

Regional Transit Development Plan

Middle Georgia Regional Commission

Existing Conditions Report

May 2024



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List of Acronyms

AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic	MHI	Median Household Income
ACS	American Community Survey	MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	MTA	Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority
APTA	American Public Transportation Association	MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
ATS	Albany Transit System	NEMT	Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
BLS	United States Bureau of Labor Statistics	NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
DAC	Disadvantaged Community	NS	Norfolk Southern
DCA	Georgia Department of Community Affairs	NTD	National Transit Database
DCH	Georgia Department of Community Health	RHST	Rural and Human Services Transportation
DHS	Georgia Department of Human Services	RITIS	Regional Integrated Transportation Information System
DRI	Development of Regional Impact	RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
EJ	Environmental Justice	SAT	Statesboro Area Transit
ETC	Equitable Transportation Community	SGR	State of Good Repair
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	SSTP	Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan
FTA	Federal Transit Administration	SWTP	Statewide Transportation Plan
GDOL	Georgia Department of Labor	SWTRP	Statewide Transit Plan
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation	TADA	Traffic Analysis and Data Application
HUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development	TAM	Transit Asset Management
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act	TDP	Transit Development Plan
IRA	Inflation Reduction Act	TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems	ULB	Useful Life Benchmark
LEHD	Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
LEP	Limited English Proficiency	USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
LIHTC	Low-Income Housing Tax Credit	UZA	Urbanized Area
LODES	LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics	WMA	Wildlife Management Area
L RTP	Long-Range Transportation Plan	WRT	Warner Robins Transit

1.0 Introduction

In 2020, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) published the Statewide Transit Plan (SWTRP), which recommended strategies to address rural and regional transit needs across the state. In addition to stressing the need for regionalized transit service in Georgia, the plan also called for a two-pronged strategy to assist the preparation of transit development plans (TDPs) across the state.

The TDP Guidebook, published in 2021, equips regional commissions, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), rural transit providers, and small urban transit providers with the methodologies, resources, and data necessary to draft a TDP.

GDOT is currently implementing the second part of this strategy through the development of several Regional TDPs. With the support of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC), GDOT is preparing a Regional TDP for Middle Georgia.

The following SWTRP strategies directly inform this plan:

- **10.1.1.1** Develop Transit Development Plan Guidance and Regional TDPs
- **10.2.3.1** Regionalize Transit Service

The TDP process will facilitate intergovernmental and interagency collaboration to further advance access to public transit in the region. Through the development of this Regional TDP, GDOT and MGRC will continue the implementation of the SWTRP by identifying regional transit needs and developing a series of recommendations to improve and expand regional transit in Middle Georgia.

1.1 Purpose and Methodology

A Regional TDP identifies transit needs and opportunities and informs future transit system investments. The TDP process assists communities in developing a transit vision and evaluating transit alternatives that move communities closer to these goals. TDPs typically have a 20-year horizon and are intended to be updated on a five-year renewal cycle. Though they have a 20-year horizon, TDPs should identify achievable transit projects that can be implemented within five years.

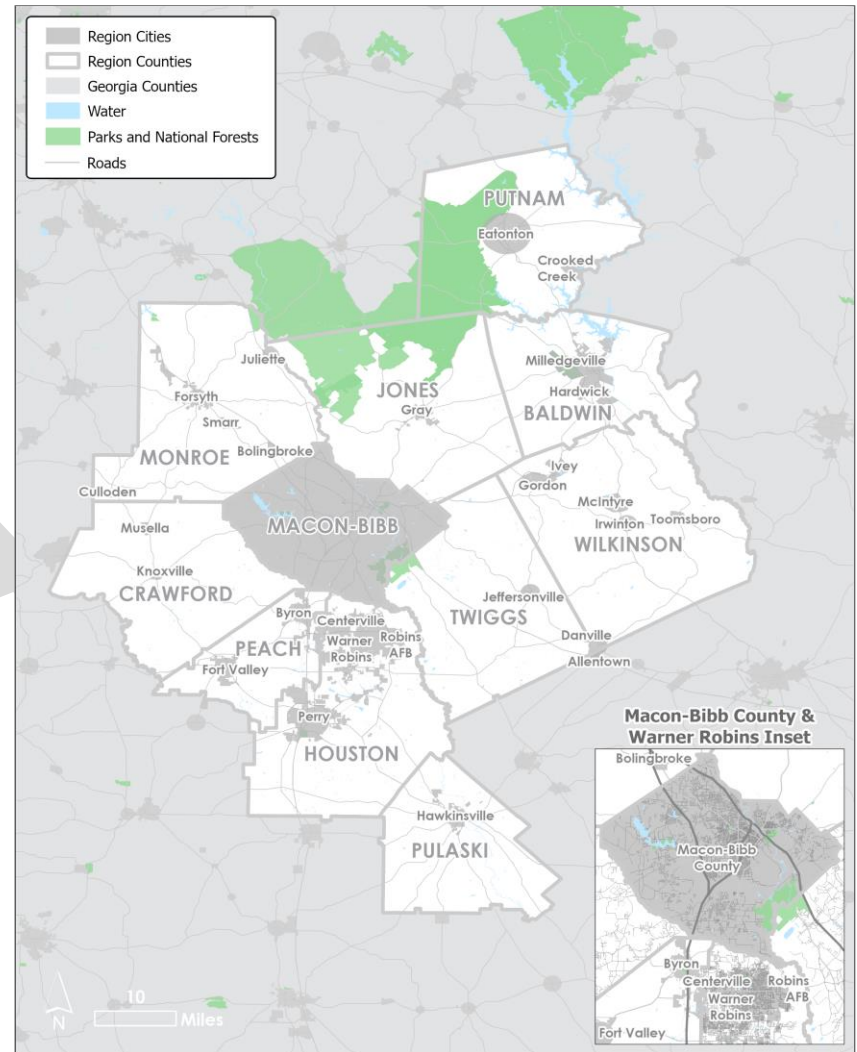
The first part of the Regional TDP, the Existing Conditions Report, compiles current information from a variety of sources, including existing plans and studies and the latest data from agencies like GDOT, the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), and the U.S. Census Bureau. This report documents demographic and employment trends, travel patterns, transportation options, and land use and development patterns within Middle Georgia.

This report also includes a performance review of the region's current transit providers, their funding situation, and a comparison of Middle Georgia's transit providers to other peer transit systems in the state.

1.2 Overview of the Middle Georgia Region

The Middle Georgia Regional Commission comprises an eleven-county area situated southeast of the Atlanta metropolitan area, near the geographic center of Georgia. The eleven counties that make up the region are Baldwin, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Macon-Bibb, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson counties. Primary population and employment bases are centered around Macon-Bibb County and Warner Robins, which is home to Robins Air Force Base in Houston County.

Figure 1: Middle Georgia



Source: Middle Georgia Regional Commission

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2.0 Demographic Trends

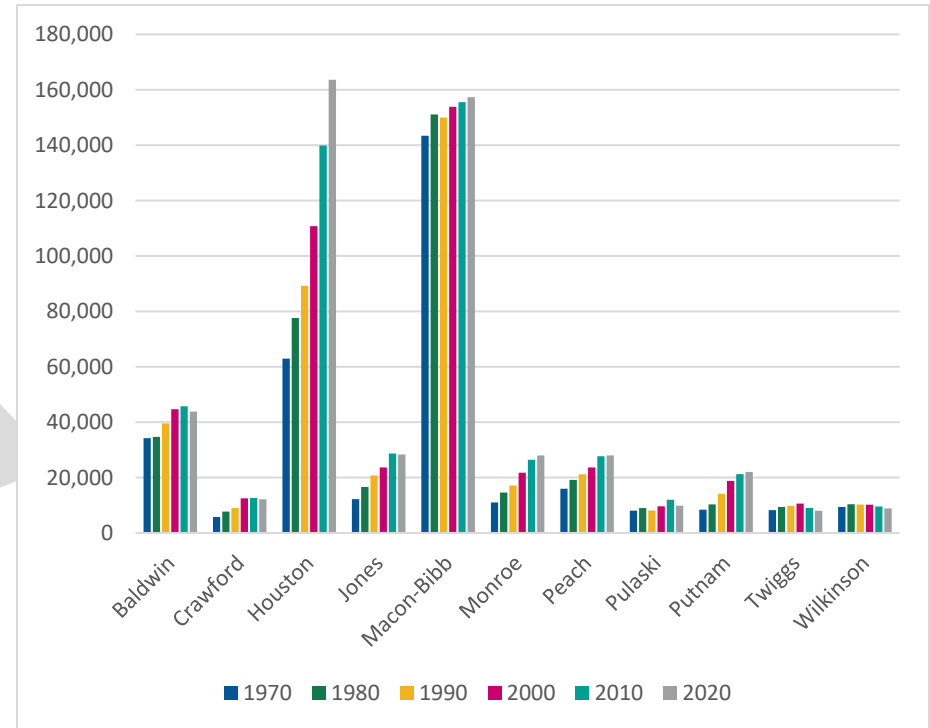
Demographic trends show growth patterns within Middle Georgia. This section will depict historical, current, and future population trends for the region as well as provide a breakdown of demographic characteristics across the region.

Disclaimer: This report uses U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year data to analyze various population trends and demographic characteristics. The 5-year estimates are "period" estimates that represent data collected over a period of time. These datasets use different collection methods and methodologies to provide more demographic detail than the Decennial Census. There may be variation in figures such as total population across ACS datasets.

2.1 Historical Population

Middle Georgia has seen consistent growth over the last five decades, though at a pace behind statewide trends. Since 1970, the region's population has grown from 319,604 to 509,994, an increase of 59.6 percent. **Table 1** shows historic population counts and rates of change for the region and state. The region saw the most growth in the 1990s (13.1 percent) and 1970s (12.5 percent). Historical population trends for all counties in the region are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Historical Population by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Population Change Data (1910-2020)

Table 1: Historical Population and Population Change

Geography	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
MGRC	319,604	359,538	389,016	440,121	479,991	509,994	12.5%	8.2%	13.1%	9.1%	6.3%
Georgia	4,589,575	5,463,105	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,711,908	19.0%	18.6%	26.4%	18.3%	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Population Change Data (1910-2020)

2.2 Demographic Trends within the Past Decade

In the last decade, Middle Georgia experienced modest yet consistent population growth. Between 2011 and 2016, the region’s population increased by 1.8 percent, followed by 2.4 percent growth from 2016 to 2021. The most significant growth occurred in Houston County (16.9 percent). Other counties, such as Monroe (6.2 percent), Putnam (3.5 percent), Peach (1.7 percent), and Macon-Bibb (1 percent), also saw modest increases. Some counties experienced consistent declines in population, such as Pulaski, Twiggs, Wilkinson, and Baldwin.

Middle Georgia’s population has become more diverse. In 2021, people of color (Hispanic or Latino, Black, Asian, and multi-racial residents) comprised 48.7 percent of the total population, making the region slightly more diverse than the state (48.6 percent). Alongside the diversification, the residents of Middle Georgia are also getting older. Between 2011 and 2021, the median resident age has increased from 39 to 41 years old. The number of residents over 60 years old in the region reached 112,115 in 2021, showing a 31 percent increase compared to the numbers from 2011. Across the region, Putnam County has the highest 2021 median age at 48 years old.

