

PLAN2040 Online Public Meeting #1: Vision and Goals

Report of Results

Meeting Objectives: To share and receive comments on the findings of the *PLAN2040* assessment of current conditions and opportunities as well as on the draft plan vision and goals.

When: The first *PLAN2040* online public meeting was available for review and comment from April 15, 2010 through May 31, 2010.

Participation Statistics:

- Online Public Meeting Visits: **575**
- Survey Responses: **78***
** An additional survey with identical questions was available on the PLAN 2040 main page and not a part of the online public meeting. That survey received 51 responses which are reflected in this report.*

Survey Results:

1. *What is your opinion of the findings from the ARC assessment of the current status of the metro Atlanta area?*
 - **93%** agreed that the region is positioned for economic recovery but only if we adjust the way we live and do business.
 - **96%** felt that the metro area's long term economic success is directly related to the availability of water.
 - **89%** agreed that we need major transportation investments and more housing options in major employment centers.
 - **74%** agreed that the metro area does not have the financial capacity to expand while continuing to meet the needs of developing communities.
 - **95%** agreed that the composition of the region's eight million residents in 2040 will be very different from the population today.
 - **89%** agreed that new residential housing market will shift toward communities that offer abundant amenities close to employment and cultural opportunities.
 - **95%** agreed that approximately 75 percent of the region has no other option but to drive to almost any destination.
 - **100%** agreed that not only does the region need increased funds for transportation but also better management of existing assets.
 - **97%** agreed that the region must focus on both urbanized areas and conservation areas.
2. *Is the vision statement, "Aggressive Leadership for Sustainable Growth by balancing environmental responsibility, economic growth and social needs while maximizing benefits to all," relevant to the future you want for your community?*

- **94%** agreed with the vision statement

3. *Are the following goals an appropriate foundation upon which to base this planning effort for the region?*

- Goal #1: Lead as the Global Gateway to the South: **95% agreed**
- Goal #2: Encourage Healthy Communities: **98% agreed**
- Goal #3: Expand Access to Community Resources: **93% agreed**

4. Open Format Comments:

Development

- All new development must be either nodal/walkable (if greenfield) or infill walkable (brownfield where appropriate).
- The region needs to buy into basic principles of smart development for the long-term sustainability of our communities. Only when our local policymakers sign on to these principles and communicate about them regularly to their constituents, will we have a shared approach – we have a suburban mentality in a major metropolitan city and it needs to change.
- Georgia lacks a creative focus on sustainability, transportation and planning.
- Creating a strong urban core will help the region as a whole – this includes developing poor urban areas in conjunction with better transportation and water.
- We must stop subsidizing unsustainable sprawl – we can’t possibly justify further expansion of the region while ignoring the opportunity to create vibrant, denser communities where people already live and work.
- Transportation is not the solution – denser, walkable communities that integrate amenities are the solution – then link these communities with appropriate transportation.
- We have squandered the strengths of the region with indiscriminate development of one-size-fits-all housing, separated land uses and almost exclusive emphasis on motor vehicle movement.

Education

- The region’s lackluster education opportunities within the urban core will hinder the region’s capacity to shift growth within to existing areas and to protect greenspace. This is an issue that needs greater attention in the regional plan.
- Availability of good public education through high school in the past has been a major driver for growth centers (Gwinnett County)

Funding

- Must recognize that just as services are not free, neither is infrastructure. Whether our issue is water availability or transportation infrastructure to support and sustain our growth – anti-taxation, anti-user fee, and anti-revenue legislation is tying our hands – we must fund the construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure as well as services.
- A \$.05 tax per gallon of gas would go a long way toward paying for the roads and would make City of Atlanta more livable. I have no patience with people crying about bases – things cost money and transportation is a major expense for a modern society.

- If transportation funding sources are required to provide alternate options to everyone, a substantial vehicle mile tax would provide funds and the incentive to use alternate transportation options.
- There are low cost, innovative solutions and organizations in place to help fund transportation and land use solutions, such as TMAs but ARC does not support them.
- Don't support a regional transportation tax that would not fund MARTA.

