

Plan 2040

Local Government Outreach Strategy

The 2040 Outreach Strategy is intended to provide a mechanism for ARC staff to communicate with local governments and elected officials who do not serve on the ARC Board. The objective is twofold:

- First, it will provide an opportunity for city and county elected officials to learn more about ARC, Plan 2040 and how both impact local government plans and policies;
- It will also provide staff with an opportunity to develop individual relationships with elected officials and local governments not represented on our board and begin to better understand their community visions and expectations for how ARC plans and policies can help achieve these goals.

While Plan 2040 is the impetus for this outreach strategy, it is being developed with the intention of continuing tailored local government outreach and communication with cities and counties beyond Plan 2040 plan development.

Meeting Highlights to Date

County Commissioners (Douglas, Cobb, Cherokee, Clayton, Fulton, Gwinnett and Rockdale) Municipal Meetings (Clayton, South Fulton, Cherokee, Cobb, North Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett and Henry)

- ARC should track and catalogue county budget issues so as to provide guidance and to help counties work together on budget issues.
- It seems that some local governments do not do fiscally disciplined budgeting.
- The region needs to focus development in the existing developed parts of the region. The County can't keep up in providing services farther out.
- It is hard for some counties to be competitive for funding with the current financial arrangement at ARC.
- Light-rail has been a transit investment that counties have wanted for many years and yet we've seen zero implementation.
- Our lack of transit implementation is going to cost us for decades as the federal programs begin to focus on transit (and we have no case for federal investment).
- Sub-regions around the region have different priorities/expectations in terms of growth.
- ARC should highlight good examples of cities and counties working together (particularly in terms of arrangements that have a positive fiscal impact).
- District-level issues get lost when a Chairman comes to ARC to discuss issues.
- Impression that ARC changed the I-75 Northwest Transit Corridor to a project that no longer has local public support.
- ARC needs a program that supports local planning in smaller centers/corridors (not direct funding of studies, but support for local planning staff).
- Mixed responses when asked if the local comprehensive plan meets the needs of a local district.
- Support for programs that emphasize regional investments in major growth areas, while understanding that some parts of counties do not want major growth/investment.
- ARC staff should attend local town hall meetings – Not to present material, but just to listen to local issues.

- ARC's review role (DRIs, Comprehensive Plans) can put local governments in a difficult position – They recognize that ARC seeks to meet the needs of local governments, but the review role changes that dynamic.
- ARC needs to help shrink the time frame it takes to build transportation projects.
- Local governments need help with state programs like Opportunity Zones.
- Some counties have smaller Development Authorities with limited resources – ARC could have a role in assisting with their efforts.
- ARC comes up with great ideas, but we don't do a great job of 'taking it to the streets' – Message can get lost when going from regional to local.
- Need to focus on information and resources that help them when they buy into a regional policy/program.
- ARC can help elected officials understand how long it takes to make a plan happen – Some local elected officials do not understand that when you finish a plan is only the starting point (need to focus on comp plan, zoning, etc.)
- ARC should bring policies and principles to the places where it's most appropriate (e.g. where mixed-use developments can actually happen).
- The default perspective from local governments is always going to be that ARC is trying to put some new requirement on them – need to expect that and learn a new approach.
- We shouldn't sell the tools to build great communities – sell the concept of great communities (and then provide the tools).
- Need to provide a good set of tools and resources that help locals fix local problems (while working with them on the 'major' areas).
- ARC should focus on concepts it feels the region should embrace and then work with Commissioners to figure out where those places are (ARC shouldn't necessarily be telling them – that will result in pushback).
- Starting next January will be a good 2-year cycle to work with local elected officials in terms of continuity.
- Region does a lot of planning, but we aren't seeing follow-through on core issues like transportation and water.
- Rail must be a key component of future transportation plans and investments. It absolutely needs to be done for the region to compete in the future.
- ARC needs to play a major role in holding politicians accountable on major issues like water and transportation.
- Need to focus on GDOT reform – LCI projects take entirely too long to get through their process.
- On education – there are already too many agencies involved, not sure if ARC has a role that would benefit the conversation. Federal education programs change with each administration. The whole process needs to be simplified, rather than another agency being involved.
- ARC could have a role in promoting higher education opportunities throughout the region (vs. a role in K-12).
- Education is something that is impacting the entire region (e.g. dropout rates) – ARC may need to have a role on this issue. Education even impacts things like foreclosures.
- Need to begin to see expenditures toward items like education and transit as an investment. Without these critical investments the region will not be able to compete with other areas around the country for economic opportunities.
- The region has good examples of local plans that could be used as a model as they integrate numerous planning roles (local comprehensive plan, HUD plans, transportation plan, etc.).
- ARC needs to recognize areas with highest sustainable growth potential and put resources in these areas.
- General frustration with lack of implementation in regard to transportation (projects, funding legislation, etc.)
- The region's low cost of living has helped fuel our success, but is this now hurting our ability to generate revenue for infrastructure investments?
- Free and/or artificially low parking rates in major activity centers and downtown are working against encouraging people to not drive.
- Water supply and management must be the more pressing short-term priority for the region.
- The region needs to work with the Legislature so that they understand the true, immediate needs of the Atlanta region and what actions are required.
- ARC should be working with local governments on emergency preparedness plans.

