

# PROCESS

There are many ways to assess how well various projects and programs address transportation needs. Learn about the methodologies used to identify the best possible recommendations for our Region.

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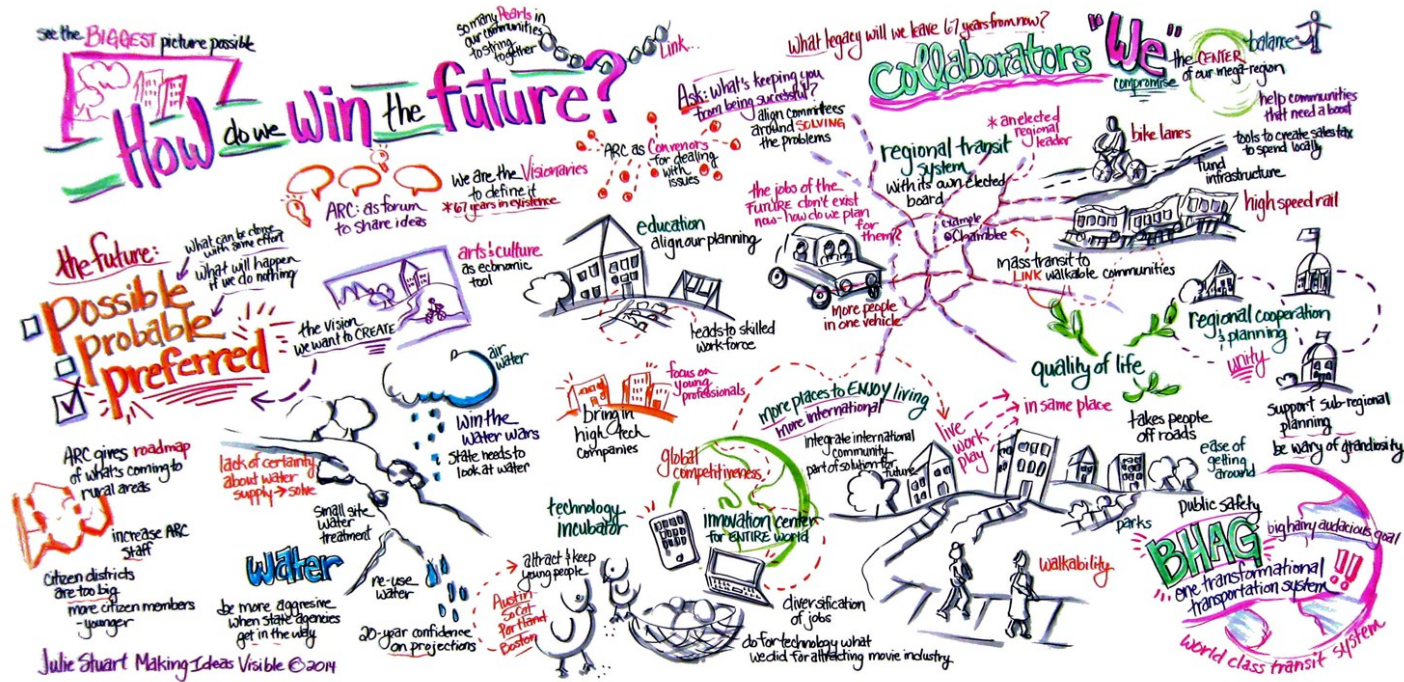
# Policy Framework

In 2014, the ARC Board adopted a planning framework for *The Atlanta Region's Plan* that focuses on a threefold vision of providing world-class infrastructure, building a competitive economy and ensuring the Region is comprised of healthy and livable communities. This vision, along with six key goals set by the ARC Board, serves as the foundation for the *Policy Framework* that was finalized in August 2015. All component elements of *The Atlanta Region's Plan*, including transportation and programs have in supporting a world class infrastructure, a competitive economy and healthy livable communities.

Transportation plays a critical role in supporting all aspects of *The Atlanta Region's Plan* vision. Whenever possible, recommendations

outlined in the Solutions section of this document relate back to this framework to demonstrate the linkages that transportation projects and programs have in supporting a world class infrastructure, a competitive economy and healthy livable communities.

Each goal defined in the *Policy Framework* is made actionable through a set of objectives and policies. These guide the conversation and process for making decisions on funding priorities. The primary goal for the transportation element of *The Atlanta Region's Plan* is "Ensuring a comprehensive transportation network, incorporating regional transit and 21st Century technology". It is supported by seven objectives and 23 policies.







# THE REGION'S PLAN VISION



**GOALS** | Ensuring a comprehensive transportation network, incorporating regional transit and 21st Century technology  
Secured, long-term water supply

**GOALS** | Developing additional walkable, vibrant centers that support people of all ages and abilities  
Promoting health, arts and other aspects of a high quality of life

**GOALS** | Building the region as a globally recognized hub of innovation and prosperity  
Developing a highly educated and skilled workforce, able to meet the needs of 21st Century employers

Atlanta is one of the world's most dynamic metropolitan areas, competing globally on the strength of our diverse population, robust economy, myriad cultural assets and attractive lifestyles. We will 'win the future' through intensive collaboration that honors and leverages the uniqueness of our communities.



## Transportation Objectives and Policies

### 1 Maintain and operate the existing transportation system to provide for reliable travel.

- 1.1 Prioritize data-supported maintenance projects over expansion projects.
- 1.2 Promote system reliability and resiliency.
- 1.3 Promote transit and active transportation modes to improve access.

### 2 Improve transit and non-SOV options to boost economic competitiveness and reduce environmental impacts.

- 2.1 Establish effective transit services that provide regional accessibility.
- 2.2 Prioritize transit projects in areas with transit-supportive land use, plans and regulations.
- 2.3 Promote bicycle transportation by developing safe and connected route options and facilities.
- 2.4 Promote pedestrian-friendly policies and designs.
- 2.5 Enhance and expand Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs.

### 3 Strategically expand the transportation system while supporting local land use plans.

- 3.1 Prioritize solutions that improve multimodal connectivity.
- 3.2 Direct federal funding for road capacity expansion to the regional strategic transportation system, including the managed lanes system.
- 3.3 Road expansion projects in rural areas should support economic competitiveness by improving multi-modal connectivity between centers.
- 3.4 Implement a complete streets approach on roadway projects that is sensitive to the existing community.

### 4 Provide for a safe and secure transportation system.

- 4.1 Promote and enhance safety across all planning and implementation efforts, including support for the state strategic highway safety plan.
- 4.2 Coordinate security and emergency preparedness programs across transportation modes and jurisdictions.

### 5 Promote an accessible and equitable transportation system.

- 5.1 Maintain and expand transportation options that serve the region's most vulnerable populations.
- 5.2 Improve connectivity around transit stations and bus stops for all users.
- 5.3 Increase funding for Human Services Transportation (HST) and Medicaid transportation services.
- 5.4 Increase access to areas with essential services, including healthcare, education, recreation, entertainment and commercial retail.

### 6 Support the reliable movement of freight and goods.

- 6.1 Provide safe and reliable access to freight land uses and major intermodal freight facilities.
- 6.2 Promote the use of information technologies to foster the most efficient movement of freight.
- 6.3 Preserve industrial land uses in proximity to existing freight corridors.

### 7 Foster the application of advanced technologies to the transportation system.

- 7.1 Pursue the application and use of advanced technologies.
- 7.2 Encourage the application of passenger information technologies.

## State Planning Coordination

ARC works with several state agencies in developing regional transportation project recommendations and ensuring programs in *The Atlanta Region Plan's Transportation Element* are complementary:








- **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)** builds, maintains and operates much of the Region's roadway network, and is the conduit through which all federal transportation funding to the State of Georgia flows.
- **State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA)** operates toll facilities in coordination with GDOT and is an important financial partner due to their bonding capabilities under state law.
- **Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA)** operates the regional Xpress bus system and provides oversight of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the short-range component of the overall transportation plan, on behalf of the Governor.

Federal legislation requires states to have a multimodal long-range transportation plan that outlines general investment policies over a minimum 20-year plan horizon. *Statewide Transportation Plans* (SWTP) must be continually evaluated and periodically updated as appropriate, typically every four to five years. At the state level, Georgia legislation requires a transportation investment plan with specific investment strategies identified to advance economic growth in the state. This *Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan* (SSTP) must be updated every two years with ongoing monitoring of key strategies through an annual performance monitoring progress report. For the first time, the two plans were merged into a single document in the most recent update which concluded in January 2016.





Georgia's Transportation Assets

<b>HIGHWAYS</b>		<b>123,546</b> center line miles	<b>15%</b> owned by GDOT	supporting <b>215 million</b> vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
<b>BRIDGES</b>		<b>14,739</b> bridges (including culverts)	<b>55 percent</b> owned by GDOT	
<b>TRANSIT</b>		<b>15</b> urban fixed-route transit providers		supporting <b>152 million</b> bus riders in 2012
<b>FREIGHT RAIL</b>		<b>4,844</b> miles of active track		supporting <b>193 million</b> tons of goods in 2010
<b>AIRPORTS</b>		<b>104</b> publicly owned airports	includes <b>9</b> commercial service airports	supporting <b>47 million</b> commercial passengers in 2012
<b>BIKE/PEDESTRIAN</b>		<b>14</b> state bike routes		supporting <b>75,000+</b> bicycle/ pedestrian commuters in 2010
<b>MARINE PORTS</b>		<b>3</b> ports in operation		supporting <b>27 million</b> tons of goods in 2010

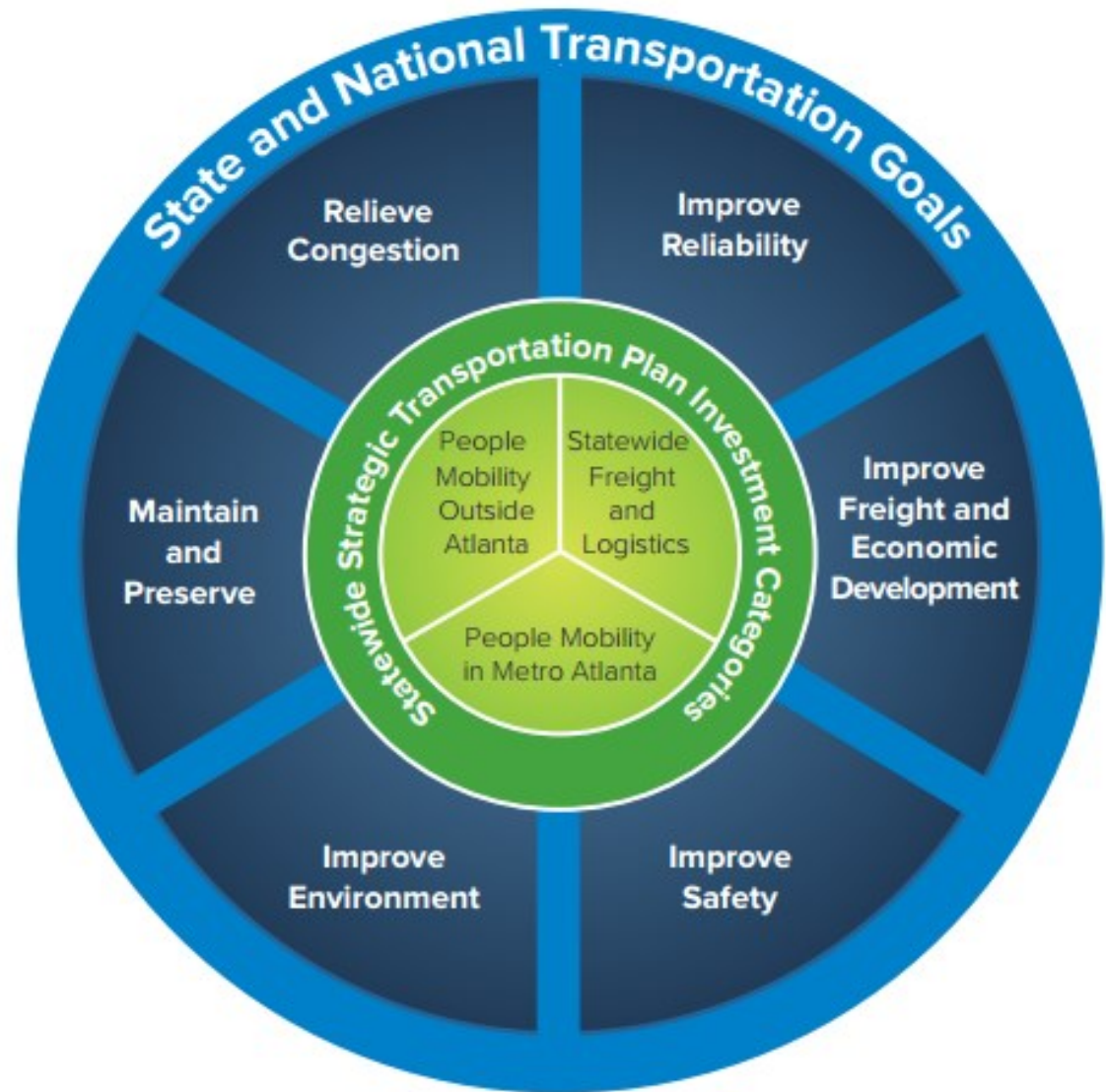
The transportation goals and objectives defined in the original SSTP were developed through a process designed to understand what is important to Georgia's transportation customers, addressing four key questions:

1. What do Georgia's citizens and businesses expect and need from their transportation network?
2. What levels of performance will attract and keep businesses and talent in Georgia's economy?
3. What characteristics or features in a transportation system will make Georgia an attractive place to live?
4. What will it take in terms of investment to drive growth across the State?

