



THE ATLANTA  
REGION'S  
**PLAN**

REGIONAL **TRANSPORTATION** PLAN

**FEBRUARY 2020**



Atlanta Regional Commission



# FOREWORD

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Transportation has long been the engine driving metro Atlanta's economy. We were founded as a railroad hub. And our extensive highway network, efficient heavy rail system, and world-class airport transformed metro Atlanta into one of the nation's largest, most dynamic places.

This Regional Transportation Plan demonstrates that we are committed to improving our transportation network to keep our region moving forward. Our economic competitiveness and quality of life depend on making the right investments over the next 30 years. It's imperative, if we are to keep pace with a population that's forecast to grow by 2.9 million by 2050. That's the equivalent of all of today's metro Denver moving to the Atlanta region.

In the pages that follow, you can learn about the Regional Transportation Plan and the projects that are planned in your community and along your commute – \$172.6 billion in all through 2050. This reflects the addition of significant new funding streams at the state and local levels in recent years, underscoring our dedication to improving our region's infrastructure.

It's critically important to note that metro Atlanta can't build its way out of congestion. Every thriving metro area wrestles with traffic. But that doesn't mean things can't improve. A balanced approach – better roads and highways, expanded transit, safer places to walk and bike – can make a real difference. This philosophy is at the heart of our Regional Transportation Plan.



The Atlanta region is a special place, where big-city sophistication blends effortlessly with small-town charm, where businesses soar and a vibrant creative community inspires us all. And by strategically investing in our transportation network, metro Atlanta will become an even better place to live, work, and play.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas R. Hooker".

**Doug Hooker**  
*ARC Executive Director*

# UPDATE / AMENDMENT / ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATION HISTORY

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The Regional Transportation Plan predates February 2020, however, this list reflects only those changes made since the federally required quadrennial update.

## ACTION

## ARC APPROVAL DATE

Federally Required Quadrennial Update

**Pending** - February 2020

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

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AAA	Area Agency on Aging
ABM	Activity Based Model
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ARTP	The Atlanta Regional Transit Plan
ARWDB	Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board
ASTRoMaP	Atlanta Strategic Truck Route Network
ATL	The Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CAA	Clean Air Act
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CDAP	Community Development Assistance Program
CDR	Conformity Determination Report
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CID	Community Improvement District
CIG	Capital Investment Grant
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
CMP	Congestion Management Process
CTP	Comprehensive Transportation Plan
CV/AV	Connected Vehicle/Autonomous Vehicle
DSRC	Dedicated Short Range Communications
EJ	Environmental Justice
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESO	Employer Service Organizations
ETA	Equitable Target Area
ETL	Express Toll Lanes
ETOD	Equitable Transit Oriented Development
FAST Act	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GCO	Georgia Commute Options
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation
GNAHRGIS	Georgia Natural, Archaeological, and Historic Resources Geographic Information System
GRTA	Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
HOT	High Occupancy Toll
HOV	High Occupancy Vehicle
HST	Human Services Transportation
HTF	Highway Trust Fund
INVEST	Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LCI	Livable Centers Initiative



MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
MLIP	Managed Lanes Implementation Plan
MLSP	Managed Lanes System Plan
MMIP	Major Mobility Improvement Program
MNGWPD	Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
P3	Public Private Partnership
RC	Regional Commission
RDP	Regional Development Plan
REF	Regional Ecological Framework
ROW	Right of Way
RSTF	Regional Safety Task Force
RSTS	Regional Strategic Transportation System
RTN	Regional Thoroughfare Network
RTOP	Regional Traffic Operations Program
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SHRP2	Second Strategic Highway Research Program
SOV	Single Occupancy Vehicle
SPLOST	Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax
SRTA	State Road and Tollway Authority
SSTP	Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan
STP	Surface Transportation Program
SWTP	Statewide Transportation Plan
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program
TAQC	Transportation & Air Quality Committee
TARP	The Atlanta Region's Plan
TCC	Transportation Coordinating Committee
TDM	Transportation Demand Management
TEAG	Transportation Equity Advisory Group
TFA	Transportation Funding Act of 2015
TMA	Transportation Management Association
TNC	Transportation Network Company
TOD	Transit Oriented Development
TSMO	Transportation Systems Management and Operations
UASI	Urban Area Security Initiative
UGPM	Unified Growth Policy Map
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled

# GOVERNING LAWS & LEGAL DEFINITIONS

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**THE FAST ACT:** In 2015, President Obama signed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act into law. The FAST Act continues the fundamental requirements for a metropolitan long-range regional transportation plan (RTP) to be updated every four years and a short-range component that reflects investment priorities for at least the next four years called the transportation improvement program (TIP).

This federal law continues the performance management approach and performance-based planning and programming requirements of the previous law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act, which mandated MPOs incorporate performance measures; set targets; and monitor progress related to national performance goal areas. This Act continues to uphold public involvement as the hallmark of the planning process.

The law also requires the planning process to address ten planning factors, including two new planning factors presented in italics below:

- Support economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, people, and freight
- Promote efficient system management and operation
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system
- *Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation*
- *Enhance travel and tourism*

## TITLE 23. CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

**(CFR) § 450.306 AND § 450.322:** In addition to the ten FAST Act planning factors, there are seven more specific requirements of an RTP defined in two sections of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). These sections state that a RTP must meet the following basic requirements. To understand how ARC's RTP meets and exceeds all of these requirements, see the RTP chapter title included in the bracket following the requirement.

- Assess the needs of all system users, including people driving, taking transit, walking, and bicycling [ASSESSMENT + PROCESS]
- Be developed through a robust engagement process involving citizens, elected officials, public agencies, and other key stakeholders [ASSESSMENT + PROCESS]
- Include a variety of strategies, programs, and projects to best address the identified needs [RECOMMENDATIONS]
- Include both a short-term element (minimum of four years) and a long-term element (minimum of 20 years) [RECOMMENDATIONS]
- Be fiscally constrained, meaning that projected revenues from reasonably available sources will be sufficient to cover the costs of the plan. A financially unconstrained, aspirational vision may also be developed at the MPO's discretion [FINANCES]
- Address all federally required performance measuring and monitoring requirements [PERFORMANCE]
- In regions which do not meet or are in maintenance for federal air quality standards, the plan must result in a transportation system which does not produce emission levels above specified amounts [PERFORMANCE]



# GOVERNING LAWS & LEGAL DEFINITIONS (CONTINUED)

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**CLEAN AIR ACT (CAA):** Federal law passed in 1970 that prescribes the national air pollution control program. The 1990 Clean Air Act amendments are the most far-reaching revisions of the original law. The Clean Air Act is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The State of Georgia takes the lead in carrying out the Act.

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ):** The equitable distribution of costs and benefits associated with any Federal investment on all members of the community. An environmental justice policy and analysis seeks to ensure that low-income persons and people of color, in particular, benefit from Federal investments and do not experience disproportionate adverse environmental and health impacts (Executive Order [E.O.] 12898).

## **METROPOLITAN PLANNING**

**ORGANIZATIONS (MPO):** A group of local officials with the Federal mandate to develop transportation plans and programs for Urbanized Areas with a population of more than 50,000. MPOs are formed by agreement between local elected officials representing at least 75 percent of the population located within that area and then approved by the Governor (23 U.S. Code §134–135).

**MOVING AHEAD FOR PROGRESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY:** Legislative initiative by the United States Congress reauthorizing and restructuring funding and planning for highway and transit programs. MAP-21 authorizes increased levels of highway and transportation funding. It was signed into law by President Obama on July 6, 2012. The FAST Act superseded MAP-21 in 2015.

**REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PROJECT:** A project which serves regional transportation needs (such as access to and from the area outside of the region or major activity centers in the region) including, at a minimum, all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer a significant alternative to regional highway travel (23 CFR. §450.204). These types of projects also include any project which requires the acquisition of right-of-way (ROW).

**TITLE VI:** The section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in programs that receive federal financial assistance, including transportation projects (42 U.S. Code §2000d).

# KEY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DOCUMENTS

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**THE POLICY FRAMEWORK** articulates a common vision for the future across all documents related to The Atlanta Region's Plan. The framework 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.

**THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN** seeks to ensure that The Atlanta Region's Plan reflects the full range of regional values and desires by involving a diverse spectrum of stakeholders in the development of its contents. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan strives for inclusive, creative, meaningful, and relevant community engagement.

**THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RDP)** provides a starting point for regional dialogue on current issues, opportunities, and trends around the region. It dictates the programs and projects that implement the Policy Framework. The Regional Findings are a required component, and constitute the list of issues and opportunities to be addressed in the plan. The RDP previously existed as two distinct documents - The Regional Agenda and The Introduction to the Atlanta Region's Plan.

**THE REGIONAL RESOURCE PLAN** enhances the visibility and management of historic, cultural, and natural resources while planning for their place as a part of our future.

**THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP)** examines the 20-county metropolitan planning area's transportation needs through 2050. The RTP addresses anticipated growth through transportation strategies and investments that seek to improve mobility, connectivity, accessibility, safety, reliability, congestion, and transportation equity. At its core, the RTP is a statement of future transportation needs as identified by public stakeholders, local jurisdictions, ARC's planning partners, and the State. The TIP is derived from and consistent with the RTP. It reflects the investment priorities established in the RTP.

**THE ATLANTA REGION'S PLAN (TARP)** is a long-range blueprint that details investments that will be made through 2050 to ensure metro Atlanta's future success and improve the region's quality of life.

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Unless otherwise noted, all map data comes from ARC.

# TITLE VI

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The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), as a federal grant recipient, complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Presidential Executive Order 12898 addresses environmental justice in minority and low-income populations. Presidential Executive Order 13166 addresses services to those individuals with limited English proficiency.

ARC is committed to enforcing the provisions of Title VI and to taking positive and realistic affirmative steps to ensure the protection of rights and opportunities for all persons affected by its programs.

If any person believes they have been discriminated against regarding the receipt of benefits or services because of race, color, or national origin, they have the right to file a complaint with ARC. For information on ARC's Title VI program, or to obtain a complaint form, see the link below.

