

PLAN2040 Online Public Meeting #2: Guiding Principles for Plan Policies

Report of Results

When: The second *PLAN2040* online public meeting was available for review and comment from June 23, 2010 through July 31, 2010.

Meeting Objectives: To share and receive comments on draft plan guiding principles and obtain direction for measuring the impact of basing the plan on these principles.

Participation Statistics:

- Online Public Meeting Visits: **213**
- Survey Responses: **50**

Survey Results and Summary of Open Format Responses:

1. *Here is some potential policy guidance for PLAN 2040. These areas will form the basis for what we want to accomplish in PLAN 2040. What do you think? Do these guidelines reflect what is needed in the metro Atlanta area and where regional policy should be focused?*

- **93%** agreed to focus financial resources and public investments in existing communities.
- **97%** agreed to conserve environmentally-sensitive areas and increase the amount and connectivity of greenspace.
- **99%** agreed to promote sustainable and energy-efficient development and transportation investments.
- **99%** agreed to align growth and development with infrastructure investment.
- **95%** agreed to encourage a variety of choices related to housing and transportation.
- **94%** agreed that at strategic regional locations, plan and retain industrial and freight land uses.
- **86%** agreed to increase the number and variety of uses around existing and planned transit stations.
- **88%** agreed to assure the preservation, maintenance and operation of the existing transportation system.
- **90%** agreed to incorporate the needs of the region's changing demographics into all aspects of planning.

2. *Do you have any other thoughts to share on these guidelines?*

Roadways

- Does preservation mean continuing to fund highway sprawl?
- I hope maintenance and operation of existing transportation systems won't mean excessively frequent repaving schedules for roads – this is at the expense of other infrastructure.
- Many of our roadways were overbuilt in response to liberal financing and traffic projections that never materialized – repurpose them but not preserve them.
- Spend money on major arterials and collectors which carry a lot of cross regional trips.

Transit

- Create serious incentives for people to live near their jobs or to take mass transit
- Where is rapid transit from Athens, Rome, Columbus, Macon?
- Why do Gwinnett and Cobb county transit buses pickup passengers in downtown Atlanta – doesn't this work to the detriment of MARTA?
- Focus on a unified transit system rather than trying to connect individual systems.

Development

- Transit oriented developments are not where many people want or can afford to live.
- I find the word "smart growth" insulting – more options should be proposed, not just dense, mixed use, expensive places to live.
- Focus investments in denser portions of existing communities – jobs and housing ratio should be key.
- Look at the Ahwanee principles – developing distinct communities, wired communities and green communities.
- What are all these related to development?

Freight

- You left out emphasizing enhanced rail capacity for freight as well as people movement.
- Freight and industry should be good neighbors and not create barriers, traffic, noise or pollution.

Economy

- Blue Collar type jobs are essential – not everyone is cut out for office work in downtown.

General

- "Sustainable" verges on meaninglessness without some defining benchmarks.
- This is too much of a feel good statement that has no meaning and no true way to implement other than social re-engineering.
- I'm wondering how much changing demographics will impact long-term planning?
- Where are the incentives or regulations to enforce these guidelines?

3. Are there any guiding principles that we've missed?

Travel

- Determine what is the optimum number of peak hour vehicles that can use the system before congestion becomes intolerable to establish goals for reducing average VMT.
- Favor local connectivity over "big ticket" regional connectivity wherever possible.
- Ensure that needs of pedestrians and cyclists are placed alongside, not behind, those of motorists.
- Easy connectivity between existing transportation system and points of interest.
- Network connectivity.
- Do not fund capacity improvements for roadways if local government is not providing appropriate land uses.

Freight

- Stress freight shipments via rail rather than truck due to worsening highway congestion
- Use increased freight rail capacity for commuter rail, intercity rail, high speed rail

Water

- Water – as usual is not mentioned directly – I am disappointed at the low emphases of conservation goals and neglect to get behind green infrastructure except in an optional way.

General

- Lifelong communities should be a part of the guiding principles – ties directly into housing and transit options
- Meet the needs of the majority of the population
- Coordination between local governments – regulations, zoning classes, procedures, software systems, data collection, data distribution.
- Missing is a focus on people and communities.

4. *You have seen potential guiding principles for PLAN 2040 and given your opinion of them. We would like to look more closely at these areas and think about how they can contribute to meeting the needs of our metro area. Please briefly provide a suggestion on what is important to consider about each of these principles. Your thoughts here will help ARC find the best way to measure the impacts of these actions. If you have added other guiding principles, please let us know what evaluation you would suggest for them as well:*

4A: What would be the outcome of focusing financial resources and public investments in existing communities rather than in building new ones?