To address these questions, the goals of the current SWTP/SSTP were aligned and structured around three core investment categories:

1. Statewide freight and logistics
2. People mobility (excluding Atlanta)
3. People mobility in metro Atlanta

The SWTP/SSTP does not enumerate specific projects, but rather identifies general approaches and strategies the state will follow for various components of the multimodal transportation network. This structure provided key direction in the development and prioritization of projects and strategies included in *The Atlanta Region's Plan*.





### Roadway Capacity

- Focus roadway capacity expansions on priority freight corridors.

### Roadway Operations

- Improve network reliability through managed lanes systems in metro Atlanta.
- Continue to apply comprehensive operational investments (e.g., ramp metering, incident response, signal coordination).

### Safety

- Implement the *Strategic Highway Safety Plan*.
- Continued focus on high crash intersections and roadway departure improvements to reduce serious injuries and fatalities resulting from infrastructure deficiencies.
- Continued, aggressive education efforts on safety needs to address fatality reductions, in particular.

### Pavement

- Aggressive investment in pavement over today's spending levels to meet federal and state performance expectations, reduce commercial and private vehicle operating costs, and improve safety.
- Invest on priority corridors (e.g., priority freight corridors, Interstate Highway System).
- Reconsider size of Federal Aid System to reduce overall pavement maintenance burden over time.

### Bridges

- Continued investment in bridge network at approximately today's funding levels to maintain and improve overall system and meet federal and state performance expectations.

### Transit Capacity

- Continue to support fixed route service in urbanized areas not currently served and expanded/improved transit to underserved portions of urbanized areas.
- Continue to support expansion of rural transit to counties without rural human services transportation.
- Support transit enhancements for existing service, e.g., new park-and-ride facilities inside and outside of metro Atlanta, express bus expansion in Atlanta.

### Bicycle/Pedestrian

- Continue to implement GDOT complete streets policy.
- Improve tracking and reporting of bicycle and pedestrian funding allocations.

### Intermodal (Freight-Rail, Ports, Aviation)

- Continue to promote and enhance rail safety.
- Collect more data on tracks and bridges, hazardous materials, grade crossings.
- Collaborate with neighboring states on regional solutions to freight challenges.
- Increase goods movement by rail; e.g., support GDOT-owned short line upgrades, remove key freight bottlenecks, improve grade crossings.
- Improve port-rail access, storage and operating efficiencies.
- Improve last-mile connections to intermodal facilities (port, aviation, rail).
- Modernize systems to accommodate more stringent federal standards

## Local Planning Coordination

*The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* must reflect the needs and priorities of a vast number of stakeholders, from the federal and state levels all the way down to counties, cities and neighborhoods. This is accomplished through a number of programs and initiatives. In addition to periodically providing funding and planning expertise for specialized corridor or subarea studies led by local governments, ARC sponsors two core programs. One of these is the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), which is described in the Solutions section of this document. The other is the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) program.

The primary way in which recommendations of *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* are shaped to address issues at a local level is through the CTP program. The purpose of the program is to ensure that transportation infrastructure has a positive impact on strengthening our economy and communities at both the local and regional levels by providing financial incentives for counties and their constituent municipalities to develop joint long-range transportation plans. Since 2005, ARC has made federal funding available to assist counties and cities in developing joint long-range transportation plans. These plans serve as the foundational building blocks of regional transportation planning efforts and are updated on a five to seven year rotating cycle.

While participation in the program is voluntary, most of the Region's jurisdictions are active participants and have found the program to be a valuable resource in understanding their needs, identifying solutions, establishing priorities, and defining a course of action to get much-needed projects funded and built.

The basic expected outcomes of a CTP are:

- Prioritized list of transportation investments necessary to support the visions for economic development and strong communities established by cities and counties.
- Five to ten year fiscally constrained action plan which reflects currently available funding sources and feasible policy actions that can be taken at the city/county level.
- Recommendations that have been vetted through a robust community engagement process and formally adopted by local government policy officials.
- Recommendations that leverage regional facilities, services and programs to address local needs and priorities.
- Recommendations that can knit together previous plans and projects identified at the community level through Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) studies, Community Improvement District (CID) work programs, county/city Capital Improvement Programs (CIP), corridor studies, and other initiatives.

Funds are programmed in the Region's six-year TIP based on the most recent population estimate of the recipient jurisdiction. Amounts are reassessed periodically to reflect any significant population growth which may occur over time and to ensure the level of funding matches the level of planning activities required to meet the program's expected outcomes. Currently, amounts range from a minimum of \$250,000 to a maximum of \$1,000,000, with a minimum local match requirement of 20%.

Needs and priorities vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction across the Region. For that reason, the emphasis areas of each CTP work program can vary considerably. While all CTPs must address 10 core elements,



the depth to which each is studied can be modified to match the relative importance of that element to the jurisdiction. The core elements which every CTP must include are:

- State of Good Repair / Maintenance
- Roadways
- Transit
- Active Transportation
- Freight and Goods Movement
- Human Services Transportation (HST)
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Programs
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) / Technology
- System Resiliency / Emergency Preparedness
- System Performance Monitoring and Reporting Program

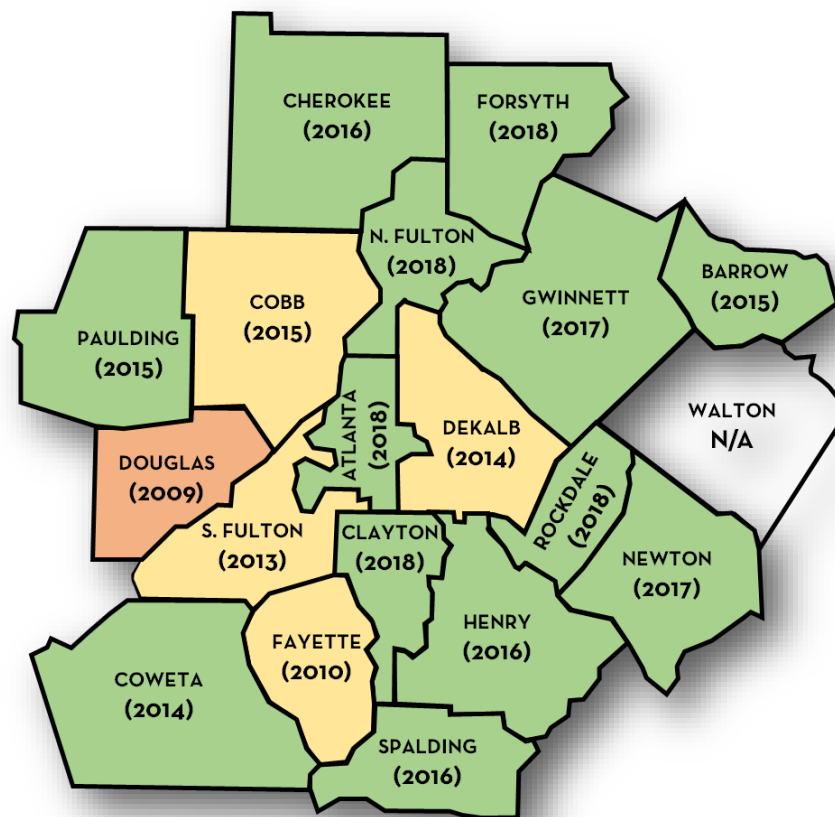
Five other potential elements have been identified, but are considered optional since they may not be universally relevant to or a high priority for every jurisdiction in the Region:

- Airport Access
- Subarea and/or Corridor Analyses
- Traffic Calming Program
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA)
- Project Screening

The above list is not all inclusive, but does clearly demonstrate the flexibility of the program to address and focus on those transportation issues which are the most relevant and important to local communities.

*The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* is informed by 18 completed CTPs, of which four were actively being updated as of May 2019. The relationship between the timing of future CTP updates and the regional planning process is discussed in the Future section of this document.

### CTP Adoption Dates and Update Status (as of May 2019)



- No update actively underway
- Update currently underway
- Update to begin in 2019 (tentative)
- Does not participate in CTP program



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## Modal Planning Coordination

In addition to the comprehensive transportation planning activities which occur at the state and local levels, the recommendations of *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* also incorporate findings of various studies and plans which focus on a specific group of travelers and their needs. These modal plans typically do not focus on a specific geography, such as a city, county or corridor, but rather have broad applicability to the entire Region.

The chart depicts the key user groups of the transportation system and identifies the primary modal plans from which *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* was developed. It would not be accurate to characterize their relationship to the transportation plan as being subelements. Rather, these are considered as extensions to this plan where more detailed information on modal data, analysis results and recommendations can be obtained. To the extent possible, this plan synthesizes the key findings of each into a coordinated and complementary set of projects, programs and initiatives, but does not attempt to incorporate each modal plan in its entirety.

The timing of the development of each modal plan varies and it is not always possible to revisit each within the regional planning cycle. While many plans, such as those for bicycling and walking, freight, managed lanes and the airport master plan, were refreshed in the year leading up to finalizing *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)*, several others have not changed since an update to the PLAN 2040 RTP was adopted in early 2014. ARC has identified the need to update many of these over the next couple of years in anticipation of the next RTP update due in early 2020, notably the transit vision and the thoroughfares network. These needs and others are identified in the Future section of this document.

It should be noted that there are a large number of additional modal studies underway at any given time which focus on a particular jurisdiction, corridor or location. For example, MARTA is continuing environmental work related to several fixed guideway transit services, including SR 400, I-20 East and Clifton Corridor. GDOT is investigating how to relieve automobile congestion along the I-75/85 Downtown Connector. And numerous cities and counties are at various stages of developing local bicycle and pedestrian plans, transit feasibility studies or freight access analyses.





*The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation) is built from numerous other plans which focus on specific components of the overall system*



-  **Walk! Bike! Thrive! Atlanta Region Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (ARC - 2015)**
-  **Managing Mobility in the Atlanta Region: Human Services Transportation Plan (ARC - 2017)**
-  **Regional Transit Vision (ARC - 2012)**
-  **Direct Xpress Service Plan (GRTA - 2015)**
-  **Atlanta Regional Freight Mobility Plan (ARC - 2016)**
-  **Atlanta Strategic Truck Route Network (ARC - 2010)**
-  **Georgia Statewide Freight and Logistics Plan (GDOT - 2015)**
-  **Georgia State Rail Plan (GDOT - 2015)**
-  **Atlanta Aerotropolis Blueprint (ARC - 2015)**
-  **Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport Master Plan (HJAIA - 2015)**
-  **Georgia State Aviation System Plan (GDOT - 2003)**
-  **Atlanta Regional Transportation Demand Management Plan (ARC - 2013)**
-  **Metro Atlanta Operational Planning Study (GDOT - 2015)**
-  **Managed Lanes Implementation Plan (GDOT - 2015)**
-  **Strategic Regional Thoroughfare Plan (ARC - 2012)**

# Project Technical Evaluation

ARC is always improving its methods for project evaluation. Using national data resources (Big Data) and modeled data developed in-house, ARC has separated current need and future performance, as well as developed new tools for evaluating and analyzing projects.