Greenspace

- Integrate parks and greenspace into the denser communities. Focus less on preserving large tracts in more rural areas of the region. As transportation costs rise with the cost of fuel, demand to develop those areas will decrease on its own and demand for urban nature will increase.

Growth

- The region experienced exuberant growth over the last 30+ years – unchecked in many ways. Smart growth and re-growth must occur in the revitalization of communities as they become more urbanized.
- Region needs to focus on quality of life and safety. Let's slow growth until we can get the half-developed subdivisions completed. Put stronger restrictions on the amount of land that can be developed and make developers put up a bond large enough to convert these disasters back to greenspace if they go under.

Population Changes

- By 2040 or 2015, 2020, metro Atlanta will be more of a global area, we must find ways to develop respect, culture growth for all citizens; please do not pattern after New York, Detroit or Chicago.

Roadways

- The survey questions are strongly biased to come to the conclusion that funding should be spent on the urban core areas. I fear that this will result in employers leaving the congested Atlanta area and moving elsewhere. Something like the outer perimeter highway is needed to keep the urban core from stagnating. Make it a toll road.
- Connecting I-75, I-20 and I-85 on the east and west sides of Atlanta would divert a tremendous amount of traffic around the city.
- Any new road initiatives should allow for train expansion. Additional expansion of major routes should be dedicated to alternative modes to driving.

Safety

- If we are committed to transit, commit adequate funds to adding pedestrian safety improvements around MARTA stations and near heavily used bus stops.
- The region needs to provide incentives that encourage local governments to make safety improvements on multi-land transit routes a priority.

Transit

- Increasing needs for transit in urban counties beyond Fulton and DeKalb suggest the need to push for referendums in Clayton, Cobb and Gwinnett to join MARTA.

- MARTA, GRTA and county systems should be melded into a regional transit system that commits to a certain level of service for transit within an expanded footprint of the five core counties.
- A penny sales tax to fund transit in five counties through MARTA, paired with a T-SPLOST for the region as a whole, could really move us to where we need to go.
- Need public transportation more available in cities and rural areas.
- Public transportation is a key to success for the region for all areas. It allows visitors to stay most anywhere in the region with easy accessibility to downtown events. Currently that does not exist.
- Trying to provide additional residential near employment centers has seldom been achieved. It is more important to develop mass transit options to provide everyone with at least one other reasonable travel mode option without significant time penalty at a smaller out-of-pocket cost of driving.
- Need commuter rail from Lawrenceville to the airport and beyond with surface transit options from Lawrenceville through Duluth to Marietta or beyond.
- Streetcars, light rail, commuter transit, MMPT – make it happen.
- Transfer state funds from entitlement programs to a rail system that tracks along the major highways.
- Establish free park/rides along rail stops.
- Interesting how public transportation is never mentioned in the findings.
- We are forced to drive for even minor trips – even in our own neighborhoods.
- The MARTA North Springs line is a perfect example of what each MARTA line should look like.
- At a minimum, MARTA should extend to the farther corners of Fulton County.
- Develop many layers of incentives to ride MARTA – higher fuel costs, increased parking fees, etc.
- I would like to see metro Atlanta expand, rebrand or recreate MARTA so that it is available in collar counties, expand our train and bus network – we need a comprehensive system that makes sense for all.
- I don't believe that we are maximizing the current bus structure. Many bus stops look like they were purposely placed in inconvenient locations. – no sidewalks, benches or platforms to provide safety – ridership is actually being discouraged.
- MARTA should be expanded in all directions with priorities east to DeKalb/Rockdale county line, the beltline and northeast to Gwinnett County.

Water

- Not just an issue of supply, but of demand.
- If availability of water is to limit our growth, mandatory bans on outside watering and replacement of older wasteful household plumbing and appliances would be a better use of our resources than looking for legal loopholes.

PLAN2040 Survey Problems

- What do you mean by transportation investments – is that road widening or transit?
- What is the difference between expanding and developing communities – both are sprawl
- What does “conservation area” mean?
- How are you defining urbanized?
- These questions are too vague and won't yield results.