- Taking planning away from development community.
- Local communities will concentrate locally instead of regionally.
- Redevelopment and walking communities would be encouraged.
- Conservation of fiscal resources.
- You ignore the fact that there will be continued growth in the exurbs.
- Model code would be developed regarding Transfer of Development Rights because there would be a huge backlash if all public resources and financial support is focused only on property owned in already existing communities.
- Efficiency and better utilization of our limited water resources.
- Infill development would occur.
- More jobs would be closer to where people live.
- Life Cycle costs are less.
- Lower environmental impacts.
- Density and job creation.
- Would be cheaper and more sustainable to maintain existing infrastructure.
- Less urban blight.
- Stagnant growth.
- Stopping or slowing consumption of land.
- Help to make existing neighborhoods thrive
- We could probably accommodate all 2 million anticipated new residents without disrupting any existing neighborhoods.

4B: Where should greenspace be protected and where should it be connected?

- At all sensitive areas particularly floodplains.
- Stream corridors and buffers, existing wooded areas.
- Do we need additional greenspace?
- All greenspace should be protected, especially in urban areas.
- In rapidly growing areas.
- Look at all jurisdictional park and trail plans and determine optimal connection points.
- Around all waterways and connected to activity centers such as parks, libraries, and schools/public buildings.

- How do you define greenspace and what does it mean for greenspace to be connected?
- Everywhere.
- In high density areas.
- Connected in ways that reinforce the hub-and-spoke design of the area – new greenspace carved around interstates, roadways, railroads.
- Greenspace design should be evaluated for crime prevention design.

4C: What should energy-efficient land development look like?

- Smaller units are closer together.
- Compact and linked by multiply options.
- Green building practices.
- Accessibility without a car.
- Walkable and transit-oriented places.
- High density, mixed uses centered on passenger rail lines.
- High efficiency.
- Promotion of non-fossil-based power sources.
- Natural.
- Indicators would be energy used per acre, distance to energy source, and carbon footprint.
- Housing close to jobs.
- Densely populated deciduous trees.
- LEED certification with strength in areas of water conservation and energy efficiency.
- Sidewalks, safe ped crossings, small blocks, high jobs-housing balance, high number of intersections.

4D: What is the benefit of aligning growth and development with infrastructure investment like water and roads?

- It will make planning more proactive rather than reactive.
- Sidewalks and bike lanes on existing major roads.
- It will make builders richer.
- We won't waste or misuse resources.
- Minimize additional investment in infrastructure
- It makes sense – would make the region more coherent.
- You have enough of what you need.
- Conservation of resources; lower environmental impacts.
- Costs, sustainability and usage.
- Halting sprawl.
- Less expensive.
- Reduce energy consumption, air pollution, traffic congestion.
- Infrastructure investment follows development, not the other way around.
- Controlled sustainable growth.
- Reduced maintenance costs for municipalities.

4E: What are the choices we should have in housing and in travel?

- More mixed uses; more ground level retail, more commuter bus routes
- Affordable housing, safe and convenient travel.
- Many different housing sizes and forms; many different modes of transportation.
- Range of price points at locations across the region.

- Ability to have one-way streets with narrower right of ways.
- Availability to all.
- I should be able to afford to live close to where I work.
- Choices to accommodate a plethora of destinations.
- Housing types should be left to the market and local decision makers to determine; not ARC.
- I don't care for buses, don't mind rail travel; not an overabundance of townhomes/condos.
- Streetcars to connect with bus and rail.
- More options for aging boomer populations; integrated with housing types tailored to young families, proximate to parks, cultural centers, colleges.
- Need mixed use with mixture of income vertically (not just that acres away there is a cheaper subdivision.).
- Build places where families can grow – near transit.
- Higher taxes for those who drive long distances.
- Amount of affordable housing should match local household income.
- Should be one alternative to driving.

4F: Where should industrial and freight sites be located?

- Near interstates and airports
- Rail lines and major roads.
- Away from living and green spaces
- Clustered locations around rail lines and airports.
- On the periphery.
- Throughout the metro area.
- In proximity to each other; ease of labor to reach
- 15 miles or more outside 285 with existing spaces inside 285 preserved for industry and freight as needed to sustain the needs of the metro area.
- Along existing hub activity expanded to maximize capacity along the perimeter of the central city.
- We should also incentivize innovations that reduce traffic and other impacts.

4G: What kind of land uses should be available around transit stations?

- Not freight or industry.
- Enough parking lots.
- Most dense in the region.
- Safe commercial, green space, multi-use/multi-residential, retail (grocery, dry cleaners, restaurants, recreation), education, cultural, office, parks, civic facilities.
- Micro-neighborhoods.
- Flexibility.
- Balance of uses – closest to station should be institutional, commercial, and residential.
- Not parking – should be at least a block away to reduce crime and traffic.

4H: What are the characteristics of a preserved and maintained transportation system?

- Excellent transit headways, long service hours, roads with tolls to pay for maintenance.
- Should be balanced; should be able to walk on a safe sidewalk in a well lit and safe area to and from our car.
- Takes people where they want to go for work, play and mandatory/non-mandatory visits.
- Functioning at its highest capacity.
- Adequate resurfacing schedule; lane expansion where necessary.