## Overview of the Evaluation Process

Project evaluation is one of ARC's key technical functions as an MPO. Project evaluation is frequently seen as primarily a planning effort. However, knowledge of policy, community support, modeling, and big data are all essential to gain a higher level of understanding of projects. Each of these perspectives is equally important when deciding which metrics to use, how to weigh them, and which projects should be prioritized. This improved methodology has sought to bring together these perspectives for a holistic evaluation of transportation projects in the Atlanta Region.

Since a metropolitan area can include communities that are diverse in development and demographic patterns, it is important for an MPO to formulate an objective evaluation process that accounts for the differences in priorities among the Region's communities. There are several methods that most MPOs use to evaluate projects including:

- **Benefit/Cost (B/C) Ratio** – in which all projects are run through a travel demand model to estimate their future benefit, which is monetized and divided by cost to determine the overall value of the projects.
- **Criteria Method** – in which individual performance metrics, both observed and modeled, are indexed, weighted, and summed together to give each project a score for their performance.

ARC has made changes to previous methodologies to promote transparency, objectivity, and greater accuracy. In light of these goals and to promote a deeper understanding of the projects themselves, current needs and future performance were separated as two distinct dimensions of transportation projects.

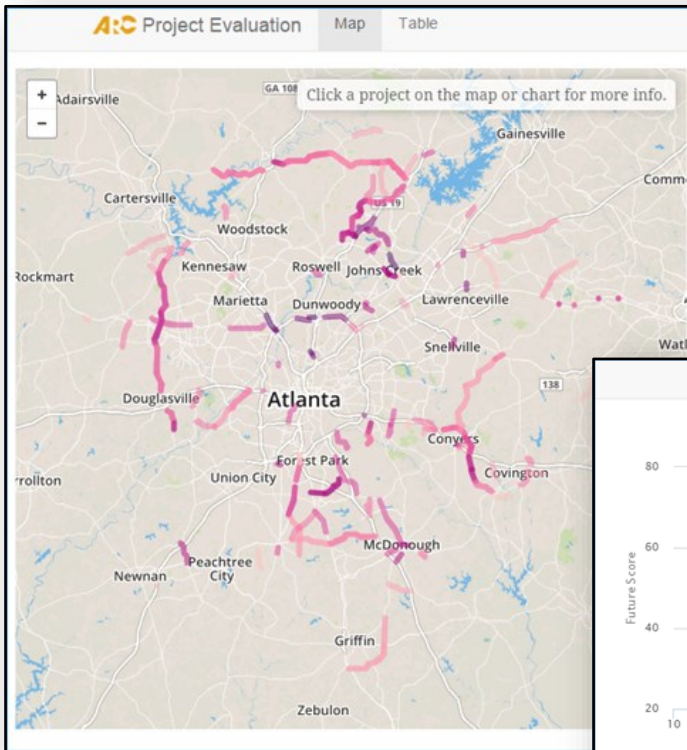
A proposed project's need demonstrates the current conditions that necessitate a project through real world data and tools. A project's performance focuses on the forecasted potential impacts a project could have on the network and its estimated effect on future measures. A project's performance is also adjusted by the anticipated deliverability problems based on environmental obstacles, such as historic landmarks or cemeteries, which can increase the amount of time and resources needed to complete a project. The metrics used for both need and performance reflect USDOT's FAST Act policy goals, as well as the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Atlanta Region's goals and visions.

More details on the project evaluation methodology can be found in Appendix (H).

## Project Evaluation Visualization

The amount of information gathered in this project evaluation would be impossible to digest separately without a way to visualize the comparisons. Therefore, the Project Evaluation Visualization (PEV) web application was created to make it easy to navigate and interact with the data and to allow for on-the-fly analysis and comparisons of each of these different measures. This tool also allows the public to examine all of the aspects and variables included in project evaluation, creating a more transparent process.



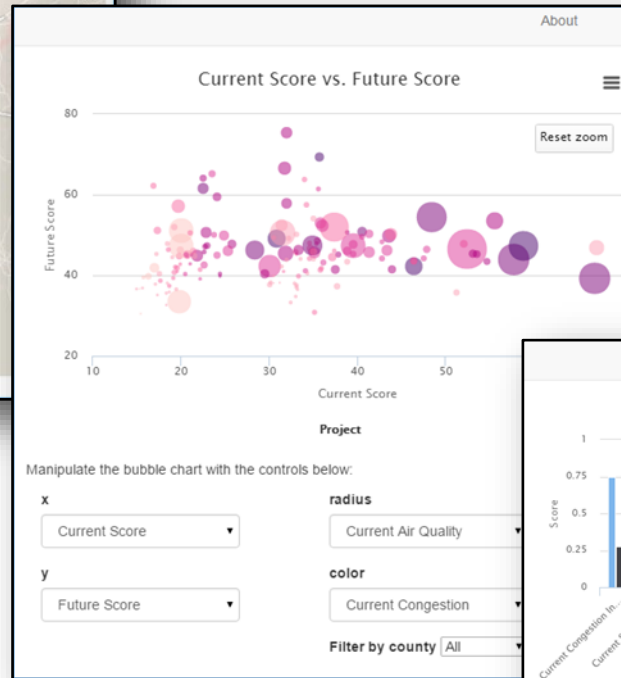


Atlanta Region's Plan Road Project Information

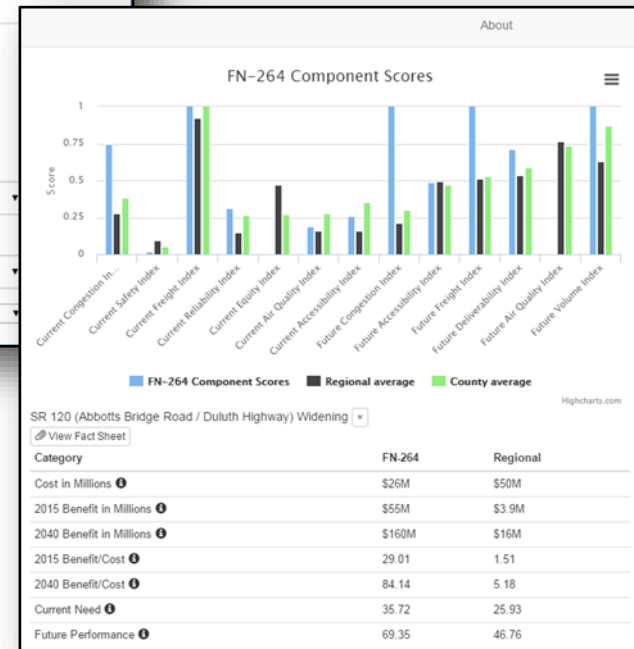
ARC's Project Evaluation Visualization tool allows the user to choose variables from a pull down menu to populate the scatterplot that is linked to an interactive map. It also allows users to choose variables for point size and color and to filter by county or project type. The advantage of this delivery method is that the focus is no longer on one metric, such as the benefit/cost ratio, but on many measures within a regional context.



LEARN MORE



Comparative Data for a Set of Projects



## Environmental Coordination

The environmental review process for *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* leverages the "Eco-Logical Approach," established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). ARC has been following the Eco-Logical Approach for the last several regional planning cycles. This approach, a component of FHWA's Environmental Review Toolkit, encourages local, regional, state, and federal agencies to collaborate and identify environmental priority areas, and to include conservation and mitigation strategies in their respective infrastructure plans that correspond to the priority areas. For the Atlanta Region, the following planning initiatives are considered to be an integral part towards implementing the Eco-Logical Approach:

- Regional Ecosystem Framework Development and Analysis;
- Streamlining NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) and Accelerating Project Delivery;
- Updating the Metropolitan North Georgia Water District Plan and Corresponding Green Infrastructure Strategies; and
- Development of a Transportation System Preparedness and Resilience Plan.

The graphic to the right represents a simplistic relationship between the Eco-Logical Approach and the relevant regional planning efforts. The remainder of this section highlights each of the aforementioned planning initiatives, and how they support or are supported by the Eco-Logical Approach.



## Regional Ecosystem Framework Development

FHWA suggests that executing the Eco-Logical Approach should include the development of a Regional Ecosystem Framework (REF), which is a geo-spatial database (electronic mapping application) featuring prioritized environmental and cultural resources, the prioritized long-range transportation plan, and land use plans. As part of the regional transportation plan development, ARC relies heavily on the federal Environmental Consultation process to refine its Eco-Logical Approach as well as update the REF. Through Environmental Consultation, ARC has been able to identify new data sources and analysis methodologies to carry out the goals of the REF, which are to:

- Create the regional ecosystem framework, based on mapping and prioritization of resources and transportation and land use plans.
- Create transportation program scenarios that address short- and long-term improvements and include all features that may cause impact to natural resources.
- Obtain a shared understanding of the current and planned/ proposed locations, quantities, and patterns of all development, uses, and resource impacts in the Region.

The latest REF consists of 15 base datasets or layers to be used as inputs into the REF analysis of transportation projects. Those datasets and sources are:

### *Natural Resources*

- Draft 2014 Clean Water Act §§ 305(b) & 303 (d) List of Waters (TMDL – Total Maximum Daily Load) – Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Brownfields – Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

- Darter Habitat – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)
- Endangered Species – Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Floodplains – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Groundwater Recharge Areas – Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Hazardous Sites Inventory – Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Trout Streams – Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Water Supply Watersheds – Atlanta Regional Commission
- Wetlands – United States Geological Survey (USGS)
- Georgia Metropolitan River Protection Act Corridor – Atlanta Regional Commission

### *Historic & Other*

- Historic Resources – Atlanta Regional Commission/Georgia Department of Transportation/ Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources/National Park Service
- Current Land Use Map (“Landpro”), Agricultural and Forest Categories – Atlanta Regional Commission
- Greenspace – Atlanta Regional Commission

ARC developed a customized ArcGIS Desktop/ModelBuilder application that automatically calculates the individual and cumulative acreages of proposed transportation project footprint overlays, relative to the 15 key environmental resources in the Atlanta Region. The acreage estimates were used to screen projects for: potential impacts, project deliverability, potential scope of NEPA review, and to proactively identify potential mitigation strategies. This screening would occur during the regional transportation planning process, prior to the proposed project being programmed in the RTP/TIP with federal funding. The



methodology and results of this analysis were presented to the Environmental Consultation group. The screen capture represents an environmental resources “heat map,” which is a composite map that shows where selected mappable RTP/TIP projects are, relative to the highest concentrations of environmental resources.

### Streamlining NEPA and Accelerating Project Delivery

By updating the REF during development of this plan, ARC was able to address some of the Project Delivery Task Force Action Plan recommendations, which support the Accelerating Project Delivery goal of MAP-21\*. Specifically, the following sections of MAP-21, Subtitle C, directly involve leveraging an Eco-Logical Approach to accelerate transportation project delivery:

- Section 1305 – Efficient Environmental Reviews for Decisionmaking
- Section 1310 – Integration of Planning and Environmental Review
- Sections 1316 and 1317 – New Categorical Exclusion Categories
- Section 1318 – Programmatic Agreements and Additional Categorical Exclusions

### Updating the Metropolitan North Georgia Water District Plan and Corresponding Green Infrastructure Strategies

Also related to ARC’s Eco-Logical work program, is the Metropolitan North Georgia Water District Plan (MNGWDP) update. This planning effort involves three main components:

- Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan
- Watershed Management Plan
- Wastewater Management Plan

The Watershed Management Plan details strategies and recommendations for both effective watershed and stormwater management and water quality protection. It includes specific tasks and milestones for implementing these recommendations for local governments as well as regional and state agencies.

Of all three MNGWDP Plans, the Watershed Management Plan (WSMP) is the most relevant to the RTP/TIP because transportation infrastructure can have a significant, cumulative impact on watershed resources and conditions. For example, transportation asset management practices can support the objectives of the WSMP, because they address stormwater runoff from linear facilities like roads, highways, and trails. Transportation infrastructure is also susceptible to and often a contributing factor to flooding, and the WSMP includes floodplain management guidelines and policies that can help influence where and how transportation investments can benefit floodplains.