Table 2: Population and Population Change from the Last Decade

Geography	2011	2016	2021	2011-2016	2016-2021
MGRC	485,886	494,668	506,703	1.8%	2.4%
Georgia	9,600,612	10,099,320	10,625,615	5.2%	5.2%

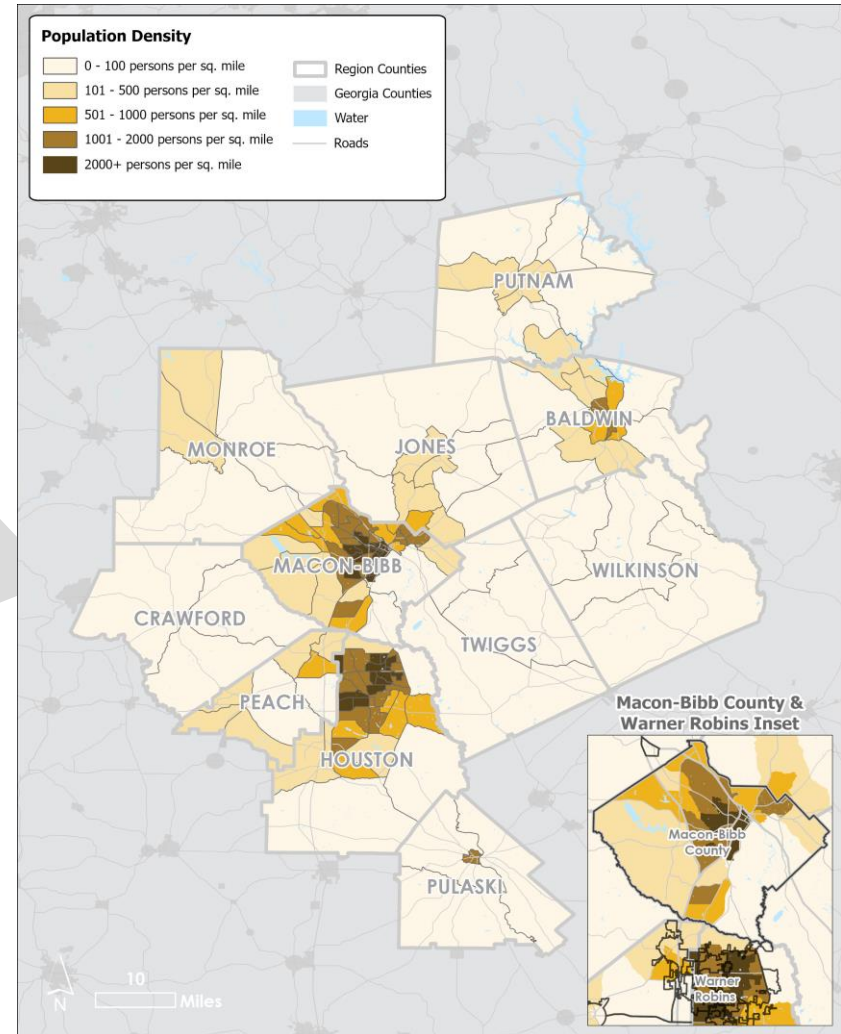
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.3 Current Demographics

Middle Georgia is currently home to an estimated 506,703 residents and has a land area of 3,603 square miles. The average population density for the region is 140.6 people per square mile. As presented in **Figure 3**, the highest areas of concentration are in Macon-Bibb County and the Warner Robins metro area, where population densities in some census tracts reach over 2,500 people per square mile.

Most of the region’s land area, however, is rural and agricultural with moderate to low densities.

Figure 3: Population Density by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

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2.4 Transit Market Demographics

Selected demographics were chosen for analysis to find populations that could benefit from public transportation. These demographics are:

- Low-Income Population
- Elderly Population: Individuals Ages 60+
- Youth Individuals: Ages 15-19
- Zero-Car Households
- Populations with a Disability

The ACS has differing methodologies for how total population is determined when a person’s status cannot be determined (such as for poverty or disability). This can lead to figures that vary from the total population presented in 2.2.

2.4.1 Low Income

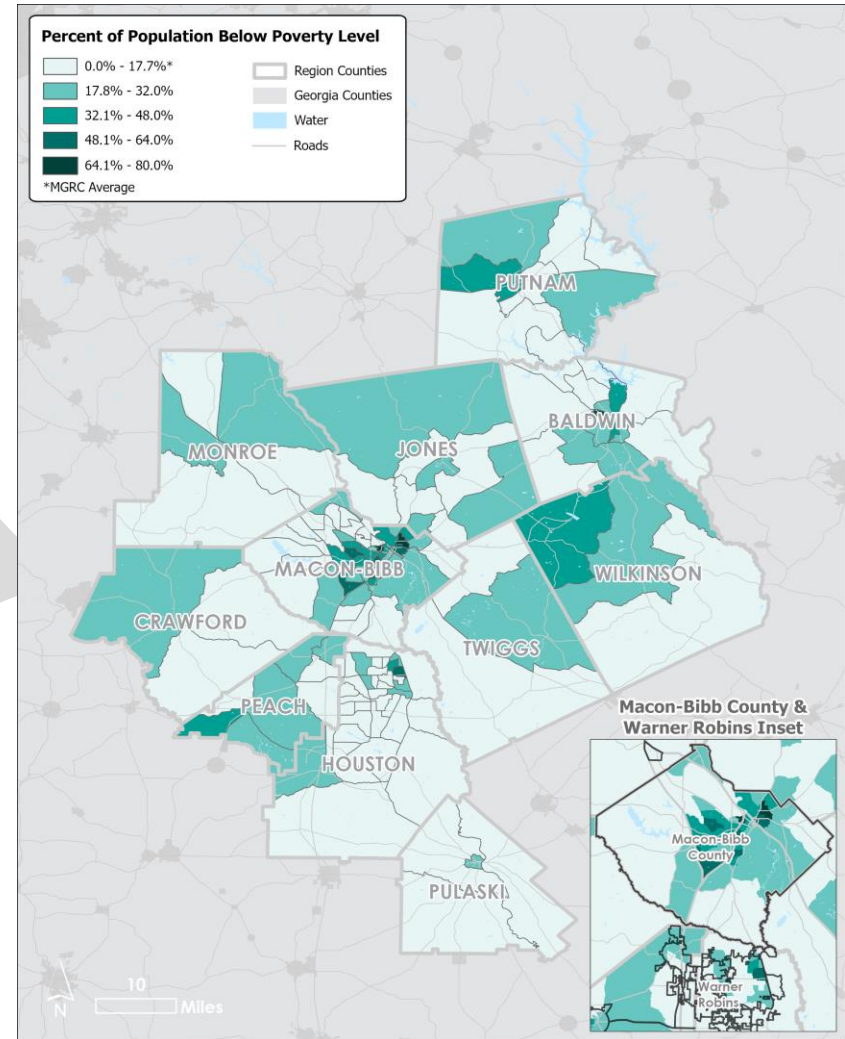
The Median Household Income (MHI) in Middle Georgia is \$53,132, which is 18.3 percent lower than the state MHI. Two counties have an MHI above the state average: Houston County (\$70,313) and Monroe County (\$67,154). The lowest MHI is found in Wilkinson County (\$34,680). Middle Georgia has a higher percentage of individuals classified as low income compared to the state as a whole (See **Table 3**). **Figure 4** shows the areas where low-income individuals are most concentrated.

Table 3: Low-Income Population

Geography	Total Population for Poverty	Number Below Poverty	Percent Below Poverty	Median Household Income
MGRC	488,224	86,554	17.7%	\$53,132
Georgia	10,356,895	1,441,351	13.9%	\$65,030

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 4: Low-Income Population by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.4.2 Elderly (60+)

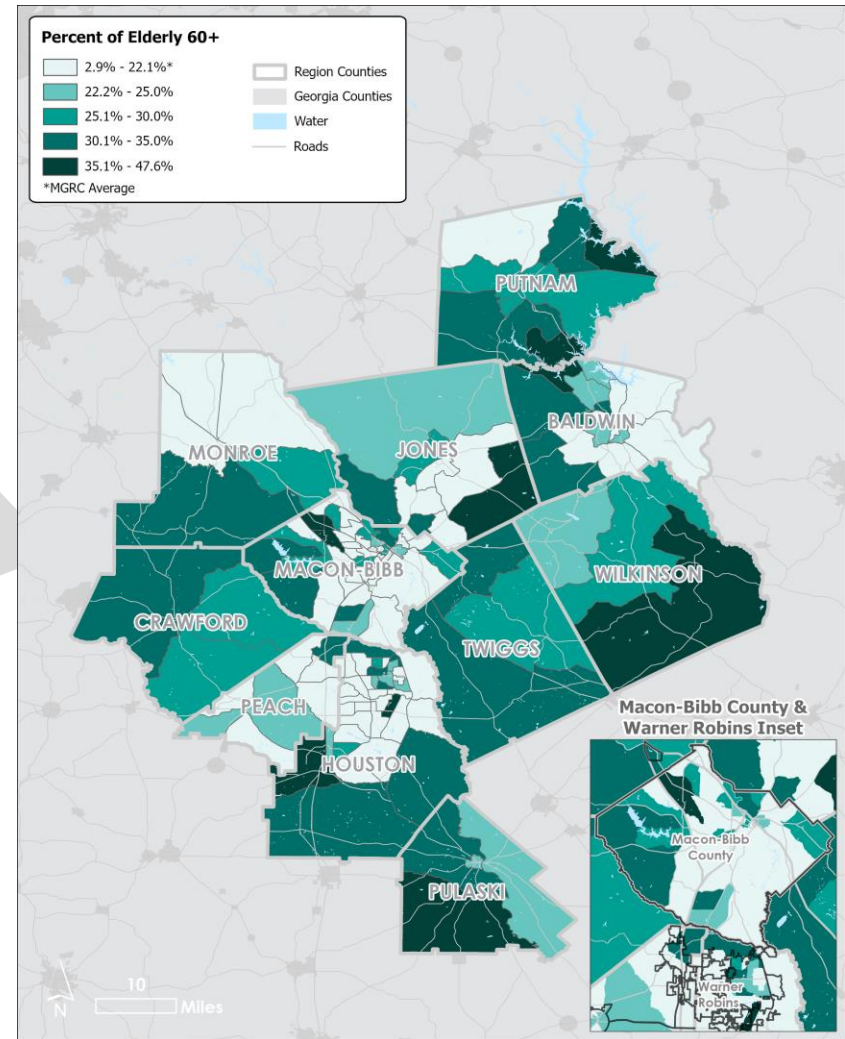
Table 4 shows that 22.1 percent of Middle Georgia’s residents are aged 60 and above, aligning closely with the state average of 19.8 percent. As shown in **Figure 5**, higher concentrations of older adults are predominantly situated in the outskirts of each county, such as southwest Wilkinson, south and northeast Putnam, southwest Jones, south Houston and southwest Pulaski Counties. The clusters of older residents in Wilkinson and Pulaski Counties appear to be more rural and have lower population density than the areas in Putnam County around Lake Oconee and Lake Sinclair. Yet the most substantial concentrations of older adults are observed in the suburban areas in Macon-Bibb County and around Warner Robins and Perry in Houston County. In those locations, some census tracts report over 40 percent of residents aged 60 and above. In contrast, urban centers in Macon-Bibb County and Warner Robins show the lowest concentrations of older residents.

Table 4: Elderly Population

Geography	Total Population	Total 60+	Percent 60+
MGRC	506,703	112,115	22.1%
Georgia	10,625,615	2,102,664	19.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 5: Elderly Population by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.4.3 Youth (15-19)

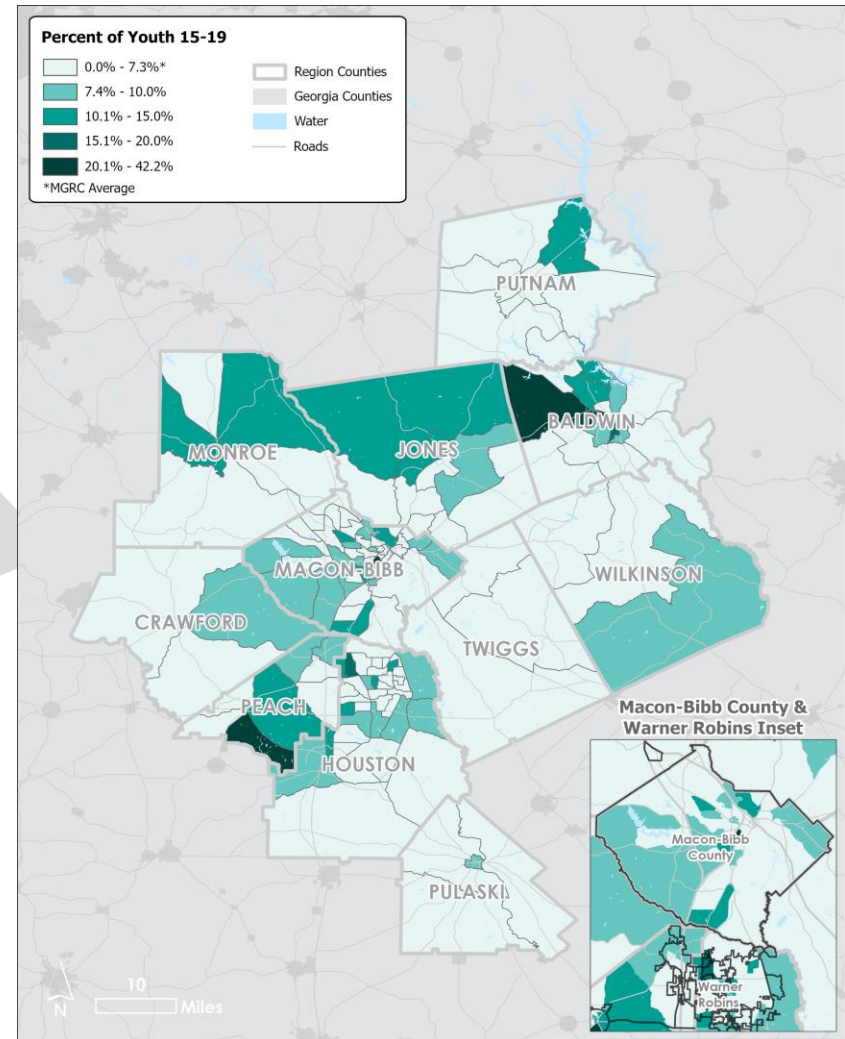
This document defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 19. According to **Table 5**, Middle Georgia aligns closely with the state average (7.1 percent) in the percentage of youth aged 15 to 19. **Figure 6** shows areas with the highest concentration of this age group are predominantly located in and around cities like Fort Valley in Peach County, Milledgeville in Baldwin County, and Warner Robins in Houston County. High concentrations of youth populations in those areas are particularly tied to Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, as well as Georgia College and State University and Georgia Military College in Milledgeville.