## LEARN MORE:

- [ARC's Title VI Plan and Program](#)





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# OUR VISION

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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.

- Atlanta Region's Plan Policy Framework









# ROLE OF ARC

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## ARC LEGAL DESIGNATIONS

ARC coordinates regional planning efforts in areas such as aging, community services, environmental planning, governmental services, job training, land use and public facilities, as well as transportation planning. The primary roles of ARC are:

- **The federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 20-county Greater Atlanta region. As such, ARC is required to develop the long-range transportation plan that covers a minimum 20-year planning horizon.**
- A designated Metropolitan Area Planning and Development Commission as well as a Regional Commission (RC) under the laws of the state of Georgia. As such, ARC operates under rules promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- To provide planning staff to the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (MNGWPD), whose mission is to develop comprehensive regional and watershed-specific water resources plans for implementation by local governments.
- The administrative agency for the Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board (ARWDB).
- The Area Agency on Aging (AAA), providing services and policy guidance to address aging issues.
- The local administrative agency for the Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), responsible for preparing and coordinating the region's response and recovery to homeland security issues.

## ARC STRUCTURE & MEMBERSHIP

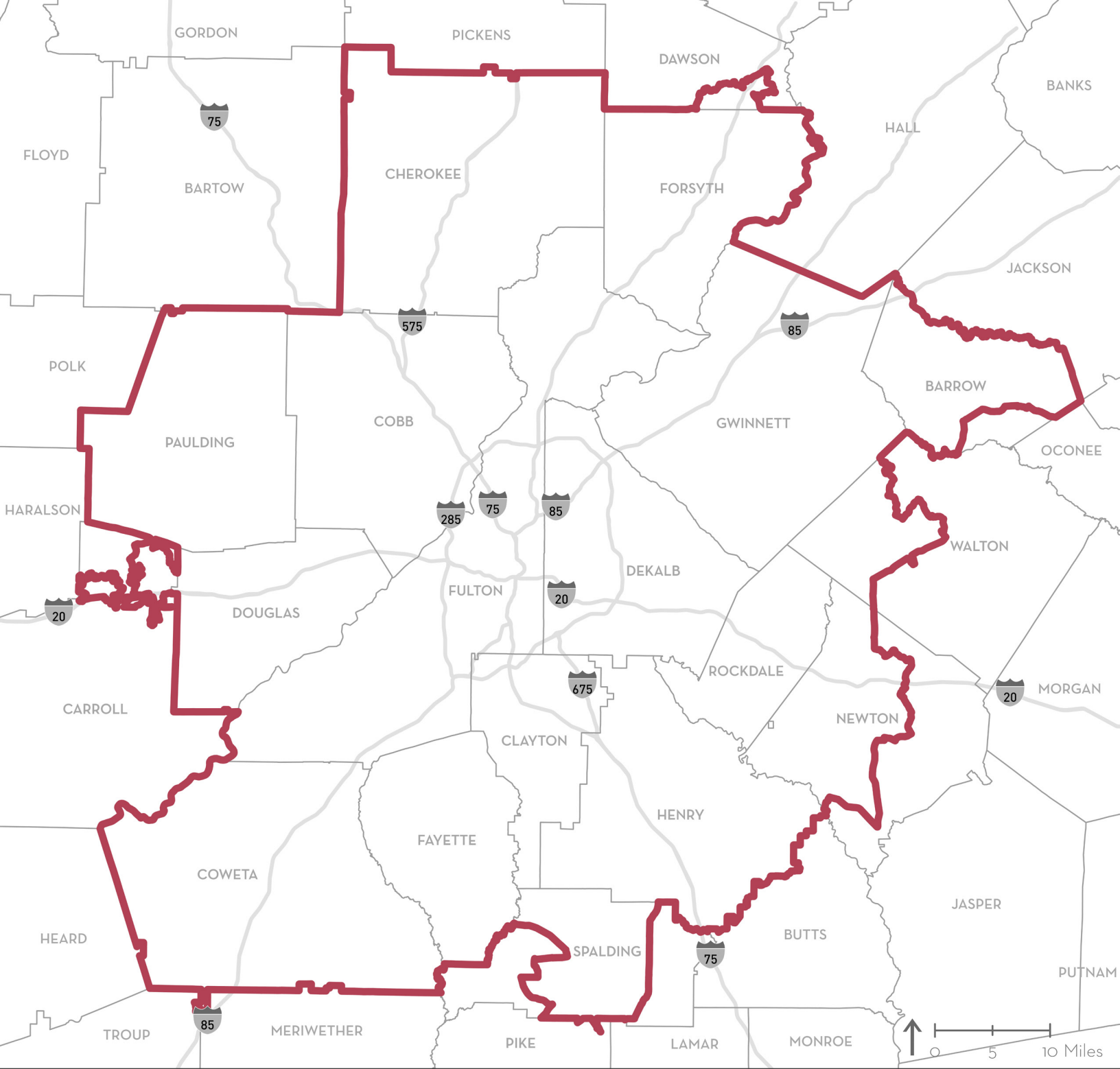
ARC is governed by a 39-member board composed of ten county commission chairs, 11 mayors, 15 citizen members, the Mayor of Atlanta, an Atlanta City Council representative, and a Department of Community Affairs representative. The actions taken by ARC's board and board committees are based on and supported by recommendations of a staff of approximately 200 professionals representing a broad range of skills and specialties.

ARC's membership includes local governments throughout the region. Some counties are considered within all elements of ARC's work, while others are only involved in one aspect. As noted in the ARC's Legal Designations section, each jurisdiction's relationship to ARC is determined by planning boundaries established through various federal and state regulations. The table on the opposite page illustrates the various boundaries for which ARC has some official level of planning and service delivery responsibilities. The map on Page xx shows the MPO boundary, the relevant boundary for the Regional Transportation Plan.

**Table i: ARC's Planning and Service Delivery Areas**




	Metropolitan Area Planning and Development Commission / Regional Commission	Metropolitan Planning Organization	Area Agency on Aging	Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board	Urban Area Security Initiative	Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District
Atlanta						
Cherokee						
Clayton						
Cobb						
Dekalb						
Douglas						
Fayette						
Fulton						
Gwinnett						
Henry						
Rockdale						
Barrow						
Bartow						
Carroll						
Coweta						
Dawson						
Forsyth						
Hall						
Jackson						
Newton						
Paulding						
Pike						
Spalding						
Walton						





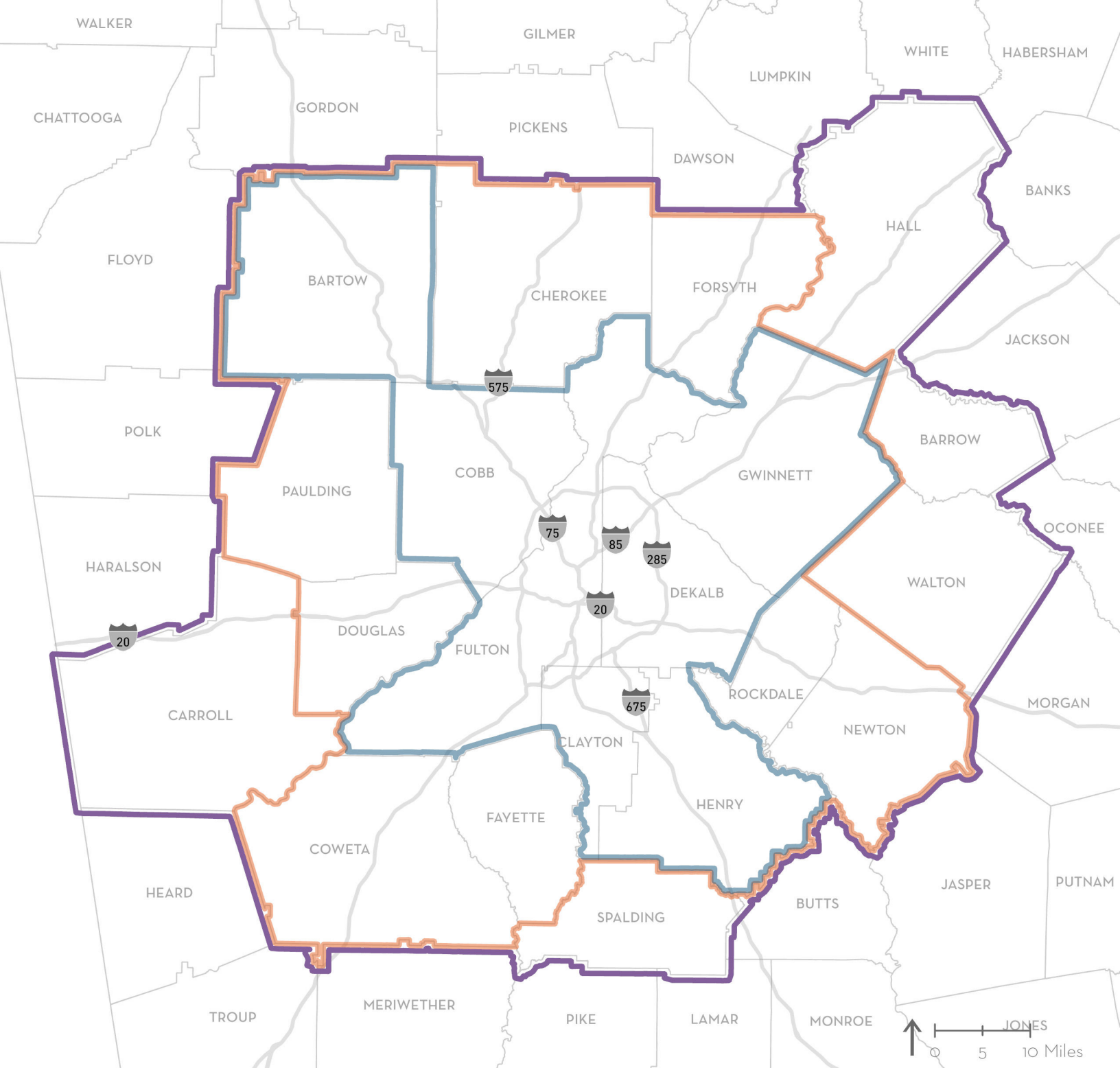
MAP i: ARC MPO Boundary

Legend

-  Expressways
-  Counties
-  MPO Boundary

ARC MPO within Georgia





## MAP ii: AIR QUALITY BOUNDARIES

### Legend

- 2015 Nonattainment Boundary
- 2008 Nonattainment Boundary
- 1997 Nonattainment Boundary
- Expressways
- Counties

It's a fragile ecosystem we have here. There are so many components that bring people together here in Atlanta. How do you fix it all?