- A change in public funding that focuses primarily on new projects rather than maintaining our existing roads and bridges.
- A focus on alternatives sources of power.
- Services all users.
- Lower costs.
- Efficient.
- Cracks don't become potholes, grass is cut, drainage system is cleaned regularly, and utilities do not break the pavement surface.
- Supports commuting and nightlife.
- Move people quickly and safely; ease of navigation, minimal downtime for repairs/maintenance.
- Repair/replace bridges with sufficiency ratings below 50.
- Strong support from federal, state and local governments.
- Streetcar network, 220 miles of single track rail connected to the Beltline
- Clean, current signage
- Roads right-sized or given a road diet where there is excess capacity.
- Alternate routes that have excess capacity in case of interstate failures.

4I: Criteria for your guiding principles?

- Safety, green, non-wasteful and not so much concentration on commercial profits.
- What is best for our community and not any political criteria.
- Items such as rain gardens, parking lot landscaping/swales should be promoted over concrete structures that feed right into the stormwater system.
- Accessibility and fairness to all regardless of their economic situation.
- Livability.
- Biomimicry
- Need for environmental and economic sustainability.
- Square ft number of vacant commercial property within a community.
- Intersection ratios (which is in essence a connectivity measure) and jobs/housing ratios.
- What makes an area livable and workable in a world with dwindling resources?
- Keep it a choice – not all about transit and not everyone wants to live in Atlanta.
- Stronger regional planning less controlled by Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- Does the population in 2040 occupy a smaller amount of land per capita than it does today?
- Do they have a higher capacity to circulate among key areas in our region via regional transit?
- Transportation funds are spent in the areas with the most population density.
- We need to promote a mixed age, mixed income, mixed use, mixed ethnic region where everyone has choices in housing and transportation, and where we can build safe, health, caring communities that support people and families through all stages of life.

5. *Do you have other thoughts about these potential PLAN 2040 outcomes?*

- Prioritize transportation and water infrastructure.
- Follow through and implement.
- We cannot afford to go yet another ten years of more sprawl.
- It will need to be a place that serves the needs of the HUGE senior population.
- Sometimes we laymen do have some good ideas.
- Despite noble efforts to match policies with projects, the project selection process will still end in a list of projects that are biased towards roadway repaving, widening and costly interstate projects, leaving little if any funding for transit preservation (let alone expansion.). Too much focus on getting to an employment center but not enough on internal circulation once one reaches that area. Basically, your car will arrive to the area faster

but local system will not work. So entire trip is still producing too many emissions. Ramp meters on highways guarantee flow on freeway but lead to idling on local road...in the end we don't address our emissions, an auto-centric issue.

- Outcomes are healthy people, access to jobs, a thriving economy, safe and successful families, good quality of life. Transportation investments, land use policies and such are just a means to that end – never forget that.

6. *What else would you like to share with ARC today?*

- Stop enabling sprawl.
- Please stop using highway funds just because they are available. I would really like to see a reduction in lane miles on the interstates.
- I'm worried that this topic seems too esoteric and boring to the lay public.
- <http://savingwithrail.info/?p=21>
- Why is the Beltline not listed as a Redevelopment Corridor or Recreation Center on the UGPM?
- You need to have more meetings out in the community rather than online or in downtown Atlanta. Why are you not coordinating with local jurisdictions to get out in the community and hear from the people that you are impacting with this process?
- Encourage employment contracts and/or employee incentives with a set distance from employer to home.
- Good guidelines for future redevelopment that takes into account long term growth of population and jobs opportunities can create economic engines for different areas of the metro area.
- A huge motivator that creates sprawl is the public education system.
- I believe it is a mistake to allow the State's plan priorities to supersede ARC's performance process. ARC process should be in essence asking: What projects will enable sustainable land development patterns that reduce SOV travel? Then those should be ranked according to a performance based process with more specific metrics.
- We need to look at transportation as a priority as the city grows. Adding additional transit stops and capacity building in the central district. Look at development that would benefit the climate of Atlanta while looking at ways to attract future/research focused industries that would thrive in a live-work-play environment.
- Until local municipalities and counties have incentives to embrace bicycling and public transportation, it will be slow going, if at all. Seeing new roads being built with "shoulders" that are 12-16 inches in width is disheartening in terms of becoming a bike-friendly area.
- Add a tax per gallon of gas. Say "NO" to sales tax or TSPLOST for transportation. Let those who use the roadways pay for expansion through a tax per gallon. Train expansion is a waste of time and dollars. There will not be enough riders to pay for the cost of development and maintenance.
- More transit and more housing options are how we will stay competitive with our national and international peers.
- Why are there huge open parking lots at intown MARTA stations. Why do we have sections of highway more than 20 lanes wide, even though we can't even keep our air clean? Why are cars allowed to speed dangerously at 45mph down wide one-way streets through the heart of midtown? Why do Buford Highway, Peachtree industrial, have some of the highest pedestrian fatality rates in the country? Why are there no sidewalks in so many places, even places where there are MARTA bus stops – need greater focus on people, not moving cars.
- Get signals coordinated along arterials and collectors.