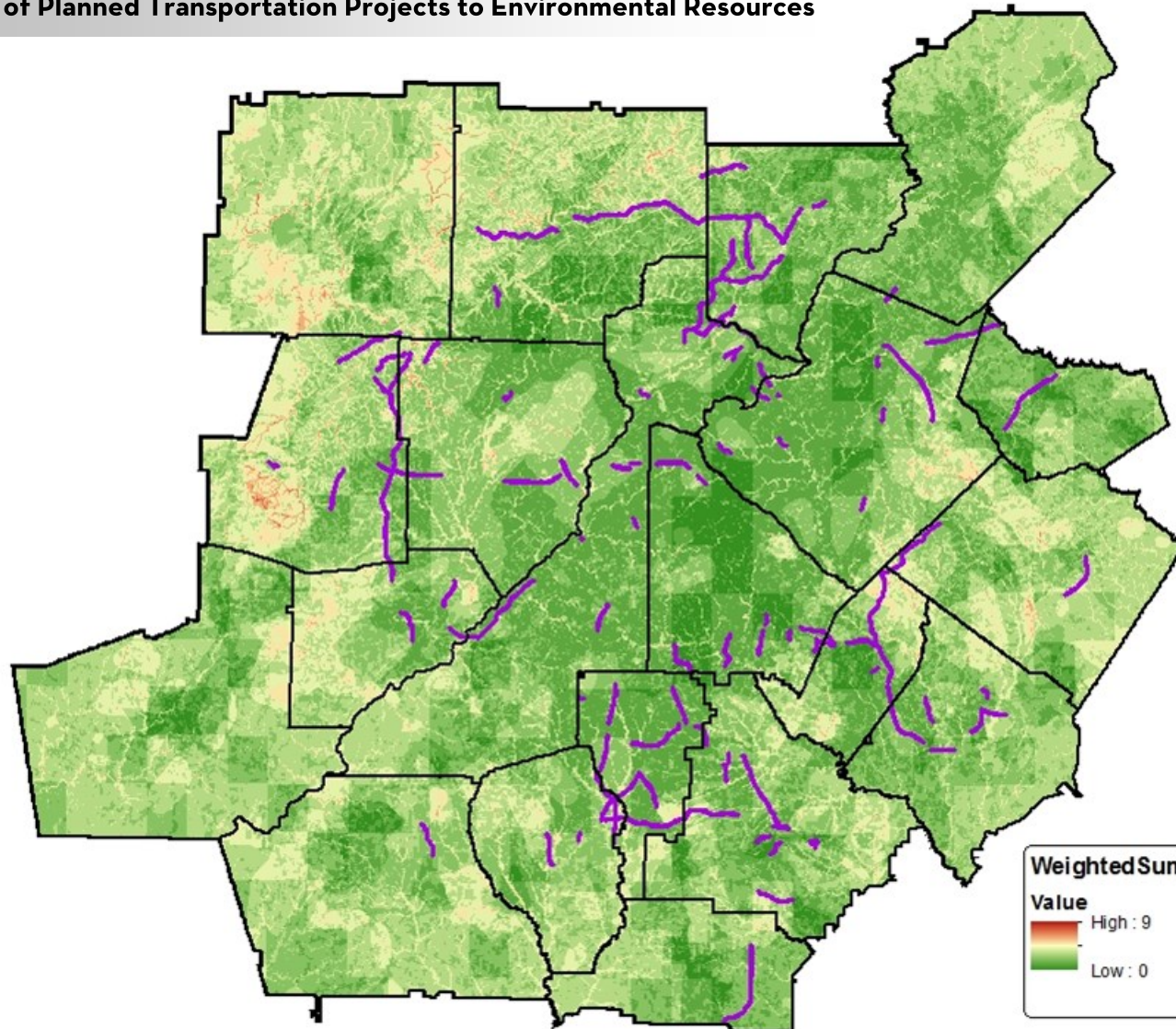
### Transportation System Preparedness and Resilience Planning

Starting in 2016, ARC began leveraging all of the aforementioned analyses and planning activities to establish a more rigorous long term transportation system resilience planning work program. The primary objective will be to analyze transportation infrastructure resiliency and travel behavior, in response to applicable federal policies on climate change and extreme weather events. The anticipated work product will be primarily useful in identifying existing and future critical transportation infrastructure that can help address the impacts of extreme weather events. Additionally, the resilience planning will also leverage the recommendations provided by the 2014 Severe Weather Task Force Report, which was established by Governor Nathan Deal.

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\* The federal MAP-21 legislation in effect at the time was superseded by the FAST Act in December 2015.

## Relation of Planned Transportation Projects to Environmental Resources



This map depicts the results of mapping selected transportation projects (shown in purple) against 15 datasets of environmental resources. Based on the degree of overlap, projects received a numerical value representing the level of risk which environmental issues may pose to implementation. This methodology was not used to eliminate projects from funding consideration. Rather, its value will be in helping sponsors better understand in advance the potential risks, costs and schedule impacts caused by proximity to environmental resources.

## Priority Networks

To support the identification of specific transportation investments for *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)*, the vision, goals, objectives and policies of the *Policy Framework* are operationalized through identification of several critical, regional transportation systems:

- **Regional Strategic Transportation System (RSTS)** - Identifies facilities which the Atlanta Region has agreed will be considered for federal funding investment. This is a less extensive network than federal eligibility rules allow.
- **Regional Thoroughfare Network (RTN)** - Identifies a subset of roadways within the RSTS which serve the most critical mobility needs and receives the highest priority for federal funding consideration.
- **Regional Truck Route Network** - Defines the most significant facilities for the movement of freight in the Region. As would be expected, this network overlaps significantly with the RSTS and RTN.
- **Regional Transit Vision** - Defines the vision for transit expansion in the Atlanta Region (formerly known as "Concept 3").

By identifying these networks, ARC will be able to focus limited funds for implementation of strategic projects to maintain and improve the most essential parts of the overall regional transportation system.

### Regional Strategic Transportation System (RSTS)

*The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* continues the strategy of focusing limited federal transportation funds on the RSTS. This network was originally defined in 2006 and updated during development of the previous long range plan. It was not reassessed as a component of this plan update process.

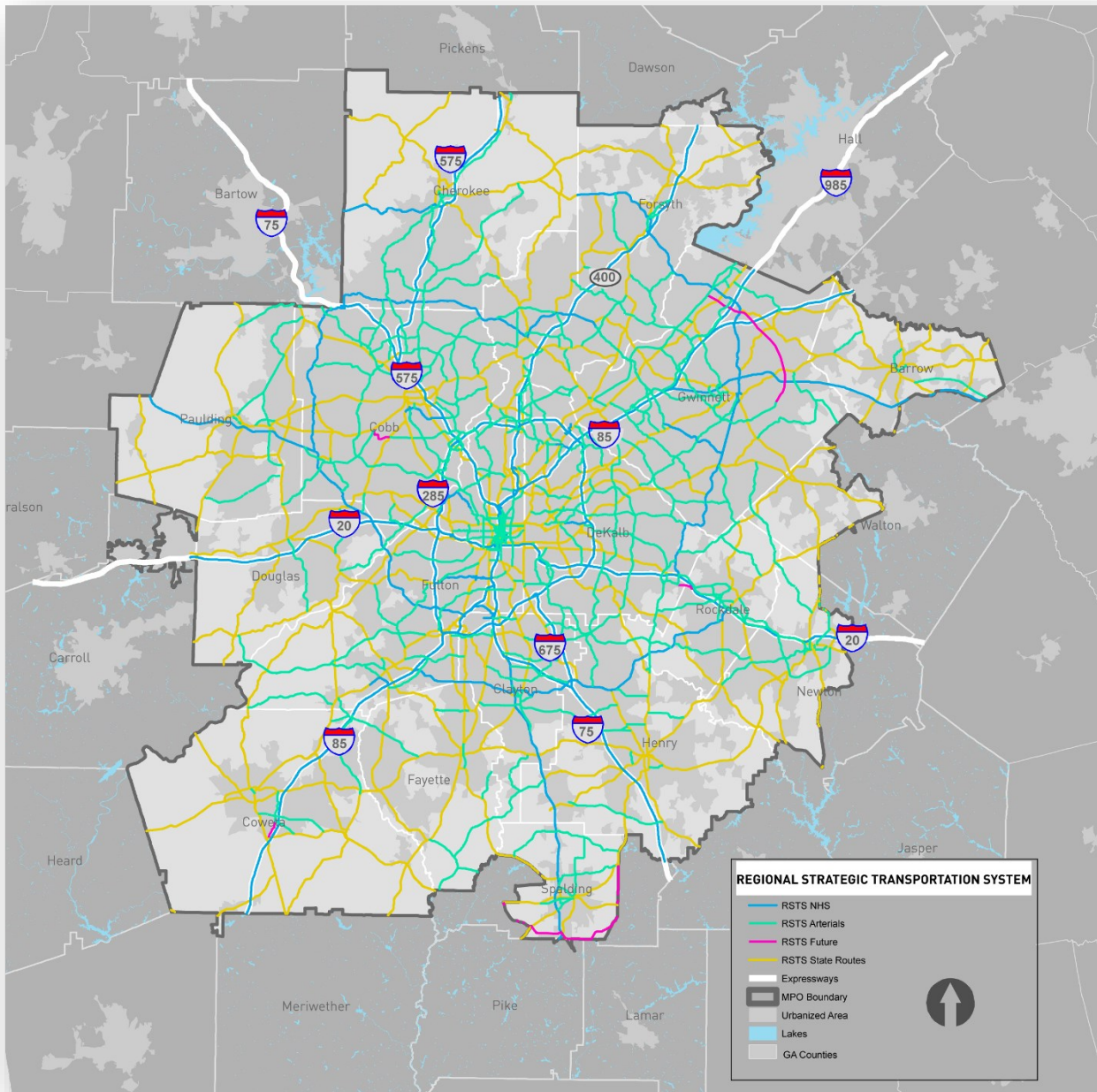
The RSTS furthers the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, including addressing current and future transportation demand. It is a critical element in identifying roadway and transit strategies. It is ARC policy to only fund roadway and transit capacity expansions on RSTS facilities.

The RSTS accommodates the Region's highest volume tripmaking patterns and is comprised of:

- Interstate highways and freeways
- National Highway System (NHS) classified facilities and State highways, including intermodal connectors for freight facilities
- Existing and future regional transit services
- Principal arterials, critical minor arterials and other facilities that provide continuous, cross-regional mobility by ensuring adequate spacing of major roadways that connect regional activity centers, town centers and freight corridors.



# Regional Strategic Transportation System



## Regional Thoroughfares Network (RTN)

The RSTS provides a framework for identifying regional facilities that are critical to the movement of goods and people, while identifying priority facilities for the use of federal-aid funding for capacity expansions. However, additional refinement of the RSTS was needed to help in policy planning. This need was met through the Regional Thoroughfares Network (RTN), which defines guidelines and strategies for maximizing the effectiveness of the system as a whole, rather than its individual segments.