- JOSHUA E.



The last thing I want to do at the end of a work day is to get in the car and drive an hour back when I could potentially even leave a little bit earlier, get on a train and continue to work. That could be my work time. I can't do that when I'm driving myself in a car.

- EMILY L.



I love coming to downtown. It can be stressful, but if I had a live, work, entertainment community, that would be ideal for me. It would be nice to have hubs like that. I see that we're headed more that way.

- BARRON M.





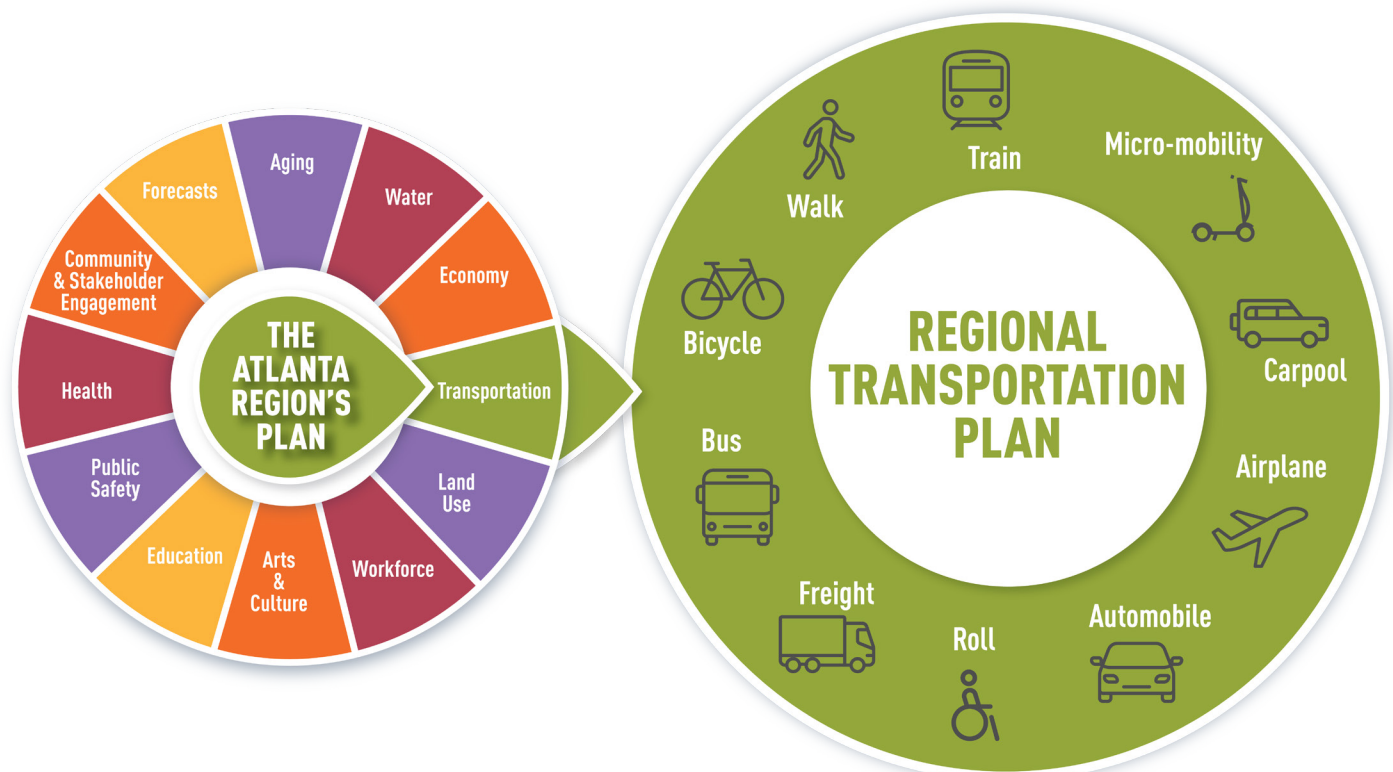
# INTRODUCTION

The Atlanta region's economy and overall quality of life relies on the ability to travel to, from, and around our communities safely and efficiently. This capability is essential if we hope to *Win the Future*.

## HOW THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN FITS IN TO THE ATLANTA REGION'S PLAN

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is one piece of The Atlanta Region's Plan (TARP). Both plans establish long-term visions and detail the policies and programs that will bring those visions to fruition. As its title may suggest, the RTP focuses on current transportation conditions, expected trends that will impact the transportation network, and documents the strategies and investments necessary to meet the multi-modal transportation needs of all residents and visitors of the Atlanta region through 2050.

To learn how TARP and the RTP are implemented, see the Process Chapter.



## WINNING THE FUTURE

First adopted in August 2015 and reconfirmed in 2019, the Policy Framework articulates a common vision for the future across all documents related to The Atlanta Region’s Plan. The framework 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. While transportation clearly underpins the world-class infrastructure element, it also plays a critical role across the other elements of the vision and their respective goals. The figure below illustrates the six goals outlined in the Policy Framework.

These six goals are inextricably linked, contingent on the success of the others. This Plan incorporates those linkages and explores the goals of a comprehensive transportation network and walkable, vibrant centers in detail.

ARC alone cannot achieve this vision of *Winning the Future*. Success will require coordinated efforts of our government partners at all levels, private and nonprofit organizations, and community support to make this vision a reality.

### GOALS

Building the region as a globally recognized hub of innovation and prosperity

Developing a highly educated workforce, able to meet the needs of 21st Century employers



### 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

## A LIVING DOCUMENT

Federal law requires an update to regional transportation plans every four years. The last quadrennial update to ARC's RTP happened in 2016.

Between 2016 and 2019, the RTP went through a series of amendments and modifications in order to reflect new and evolving transportation efforts ARC pursued, keeping it fresh and relevant.

In that way, the RTP is not a fly in amber after adoption, but rather a living document that is gradually adjusted and augmented between quadrennial updates.

## WHAT'S NEW IN THIS UPDATE OF THE RTP?

There are several spheres of transportation planning that ARC has continued to strengthen and emphasize since the 2016 update, including:

- Equity and equitable outcomes
- Transportation infrastructure resilience
- Livable center and transit-oriented investments
- Safety and working towards zero deaths
- Planning for limited federal funding
- Multimodal freight planning
- Performance-based planning and target setting

There are also emerging practices and concepts ARC has worked to understand and harness, including:

- Rapid technological advancements in automated, connected, and electric vehicles
- The proliferation of new mobility services like bike share, scooters, ride-hailing services
- The data management strategies behind them all.



## DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The Regional Transportation Plan is divided into the following seven chapters, plus an executive summary and technical appendices:

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Summary highlights the most significant and relevant information to create a brief synopsis of the entire Regional Transportation Plan.

### INTRODUCTION

This Chapter creates the link between the RTP and TARP. It recalls the vision and goals outlined in the Policy Framework and touches on significant changes in the transportation industry since the last major update in 2016.

### ASSESSMENT

The Assessment Chapter sets the stage for readers to understand our changing population, employment, and demographic landscape and the transportation implications. It also details the challenges the Atlanta region is likely to face in the future, as well as the assets we have available to overcome those challenges and even improve as a region.

### PROCESS

This Chapter describes how ARC collaborates with partners and stakeholders to create a plan that is reflective of the Policy Framework, as well the practice used to identify projects that are the best use of available funds.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recommendations Chapter highlights the myriad programs, policies, plans, and funding efforts ARC champions in order to improve the lives of Atlanta region residents and visitors, no matter what mode by which they travel.

### FINANCES

This Chapter explores the state of funding at the federal, regional, and local scale. It also describes regional expenditures and revenues, meeting the fiscally constrained requirement.

### PERFORMANCE

The Performance Chapter communicates what impacts that everyday resident and visitor will feel as a result of investing in the RTP project list or foregoing building the RTP project list.

### FUTURE

This Chapter lays out the ongoing transportation planning efforts at ARC. It also discusses advancements and disruptors likely to impact transportation, and how those might play out through scenario planning.