Table 5: Youth Population

Geography	Total Population	Total 15-19	Percent 15-19
MGRC	506,703	37,217	7.3%
Georgia	10,625,615	752,682	7.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 6: Youth Population by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.4.4 Zero-Car Households

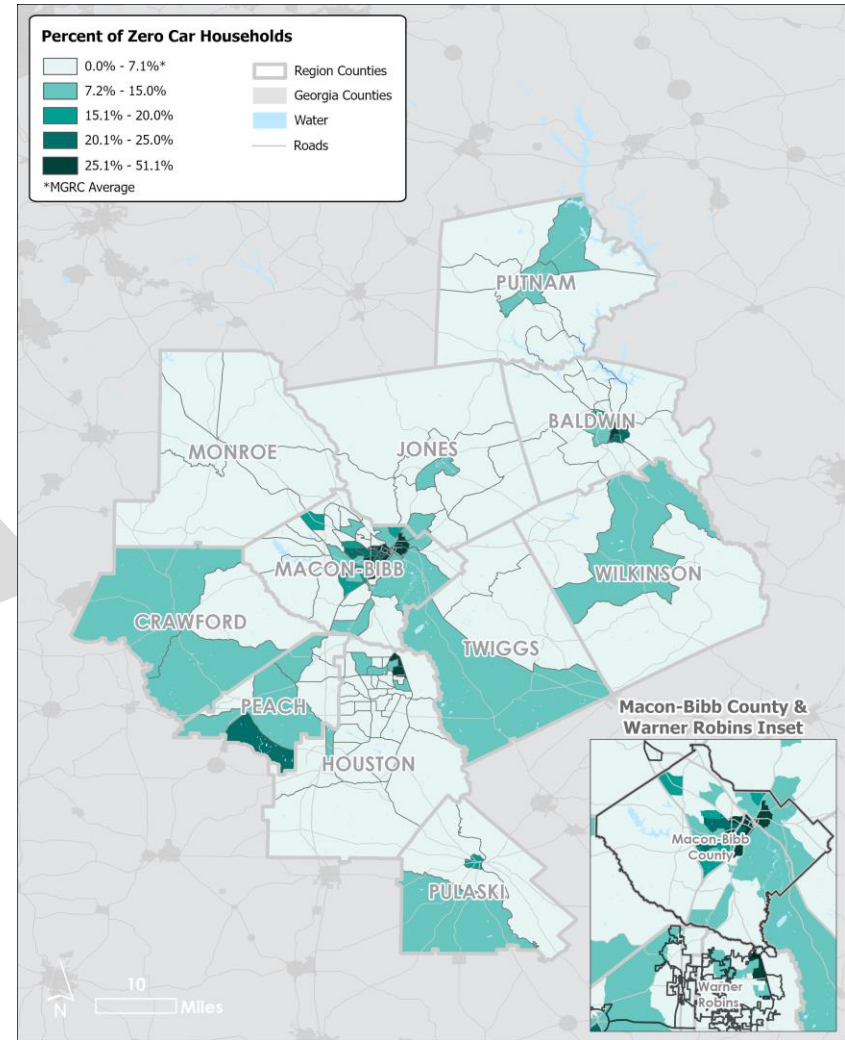
Zero-car households lack access to a vehicle for transportation. These populations may rely on transit or another form of transportation to meet their daily needs. In Middle Georgia, **Table 6** indicates 7.1 percent of households do not own a vehicle, slightly exceeding the state average of 6.1 percent. **Figure 7** reveals zero-car households in the region are largely found in and around the cities with access to transit service of some kind. One exception to this is the city of Warner Robins in Houston County, which features census tracts with high percentages of zero-car households despite limited transit services. Additionally, some of the areas with a high percentage of zero-car households are home to colleges with a large surrounding residential student population, like Milledgeville in Baldwin County. Some census tracts in this city report over 30 percent of households without a car. Another high concentration of zero-car households can be found in Macon-Bibb County.

Table 6: Zero-Car Households

Geography	Total Households	Total Zero-Car Households	Percent Zero-Car Households
MGRC	188,113	13,370	7.1%
Georgia	3,885,371	236,209	6.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 7: Zero-Car Households by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.4.5 Population with a Disability

Populations with a disability may rely on transit to access destinations and provide mobility. The U.S. Census Bureau defines populations with a disability as individuals having hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living difficulties.

As illustrated in **Table 7**, residents in Middle Georgia are more likely to face challenges due to disabilities (15.1 percent) compared to the overall state average of 12.4 percent. Areas with a high concentration of residents with a disability often coincide with areas having more senior residents, like south Putnam County, south Houston County, south Pulaski County, and suburban Macon-Bibb County. While Middle Georgia generally follows this pattern, there are differences. **Figure 8** identifies the specific areas with the highest concentration of residents with a disability.

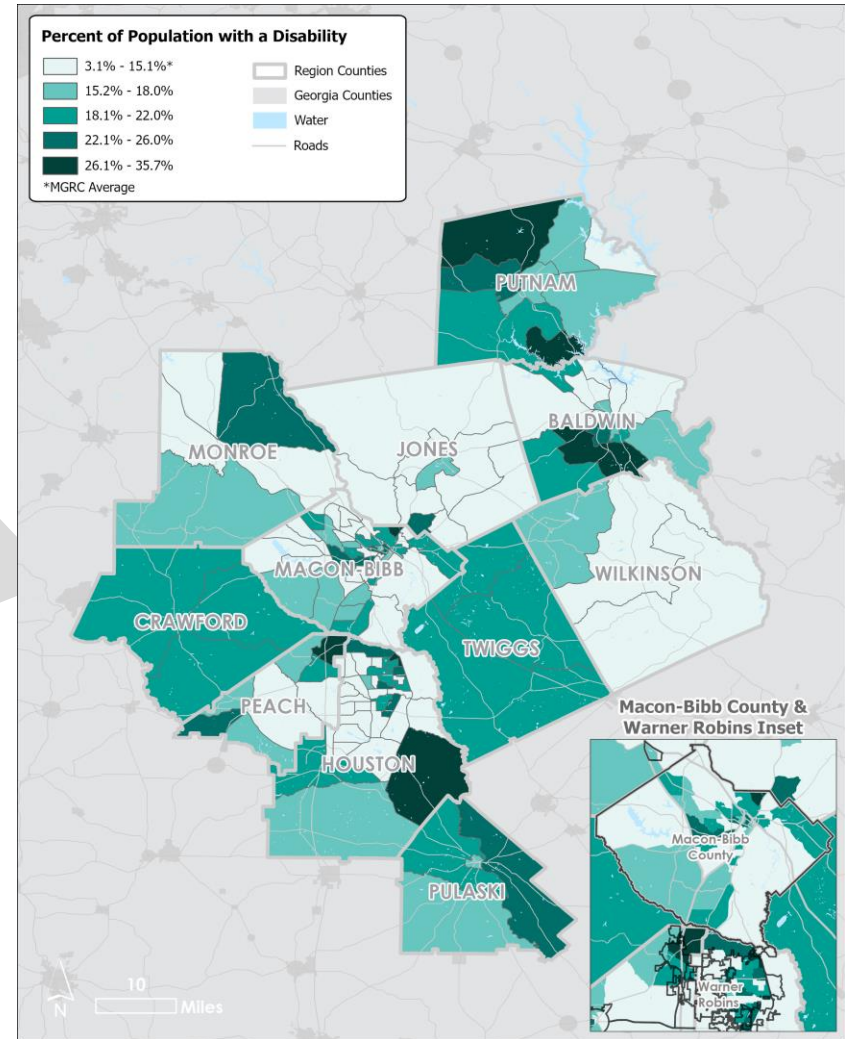
Zooming in, Crawford County stands out with the highest share of residents with a disability (21 percent), emphasizing the unique challenges in this community. Across the region, Macon-Bibb County has the highest total number of residents living with a disability, totaling around 24,000 individuals. Houston County, in contrast, reports the lowest share of disabled residents at 12.6 percent, indicating a comparatively lower prevalence of disabilities in that part of the region.

Table 7: Populations with a Disability

Geography	Total Population for Disabled	Total Disabled	Percent Disabled
MGRC	492,362	74,513	15.1%
Georgia	10,438,528	1,297,020	12.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 8: Populations with a Disability by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.5 Title VI

According to Federal Transit Administration Circular 4702.1B, Title VI prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance (e.g., states, local governments, transit providers) from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin in their programs or activities. Title VI also obligates federal funding agencies to enforce compliance. Two demographic groups covered by Title VI, minority and limited English proficiency populations, are discussed below.

2.5.1 Minority

The U.S Census Bureau defines minority as populations with an ethnicity of Hispanic or Latino and/or those who identify as the following:

- Black or African American
- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- Other
- Two or More Races

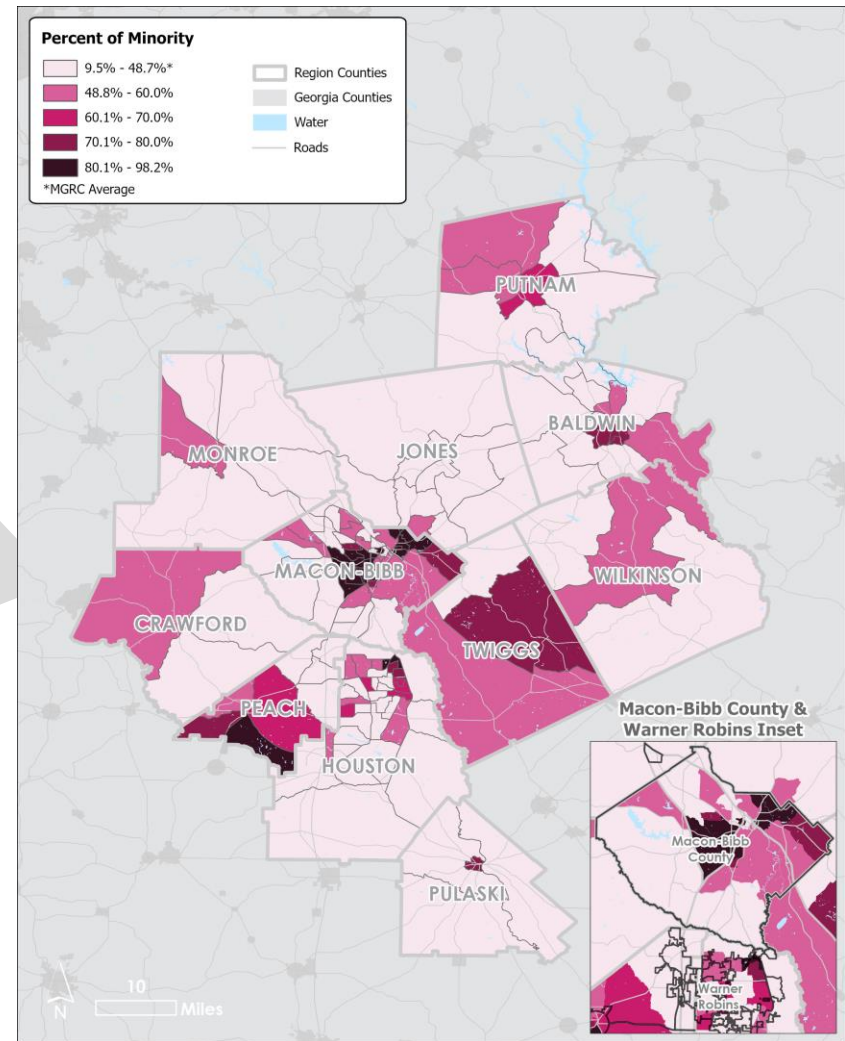
Table 8 shows that 48.7 percent of population in Middle Georgia consists of minority residents, a percentage closely mirroring the state average of 48.6 percent. **Figure 9** highlights that the highest concentration of minority residents is located in central Macon-Bibb County, with the proportion exceeding 90 percent.

