

The theme of "sustainability" was selected as an overarching concept for the development of PLAN 2040. The term was defined through meetings of ARC committees, and the Vision, Goals and Objectives for completing PLAN 2040 were adopted by the Atlanta Regional Commission in July 2010.

Based on input from regional stakeholders, the final list of Findings reflects the regional issues and opportunities to be addressed through PLAN 2040. The Vision and Goals of



Sustainability balances environmental, social, and economic objectives to achieve the region's growth vision.

PLAN 2040 originate from these regional Findings, as well as the findings of Fifty Forward, a 50-year visioning effort for the Atlanta region initiated by ARC in 2008.

Meeting Federal Transportation Planning Requirements in Developing the PLAN 2040 RTP

In developing the PLAN 2040 RTP, ARC has followed the federally-required transportation planning process with a detailed focus on making decisions and project recommendations in a transparent and logical manner. The Atlanta region's transportation planning process was last certified by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration on October 5, 2007, as required by 23 USC 134(i)(5) and 49 USC 5305(e).

On August 10, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU is the Federal authorization of funding for surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. As of May 2011, a new reauthorization bill has not been adopted to replace SAFETEA-LU, but existing programs have been extended through continuing funding resolutions.



The federal transportation planning provisions of SAFETEA-LU list eight planning factors which must be considered as part of the transportation planning process for all metropolitan areas. These factors are summarized in Table 1.1, below. Each planning factor has been considered as part of PLAN 2040 development, as noted throughout various sections of this document. The planning factors have been addressed as appropriate, given the scale and complexity of many of the issues, including transportation system development, land use, employment, economic development, human and natural environment, and housing and community development.

In addition to the eight planning factors, a number of more specific transportation planning provisions are defined in SAFETEA-LU that outline the various required elements of a long- (and short-) range transportation plan. These transportation planning requirements are codified in Title 23 CFR 450.322 and are referenced throughout various sections of the document. Each requirement also is listed in checklist format with page number references identifying where each is addressed in PLAN 2040, in Appendix D-1 of this report. The minimum planning requirements of SAFETEA-LU are applicable to, and are met by, PLAN 2040.

Table 1-1: SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors

Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency
Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight
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
Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes, people and freight
Promote efficient system management and operation
Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system

Following ARC Board and Committees Guidance

Throughout the PLAN 2040 process, the ARC Board and Committees provided direction to technical staff regarding key policy directions and recommendations for PLAN 2040. Monthly meetings were held for the heads of ARC's policy committees to direct the plan development process. Regular briefings were made to both technical and policy committees. At major milestones, ARC staff received guidance on PLAN 2040 direction:

- In February 2009 the ARC Board approved a resolution to develop a regional unified plan that specifies a strategic vision and seeks a comprehensive approach to accommodate economic and population growth sustainably in the Atlanta region through the year 2040.
- In March 2010 the ARC Board approved a resolution for the PLAN 2040 Regional Assessment, Stakeholder Involvement Plan, and the Regionally Important Resources (RIR) Map. These documents reflect an innovative stakeholder involvement process for PLAN 2040 and the identification of needs to address in Plan recommendations.
- In July 2010 the ARC Board approved a resolution adopting PLAN 2040's Vision, Goals & Objectives. This Vision guides development of PLAN 2040 recommendations.
- In July 2010, at a regional PLAN 2040 retreat, regional policy makers reviewed and provided direction on the plan including how to allocate funding to key program areas of the RTP. This direction increased resources devoted to transportation system preservation and operations, while maintaining a demand management programs and strategic system expansions. A PLAN 2040 RTP Performance Framework was also presented to guide the evaluation and selection of programs and projects for inclusion in the RTP.
- In February-March 2011, ARC policy committee members and other elected officials reviewed draft PLAN 2040 RTP recommendations and provided feedback.
- In March 2011, the ARC Board formally submitted a draft of the DCA-required elements of PLAN 2040 to the State of Georgia. Final approval of these documents is targeted to be approved with the adoption of PLAN 2040 in July 2011.

Stakeholder Involvement and Public Outreach

PLAN 2040 reflects input and feedback gained through unprecedented involvement of policy makers, regional leadership, stakeholders and the general public. ARC sought to ensure that PLAN 2040 reflects the full range of regional values and desires by involving a diverse spectrum of opinion and discussion in development of the plan. The PLAN 2040 stakeholder and public outreach efforts meet the requirements of both the Georgia DCA and US DOT for developing and sharing regional plans.



Early in the process, the PLAN 2040 Stakeholder Involvement Program was developed to lay out a program of activities with local governments in the Atlanta region as well as other stakeholders to ensure that broad input and support for PLAN 2040 goals, policies, transportation investments, and programs are achieved. These activities were based on the Regional Transportation Participation Plan and supplemented the existing ARC committee and task force structure.