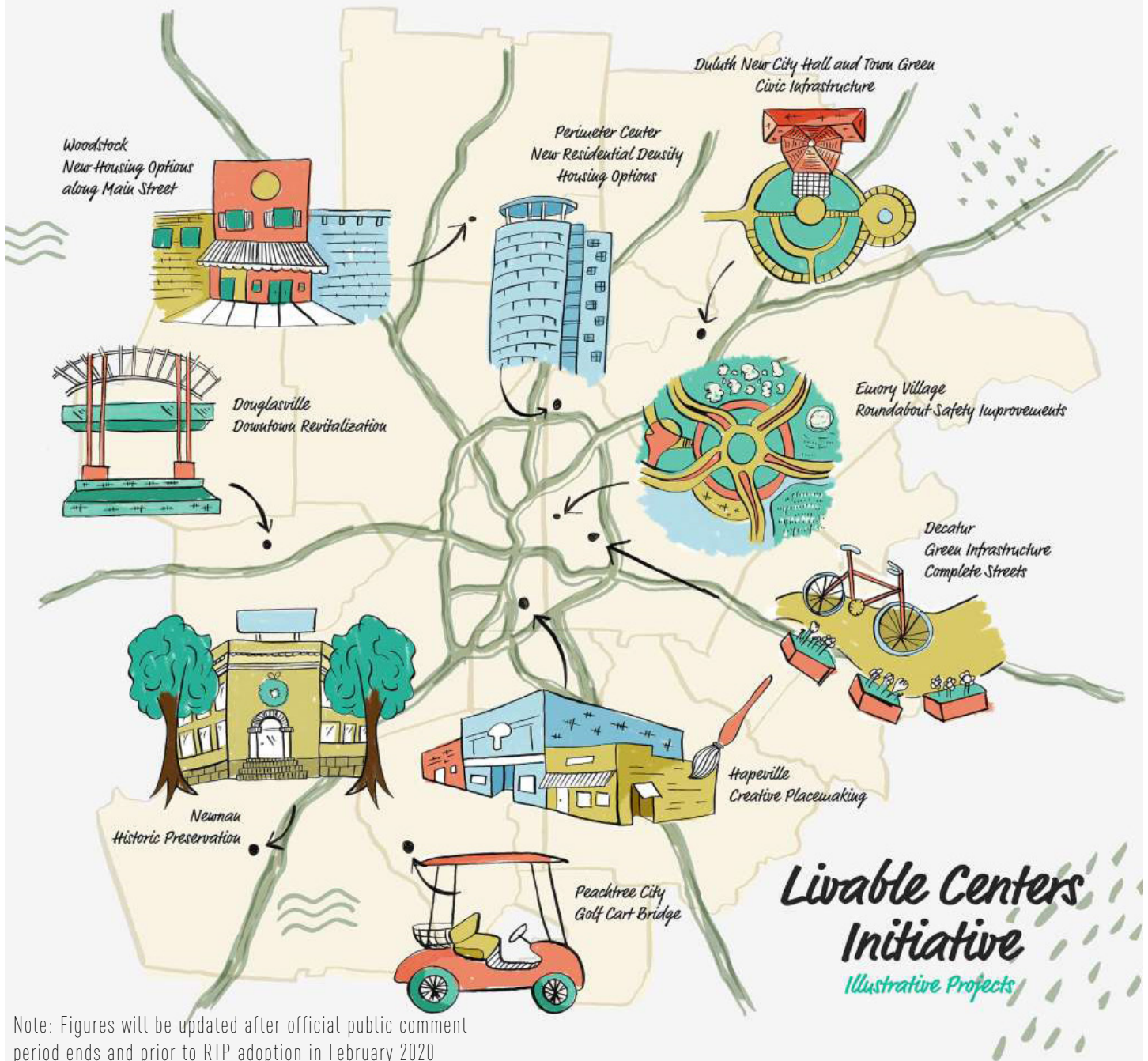
### TECHNICAL APPENDICES

The Technical Appendices (A through N) house all of the methodologies and analytic components used to create this Plan, as well as the RTP project list.

## Snapshot of Public Involvement

**6** WERE HELD  
**OPEN HOUSES** ACROSS  
THE REGION  
TO ENGAGE  
THE PUBLIC  
ABOUT TARP

THE SIX POP-UP  
OPEN HOUSES ENGAGED:  
**300 PEOPLE**



Note: Figures will be updated after official public comment period ends and prior to RTP adoption in February 2020



If even one day per week, every person in Atlanta chose an option other than driving, that would be a huge game-changer.

- TRACY S.



I think education is key, informing people on what's in it for them, what would the benefit be for them if they had to leave their cars home and just took the train, rapid transit, walking, stuff like that.

- KEONA J.

Expanding bus service should be the first priority, and then probably getting dedicated express bus lanes could help ease up congestion, but I think it's just connecting where people work to where people can actually access transit.

- DAVID N.



# ASSESSMENT

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Over the 30-year period from 2020 through 2050, the Atlanta region is forecasted to add 2.9 million residents, resulting in a total population of 8.6 million.

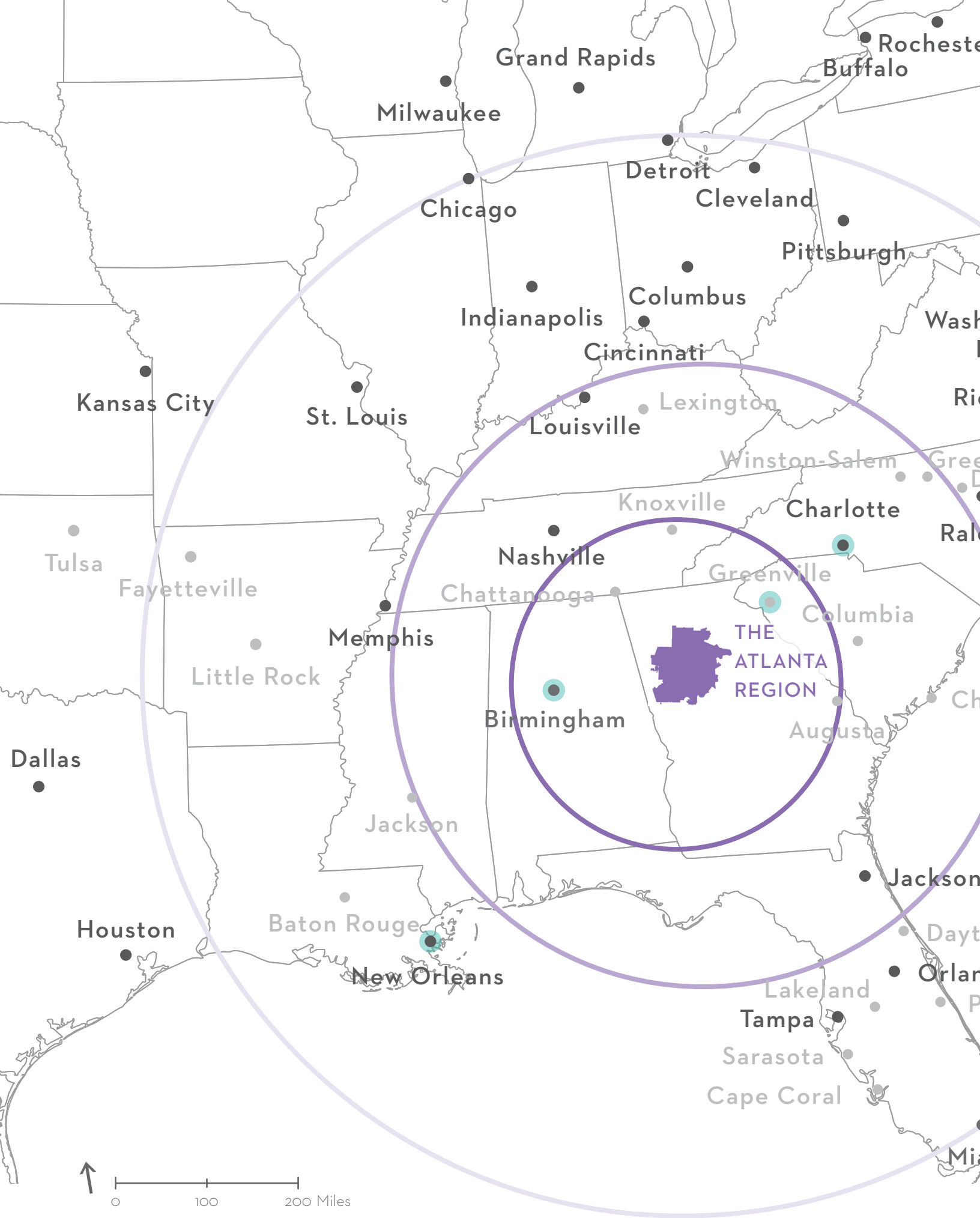
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Metro Atlanta is an ever-evolving region of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes that provides a diverse collection of homes, jobs, and communities for the 5.7 million people currently living here. Over the next 30 years, the region expects to add another 2.9 million people (for a total of 8.6 million), requiring new homes, jobs, and communities to be developed. The RTP plans for that development by outlining the transportation investments to be made in the coming years that encourage the kind of development desired by the residents of the region.

The first step in planning for the future is to assess the present. This chapter starts the planning process by reviewing the region's current population, employment, housing, demographic, and land use conditions to lay the ground work for forecasting the future. Topics studied in other parts of The Atlanta Region's Plan, like regionally important resources and the region's workforce, are also reviewed in the RTP to ensure that a holistic approach to transportation planning is undertaken.

After the review of current conditions is completed, forecasts for future conditions are produced to understand growth in the region. The goal of forecasting future conditions is not to exactly anticipate future growth, but to understand the likely patterns of growth that will influence the future. This modeled condition is merely one possible future, informed and limited by our current knowledge of factors influencing our region and its transportation system. Any subsequent forecast of future conditions can be modified to reflect different policy decisions and planning assumptions.

By understanding the likely trajectory of growth from this point forward, the RTP can more readily plan for transportation investments that respond to resident's needs and deliver the kind of communities they desire.

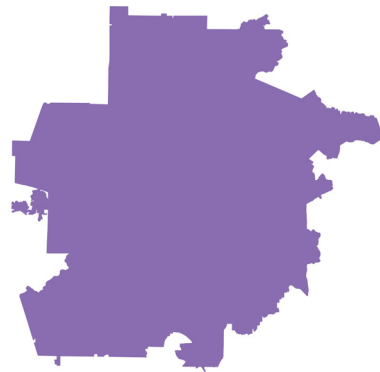




# WELCOME TO ATLANTA

The Atlanta region remains the economic and cultural powerhouse of the southeast. Adding to this prominence is not only the ability to connect residents and visitors globally through the busiest airport in the world, but also to metro areas across the south, mid-Atlantic, and mid-west in only a few hours by way of multiple modes of travel.

Travel via airplane, bus, and personal vehicle only prospers when supplemented by viable community-oriented travel



like walking, bicycling, and transit. The RTP supports and proposes to improve both local and regional mobility options in three ways: transportation demand management, capacity enhancements, and modernization of the transportation system.

This chapter details trends the Atlanta region should expect in the next thirty years, as well as the multi-various and longstanding challenges facing the Atlanta region and the assets we can leverage, recognizing that transportation and land use decisions are intertwined in all of it.