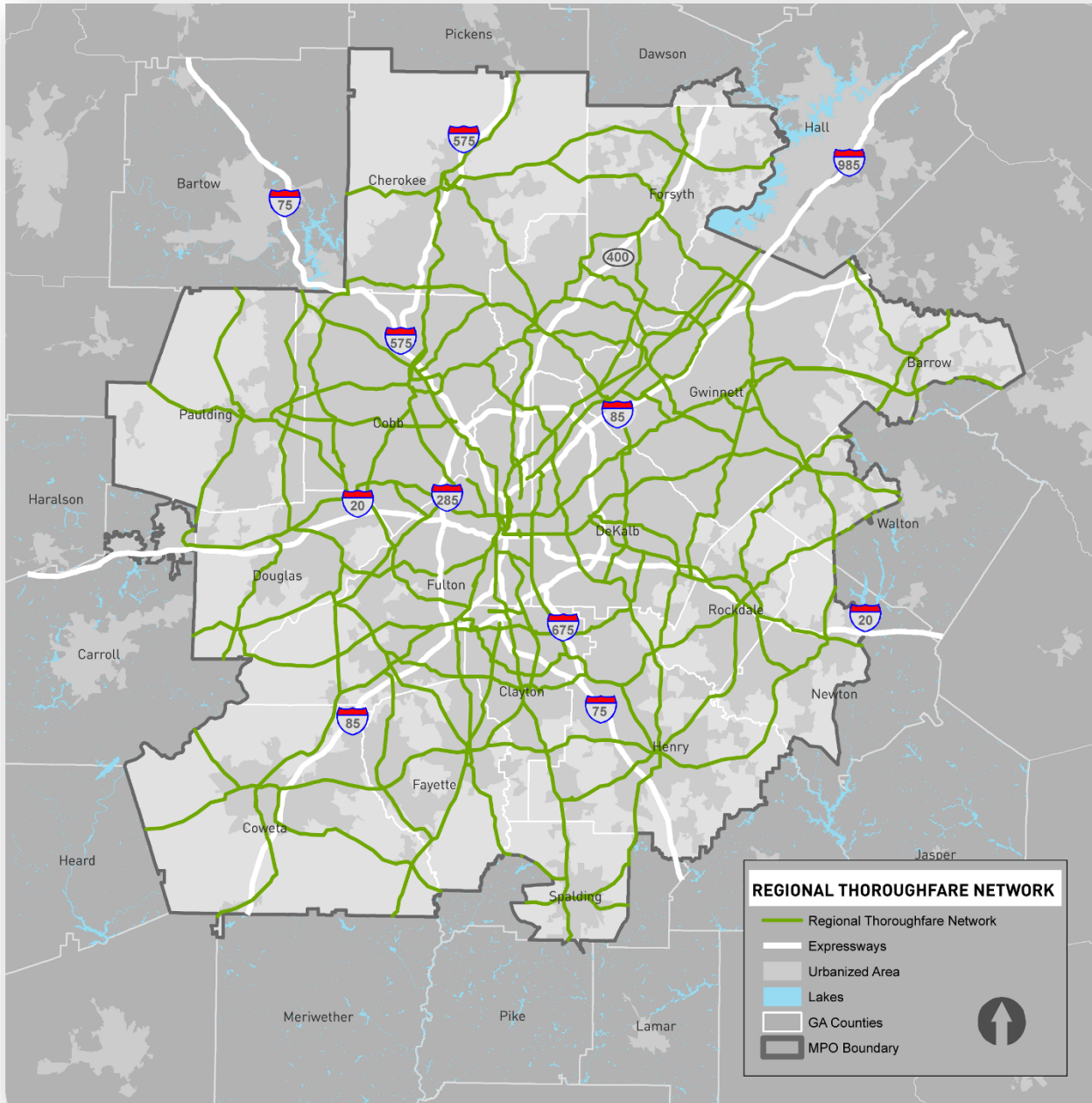
A thoroughfare is a high volume transportation corridor that serves multiple ways of traveling, including walking, bicycling, driving and riding transit. It connects people and goods to important places in the Region. It is managed by applying special traffic control strategies and suitable land development guidelines in order to maintain travel efficiency, reliability and safety for all thoroughfare users. In light of this special regional function, the thoroughfare network receives priority consideration for infrastructure investment in the Atlanta Region.

The RTN has several purposes that further contribute to recommendations of *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)*:

- Highlight non-freeway corridors that promote regional commute patterns
- Accommodate Concept 3 premium transit services (light rail transit, bus rapid transit)
- Serve as a priority network for performance monitoring reporting initiatives
- Serve as the basis for selecting future locations for multimodal corridor studies



# Regional Thoroughfare Network



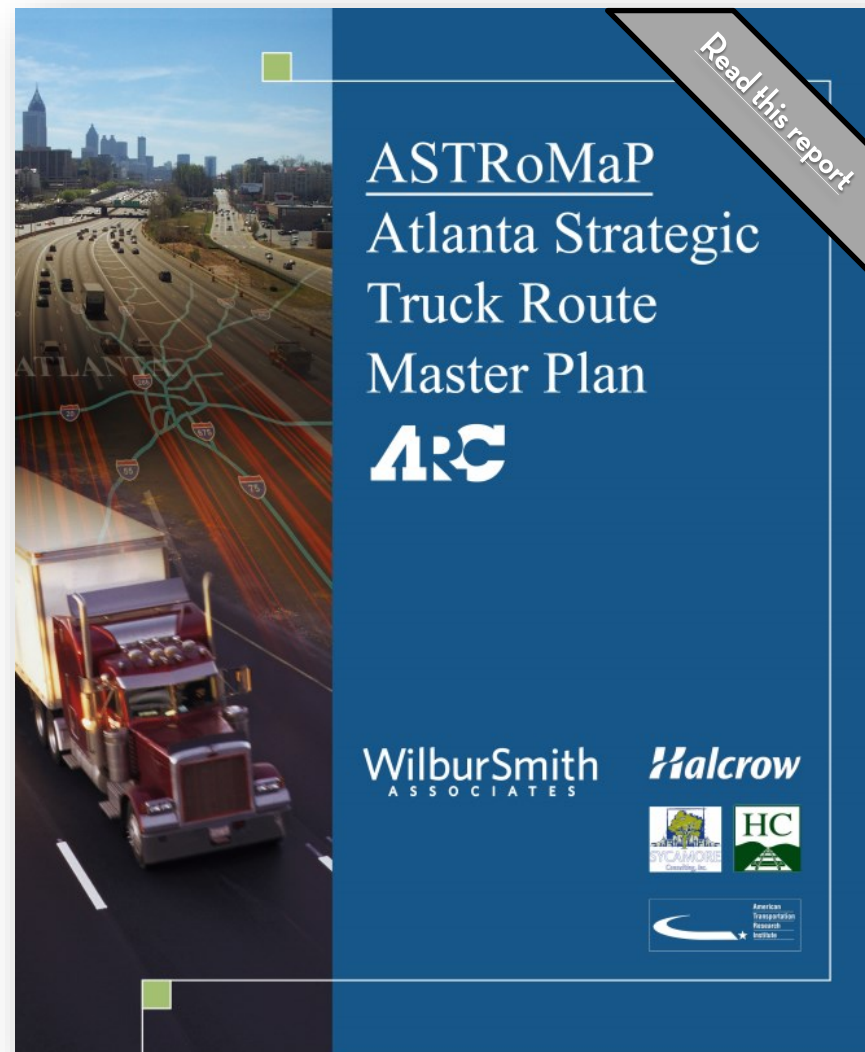


## Atlanta Strategic Truck Route Network (ASTRoMaP)

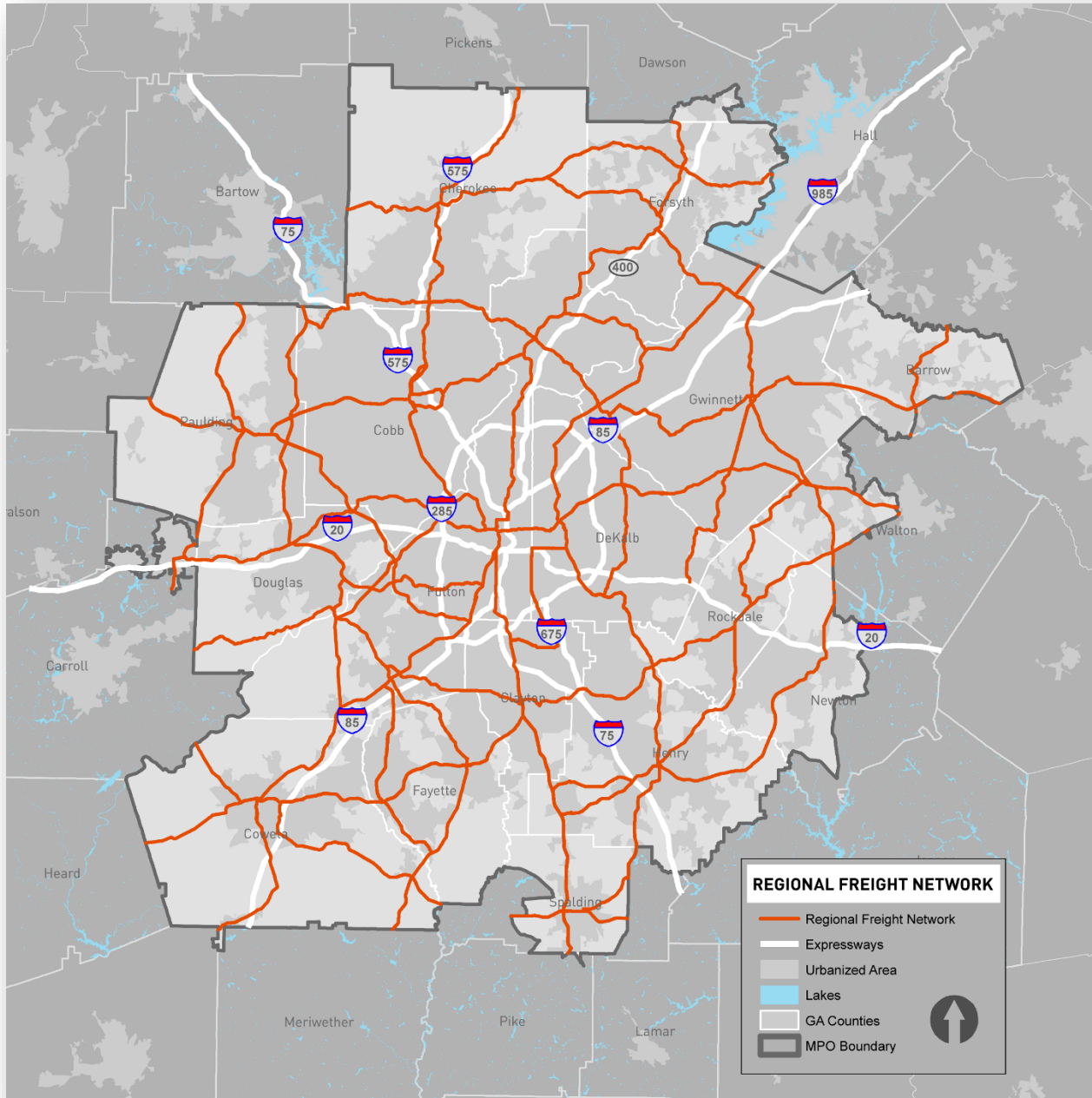
The 2008 *Atlanta Regional Freight Mobility Plan* noted that the Region has discontinuous routes serving freight truck traffic. Many truck routes are not logical in that they may stop at jurisdictional boundaries or conflict with restrictions placed in adjacent communities. It was recognized that additional study was needed to address issues pertaining to truck routing and operations. One of the additional follow-up activities included the development of a regional truck route network as well as associated policies and guidelines.

In response to the recommendation from the Freight Mobility Plan, ARC developed the *Atlanta Strategic Truck Route Master Plan* (ASTRoMaP). This project, in cooperation with state and local government bodies and agencies, produced a truck route system designed to provide regional access and which will also guide current and future decision making on regional transportation priorities.

Policies, guidelines and design strategies that impact freight planning were developed for this network, with specific emphasis placed on addressing at-grade rail crossings and intersection geometrics. This network also served as the foundation for an update to the *Atlanta Regional Freight Mobility Plan* which occurred concurrent with development of *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)*.