Table 8: Minority Population

Geography	Total Population	Total Minority	Percent Minority
MGRC	506,703	246,918	48.7%
Georgia	10,625,615	5,162,942	48.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 9: Minority Population by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.5.2 Limited English Proficiency

Limited English proficiency (LEP) populations are populations that speak English less than very well (i.e., well, not well, or not at all). The U.S Census Bureau collects this information for people five years of age and older.

Table 9 highlights that 2.1 percent of Middle Georgia’s residents face challenges with limited English proficiency, which is below the state average of 5.4 percent. The most common language spoken by LEP residents is Spanish, representing 52 percent of the LEP population and 1 percent of total population (5,302 residents). This Spanish-speaking demographic is predominantly found in Houston County and Macon-Bibb County. The second most common language spoken by LEP residents is Vietnamese, accounting for around 1,602 residents in the region.

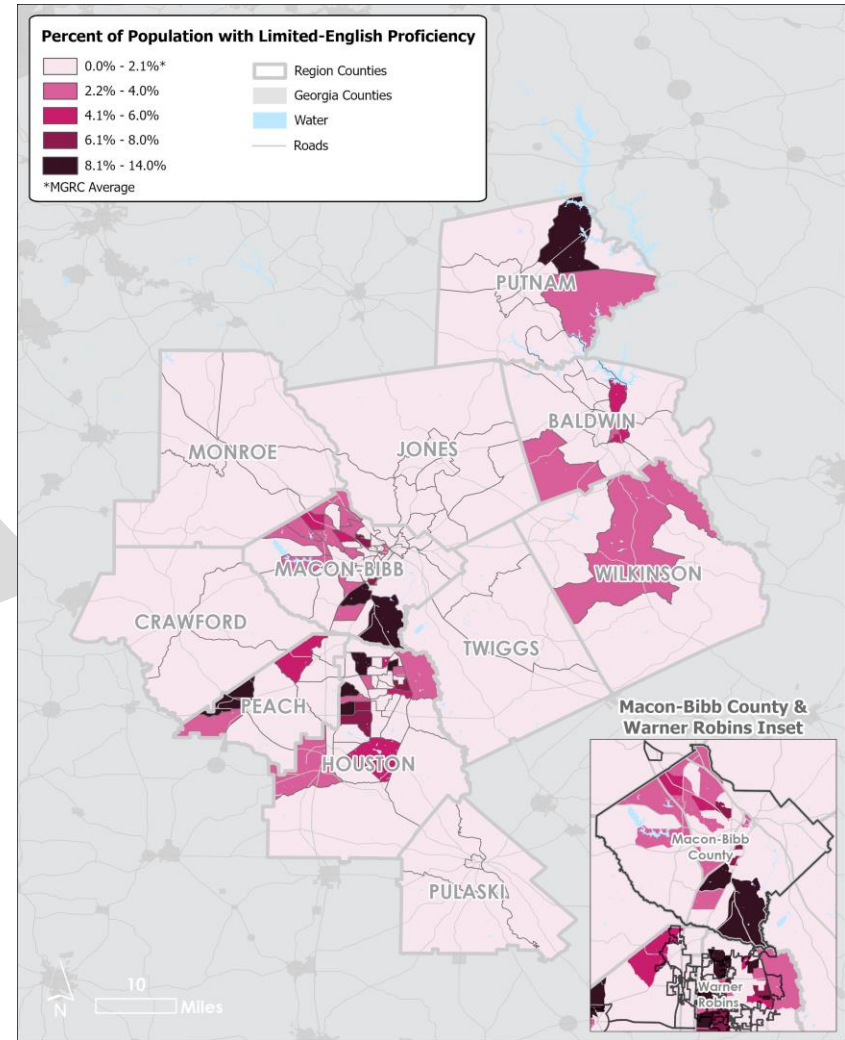
As shown in **Figure 10**, areas with the highest concentrations of LEP residents are primarily located in urban areas in and around Macon-Bibb County and Warner Robins, where more than 10 percent of the population face English proficiency challenges.

Table 9: LEP Populations

Geography	Total Population Ages 5+	Total LEP	Percent LEP
MGRC	476,622	10,142	2.1%
Georgia	9,981,897	541,595	5.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 10: LEP Populations by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

2.5.3 Transportation-Disadvantaged Communities

In 2021, the Biden administration issued Executive Order 14008 establishing the Justice40 Initiative, which seeks to ensure that disadvantaged communities (DACs) receive 40% of the overall benefits of federal investments in climate and clean energy programs, including sustainable transportation. As part of implementing Justice40, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) developed several tools to measure historical disadvantage across the nation. This report uses USDOT's Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer tool to assess disadvantage in Middle Georgia.¹ This tool takes into account five components of disadvantage, with each component comprising multiple indicators. These components are:

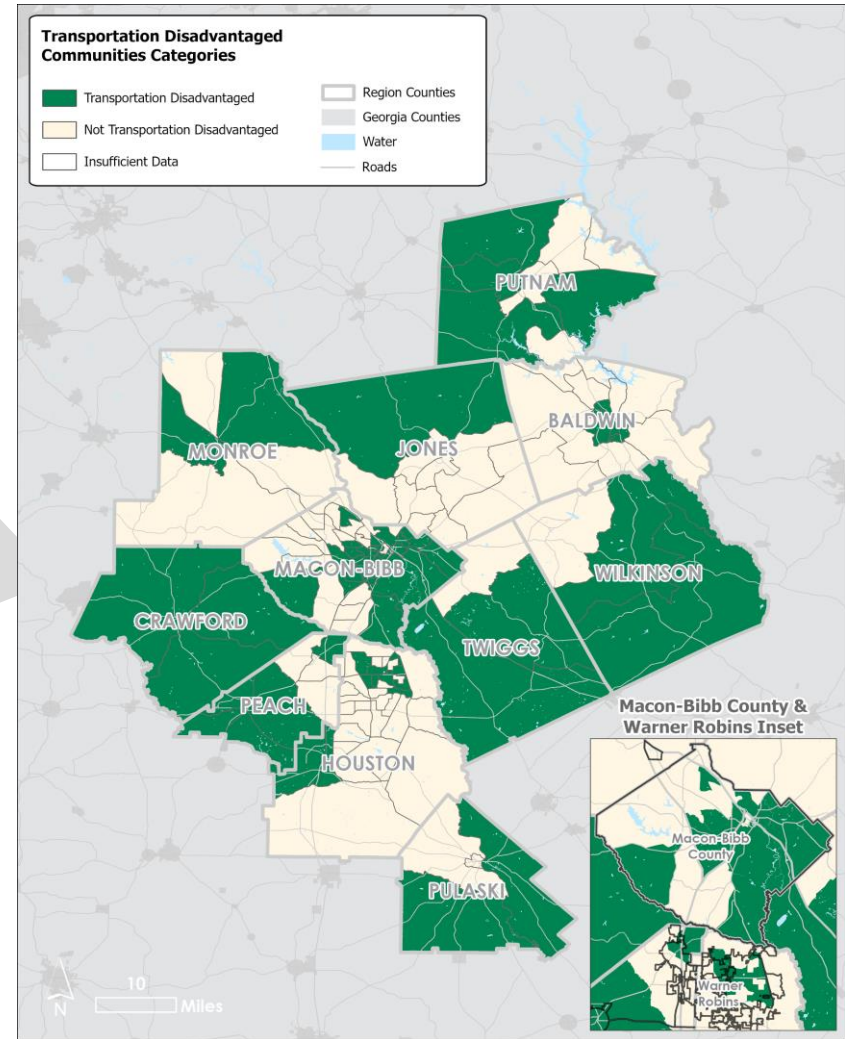
- **Transportation Insecurity:** Considers transportation access, transportation cost burden, and transportation safety to assess residents' ability to easily address their daily transportation needs.
- **Environmental Burden:** Considers sixteen environmental indicators measuring air and water pollutant exposure, proximity to known emitters of air, soil, noise, water, or light pollution, and percentage of pre-1980s housing, which is predictive of lead exposure.
- **Social Vulnerability:** Looks at 12 socioeconomic indicators that have a direct impact on a population's quality of life, including unemployment levels, housing cost burden, and lack of internet access. This component also includes many of the socioeconomic factors covered in **Section 2.4** and **Section 2.5**.
- **Health Vulnerability:** Assesses an area's frequency of health conditions by measuring the prevalence of five chronic health conditions that can be caused by environmental factors: asthma, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and low mental health.
- **Climate and Disaster Risk Burden:** Measures the risk an area faces from increased chances for climate or disaster events. Indicators include anticipated changes in extreme weather, annualized disaster losses, and impervious surface percentage.

¹<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0920984aa80a4362b8778d779b090723/page/ETC-Explorer---Homepage/>

Figure 11 shows which tracts in Middle Georgia are designated as disadvantaged. These designations typically follow the trends seen for many of the previously analyzed demographic factors, with disadvantaged areas most likely to be in either rural outskirts or urban centers.

In total, 47 percent of Middle Georgia’s land area falls within a census tract designated as historically disadvantaged. These tracts are home to 42 percent of the region’s residents. Residents living within one of Middle Georgia’s historically disadvantaged areas are 65 percent more likely to lack vehicle access than the average regional resident.

Figure 11: Transportation Disadvantages by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Department of Transportation ETC Explorer Tool

DRAFT

2.6 Future Demographics

Population projections provide insight on the growth of geographic areas. The Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget issues a population projection series by county. Based on the 2020 Census count, these data use birth rates and other growth factors to extrapolate population for each year from 2022 to 2060. Much like the differences seen between U.S. Census and ACS data, differences in methodology can lead to variations across datasets.

The region is projected to see modest growth in the coming decades, with a projected population of 612,190 by 2060, reflecting an increase of 21.1 percent from the 2020 population. This growth is less than half of the state’s projected 32.1 percent growth by 2060 (see **Table 10**). Most of this growth is expected to be driven by Houston, Monroe, Putnam, and Peach Counties. All other counties are expected to see a decline in population by 2060. Some of the region’s more rural counties, like Wilkinson, Twiggs, and Pulaski, are predicted to experience steep declines, exceeding 10 percent. **Figure 12** displays the projected population by decade for all 11 counties in the region.