- 
- Within a 2 hour flight
- 
- Within a 6 hour personal vehicle drive
- 
- Within a 4 hour intercity bus ride
- City on Amtrak  
Crescent Line  
Hours to New York: 16  
Hours to New Orleans: 12
- Metro Area  
≥ 1,000,000 people
  - Southern Metro Area  
≥ 500,000 people



## REGIONAL GROWTH TRENDS

Long-range transportation planning is informed by estimates of future population and employment conditions that drive trip-making patterns and travel needs.

Metro Atlanta’s urbanized area measured 2,645 square miles at the last Census in 2010 – this is the second largest urbanized area in the country with the ninth largest population. The region saw particularly robust growth leading up to the turn of the century, and has since grown at its slowest rate since the 1960s. Notably, some areas that have previously been identified as key natural resources, such as the Dog River Watershed and Arabia Mountain, have been protected from overwhelming urban development. Nevertheless, development pressures continue to threaten natural resources and increase impervious surface coverage, testing our ability to manage

stormwater. Along with other major urban areas in the country, metro Atlanta will continue to face greater challenges related to urban development, climate resilience, and a changing population.

## TREND PROJECTION METHODOLOGY

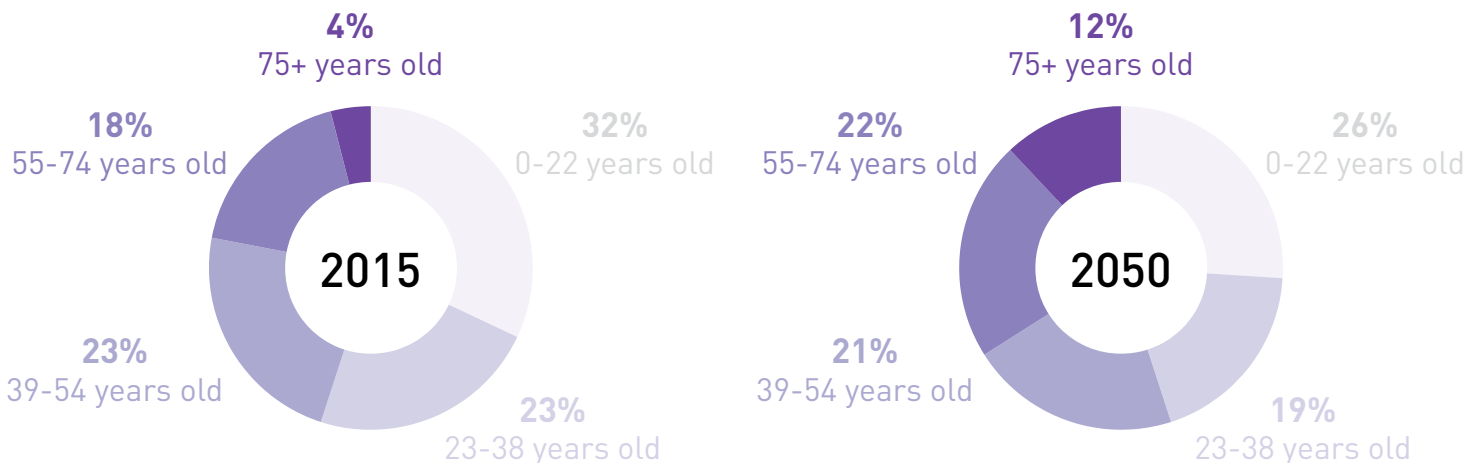
ARC uses a two-step modeling process to develop regional control totals and small area forecasts used as inputs into our Activity Based Transportation model. First, an econometric model (REMI) uses a national forecast that is shared out to each county in the nation. Then an “agent” model (PECAS) simulates development. More information about these two models can be found in ARC's Model Documentation.

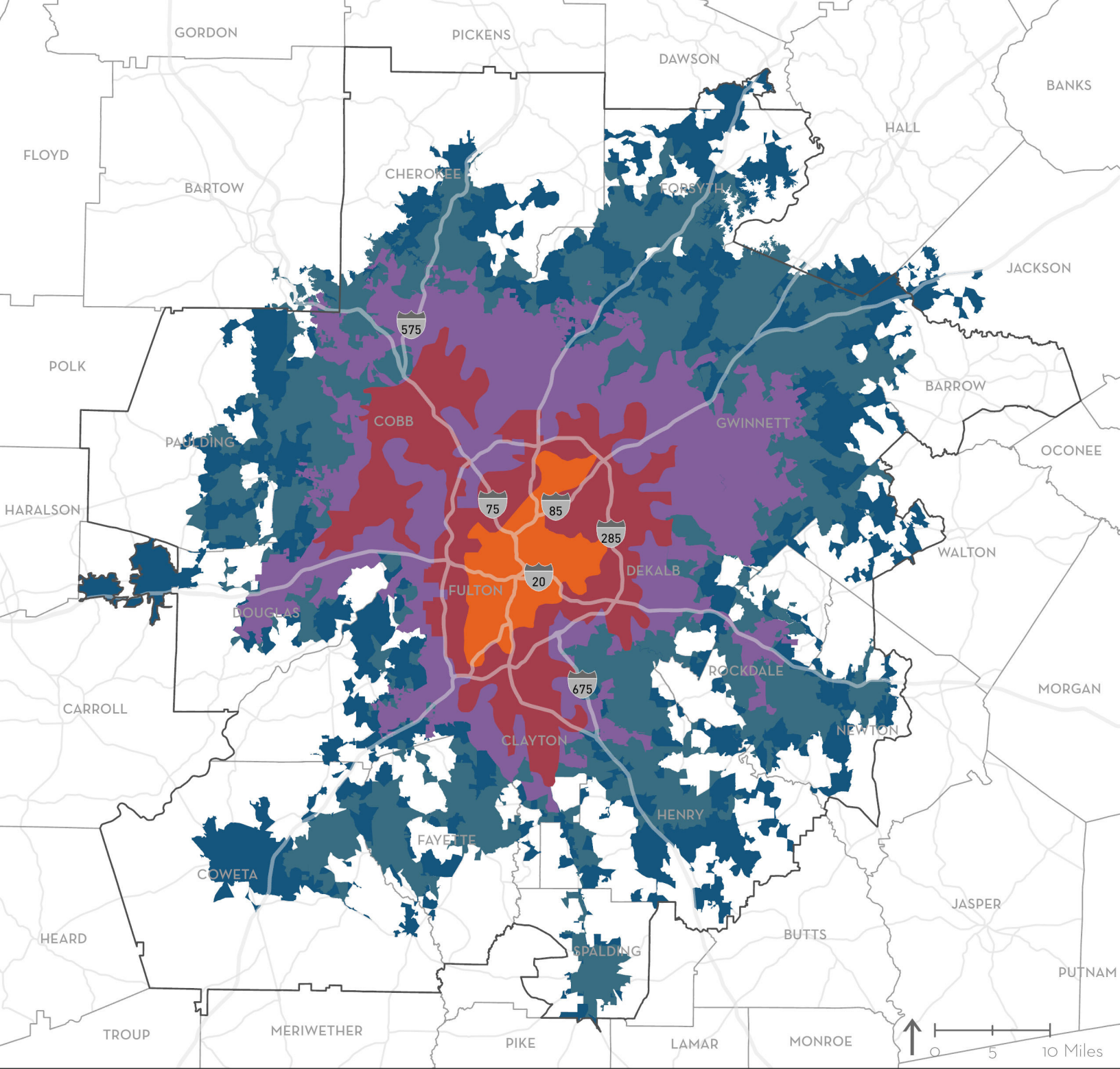
### LEARN MORE:

- [ARC's Model Documentation](#)