# Regional Freight Network

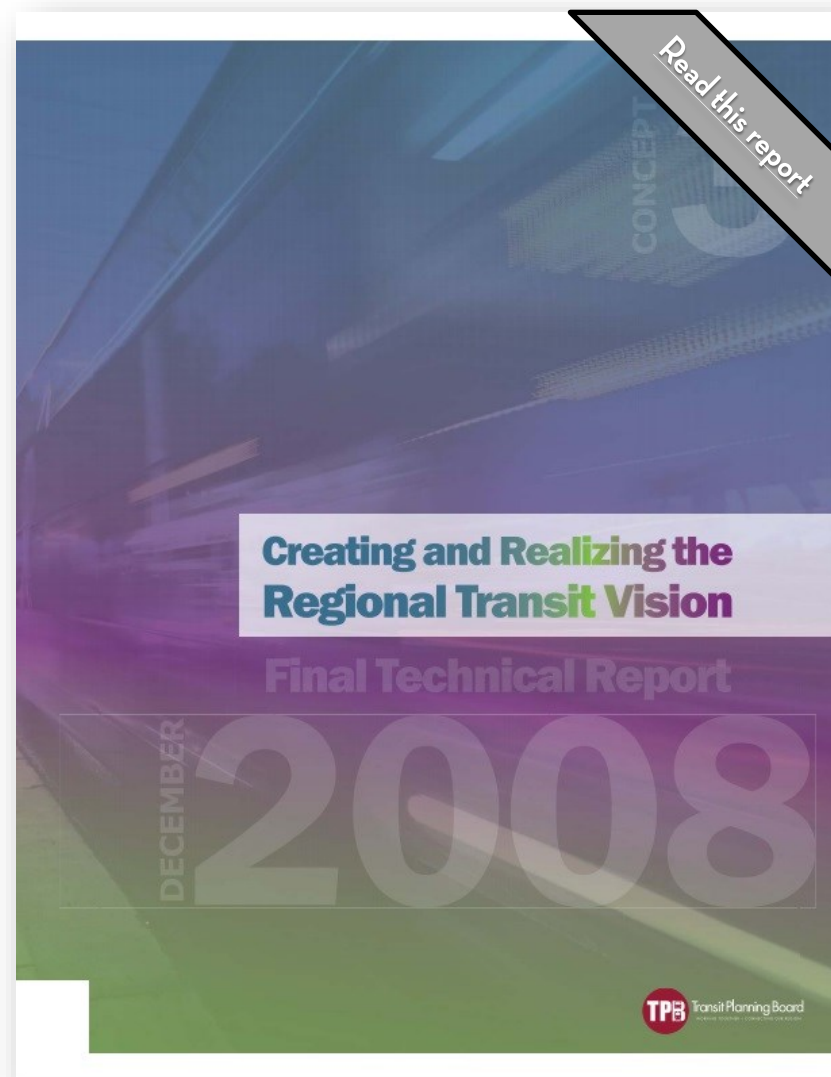


## Regional Transit Vision

A regional transit vision was first adopted in 2008 and became more commonly referred to as “Concept 3”, a reference to the approved transit expansion network being the third and final iteration presented for public review. It was developed through a collaborative, multi-year effort originally led by the Transit Planning Board, a predecessor to today’s Regional Transit Committee (RTC). The RTC initiated an update to Concept 3 that was adopted in November 2012.

While *The Atlanta Region’s Plan (Transportation)* was under development, there was a great deal of positive activity related to transit. Several transit corridors now have a locally preferred alternative identified, providing clarity on what type of transit service will be implemented in these areas. Clayton County has joined the MARTA system, and MARTA itself has become more financially stable. For the first time, the State of Georgia provided a significant amount of money, \$75 million, for transit capital projects. These projects were selected in 2016 through a competitive application process managed by the State Road and Tollway Authority. And the opportunity exists for new future transit funding at the local level enabled through state legislation which passed in 2015. Residents of the City of Atlanta led the way with a referendum approved in November 2016 to raise the sales tax dedicated to MARTA by an additional 0.5 cents

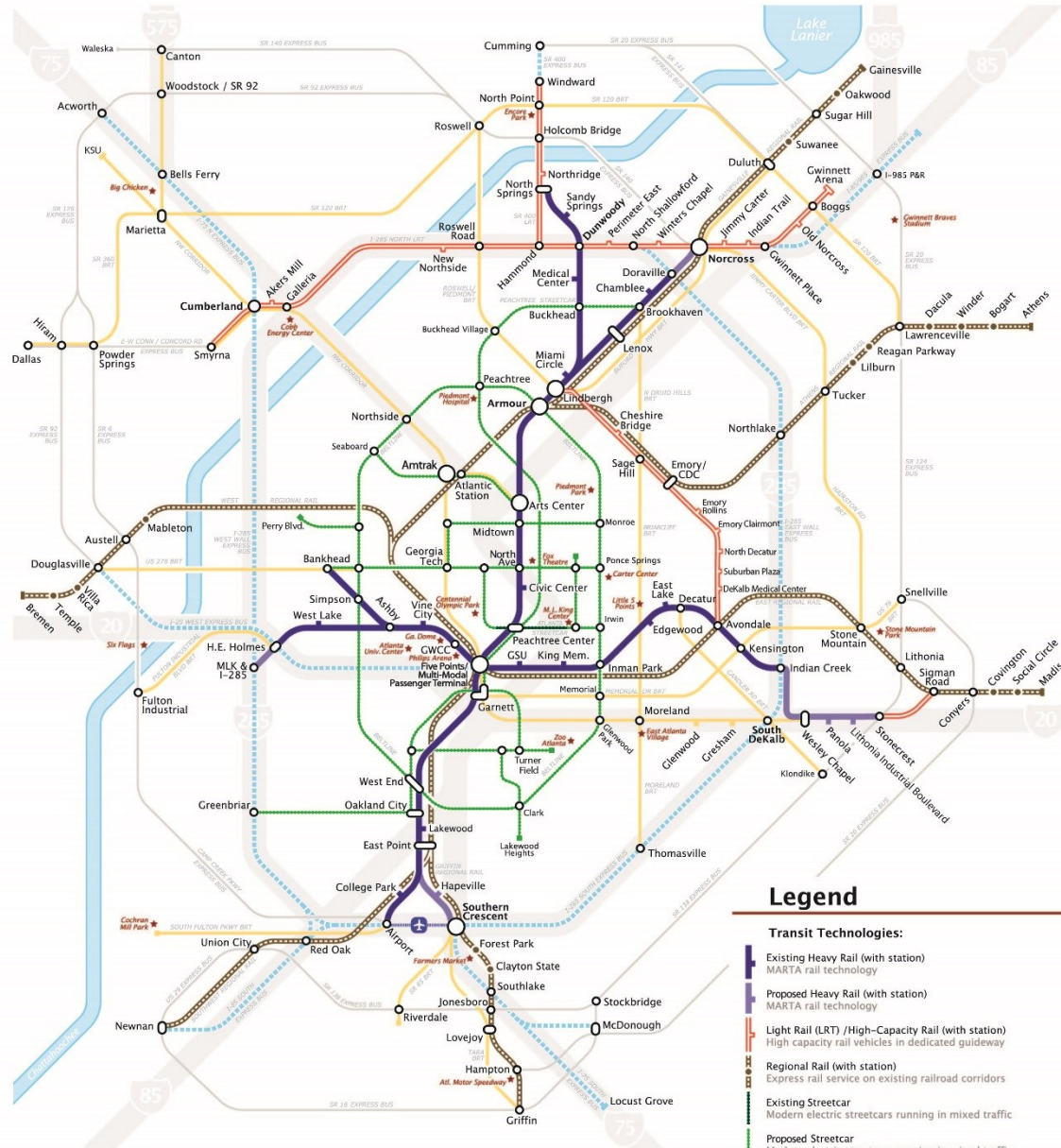
Each of these positive developments has individually been reflected in this plan’s recommendations where appropriate. Much work remains to be done, however, to bring the overall vision up to date to reflect this recent activity. The Future section of this plan identifies ARC’s intent to undertake a comprehensive overhaul of the regional transit vision in preparation for the next regional transportation plan development cycle.





# Concept 3

The Atlanta Region's Long-Range Transit Vision



## Legend

### Transit Technologies:

- Existing Heavy Rail (with station)  
MARTA rail technology
- Proposed Heavy Rail (with station)  
MARTA rail technology
- Light Rail (LRT) / High-Capacity Rail (with station)  
High capacity rail vehicles in dedicated guideway
- Regional Rail (with station)  
Express rail service on existing railroad corridors
- Existing Streetcar  
Modern electric streetcars running in mixed traffic
- Proposed Streetcar  
Modern electric streetcars running in mixed traffic
- Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)  
Enhanced bus service on major arterial roadways
- Expressway Bus  
Express buses running in managed lanes on highways
- Arterial Express Bus  
Cross-regional express bus service on major arterials
- Transfer Station



ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

<http://www.atlantaregional.com/transit>

Network depicted as modeled by the  
Atlanta Regional Commission, November 2012  
Map is not to scale



## Unified Growth Policy Map

The Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM) provides direction for future growth based on the Areas and Places within the Region. The UGPM represents local plans as well as *The Atlanta Region's Plan* policies and forecasts. Regional Areas directly influence the future forecasted growth of the Region by describing future land use patterns in each part of the Region. A large portion of the Region's development landscape is built out, but opportunities still remain for redevelopment and new investment.

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 *Development Guide* provides the following for each Area and Place identified on the UGPM:

- A detailed map showing the specific location in the Region
- A written description that includes a defining narrative and issue summary
- Guidelines for recommended building height and development density
- Pictures that characterize development patterns that are typical and desirable
- Implementation priorities that identify measures to achieve desired development patterns

The UGPM and Development Guide supported *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* recommendations through:

- **Evaluation of Potential Transportation Investments** – The specific policies and outcomes identified in the UGPM and Development Guide were applied in evaluating potential projects

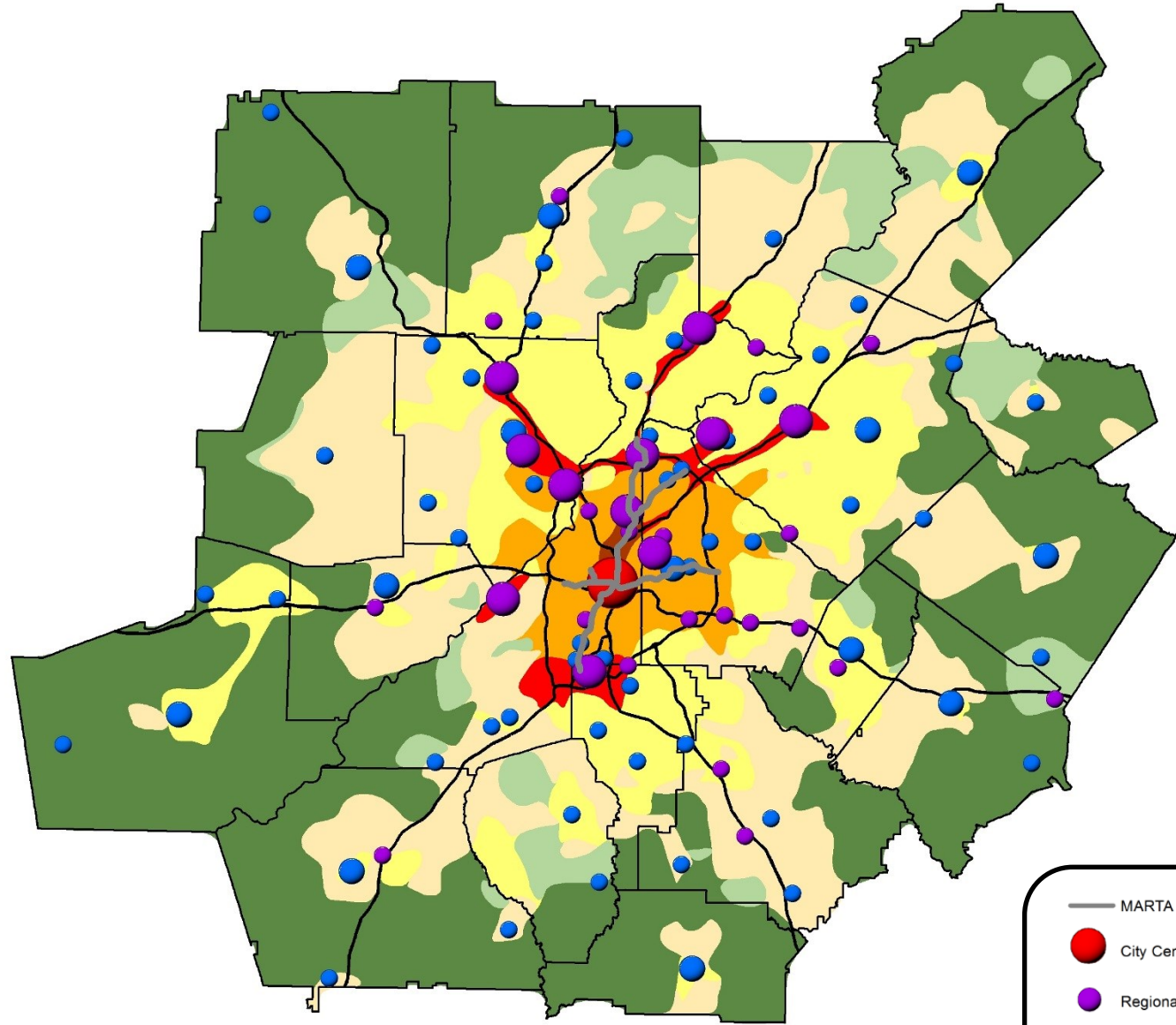
for inclusion in the RTP. For example, transportation investments that were inconsistent with regional growth objectives were not recommended for federal funding.

