PLAN 2040 Online Public Meeting #6: PLAN 2040 Results and the Path Forward

Report of Results

When: The sixth PLAN 2040 online public meeting was available for review and comment from May 20, 2011 through June 20, 2011 and served as the concluding formal public meeting for the PLAN 2040 outreach process.

Meeting Objectives: To share and receive comments on draft plan key draft decisions in land use and transportation.

Participation Statistics for the Period :

PLAN 2040 Visits: 1,022

Online Public Meeting Visits: 306

Survey Responses: 25

Survey Results and Open Format Responses:

Primary Focus of Comments

- Need for implementation
- Interconnectedness of solutions and travel options
- Transit expansion
- Importance of the connection between public health and travel options

Question 1: PLAN 2040 DECISIONS

There were some difficult decisions to make:

- *Where in the region should growth be encouraged?*
- *What kind of growth should that be?*
- *How will our limited resources be allocated?*
- *How will regional systems such as transit, managed lanes and freight benefit our sustainability goals?*

- *How much funding should go to grow our transportation systems and how much to maintain what we already have? How can individual decisions and actions impact our future?*

Please indicate below what you think of the decisions made for PLAN 2040:

	Support	Neutral	Don't Support	Don't Know	Rating Average	Response Count
More growth encouraged in activity centers	79.2% (19)	12.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (2)	0.00	24
Land use patterns should connect housing, employment and services	91.7% (22)	4.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.2% (1)	0.00	24
More connections between land use and transportation systems to maximize efficiencies	95.8% (23)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.2% (1)	0.00	24
More funding allocated to maintaining what we have than expanding the transportation system	47.8% (11)	17.4% (4)	26.1% (6)	8.7% (2)	0.00	23
Providing more ways for people who don't choose to drive to access the region's resources	91.7% (22)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.00	24
					answered question	24
					skipped question	1

Question 2: What have we missed and other thoughts?

1. I didn't really find out about PLAN 2040 until the last public meeting went online, through the Cobb weekly email. It feels like the publicity didn't start in the media until late May. Now I go on the website and there is TOO MUCH information there - and all I really want to know is for my little part of the world...will we get a sidewalk to Sandy Plains Road and might one day a bus actually go down Sandy Plains Road? It appears from the extremely dense maps that my area is grey...so that doesn't seem to bode very well. As much as I would like to think I could put a vote towards the betterment of the entire regional area, I'm sure there are many more people just like me...if I can't spot any value for ME in my neighborhood/county, I'm not sure I'm going to vote to increase my taxes. And I really hate that I've discovered that about myself. I make a plan in my life not to go all over the metro area to go to work or play or if I have to, to schedule it properly, and as I get older I'm sure my realm of discovery will just continue to shrink.

2. I fully support only maintaining roads and highways, however public transit needs to be expanded. From what I have seen and heard at a brainstorming session, as well as the online meetings, Plan 2040 seems biased towards buses, van pools and managed lanes with little mention of rail. Van pooling and bus service is most likely to be used by people who do not have cars, therefore it is not reducing the number of cars on the road. We need to address the needs of the majority of people, who do have cars but want choice, and those people are more likely to ride rail. Light rail is more cost effective and efficient, moves more people, is less noisy and produces less emissions than buses. I do not believe I am in the minority when I say that we want an extensive rail network in Atlanta that connects with an equally extensive network of biking and walking trails, and so-called complete streets where cars are not dominant.

3. There is a lack of consideration given to health effects in Plan 2040. While Plan 2040 does a good job of encouraging sustainable land use and transit use, it does not do enough to tie these in to health. Continued sprawl and single-driver vehicle use will only serve to worsen our health. There are numerous studies linking air pollution from vehicles to morbidity and mortality from air pollutants such as ground-level ozone and particulate matter. In fact, in Atlanta there was a large study during the Olympics that directly showed the respiratory health benefits of limiting the number of cars on the road (Friedman et al, 2001, J. American Medical Association). Vehicle exhaust has also been directly linked to negative cardiovascular outcomes, and there is also the issue of direct injury from cars, which kills about 30,000 people a year in the US. Considering the above information, Plan2040 should take a stronger stance on protecting the health of Atlanta's people by more heavily promoting use of public transit, transit-oriented communities, and provisions for walkers and cyclists.

4. Focus on optimizing the infrastructure we have at this time, with construction or re-construction of problem areas. The entire system can be more efficient with smart spending.