Figure 1

## CURRENT AND PROJECTED AGE IN THE ATLANTA REGION

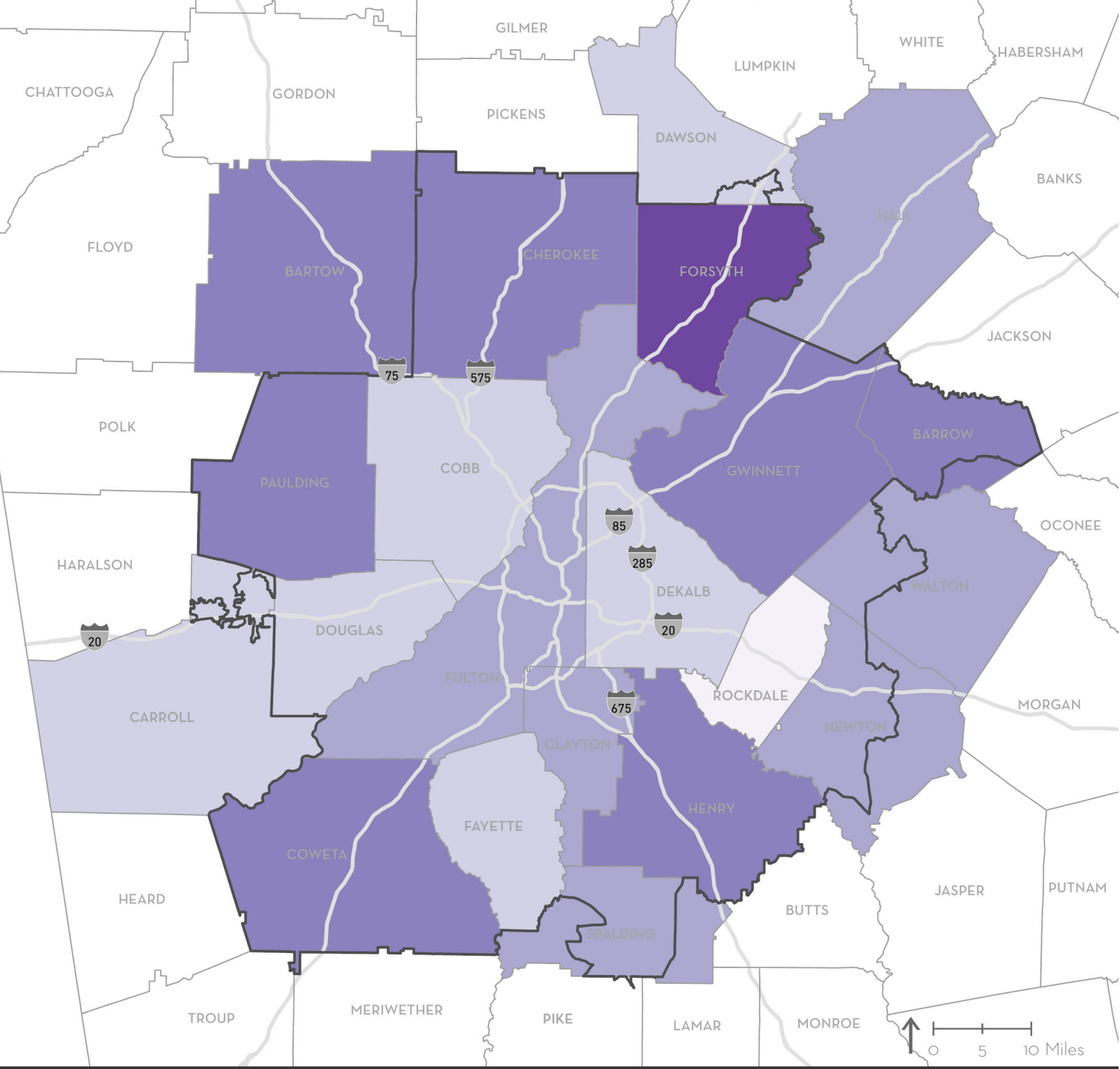




## MAP 1: GROWTH OF THE URBANIZED AREA

### Legend

Year	— Major Roads
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 1950	— Expressways
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: darkred; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 1970	□ Counties
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 1990	□ MPO Boundary
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: darkteal; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 2000	
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: darkblue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> 2010	



MAP 2: POPULATION CHANGE BY COUNTY

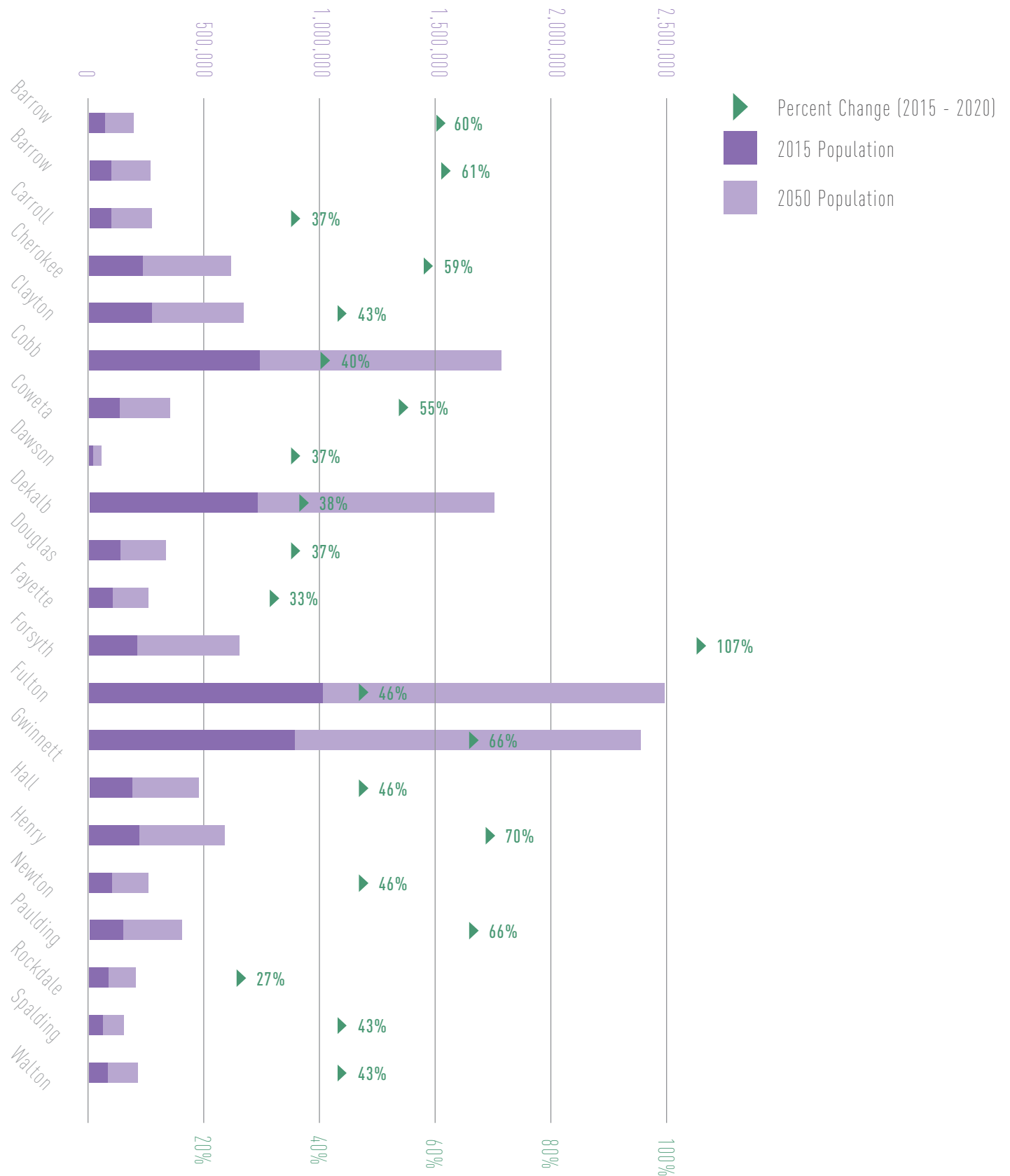
Legend

Percent Change

- 0 - 27%
- 28 - 40%
- 41 - 46%
- 47 - 70%
- 71 - 107%

- Expressways
- Counties
- MPO Boundary

Table 1: Projected Population Change from 2015 to 2050 by County



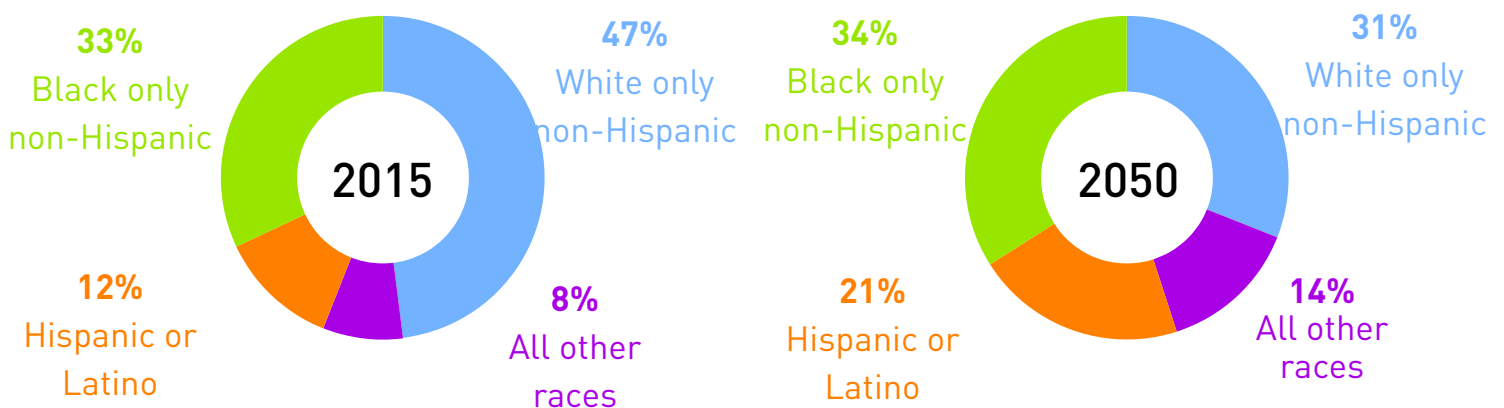
## DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Metro Atlanta is expected to add 2.9 million residents by 2050. This growth is spread across the region – Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett will remain the most populous counties, but all MPO counties are projected to see a population increase of at least 25%. In fact, some primarily suburban and rural counties, including Barrow, Henry, Paulding, and particularly Forsyth, are expected to see more relative population growth than the core urban counties. With population growth expected across metro Atlanta, pressure on our current transportation system will only increase, and the demand for transportation options will rise. The majority of the region’s residents work outside of the county they live in, and mobility across and around metro Atlanta is critical for the success of the region.

As is the case in urban areas across the country, the region’s population is expected to age significantly in the coming decades. While just 4% of the population in 2015 was above the age of 75, this population share is projected to triple by 2050, creating new challenges in housing, workforce, and mobility in the region. Metro Atlanta’s population is also projected to be substantially more diverse in 2050. The region’s White population currently makes up nearly half of metro Atlanta residents; in 2050, that number is expected to be just under one third. Strong growth will be seen in the Hispanic population in particular. Today, there is still significant geographic separation, with high concentrations of Black populations in DeKalb, Clayton, and south Fulton and Asian and Hispanic populations clustered in northern DeKalb and Gwinnett. Metro Atlanta faces challenges in ensuring equitable access to transportation options, which must be addressed as the region continues to grow and diversify.