Figure 12: Population Projections by County

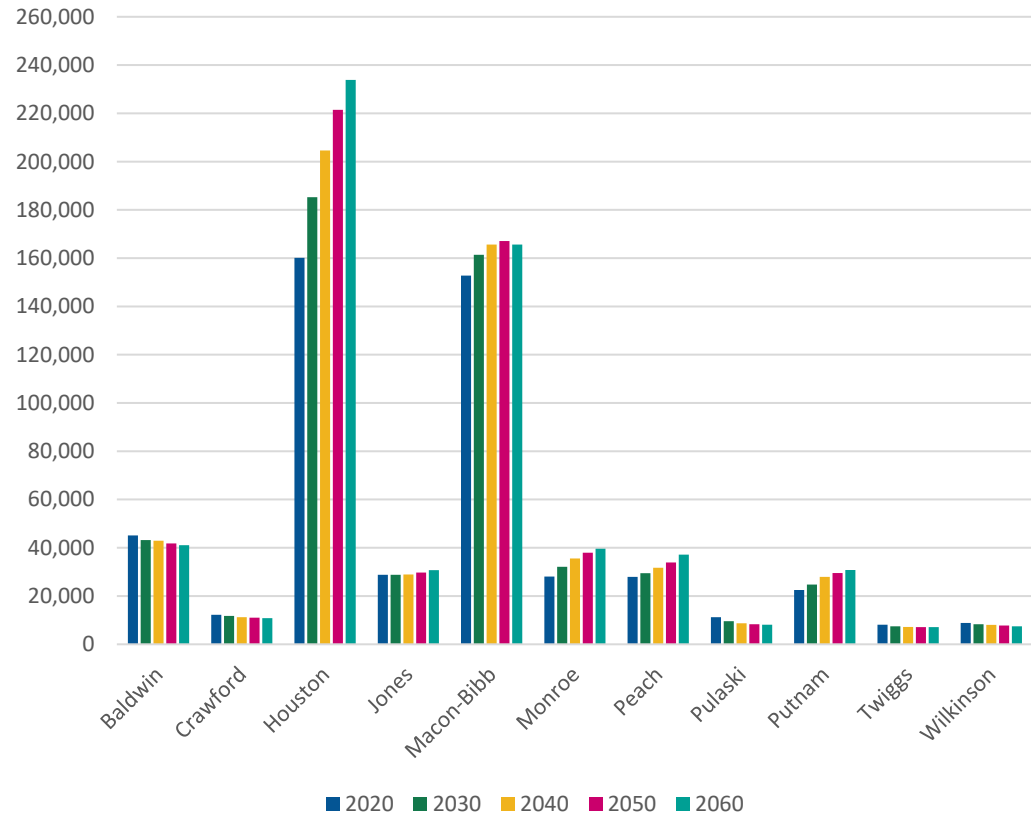


Table 10: Population Projections

Geography	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
MGRC	505,582	541,927	572,352	595,516	612,190
Georgia	10,710,017	11,764,473	12,786,367	13,545,662	14,147,873

Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Series 2023

3.0 Employment Trends

This section analyzes the current and future employment landscape for the Middle Georgia region, including workforce growth, job concentrations, and major industries operating in the area.

3.1 Current Employment

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2021 American Community Survey, the Middle Georgia region has its highest concentrations of employment in Houston and Macon-Bibb Counties, which constitute over 60% of the region’s employment combined. With a population of over 400,000 people who are age 16 and older, nearly 60% of the region’s residents participate in the labor force. In contrast, less than half of the populations in Pulaski, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties participate in the labor force. Employment by county and the percentage that each county contributes to the region’s total employed population is reflected in **Table 11**.

Table 11: Employment by County

County	Total Employed Population	Percent of Region’s Total Employed Population
Baldwin	18,877	8.00%
Crawford	5,328	2.26%
Houston	82,574	35.01%
Jones	13,370	5.67%
Macon-Bibb	70,385	29.84%
Monroe	13,162	5.58%
Peach	12,565	5.33%
Pulaski	3,914	1.66%
Putnam	9,408	3.99%
Twiggs	2,951	1.25%
Wilkinson	3,333	1.41%
MGRC	235,867	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

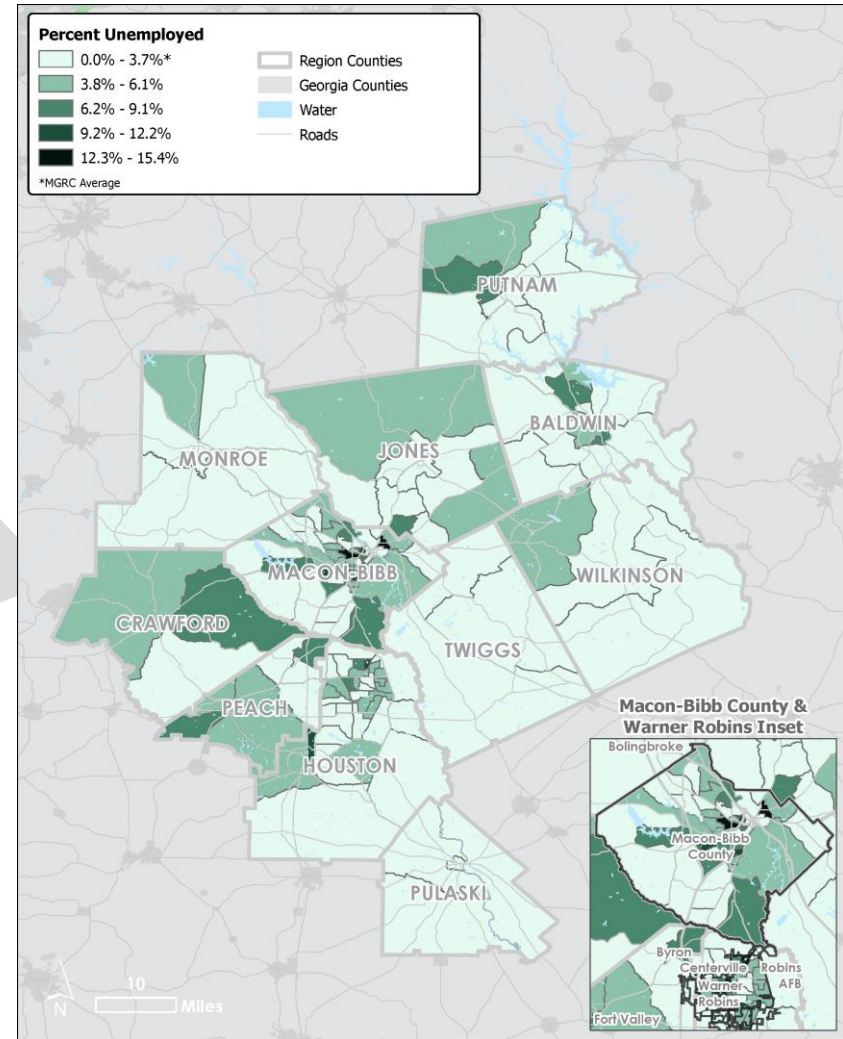
According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data, nearly 15,000 persons are unemployed in the Middle Georgia region. This number equates to a 3.70 percent unemployment rate. This is a higher percentage than the state’s overall unemployment rate of 3.47 percent using the same dataset. This comparison is reflected in **Table 12**. The highest tracts of unemployment occur in the region’s most heavily populated counties, which are Macon-Bibb and Houston Counties. **Figure 13** displays the percentage of the residents that are unemployed by census tract. Looking at more recent data, January 2024 monthly employment data from GDOL shows the region’s unemployment rate (3.3%) more closely keeping pace with the state’s rate (3.1%).²

Table 12: Unemployed Population

Geography	Total Population 16+	Total Labor Force	Total Unemployed	Percent Unemployed
MGRC	401,952	235,867	14,867	3.70%
Georgia	8,385,039	5,329,864	290,843	3.47%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

Figure 13: Unemployment by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Data

² <https://dol.georgia.gov/area-unemployment-rate-and-labor-force-estimates>

3.2 Current Job Concentration

The U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program provides workforce data through its LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, or LODES.

Data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) shows that while agriculture contributes to the economies of every county in the region, this industry is most prominent in Crawford, Monroe, Peach, and Pulaski Counties. According to the 2022 USDA AgCensus, fruit and tree nuts and poultry are some of the top agricultural products produced in the region.

Though data on agricultural production is provided by USDA, agriculture's impact as a source of employment remains more difficult to quantify. Agricultural labor data is complicated by factors like seasonal fluctuation and the involvement of farmworkers that are self-employed, part-time, family members, or undocumented workers. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) focuses employment statistics on nonfarm payrolls, which exclude the self-employed, private household employees, volunteers, and farm employees. Both LODES and the GDOL utilize BLS data for their jobs, employment, and industry mix releases.

Figure 14 shows the number of jobs for each census block in 2021 available from LODES.

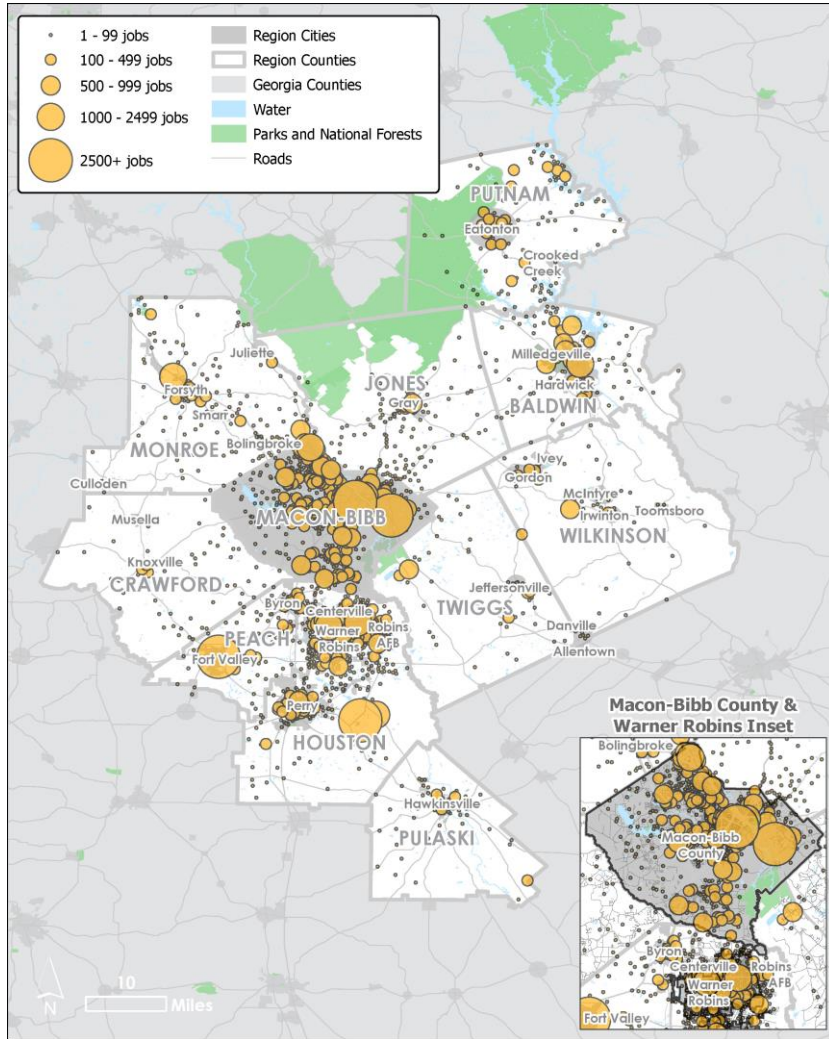
The highest job concentrations are in Macon-Bibb County and the Warner Robins area. In addition, there are areas of high employment activity in Peach and Baldwin Counties.