5. Going back to the Reason Foundation Study and Report on Atlanta in 2006, I seriously question any expansion of heavy rail transit and light rail effectiveness on a cost versus performance basis. I do support dedicated bus lanes and HOT lanes with congestion pricing. I also support signal system enhancement. Motor freight corridors around Atlanta need to be supported as well as enhanced rail freight capability.

6. According to a recent report from Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies, 49% of Americans currently spend more than the recommended limit of 30% of their income on

housing. On top of this, investments in transit and quality growth typically push up land prices, rents, and property taxes, making housing near transit unattainable to those who need it the most. Programs should be put into place at the front end of transit investments or transit-oriented redevelopments to preserve affordable housing around transit stations. Making a few units of housing in each development affordable to individuals and families earning 80% or 100% of the area median income is not enough. We need to strive for housing availability at price points that reflect Atlanta's demographic ability to pay. Policies for "Station Communities" should include inclusionary zoning, joint development agreements, soft second mortgages, shared equity programs, land banking, employer housing co-ops, preservation and rehab of existing affordable housing, and tax increment financing with a portion of bond proceeds dedicated to affordable housing. Programs need to preserve affordability for the life of the transit systems (i.e. perpetuity), and leverage layered subsidies to provide additional support at progressive levels of poverty.

7. With successful land use and transportation integration, and better alternative transportation offerings, it may be possible to actually shrink or reallocate some of our existing, underutilized transportation facilities - for instance, converting general purpose traffic lanes with low traffic volumes to bus-only lanes, bike lanes, or wider sidewalks depending on the context. Decisions should be context-driven and outcome-driven. The devil will be in the details - how much bicycle and car parking is available at destinations? How do travel times and costs compare across modes? Will travel mode options become more balanced? Will infrastructure design and enforcement convince residents that walking, bicycling, and taking transit are safe?

8. Not only put money toward expanding mass transit we should put more train stations within the region now. Most people do not like taking the bus because that extends their travel time twice over.

9. The use of a rapid transit monorail system has been overlooked. A monorail system is more flexible than a light rail system, avoids sharing the same space as cars and trucks, a smaller foot print, able to cross numerous waterways more cost effectively and would be more attractive to riders in the metro region. Do not sell the right of way of major highway corridors - these can be used for the monorail system. A demonstration project should be funded. A supplier of monorail cars can be relocated to Georgia. A new industry can take root in Georgia with a smart cost effective monorail system developed for the Atlanta region that can be exported to other parts of the US and world.

10. This county has grown a lot since I moved here in 1985, but with this growth has come terrible congestion. Mismanaged growth is just as bad, perhaps worse, than retarded growth. Stop focusing on new development and start getting the traffic congestion under control. My suggestion would be to start thinking outside of the box and look to other states and countries for solutions. What the state and county have been.

11. Why doesn't Gwinnett paratransit serve Gwinnett Medical Center Duluth, Georgia Pleasant Hill and McClure, Duluth?

Question 3: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

During the Online Public Meeting, examples were given on how implementation will be emphasized going forward through ARC's planning efforts. For the first time, the region has a management plan that guides PLAN 2040 implementation and tracks its progress - making sure that we are making good on our promises.

Below are examples of steps we will take to ensure PLAN 2040 is implemented throughout the Atlanta region. Let us know your thoughts on these and similar measures:

	Support	Neutral	Don;t Support	Don't Know	Rating Average	Response Count
Mobility Options: Through scoping studies, project and corridor plans together will reflect the region's priorities of sustainability, coordination, land use integration and multiple options for travel.	91.3% (21)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.00	23
Safety: Track and report safety-related programs with any projects that are included in a regional plan.	65.2% (15)	30.4% (7)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	0.00	23
Accessibility: Build and monitor partnerships to connect housing, economic activity and transportation investments.	95.7% (22)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.00	23
Environment: Track and report on environmental benefits of traffic control and improvement of traffic flow.	73.9% (17)	17.4% (4)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	0.00	23
Innovation: Package separate transportation investments together to maximize their benefits and impacts by coordinating transit expansion with future managed lanes expansion.	82.6% (19)	13.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	0.00	23
					answered question	24
					skipped question	1

Question 4: What other thoughts do you have on the implementation of PLAN 2040?

1. But who wouldn't support that stuff? I'm not sure that means anything... This is all in Transportation Planning Speak and really doesn't mean much to me, I'm afraid.