- **Identification of Transportation Programs** – Based on the vision articulated in the UGPM and Development Guide, existing transportation programs were extended and modified to support desired outcomes. This program helps support core regional vision objectives such as fostering growth in transit-supportive communities.
- **Determination of LCI Eligibility** - Only those districts or communities, or corridors that connect such areas, identified on the UGPM as a “place” are eligible for funding under the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI).

The UGPM provides a coherent vision for the future development of the Region. *The Atlanta Region's Plan (Transportation)* investments discussed in the Solutions section support this vision. The UGPM is the foundation of the Transportation Element in that it identifies desired future growth, including the nature and density of future communities, and assists in identifying existing and future transportation needs.

On the following pages are descriptions of the key Areas and Places identified and described in the UGPM and *Development Guide*.

### Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM)



**LEARN MORE**

— MARTA Rail	<b>Regional Areas</b>
● City Center	Developing Rural
● Regional Center	Developing Suburbs
● Town Center	Established Suburbs
● Emerging Centers	Maturing Neighborhoods
	Region Core
	Region Employment Corridors
	Rural Areas

## Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM) Areas and Places

### Region Core

The Region Core is the major economic, cultural and transportation hub of the Region. This area is the densest in terms of employment, residential, and cultural offerings throughout the Region, with the most developed transit service in the Region. The Region Core can handle the most intense development due to the amount of infrastructure already in place; however this infrastructure may need improvements and enhancements due to its age and our Region's changing lifestyle conditions. The lack of accessible public greenspace within the Region Core affects the area's aesthetics and overall quality of life for residents and workers. The Region Core is in competition with other central city areas in the southeast. The Region must work together to keep this area as competitive as possible in order to lure additional high paying jobs and residents. With a growing regional population and growing congestion, this center needs to maintain easy accessibility by expanding multi-modal transportation options and housing options.

### Regional Employment Corridors

Regional Employment Corridors represent the densest development outside of the Region Core. Regional Employment Corridors connect several Regional Centers with the Region Core via existing capacity transportation facilities. These areas contain a large share of the Region's jobs within a relatively small land area. These areas are also increasing in both housing and job density, and are experiencing increased redevelopment and new uses in traditionally employment-focused areas. There is a lack of accessible public greenspace within Regional Employment Corridors, which affects the overall aesthetics and quality of life for residents and workers.

### Maturing Neighborhoods

Maturing Neighborhoods are areas in the Region characterized by older neighborhoods that include both single- and multi-family development, as well as commercial and office uses at connected key locations. These areas represent the largest part of the Region that is facing infill and redevelopment pressures. In many cases, infrastructure is in place to handle additional growth, but in some areas, infrastructure is built out with limited capacity for expansion. This may constrain the amount of additional growth possible in certain areas. Many arterial streets in this area are congested due to their use as a regional routes for commuters. Limited premium transit service is available in these areas. The demand for infill development, redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing buildings in this area needs to be balanced with the preservation of existing single family neighborhoods, as well as the need for additional usable parks and greenspace close to residents, including amenities such as trails and sidewalks.



### Established Suburbs

Established Suburbs are areas in the Region where suburban development has occurred. These areas are characterized by single family subdivisions, commercial development, and office, industrial and multi-family development in limited locations. These areas represent the part of the Region that has recently reached “build out.” With few remaining large parcels for additional development, these are the areas in which the Region may see the least amount of land use change outside of retail and commercial areas. While there is still room for limited infill development, these areas will begin to focus more on redevelopment over the next 30 years. Preservation of existing single family neighborhoods is important, and wholesale change will most likely not occur in the single family subdivisions that make up a majority of these areas. However, infill and redevelopment will occur in areas of retail/commercial concentrations, especially commercial corridors.

### Developing Suburbs

Developing Suburbs are areas in the Region where suburban development has occurred, and the conventional development pattern is present but not set. These areas are characterized by residential development with pockets of commercial and industrial development. These areas represent the extent of the urban service area, and the Region’s first attempts at suburban smart growth can be found in these areas. There is a need in these areas for additional preservation of critical environmental locations and resources, as well as agricultural and forest uses. Limited existing infrastructure in these areas will constrain the amount of additional growth that is possible. Transportation improvements are needed within these developing suburbs, but care should be taken not to spur unwanted growth.

### Developing Rural Areas

Developing Rural Areas are areas in the Region where little to no development has taken place, but where there is development pressure. These areas are characterized by limited single family subdivisions, individual large single family lots, agricultural uses, protected lands, and forests. The Region should strive to protect these areas by limiting infrastructure investments to targeted areas and allowing no development or only low-intensity development. Limited existing infrastructure in these areas will constrain the amount of additional growth that is possible. Some transportation improvements may be needed in developing rural areas, but care should be taken not to spur unwanted growth.

### Rural Areas

Rural Areas are areas in the Region where little to no development has taken place or where there is little development pressure. These areas are characterized by sporadic, large single family lots, agricultural uses, protected lands, and forests. These areas outline more central developed and developing areas and represent the limits of the urban service area in Atlanta Region. There is a desire by many residents and elected officials in these areas to keep them rural in character. Increased development threatens existing rural economic uses, such as forestry, agriculture and tourism. To maintain economic viability without undesirable development, these areas may be appropriate as “sending” areas in potential Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs. The Region is striving to protect these areas by limiting infrastructure investments to targeted areas and allowing no development or only low intensity development. There will be a continued need to maintain existing transportation infrastructure, but care should be taken not to spur unwanted growth by inappropriate expansion of infrastructure capacity.

## Citizen Involvement

*The Atlanta Region's Plan* continues to build upon ARC's track record of outstanding public engagement, reflecting input and feedback gained from policy makers, regional leadership, stakeholders and the general public. ARC sought to ensure that *The Atlanta Region's Plan* reflects the full range of regional values and desires by involving a diverse spectrum of opinion and discussions in development of the plan.

The outreach efforts were guided by *The Atlanta Region's Plan Stakeholder Involvement Plan*, adopted in 2015. This document outlines a robust program of activities with local governments in the Atlanta Region as well as other stakeholders to ensure that broad input and support for plan goals, policies, transportation investments and programs are achieved. Outreach activities included in the *Stakeholder Involvement Plan* are based on the *Regional Community Engagement Plan* adopted in 2014, and are supplemented by the existing ARC committee and task force structure. The stakeholder and public outreach efforts meet the requirements of both the Georgia DCA and USDOT for developing and sharing regional plans.

*The Atlanta Region's Plan* participation process involved any person expressing interest in its activities and outcomes as well as targeted 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, provide background information on local issues and advise officials, were targeted within this audience.

- State and local private sector leadership and interested people within special interest groups that consistently engage in issues related to The Atlanta Region's Plan.
- Individuals or groups that participate in ARC activities based on short-term, issue-driven concerns.

Additionally, ARC considers needs of the transportation disadvantaged and environmental justice communities in every step of the regional planning process, forming a core consideration in policy and investment 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. To best address these concerns, an environmental justice program was an integrated facet of the plan development process, closely aligned with the technical analysis guided by the Environmental Target Area Index (ETA). This multi-faceted and sustained environmental justice program was supplemented with support of ARC's Poverty, Equity, Opportunity Subcommittee, which includes members from environmental justice communities.



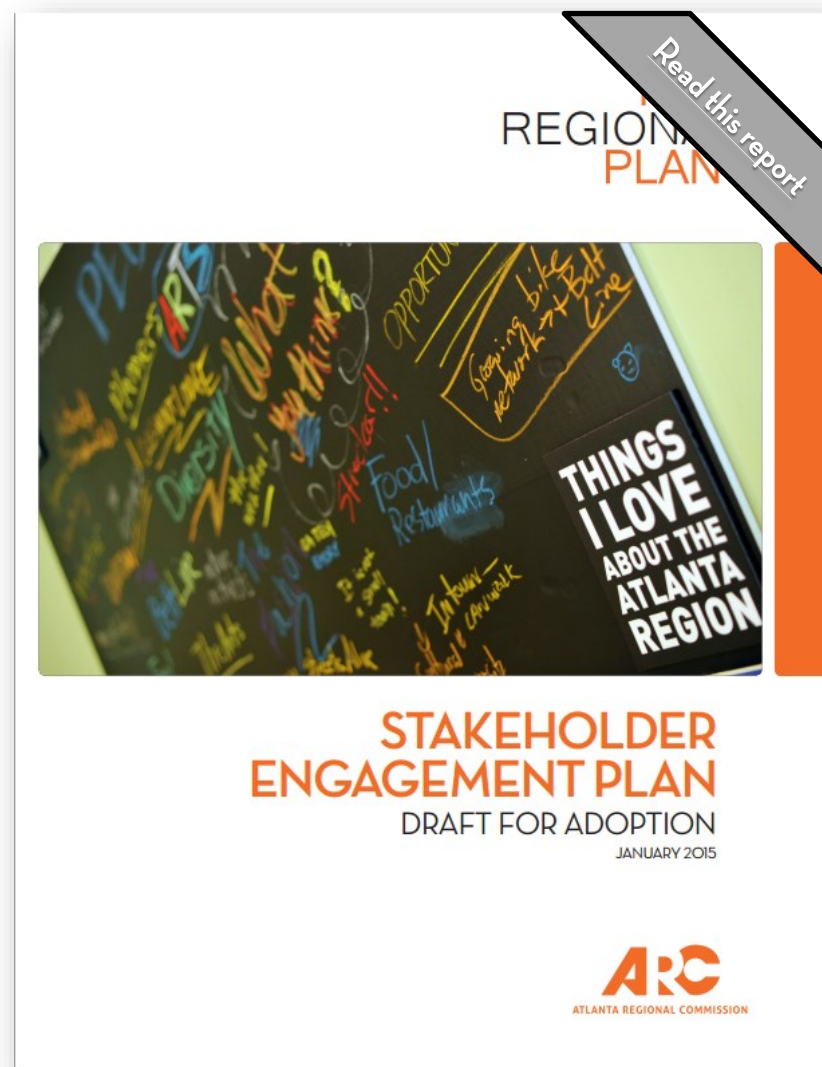
The robust engagement program used during the development of *The Atlanta Region's Plan* included a variety of techniques which sought to match various stakeholders with the best venue to seek, discuss and gather input. The range of techniques varied from the use of direct conversation to large group 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
- Demonstration projects
- On-line surveys
- Discussion forums/panels
- Stakeholder group discussions
- Telephone polls

Information on *The Atlanta Region's Plan* was distributed in many formats:

- *The Atlanta Region's Plan* website (primary vehicle for information distribution)
- Printed brochures and handouts
- *The Atlanta Region's Plan Policy Framework*
- Broadcast conversations
- Media outreach
- Presentations
- Face to face discussions with staff planners and citizens

*The Atlanta Region's Plan* participation process is described in detail along with its results in Appendix (K). More specific information on the outreach conducted for updating the RTP element is included, along with a report of comments received and responses provided during the official review period.



## Equitable Target Areas

Environmental Justice refers to the fair treatment of all people regardless of race or income. To better understand complexities in environmental justice communities and help the Region make wise decisions regarding transportation investments ARC uses the Equitable Target Areas (ETA) Index. The ETA Index is a tool developed using 2010 Census race data and 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year poverty data at the census tract level. This index is used to measure the impacts of investments and programs contained within *The Atlanta Region's Plan* on ETAs. It is also used as input for project prioritization and evaluation and monitoring resource allocation.