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Figure 14: Job Concentration by Census Block

Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics



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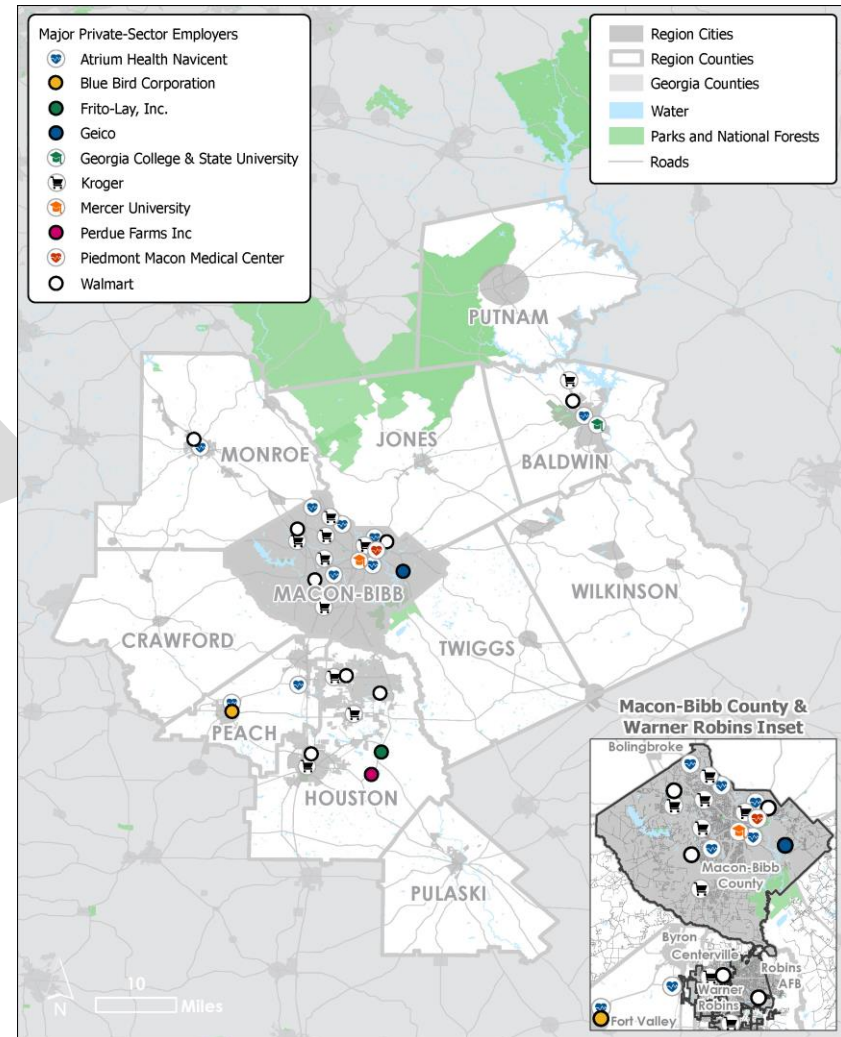
3.3 Major Industries

According to GDOL, the industries employing the most people in Middle Georgia are Government (23.7 percent), Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (18.0 percent), Education and Health Services (15.2 percent), Leisure and Hospitality (11.5 percent), and Professional and Business Services (9.8 percent).

- Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins is a major employer for both civilians and military personnel.
- The region’s top healthcare employers include Piedmont Macon Medical Center in Macon-Bibb County and Atrium Health Navicent locations in Baldwin, Macon-Bibb, Monroe, and Peach Counties. While not in the top ten private employers in the region, there are also Houston Medical facilities in Perry and Warner Robins.
- Insurance company Geico employs a large number of people at a regional office in Macon-Bibb County, though the company announced a round of layoffs in October 2023.
- Both Mercer and Georgia College place in the top ten largest employers in the region by employing many faculty and staff in Baldwin and Macon-Bibb Counties.
- Big-box retailers and grocers like Walmart and Kroger are major employers with multiple sites across the region.
- The Frito-Lay plant in Perry is the company’s largest snack manufacturing plant in the country.
- Blue Bird Corporation was founded in Fort Valley, with a fabrication facility and the main manufacturing facility located in town.
- Perdue Farms, Inc. is one of the nation’s largest processors of poultry, employing hundreds at their Perry Cook Plant, producing frozen chicken products.

The region’s top private-sector employers are shown alphabetically in **Figure 15**.

Figure 15: Major Private-Sector Employers



Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Labor Profile

3.4 Future Employment Trends

Table 13 provides the Georgia Department of Labor’s industry projections through 2030 for major industry subsectors. The Food Services and Drinking Places subsector is projected for the largest total increase (3,700 new jobs). The Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries subsector is projected for the largest percentage increase (34.29%). These industries contribute to Middle Georgia’s visitor and tourism economy.

Like many areas in the state, Middle Georgia is projected to see large increases in the healthcare sector, largely driven by increases in the number of those employed in the Ambulatory Health Care Services subsector, which is forecast to add 2,190 jobs by 2030. Other significant growth subsectors within the healthcare and human services industry include Hospitals (850 new jobs), Social Assistance (790 new jobs), and Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (630 new jobs).

Food Manufacturing is projected to add 780 new jobs in the region. The related Warehousing and Storage subsector is also expected to add 720 jobs over the next decade. Other major subsectors projected for growth tend to be in the service or trade industries. In total, the region is expected to add 14,200 new jobs by 2030.

Table 13: Industry Projections

Industry Title	2020-2030 Employment Change	
	Total	Percent
Food Services and Drinking Places	3,700	21.55%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	2,190	19.13%
Hospitals	850	8.55%
Social Assistance	790	25.24%
Food Manufacturing	780	18.18%
General Merchandise Stores	740	13.94%
Warehousing and Storage	720	32.73%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	630	14.52%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	580	7.09%
Educational Services	540	2.96%
Administrative and Support Services	470	10.09%
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	360	34.29%
Food and Beverage Stores	340	7.85%
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	310	25.62%
Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	240	17.39%
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	200	5.13%
Health and Personal Care Stores	180	13.04%
Repair and Maintenance	180	10.65%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Long-Term Industry Projections

4.0 Travel Trends

This section includes information on travel patterns within the Middle Georgia region. Understanding regional travel patterns will help identify intra- and cross-county traffic flows as well as transit demand in the region.

4.1 Background

The Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) platform and the INRIX Analytics suite provide information on travel patterns based on millions of data points collected daily. For this report, the data trends covered in the following subsections are based on RITIS INRIX origin-destination trip data from January 2022 through December 2022. The origin-destination data includes all trips across all modes in 2022.

4.2 Geographic Areas for Travel Trends Analysis

The analysis of travel trends in Middle Georgia includes all counties within the region and all counties that share a border with the region, including the following:

- Five counties in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha region: Bleckley, Dodge, Johnson, Laurens, and Wilcox
- Three counties in the Northeast Georgia region: Greene, Jasper, and Morgan
- Three counties in the River Valley region: Dooly, Macon, and Taylor
- Three counties in the Three Rivers region: Butts, Lamar, and Upson
- Two counties in the Central Savannah River Area: Hancock and Washington

4.3 Travel Patterns within the Region

The major travel pattern in the Middle Georgia region is intra-county travel, with 81 percent of trips reporting origins and destinations within the same county for the 2022 study period. As shown in **Table 14**, the counties with the highest percentage of internal trips are Houston and Macon-Bibb.

Table 14: Total Trips and Intra-County Percentage (2022)

County	Total Trips	Intra-County Trip Percentage
Houston	25,401,298	29.65%
Macon-Bibb	21,711,168	25.35%
Baldwin	7,413,781	8.66%
Monroe	3,623,563	4.23%
Jones	3,020,836	3.53%
Putnam	2,700,043	3.15%
Peach	2,447,310	2.86%
Pulaski	1,203,332	1.40%
Wilkinson	766,660	0.90%
Crawford	732,038	0.85%
Twiggs	487,109	0.57%

Source: Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS), Trip Analytics. INRIX sample trip totals collected: All months 2022.

Inter-county travel is also a major contributor for a significant number of trips, with trip origins and destinations in Macon-Bibb County reporting the highest overall number of inter-county trips. The following three county pairs reported the most trips:

- Macon-Bibb and Houston Counties,
- Houston and Peach Counties,
- Monroe and Macon-Bibb Counties, and
- Macon-Bibb and Jones Counties.

Figure 16 illustrates inter-county travel patterns, and **Table 15** provides the top origin-destination pairs and total number of trips for the time period analyzed – January 2022 to December 2022.

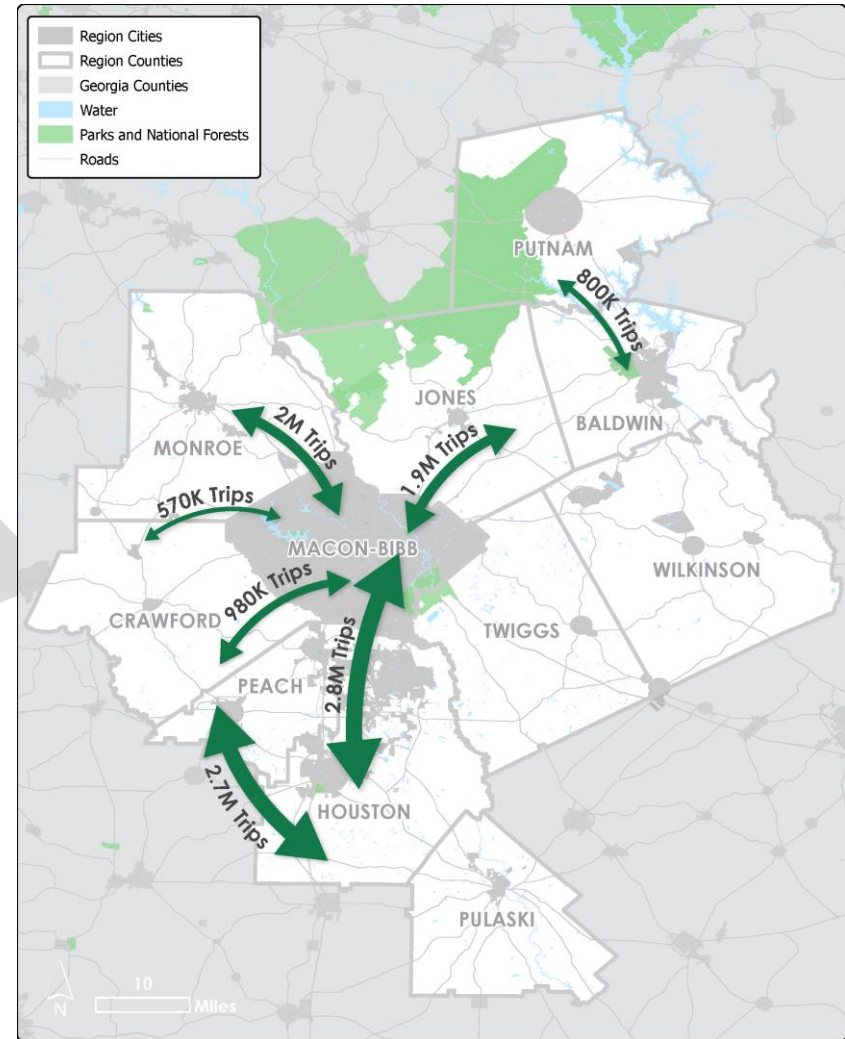
County pairs with fewer than 500,000 total trips during the study period are not included in the table or corresponding figure.

Table 15: Inter-County Trips in the Region (2022)

Origin – Destination Pair	Total Trips
Macon-Bibb – Houston	2,863,516
Houston – Peach	2,707,514
Monroe – Macon-Bibb	2,048,319
Macon-Bibb – Jones	1,914,582
Peach – Macon-Bibb	986,822
Putnam – Baldwin	805,235
Macon-Bibb – Crawford	574,407

Source: Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS), Trip Analytics. INRIX sample trip totals collected: All months 2022.