2. I would like to see how these ideas would incorporate current projects such as the Beltline, Atlanta Streetcar, possible expansion of the Silver Comet Trail to downtown, etc. so that projects are not competing with each other for funding, but rather are considered components of a larger plan.

3. Monitoring and reporting doesn't imply adherence to regional plans/goals. Goals/plans are often just adjusted to meet expectation and not held firm to enforce a decision.

4. The definition of "safety" needs to be expanded. It should include human health in general, and thus include monitoring of the negative effects from high ozone days, etc.

5. I will support legislation to give ARC additional regulatory power over the 20 country region in order to accomplish its goals. Way back in 2004, the report "Making the Case for Mixed-Use, Mixed-Income Communities" demonstrated that the vast majority of Atlanta's projected development could be easily absorbed in close proximity to MARTA and streetcar stations. While Plan 2040 doesn't prohibit this kind of development, it doesn't do enough to curtail development in less ideal locations. One benchmark needs to be the abandonment of new sprawl growth in the region, in favor of transit-oriented, walkable, bikeable, mixed-use, MIXED-INCOME communities. That is not enough, however. The vast majority of this growth needs to occur within a 5 minute walk of MARTA, BeltLine, and Atlanta Streetcar stations, and that needs to be another benchmark. No amount of pervious paving or energy efficient street lighting can compensate for the carbon footprint of Atlanta's commuters.

6. I don't have much info about how the scoping studies will function, but some mechanism is needed to innovate a new transportation and land use planning model. Safety is more than a program. Projects must actually be designed from an evidence-based and context-sensitive standpoint that prioritizes actual and perceived risk reduction. Environmental and health impacts should be tracked in all projects. Generally, transit is best coordinated with land use when it is not in a highway corridor. There may some opportunities to run express buses in managed lanes, but for effective transit service stick to walkable, populated corridors.

7. Managed Lanes should not be the only improvement in a corridor. If there is opportunity for BRT, but also light-rail or heavy rail extension, or a bikeway, it should be incorporated into the construction project. Providing 'mobility' for all users requires more than just building toll lanes for vehicles.

8. Please be conscious of overstudying.

9. We recommend tracking specific health impacts, including access for vulnerable populations, localized air quality issues, levels of physical activity, reductions of VMT, and other metrics.

Question 5: PLAN 2020 EVALUATION

The PLAN 2040 process evolved over three years involving more than 300 meetings with a variety of groups and individuals and a dedicated website providing updated plan results, resources and meeting notes.

What do you think overall of the PLAN 2040 planning process, especially in terms of connecting you to its activities? Please indicate below your opinion by activity:

	Good	Neutral	Needs Improvement	Don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
Engagement of the Region's citizens	38.1% (8)	28.6% (6)	19.0% (4)	14.3% (3)	0.00	21
Usefulness of PLAN 2040 website	57.1% (12)	23.8% (5)	4.8% (1)	14.3% (3)	0.00	21
Access to PLAN 2040 resources	65.0% (13)	25.0% (5)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (2)	0.00	20
Helpfulness of PLAN 2040 resources	60.0% (12)	20.0% (4)	5.0% (1)	15.0% (3)	0.00	20
Participation in PLAN 2040 online public meetings	57.1% (12)	23.8% (5)	9.5% (2)	9.5% (2)	0.00	21
Participation in The Civic League Neighborhood Forums	20.0% (4)	25.0% (5)	10.0% (2)	45.0% (9)	0.00	20
Quality of polls and surveys on PLAN 2040 elements	42.9% (9)	33.3% (7)	14.3% (3)	9.5% (2)	0.00	21
Helpfulness of ARC planning staff	57.1% (12)	9.5% (2)	4.8% (1)	28.6% (6)	0.00	21
Your concerns were heard	28.6% (6)	38.1% (8)	4.8% (1)	28.6% (6)	0.00	21

Question 6:   What have we missed and other thoughts?

1. I wasn't notified of this survey. I just happened to hear about it through word of mouth, because I'm interested in urban planning. Hopefully I will be more "in the loop" after submitting my information. On a related note, it would be nice for survey respondents to have some record of their responses, whether via email confirmation or a secure online database.
2. I try to keep up with these types of things and didn't know anything about this until today. So you need to get the word out more so people can get involved easier.
3. The PLAN 2040 process devoted above-average effort to stakeholder engagement and made excellent use of internet resources. However, participation rates were still low. Most importantly, the final project list did not seem to align with the opinions of process participants, which consistently trended toward a regional vision with excellent transit service, walkable communities, and less dependence on the automobile.