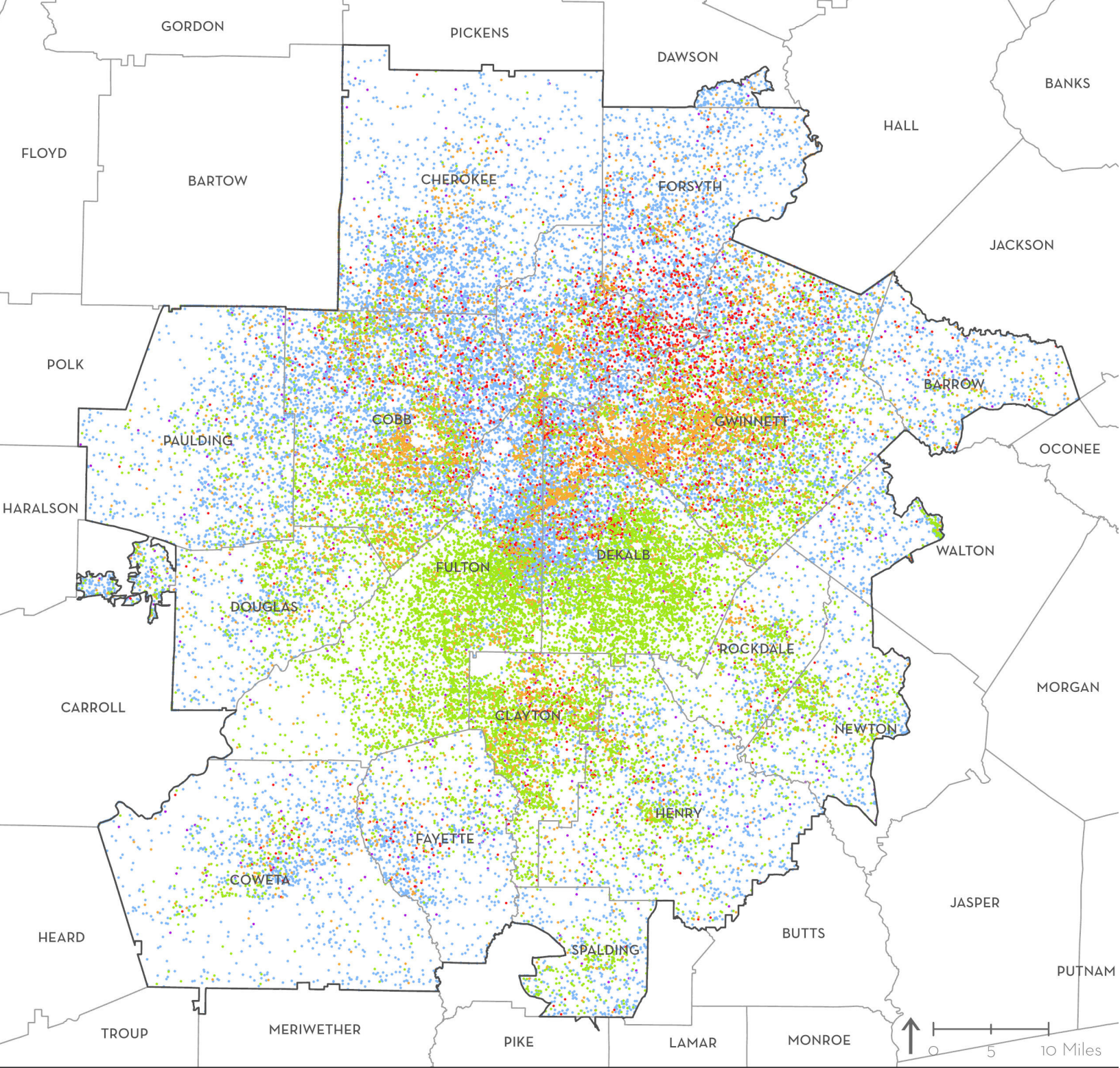
Figure 2

### CURRENT AND PROJECTED RACE & ETHNICITY IN THE ATLANTA REGION



Note: This data refers to the model area, which includes counties outside the MPO.





### MAP 3: RACE AND ETHNICITY DOT DENSITY

#### Legend

Race and Ethnicity by Census Tract

1 Dot = 100 People

- Hispanic or Latino
- Black only non-Hispanic
- Asian only non-Hispanic
- White only non-Hispanic
- Other Race / Native American / Multiple Races

Counties

MPO Boundary

Source: American Community Survey 2017



## EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

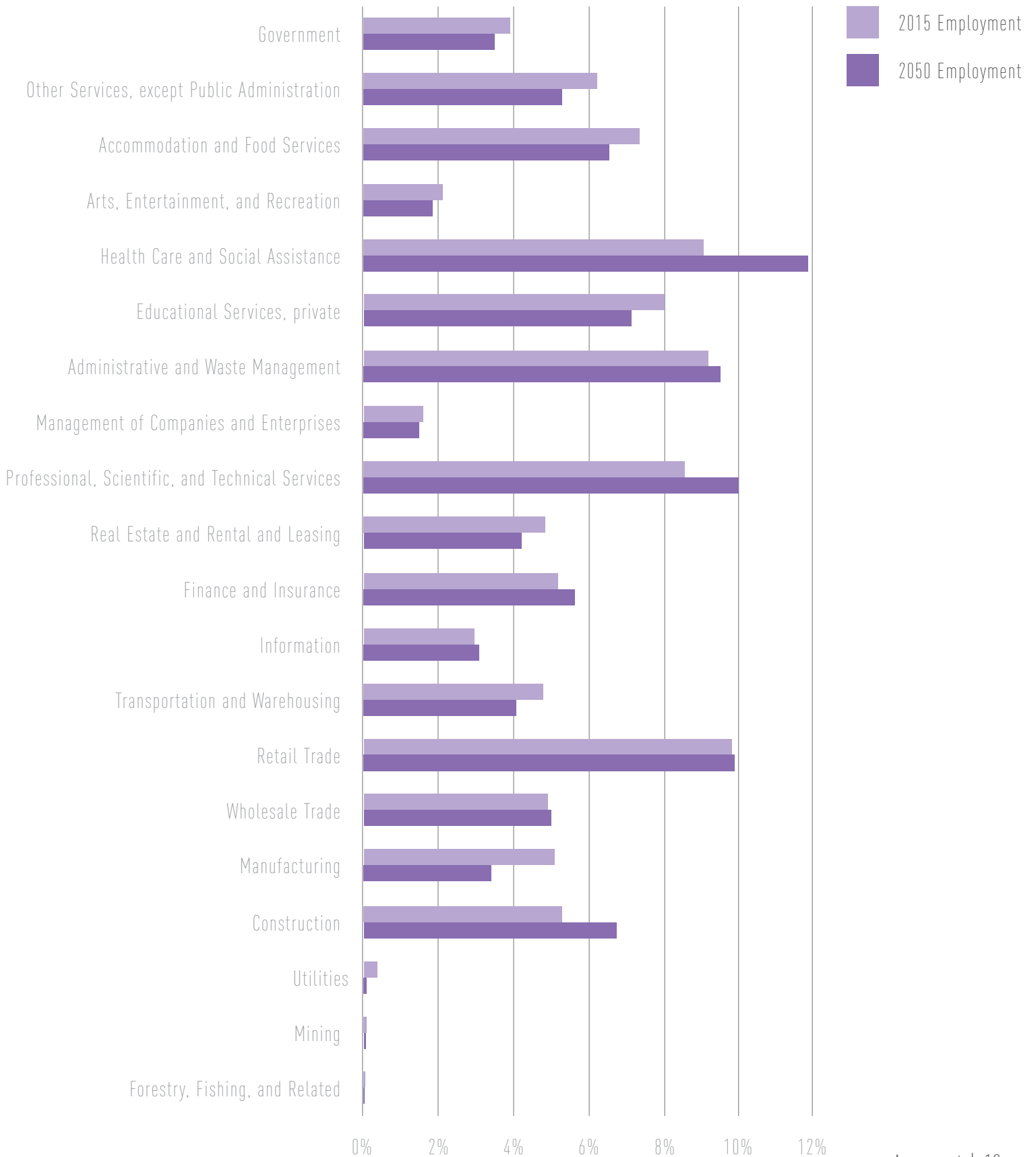
Employment for the 20-county region is projected to increase by 1.2 million jobs between 2015 and 2050, for a total job base of more than 4.7 million. In total, the region expects 33% growth, with the average annual employment growth rate during this period is forecast at 0.9%.

As Table 2 shows, growth in two sectors is expected to greatly outpace growth in other sectors. The Health Care and Social Assistance sector is expected to grow the most by 2050, growing by almost 74% or more than a quarter of a million jobs. The Construction sector is expected to grow at the second highest rate, adding 69% more jobs (about 131,000) by 2050.

The raw growth of the Retail sector, the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector, and the Administrative and Waste Management sector are all projected to be above 100,000 jobs added by 2050. Since these three sectors already have higher than average employment in the Atlanta area, the rate of growth of these sectors isn't projected to be as high as the Health Care and Construction sectors.

Two sectors are expected to lose jobs by 2050. The Utilities sector is projected to see the greatest rate of job loss, about -58% or more than 8,000 jobs. The Manufacturing sector is expected to lose more than 18,000 jobs, but this represents a slower rate of loss, at only -10% of the current workforce by 2050.

**Table 2: Projected Employment Change from 2015 to 2050 by Sector**



## TRAVEL CHANGES

Travel by specific modes has remained largely consistent in recent history. The majority of metro Atlanta residents commute in single occupant vehicles. Fewer than five percent of workers currently commute by transit, walking, or biking.

Mode choice is based on a number of factors but is fundamentally predicated on development patterns and roadway design<sup>1</sup>. Metropolitan Atlanta's historic focus on highway investments and dispersed development is closely linked to current travel patterns and predominance of single-occupancy vehicle travel. Areas that support shorter trips, reduced congestion, and increased transportation choices have well-connected streets and more proximity between schools, parks, commercial centers, and diverse housing types. Investments within existing communities and activity centers can help ensure a safer, more accessible system that supports all mode choices and types of trips.

Metropolitan Atlanta is projected to grow from approximately 5.7 million residents to 8.6 million residents in the next thirty years. More people means increasing demands on our transportation system and a continued need to adapt and maintain existing infrastructure. But changing residential patterns and technology options also indicate opportunities for mode shifts.