The PLAN 2040 participation process involved any person expressing interest in its activities and outcomes as well as targeting participants who should have a say in the plan development. For planning purposes, three broad audiences were identified within the jurisdictions served by ARC:

- Policy-making elected/appointed officials from local, regional and state jurisdictions. This also included interaction with federal officials who establish and review rules and regulations in the planning process. Public planning partner staffs, which prepare their jurisdictional plans, and can provide background information and advise officials were targeted here.
- State and local private sector leadership and interested people within special interest groups that consistently engage in PLAN 2040 issues.
- Individuals or groups that participate in ARC activities based on short-term, issue-driven concerns.

In seeking unique ways to receive input into PLAN 2040, ARC formed a close partnership with the Civic League for Regional Atlanta to successfully sponsor multiple series of neighborhood summits.

The techniques used for PLAN 2040 sought to match these stakeholders with the best venue to seek, discuss, and gather input. The range of techniques varied from the use of direct conversation to large group meetings. The goal of the techniques was to have meaningful two-way dialogue on issues and potential solutions on a continuous basis throughout the planning timeframe. Specific techniques used for stakeholder and public participation included, but were not limited to:

- ARC Board and Committee meetings and mini-retreats
- Workshops
- On-line public meetings

- Neighborhood forums
- Stakeholder group discussions
- Polls/Surveys



Information on PLAN 2040 was distributed in many formats:

- PLAN 2040 website (primary vehicle for information distribution)
- Printed brochures and handouts
- PLAN 2040 Quick Guides
- Broadcast conversations
- Media outreach
- Presentations
- Face to face discussions with staff planners and citizens

Innovative efforts to engage the public include online public meetings

The PLAN 2040 participation process is described in detail along with its results in Appendix F. Included in this appendix is a report of comments received and responses provided.

Considering the Needs of the Transportation Disadvantaged

ARC considers needs of the transportation disadvantaged and environmental justice communities in every step of the regional planning process, forming a core consideration in decisions. Environmental justice public policy seeks to ensure that harmful human health or environmental effects of government activities do not fall disproportionately upon those with low income and minority populations living and working within the community.

An environmental justice program was an integrated facet of PLAN 2040's development process. ARC utilizes a broad range of outreach strategies and technical tools to assess the needs and concerns of minority and low-income residents in the Atlanta region. ARC's community partnerships provide opportunities for environmental justice organizations to convene listening sessions in their neighborhoods and provide resources to help low-income individuals participate in the planning process. This multi-layered framework incorporates the voices of low-income and minority populations and reflects them in policies and projects:

- ARC's Transportation Public Participation Plan - Identifies goals, policies and procedures as guidance and reflects input from the public, including Environmental Justice groups.
- ARC's Social Equity Advisory Committee - Provides advice and guidance and facilitates new relationships; includes members from regional Environmental Justice communities.
- Focus Groups and Listening Sessions - Create an understanding of concerns and provide a community perspective on potentially adverse impacts and benefits.
- Studies and Surveys - Enhance ARC's understanding of transit dependent populations as well as parameters for the analysis of benefits and burdens.

Potentially vulnerable populations identified in Environmental Justice policy include African-American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, the elderly, children or people with disabilities. Impacts could come from air pollution, noise, safety issues, hazardous materials, limited access to jobs, services and other opportunities, deflated property values, business and/or home displacement, or disproportionate costs of transportation. The social impact could be on neighborhood cohesion and functioning as well as safety and aesthetics.

Organization of the Regional Transportation Plan

Volume 1 – PLAN 2040 Regional Transportation Plan provides an overview of the process to develop the PLAN 2040 RTP and outlines the transportation policies, investments, and programs that the Atlanta region will pursue through the year 2040. A financial strategy to fund projects is identified along with plan management strategies to implement RTP recommendations.



The following chapters are included in Volume I:

Chapter 1 – Introduction. An overview of the integrated transportation and land use planning process conducted as part of PLAN 2040.

Chapter 2 – Trends and Forces Impacting the Future. Defines trends in population, employment, land use, and travel patterns affecting the Atlanta region and identifies needs that are addressed in PLAN 2040. Alternative growth scenarios are presented and discussed in relation to their impact on regional needs.

Chapter 3 – Plan Development Framework. An overview of the organizing principles used to develop PLAN 2040 and support more specific RTP recommendations. Detail is provided as it relates to the performance-based planning approach for the RTP.

Chapter 4 – Investing Strategically in Transportation. PLAN 2040 transportation investments are detailed, broken down by the major plan emphasis areas of system modernization, demand management, and system expansion. The ability of PLAN 2040 to address performance measures is discussed throughout the chapter.

Chapter 5 – Financial Plan and Future Funding Options. Available financial resources are discussed, including how PLAN 2040 meets federal fiscal constraint requirements for RTPs. This chapter also provides a discussion of future funding options.

Chapter 6 – Delivering the Plan. This chapter presents a management plan that identifies actions to implement the RTP.