- All of the issues of sustainability (environment, economy, and society) are important to businesses in the region.
- The region should become a leader on sustainability issues, particularly in terms of what incentives could be provided.
- Lack of quality public education in the region impacts economic development.
- ARC needs to continue working on the issues of schools and school siting issues – The current standards do not make sense.
- Many schools have become too large – We need to be thinking about community-based schools that can not only save in transportation costs, but also become the real center of local communities.
- ARC could potentially have a role in providing training to school board officials.
- ARC should continue to offer low-cost training opportunities for local officials.
- ARC staff pushes for mixed-use development, but often when this type of development is proposed there is little public support at local zoning hearings.
- There is a limit as to how much density the public will support – ARC has no authority to tell local governments where density should go.
- Are we going to build a transportation system that fits how we live, or are we using transportation to change how people live?
- Transportation investments should be focused on existing communities, not as a tool to expand economic opportunities throughout the region.
- The market for private real estate development will respond to transportation – There is a chance that congestion will get bad enough to change travel behavior and residential choices.
- Communities that have and support additional density should get more credit, higher transportation project scores.
- BRT may be the best transit technology for many parts of the Atlanta region, but it's unclear if this region will ever embrace riding buses.
- ARC should work with local governments to understand how collections of local comprehensive plans impact the road network and other regional issues.
- Plan 2040 should focus on water – It's just as big of an issue as transportation.
- There are two ways to think about planning: How to support growth the available resources? How to overcome resource limitations to support desired growth?
- Any help that ARC can provide local governments in their dealings with GDOT would be appreciated.
- Cities are frustrated that they work with GDOT to get a design for a project, but there is no carry-over with those design elements. The next city that wants a similar project has to spend just as much time getting approvals as the first city.
- For transit to be successful there must be significant commitment from local governments.
- Getting people to work in major employment areas has become a major issue.
- Existing communities need more assistance with infrastructure to support the renewed interest in in-town communities.
- In order to move toward sustainability, smaller communities need technical support and assistance.
- LCI has been very valuable to help develop local plans, but more help is needed with non-transportation project implementation.
- Existing outreach efforts by cities and counties could be a good way to get the word out about regional issues and other items that ARC is working on.
- There are too many boards and entities dealing with transportation currently – New transportation legislation seems to add more.
- It seems that most of the solutions that ARC brings to local governments focus on bringing higher density development to communities – many of which are not supportive of that type of development.

- Bringing jobs to areas that are currently dominated by housing should work just as well as bringing people closer to the jobs.
- Counties seem to have all the influence in terms of transportation planning – Cities should be more involved. Make-up of Regional Roundtable in new transportation legislation may equal out that equation.
- ARC and region need to start becoming more active in efforts to attract jobs to the region given the current state of the economy.
- New transportation legislation is confusing – ARC should provide leadership to help local governments understand how the process will work and what their role will be.
- Many people are wrongly assuming that the sales tax referendum for transportation is a ‘slam dunk’ in this region – But given the issues with Fulton, DeKalb and City of Atlanta passage should not be assumed.
- Does ARC ever give serious consideration to double-decking major transportation facilities? It may seem like a radical idea, but there are firms around the world that have the technical and engineering expertise to accomplish this.
- We are in an era that should be considered a ‘new beginning’ – Even with a potential economic recovery the region must recognize that many things will be different in the future.
- Building in short-range expectation is critical, e.g. how to measure success in ten years?
- Region needs to focus on attracting major companies and employers to the region and working to ensure that there is adequate housing proximate to existing and new employment centers.
- Plan 2040 needs to include bold actions.
- We need to identify and remove bureaucratic barriers that prevent a better link between housing and transportation planning and implementation.
- Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is a major economic asset in the region – Can ARC put resources toward better planning, economic development and redevelopment activities around the airport?
- Transit could be used to link other airports around the region to Hartsfield-Jackson and to each other.
- The economic strength and overall global competitiveness is tied to the five core counties – The region’s investments must recognize the mutual benefit of investing in these areas.
- Need to get the commuter rail with a federal earmark built – Could be a key economic generator and show success for future projects.
- ARC should work with counties to change state law that restricts TADs from crossing county boundaries. This would help county-to-county sub-area planning efforts.
- In terms of transportation planning and implementation, ARC needs to take more of a leadership role and not expect the State to lead on this issue.
- Rockdale needs to be a destination for new light or commuter rail services or at least to Stonecrest Mall.
- Rail would relieve congestion, create jobs, new development and provide an option to I-20.
- ARC should outline the features, benefits and value of rail through an educational campaign and town hall meetings.
- Quality of life is a large issue. Need more recreational facilities. Need more senior centers.
- ARC could facilitate more interaction between education, local governments and judicial system.