The map illustrates the ETAs in the Atlanta Region, which have varying levels of degrees determined by the concentrations of households in poverty and the percent of minorities in each census tract. The areas of greatest vulnerability are concentrated in the western and southern sections of the City of Atlanta, the area within I-285 south of I-20, along several highway corridors and in certain parts of historic county seats throughout the Region.

For disadvantaged populations, a diversity of transportation options are the key to gaining access to jobs, services, and other opportunities they need to improve their quality of life. As part of a national push to understand the current state of these Ladders of Opportunity and plan for bettering them, ARC analyzed the connectivity in our Region using several tools and methods. A sampling of this analysis is included in Appendix (J). Further discussion about ARC's future plans to continue to be a positive force in building Ladders of Opportunity can be found in the Future section of this document.



## LADDERS OF OPPORTUNITY

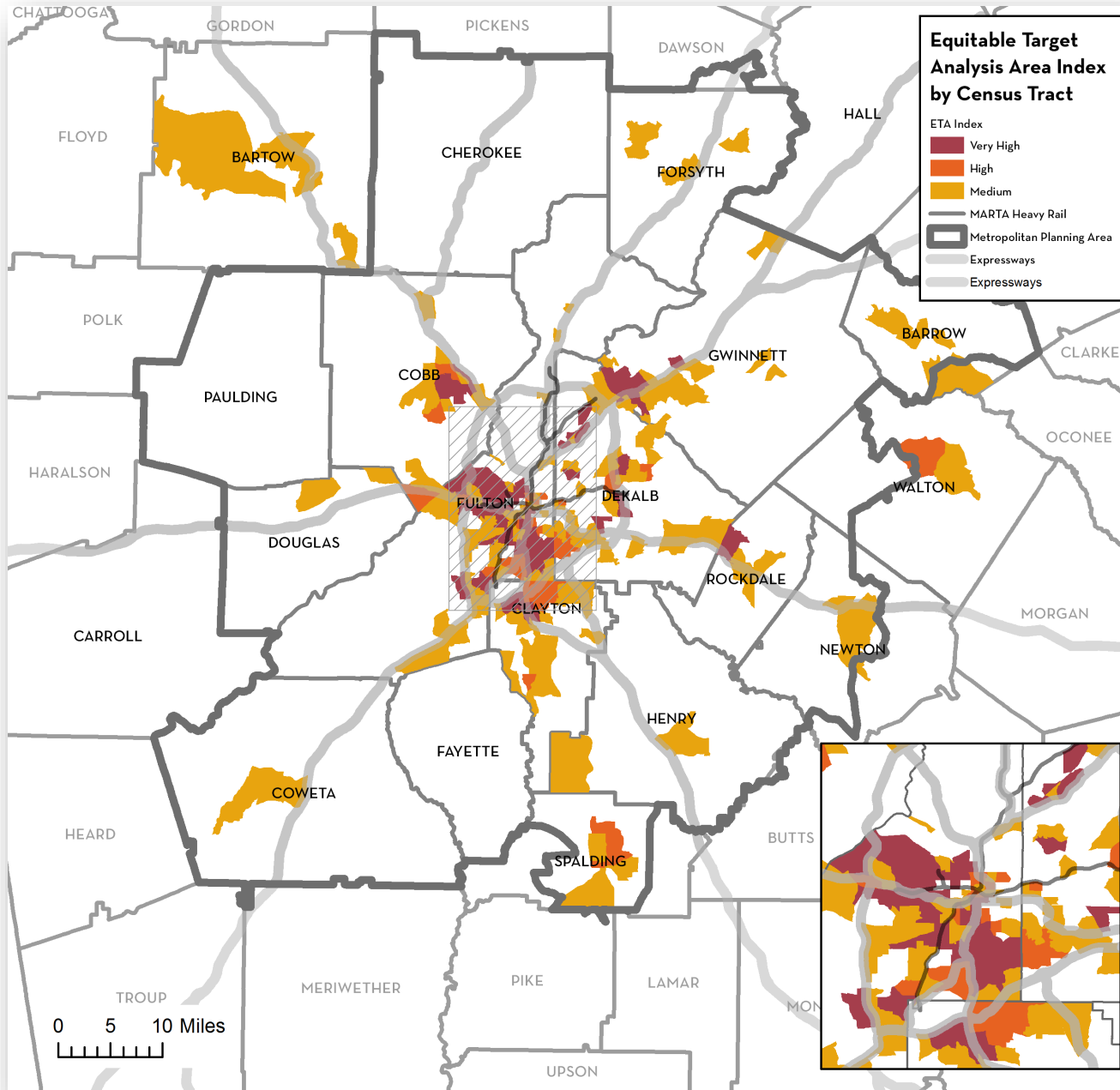
— Work — Connect — Revitalize —  
U.S. Department of Transportation

*“Through transportation, we can help ensure that the rungs on the ladder of opportunity aren’t so far apart - and that the American dream is still within reach for those who are willing to work for it.”*

*Anthony Foxx  
USDOT Secretary (2013-2017)*



### Equitable Target Areas



## Specialized Needs

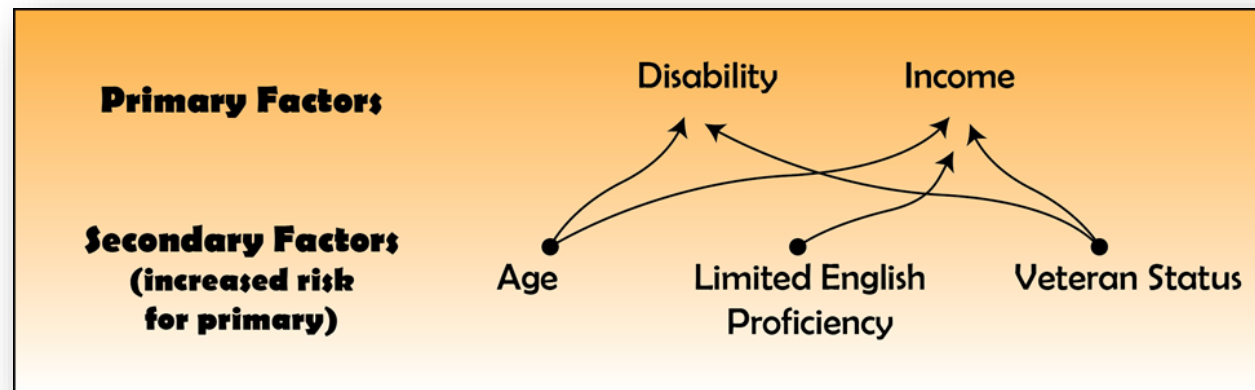
The previous section explored some of the challenges facing certain segments of the community as they try to access jobs and other key destinations that will enable them to improve their economic situation and overall quality of life. Within these groups, some have the additional difficulty of not being able to easily utilize traditional types of transportation facilities and services due to a physical or cognitive impediment, limited English proficiency or some other reason. To ensure these individuals live productive and full lives, barrier-free access to transportation is needed. This section explores the issue and describes how the needs of these groups have been considered in the plan development process.

### Diversity of Needs

Human Services Transportation (HST) entails understanding the transportation needs of target populations, specifically those affected by disability and lower income. Disability and lower income both limit access to some transportation options (such as personally owned and operated vehicles) while increasing the usage of other transportation

options such as public transit, carpool/vanpool, specialized curb-to-curb services, pedestrian trips, cycling, and taxis/transportation network companies. Additional factors such as age, English language proficiency, and military service result in higher risk of disability and/or lower income. Therefore, HST focuses on the intersecting needs of five population groups:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with lower income
- Individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Older adults
- Veterans



### How People with Specialized Needs Make Decisions.

Transportation options are limited for HST populations, and each person makes a decision based on what is personally accessible. At each step of the decision making process, some options are eliminated and others become more prominent. As they consider options such as public transit, carpool/vanpool, specialized curb-to-curb services, pedestrian trips, cycling, and taxis/transportation network companies, they ask themselves the following questions to make individual decisions:

- Is the option available when I leave my home?
- Is the option available to get me to my destination (for purposes such as work, school, errands, medical/health, social, worship, etc.)?
- Does the option accommodate my disability (if applicable)?
- Can I afford the option (does it place an undue burden on my budget)?
- Of the available options, what barriers exist (such as schedule, frequency, safety, etc.)?
- What will happen if none of the options meet my need or if they all present barriers that are too great?

The final question at the end of their decision-making process is key, as data collected through HST Public Outreach sessions conducted during August and September 2015 indicate two actions are possible. First, they may decide to purchase a vehicle. For an individual with a disability, this can be extremely cost prohibitive considering the adaptive equipment required for many (electronic lift, custom features, etc.). For an individual with lower income, they will purchase what they can afford. The vehicle would likely be an older model that is less reliable (more likely to break down) and/or has older technology (emits more emissions). Second, they may decide to stay at home and forgo trips due to the barriers encountered. Depending on an individual's situation, a lack of viable transportation options has the potential to create a large barrier in finding work and remaining gainfully employed, obtaining access to critical medical/health facilities, and/or accessing affordable food, to list only a few.



### These Issues Impact Everybody

When HST is successful, people are able to leverage many modes in the transportation system such as public transit, carpool/vanpool, specialized curb-to-curb services, pedestrian trips, cycling, and taxis/transportation network companies. This extends to those who choose these options (often called “choice riders”) and have no factors such as disability and/or low income influencing their decision. Greater usage of these options and reduction of trips by personally owned and operated vehicles has the potential to reap broad benefits across all populations, non-HST and HST alike. Issues such as poor air quality and climate change result from more reliance on less-environmentally sustainable options. In turn, this impacts public health and the environment overall. More people driving older, less reliable cars could contribute to car break-downs in traffic, resulting in additional traffic congestion. Traffic congestion, in turn, generates more stress and potentially more negative public health impacts.

When HST is successful, people are able to live independently by getting from their homes to the destinations of relevance to them. They are able to get there affordably. More members of society are able to work and contribute to the larger economy. More people are able to spend and become patrons of businesses. This benefits the economy as a whole.

Transportation options and connectivity has the potential to alleviate some effects of poverty or a lack of equity in a metro area. The reasons for having lower income are myriad and connect with reasons including, but not limited to, public school quality, adequate/affordable food access, affordable housing/connection of housing with community resources, etc. Factors such as disability, military service, age, and LEP have the potential to further exacerbate a tenuous situation where poverty or lack of equity is involved. Taking HST into account is a step towards improving equitable transportation.





## Planning Strategically and Taking Action

The challenge of HST is to understand diversity while integrating strategically with the transportation system to address a wide range of needs across a variety of transportation options. Regional HST goes a step further by connecting HST activities (projects, programs, policies, funding, etc.) on various governmental levels (municipal, county, and region). Naturally, municipalities, counties, and regions will set different HST targets based on local context, what has been accomplished in the past, and what is understood as the highest impact. For HST, as with any planning process, it is critical to integrate diverse partners who have a stake in outcomes and/or have a hand in implementing solutions (infrastructure, services, policy, etc.).

The HST process involves first inventorying HST “assets” of various types. This is coupled with public outreach and data analysis to understand the current situation. Stakeholders agree upon what the “ideal” situation would be in the future. The gap between the ideal and current reveals what is missing in general, and a draft list of the

appropriate tactics (mix of infrastructure, services, policy, etc. as solutions) can be created. The tactics can then be grouped as possible alternatives/scenarios to objectively evaluate potential results. This objective evaluation involves comparing various selection criteria that take into account economic, environmental, and equity issues. Action plans are developed, shared with regional partners, and operationalized on various levels with diverse partners.

## Being Results-Oriented

The selection criteria that support the objective evaluation process indicate what results are anticipated based on all available information. As tactics are implemented and put into operation, some will meet the anticipated results while others will not. The success of tactics generally cannot be anticipated with 100% accuracy due to the nature of cities (places with a mix of personal behaviors, continually changing dynamics, etc.). Therefore, measurement and verification of results is key to fostering effective, results-oriented HST.



*Photo credit: Karman Healthcare*