Figure 16: Inter-County Travel in the Region (2022)

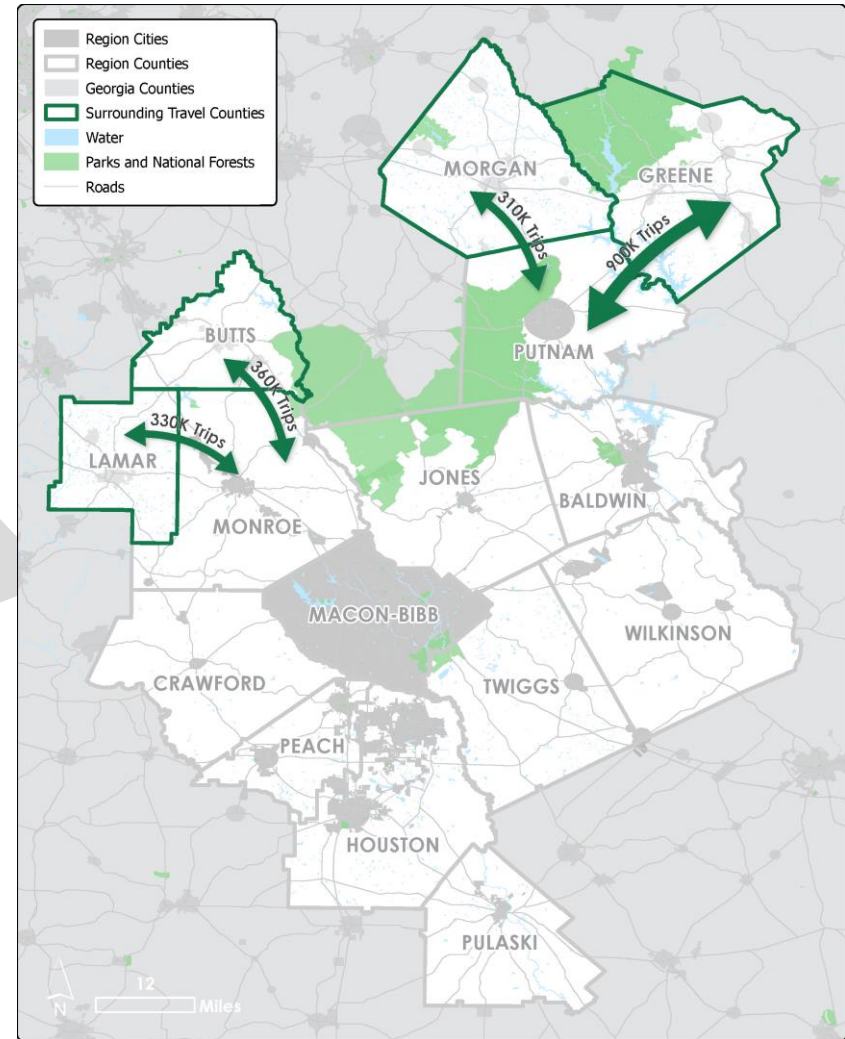


Source: RITIS INRIX Origin-Destination Data

4.4 Travel Patterns between the Region and Surrounding Areas

Inter-region and inter-state travel are important to analyze as key components of Middle Georgia’s overall travel trends. **Figure 17** illustrates these inter-region and inter-state travel trends in the analysis period. County pairs with fewer than 300,000 total trips during the study period are not included in the figure. Additionally, **Table 16** and **Table 17** provide an overview of the total trips between Middle Georgia and neighboring counties. The highest number of trips are recorded in inter-regional travel to the Northeast Georgia region (between Putnam and Greene Counties and between Putnam and Morgan Counties) and to the Three Rivers region (between Monroe and Lamar Counties and between Monroe and Butts Counties).

Figure 17: Inter-Regional Travel (2022)



Source: RITIS INRIX Origin-Destination Data

Table 16: Origin-Destination Pairs where Destination is Outside of the Region (2022)

Origin	Destination	Total Trips
Putnam County	Greene County	449,453
Monroe County	Butts County	175,844
Monroe County	Lamar County	164,731
Putnam County	Morgan County	155,972
Houston County	Dooly County	150,399
Macon-Bibb County	Laurens County	143,914
Houston County	Macon County	133,392
Houston County	Bleckley County	127,048
Baldwin County	Hancock County	111,687
Macon-Bibb County	Butts County	98,699
Baldwin County	Washington County	94,317
Houston County	Laurens County	90,740
Pulaski County	Bleckley County	88,746
Twiggs County	Laurens County	77,037

Source: Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS), Trip Analytics. INRIX sample trip totals collected: All months 2022.

Table 17: Origin-Destination Pairs where Origin is Outside of the Region (2022)

Origin	Destination	Total Trips
Greene County	Putnam County	453,722
Butts County	Monroe County	183,075
Lamar County	Monroe County	165,782
Morgan County	Putnam County	157,654
Dooly County	Houston County	149,384
Laurens County	Macon-Bibb County	140,553
Macon County	Houston County	130,539
Bleckley County	Houston County	124,608
Hancock County	Baldwin County	107,746
Butts County	Macon-Bibb County	102,512
Washington County	Baldwin County	92,288
Laurens County	Houston County	89,698
Bleckley County	Pulaski County	90,750
Laurens County	Wilkinson County	78,420

Source: Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS), Trip Analytics. INRIX sample trip totals collected: All months 2022.

4.5 Impacts of COVID-19 on Travel Patterns

The COVID-19 pandemic altered travel patterns across the country, including throughout the Middle Georgia region. The GDOT Traffic Analysis and Data Application (TADA) Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) 2019-2021 data set provides evidence that the number of trips decreased during COVID-19. In 2021, transit trips in the region fell 37.9 percent compared to 2019 levels but rose 29.5 percent from 2021 to 2022.

Trips that are normally classified as “essential,” such as medical appointments, occurred less frequently during the pandemic. Healthy individuals put off routine healthcare visits or were able to take advantage of telehealth appointments.

As for work trips, many industries shifted to remote work at the beginning of the pandemic. Where possible, the remote work lifestyle continued even as pandemic restrictions lifted. Many major industries in Middle Georgia, such as education, essential healthcare positions, and hospitality, are not conducive to remote work.

Pandemic precautions limited and discouraged in-person gatherings, particularly in densely populated areas. As a result, many in-state college students returned home and completed their classes virtually. This situation resulted in lower activity in the vicinity of the region’s colleges and universities, particularly in Macon-Bibb County and the Milledgeville area, which are home to colleges like Mercer University, Middle Georgia State University, and Georgia College and State University.

Leisure travel was impacted at the beginning of the pandemic, but Middle Georgia is known for its wealth of outdoor experiences that people can enjoy safely. National reports found that camping, particularly recreational vehicle camping, surged during the pandemic as individuals sought ways to travel in an isolated manner. There is a national park (Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park in Macon-Bibb County), two state parks (Dames Ferry Campground and High Falls State Park in Monroe County), and many campgrounds with recreational vehicle parking in the region.

National public and private transit experienced lower ridership during the pandemic as many people feared traveling in the same vehicle as others. As case numbers ebbed and flowed, transit also went through waves of increased and decreased ridership. Transit ridership in Middle Georgia had not recovered to pre-pandemic levels by 2022, but additional ridership recovery has been recorded throughout 2023.

5.0 Existing Transportation Network

The following section has information on the transportation network, including an overview of the roadway system, traffic volumes, and traffic count percent change over time.

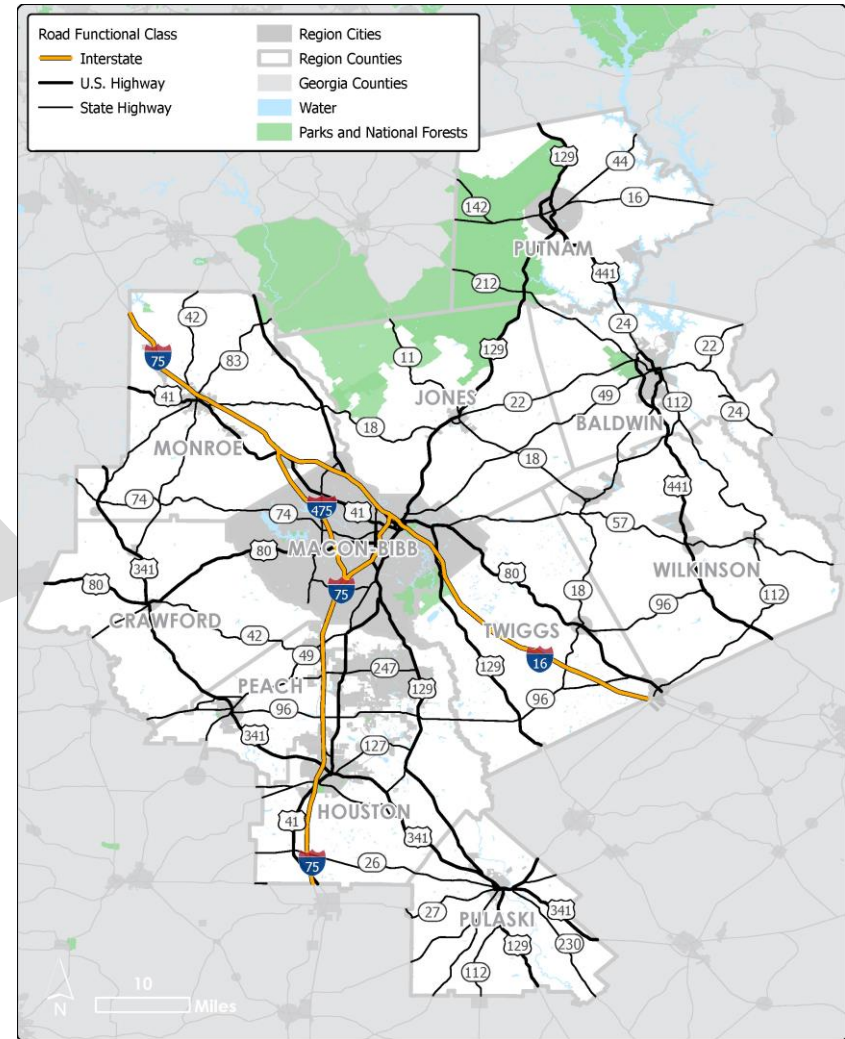
5.1 Transportation System Overview

The transportation system in Middle Georgia primarily consists of the roadway network, demand-response and fixed-route transit services, non-motorized facilities such as sidewalks and bike lanes, and intercity transportation options like intercity bus. As shown in **Figure 18**, there are several highly traveled Interstate highways, along with United States Highways and State Routes that provide connectivity for the region.

Major corridors that serve the region include:

- Interstate 75 (I-75), the region’s main north-south route, which runs from the Lamar County border to the Dooly County border near Unadilla.
- I-16, which connects Macon-Bibb County with Savannah and on to Atlanta via I-75.
- I-475, which splits off from I-75 and bypasses Macon-Bibb, providing a route for through traffic between northwest of the region and the south.
- United States Highway 129 (US 129), which connects Putnam and Jones Counties with Macon-Bibb County and other areas to the south.
- US 80, which connects Crawford County to Macon-Bibb and Twiggs Counties, at which point it runs roughly parallel to I-16.

Figure 18: Existing U.S. and State Highway Network



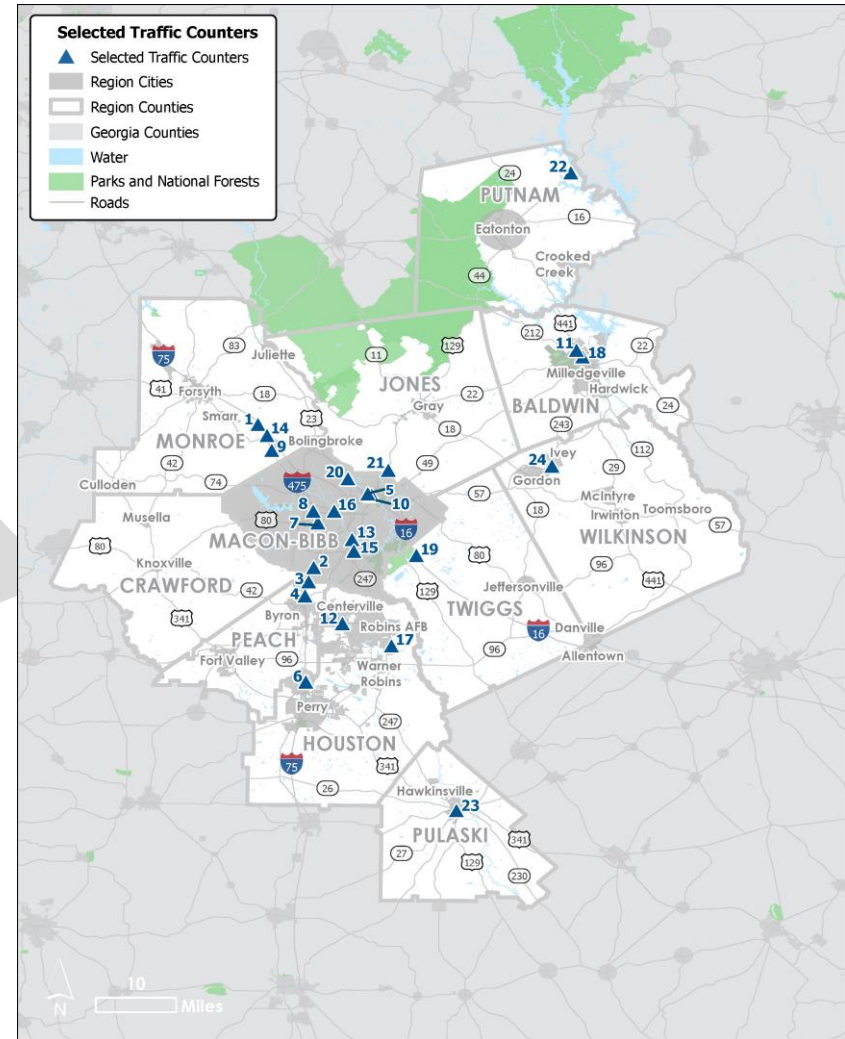
Sources: GDOT, U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics

5.1.1 Annual Average Daily Traffic

GDOT collects and reports traffic volume for all vehicle classes (car, single-unit truck, multi-unit truck) throughout the state of Georgia from traffic count stations, measured as Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT). This traffic volume provides valuable data and critical information for federal reporting and for analyzing traffic patterns and other statistics.