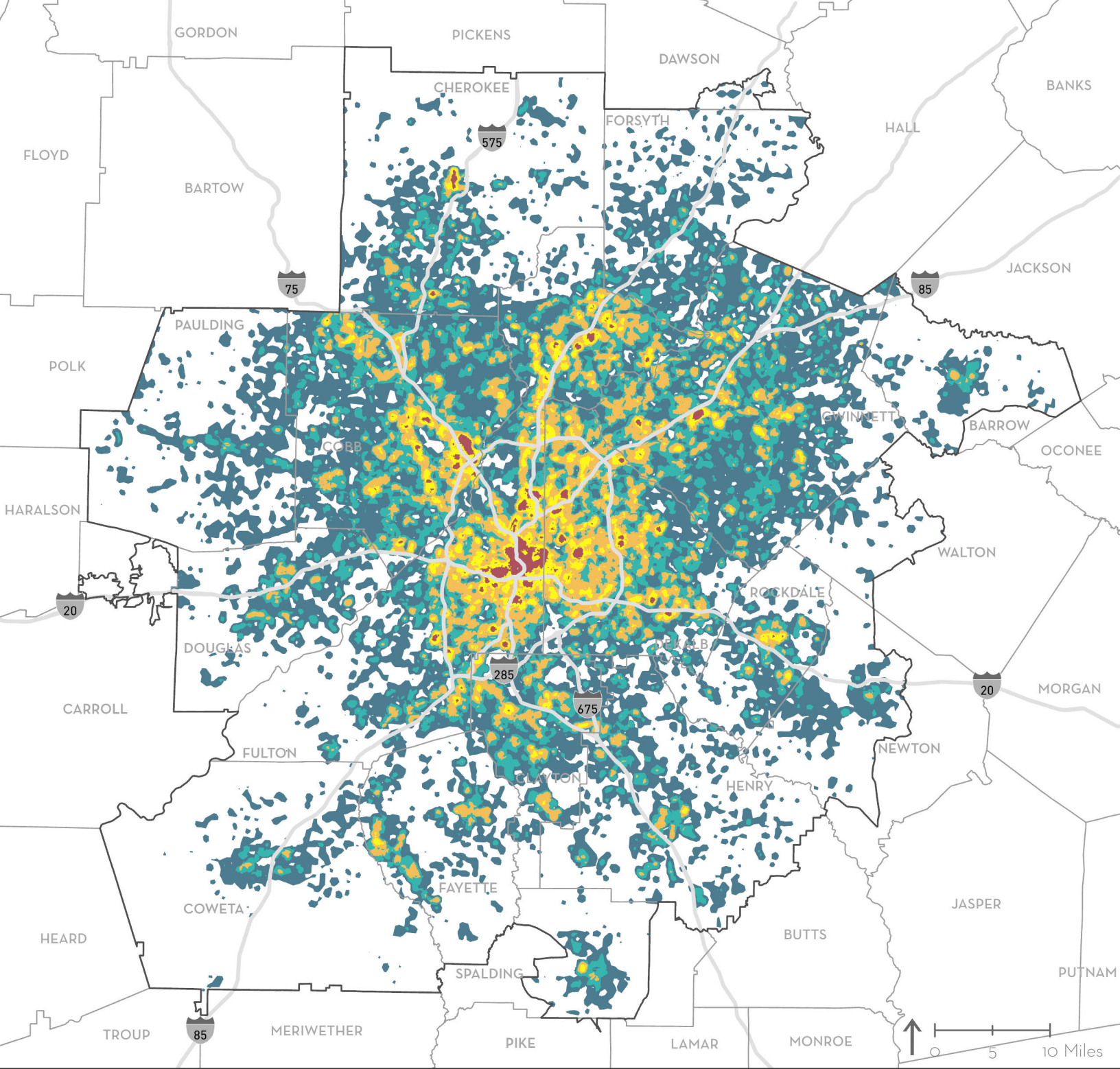
Emerging trends in geography, technology, and culture may indicate a different future for travel choices. Residents in urbanized areas typically have shorter trips and more transportation options, so more people living within the urban core or denser town centers can change underlying travel patterns. Increasing the availability of safer and more comfortable roadway designs along with more micro-mobility options can offer alternatives to driving or serve as key last mile connections. Teleworking is expected to become increasingly available for employees and employers alike.

Development patterns determine opportunities to travel. More opportunities to walk, bicycle, or access transit improves the region's quality of life, economic competitiveness, and health outcomes. The following map illustrates current propensity for walking and bicycling and highlights how opportunities to travel outside of a car vary widely across the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Goldberg, David et al. (2007) "New Data for A New Era: A Summary of the SMARTRAQ Findings Linking Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality, and Health in the Atlanta Region." Retrieved October 2019 from: [https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/SMARTRAQSummary\\_000.pdf](https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/SMARTRAQSummary_000.pdf)





MAP 4: RELATIVE PROPENSITY TO WALK & BIKE

Legend

- Higher
- Expressways
- Counties
- MPO Boundary
- Lower

## CHANGES IN CLIMATE-RELATED RISKS

Planning for climate-related risks, chiefly extreme weather events that disrupt travel, damage transportation infrastructure, and pose health, safety, and economic growth risks, is of growing importance to our region. Building climate resilience is a focus at the national level too. The FAST Act expressly urges for a reduction of natural disaster vulnerability, including reducing or mitigating stormwater impacts on surface transportation.<sup>1</sup>

Climate-related risks are already an issue here in the Atlanta region, as evidenced by more frequent and intense droughts, flash floods, snow storms, and heat waves.<sup>2</sup> See photos on the adjacent page for examples of extreme weather events that the Atlanta region has faced in recent history.

ARC is continually committed to helping the region prepare for, withstand, and recover rapidly from climate-related risks to better serve our residents and visitors who rely on the transportation system for everyday life.

In 2018, we adopted the *Vulnerability and Resiliency Framework for the Atlanta Region* to begin strategically planning for and minimizing potential adverse impacts of predictable, long-term threats. After securing a grant from the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Resilience Pilot Program, we spent the next year building a GIS-based tool that allows us to apply the framework to our decision-making processes and conduct a system vulnerability assessment.

Using the results of this Pilot Program effort, ARC will continue to improve our planning goals, objectives, and performance measures to be more sensitive to transportation system resiliency; better incorporate system resilience into modal and comprehensive plans; promote projects that mitigate climate-related risks and enhance system resiliency; and support projects and strategies that enhance resilient system performance.

### LEARN MORE:

- [Vulnerability and Resiliency Framework for the Atlanta Region](#)

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1 Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, December 2015, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-114publ94/pdf/PLAW-114publ94.pdf>

2 Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II: Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States, page 25, U.S. Global Change Research Program, [nca2018.globalchange.gov](https://www.globalchange.gov)





Lake Lanier approached historic low water levels during a drought in 2012. The lowest level on record occurred just 3 years prior.



A winter storm referred to as "Snowmageddon" hit the region in January 2014, paralyzing interstates and disrupting both rail and bus MARTA service.



Historic flash flooding hit the region in 2009, resulting in 10 fatalities and \$500 million in damage.



## REGIONAL ASSETS & CHALLENGES

Metro Atlanta will experience substantial changes to nearly all facets of daily life in the coming decades. In anticipation of these changes, we must build on our core assets in order to address both current and future challenges. The following twelve statements describe those assets and challenges. These twelve areas are interlinked so boosting any given asset can have the added benefit of improving a challenge too. The statements were established as part of ARC's Regional Development Plan, a requirement of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The purple text below answers the question: *How does the RTP build on these regional assets and address regional challenges?*

### AIRPORT AREA PLANNING

Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport is the largest economic asset in the region and its continued success will require regional coordination of land use, transportation, and economic development in the surrounding communities.

*Recognizing that passengers, employees, and goods moving to and from the airport require a variety of safe and convenient transportation options*

### AGING

By 2050, 20% of the region's population will be over the age of 65, which will demand changes in the provision of services and the design of communities.

*Ensuring that mobility options are available for all, including those who may experience changes in abilities as they age*

### CLIMATE RESILIENCY

As climate patterns become increasingly volatile, metro Atlanta communities will have to overcome more frequent environmental stressors by using adaptation and mitigation strategies.

*Emphasizing the need to maintain existing infrastructure good condition while ensuring that future facilities are designed to be resilient*

### COMMUNITY IDENTITY

To build stronger regional and local identity, communities should continue to enhance their physical and social character through creative placemaking initiatives.

*Providing funding for programs to help identify and implement projects that contribute to both the creation and preservation of livable communities*

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sustained investment in infrastructure, workforce, and quality of life will be critical to ensuring the region's economic status as a global business hub.

*Recognizing the role that maintaining and expanding transportation infrastructure plays in attracting businesses and offering a good quality of life for all*

## **EQUITY**

Inequities in income and race continue to be a barrier to success for residents across the region.

*Addressing the fact that safe, convenient transportation options are limited for many residents attempting to access essential services, job opportunities, education, and other key destinations*

## **HOUSING**

Housing affordability is eroding across metro Atlanta and will impact our economic competitiveness if left unaddressed.

*Understanding that a lack of affordable housing near jobs and other destinations increases the number and length of trips and puts a strain on both the transportation system and the individual*

## **MOBILITY OPTIONS**

Funding for transportation has increased in recent years but the need for transportation investments continues to ensure the region has mobility options.

*Establishing the list of fiscally constrained transportation projects that will continue to grow regional mobility options in the coming decades*

## **POPULATION**

By 2050, the composition of the region's 8 million residents will be markedly different in terms of age, race, and ethnicity.

*Responding to the needs of an increasingly diverse population with a continued need for greater transportation options*

## **TRANSIT**

The region has strong but geographically limited transit options. With the creation of a regional transit authority, significant coordination and prioritization will be required to expand transit services.

*Laying the foundation for the first major expansion of the region's transit services in decades and ensures coordination between stakeholders*

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

To ensure the region's economic success, everyone must be prepared to advance in a productive career.

*Acknowledging that a lack of mobility options across the region is a barrier to finding and maintaining jobs*

## **WATER RESOURCES**

Increased conservation efforts, use of new technology, and public awareness will continue to be critical tools to manage the region's limited water resources.

*Implementing projects which are sensitive to the transportation network's impact on the natural environment*

With the region's growth and projected growth, we need to take a look at expansion of all modes of transportation.

- JONATHAN H.



We still don't have sidewalks. We still don't have bicycle lanes and I haven't noticed ramps for people with disabilities. I have a problem with that because I'm disabled. Building sidewalks and bike lanes would help people get out and exercise more.

- JODIE C.



I would put money into multi-use paths so you're taking people off the main road. Plus you're helping the environment, you're saving a lot on gas and emissions

- TRACEY M.