Figure 19 shows the location of selected count stations. For the purposes of this analysis, count stations were selected along the major routes and spread out geographically across the region. Each county has at least one count station. The busiest counter in the region, along I-75 in Monroe County, had an AADT of 97,200 in 2022, a 6.1 percent increase over 2019 counts. Most of the sampled counters saw increases during this time period. Complete details for these counters are provided in **Table 18**.

Figure 19: Selected Counters for Annual Average Daily Traffic



Source: GDOT Road and Traffic Data

Table 18: Average Annual Daily Traffic

Map ID	GDOT Traffic Counter ID	Roadway Functional Class	Roadway Name	County	2019 AADT	2022 AADT	% Change
1	207-0224	Rural Principal Arterial - Interstate	I-75	Monroe	91,600	97,200	6.1%
2	021-0329	Urban Principal Arterial - Interstate	I-75	Macon-Bibb	83,100	94,600	13.8%
3	079-0165	Rural Principal Arterial - Interstate	I-75	Crawford	80,700	93,400	15.7%
4	225-0112	Urban Principal Arterial - Interstate	I-75	Peach	80,700	93,400	15.7%
5	021-0365	Urban Principal Arterial - Interstate	I-16	Macon-Bibb	89,600	92,300	3.0%
6	153-0205	Urban Principal Arterial – Interstate	I-75	Houston	63,200	72,400	14.6%
7	021-0378	Urban Principal Arterial – Interstate	I-475	Macon-Bibb	62,100	70,300	13.2%
8	021-0381	Urban Principal Arterial – Interstate	SR 408	Macon-Bibb	58,000	64,000	10.3%
9	207-0267	Urban Principal Arterial – Interstate	I-475	Monroe	42,400	44,400	4.7%
10	021-0038	Urban Principal Arterial – Other	US 129	Macon-Bibb	44,200	43,800	-0.9%
11	009-0165	Urban Principal Arterial – Other	SR 24	Baldwin	36,600	37,500	2.5%
12	153-0145	Urban Principal Arterial – Other	SR 247C	Houston	32,700	34,200	4.6%
13	021-0012	Urban Principal Arterial – Other	US 41	Macon-Bibb	40,800	31,600	-22.5%
14	207-9507	Urban Principal Arterial – Interstate	SR 408	Monroe	26,800	29,600	10.4%
15	021-0161	Urban Principal Arterial – Other	SR 247	Macon-Bibb	29,000	28,700	-1.0%
16	021-0198	Urban Minor Arterial	Mercer University Dr.	Macon-Bibb	29,700	27,400	-7.7%
17	153-0178	Urban Principal Arterial – Other	SR 247	Houston	29,000	26,600	-8.3%
18	009-0161	Urban Minor Arterial	US 441 Bus.	Baldwin	28,900	26,200	-9.3%
19	289-0189	Rural Principal Arterial – Interstate	I-16	Twiggs	26,000	26,100	0.4%
20	021-0234	Urban Minor Arterial	US 23	Macon-Bibb	25,600	24,500	-4.3%
21	169-0101	Urban Principal Arterial – Other	SR 22	Jones	17,700	18,200	2.8%
22	237-0146	Rural Minor Arterial	SR 44	Putnam	15,200	16,900	11.2%
23	235-0149	Rural Minor Arterial	SR 11	Pulaski	13,200	10,600	-19.7%
24	319-0214	Rural Principal Arterial – Other	SR 243	Wilkinson	7,330	7,510	2.5%

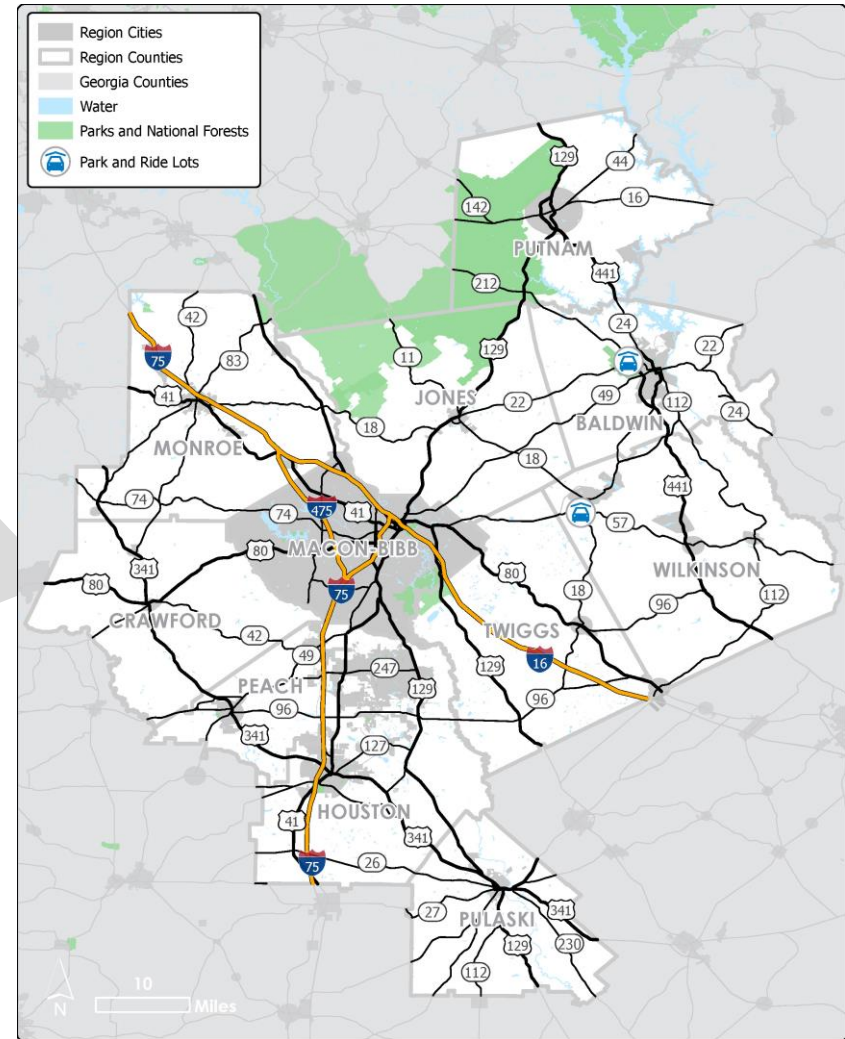
Source: GDOT Road and Traffic Data

5.2 Park and Ride Lots

Park and ride lots allow users to park and transfer to other modes of transportation, such as carpool, vanpool, etc. There are only two lots in the Middle Georgia region, as shown in **Figure 20**. Lots are located in Baldwin and Wilkinson Counties, in proximity to Milledgeville and Gordon.

- The lot in Baldwin County is at Walter B. Williams Jr. Park, northwest of Milledgeville near the intersection of SR 22/Glynn Street and SR 212. It contains 20 parking spaces.
- The lot in Wilkinson County is found south of Gordon, adjacent to a gas station at the intersection of SR 18 and SR 57. It also contains 20 spaces.

Figure 20: Park and Ride Lot Locations



Source: GDOT

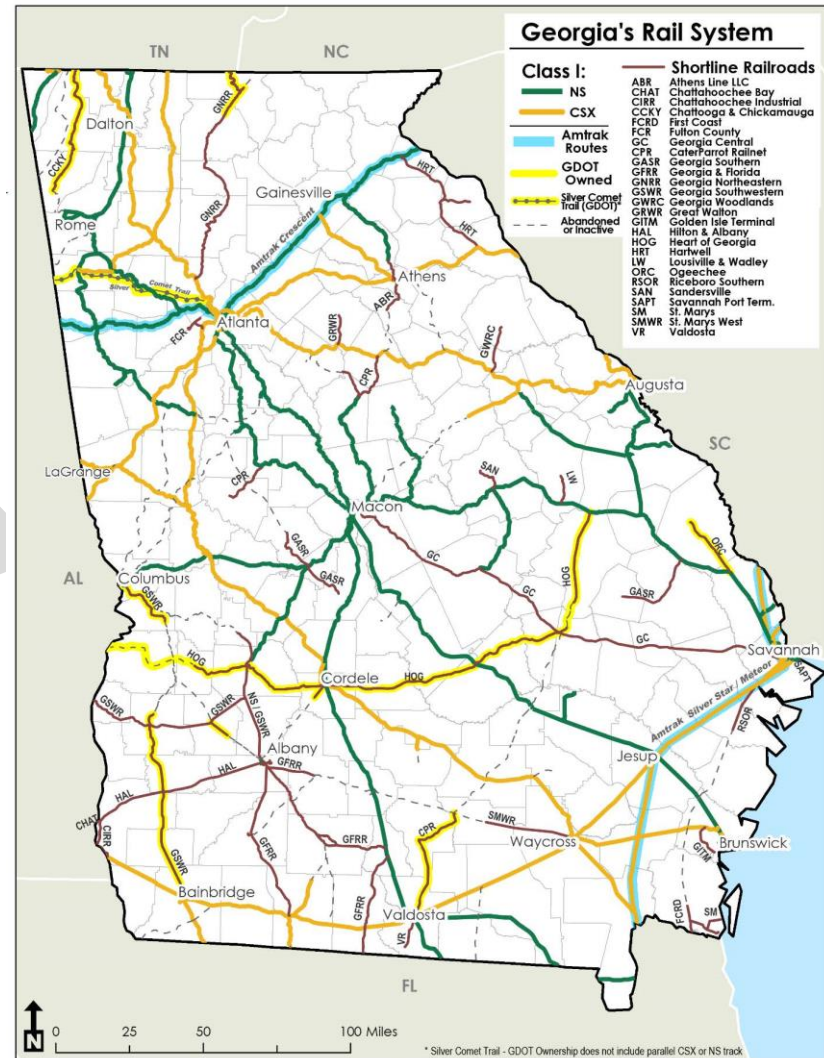
5.3 Rail

One Class I railroad operates within Middle Georgia. Several mainlines operated by Norfolk Southern (NS) pass through Macon-Bibb County. These mainlines provide connections from the Atlanta area to the southern portion of the state and south to Florida, and from the Ports of Brunswick and Savannah west to the Atlanta region and Alabama. Regional rail yards along the NS main lines include Brosnan, Gordon, and M&E Junction.

Class III shortlines in the region include the Georgia Central and Georgia Southern Railroads. A small portion of the CaterParrot Railnet Railroad passes through Putnam County. No regional shortlines are owned by GDOT. **Figure 21** shows these regional lines in relation to the state’s rail network.

There is currently no passenger rail service available within Middle Georgia. Macon was previously included as a station in proposed Atlanta to Macon and Macon to Albany intercity rail corridors within the Georgia Rail Passenger Program. In September 2023, GDOT began studying passenger rail service between Atlanta and Savannah. The Atlanta to Savannah Intercity Passenger Rail Project is currently identifying alternative routes within a 11,300 square-mile study area covering central and eastern Georgia. Macon has been identified as a potential station area.

Figure 21: State Rail Network



Source: GDOT Georgia State Rail Plan

5.4 Active Transportation

Active transportation refers to the concept of using walking or biking as a means of traveling from an origin to a destination. These means can occur on sidewalks, bikeways, or trails. Sidewalks are present in most Middle Georgia region municipalities. Macon-Bibb County, Milledgeville, and Warner Robins are the areas with the most sidewalk infrastructure. Additionally, Macon-Bibb County and Milledgeville have bike lanes and bike paths. Macon-Bibb County also has shared bike lanes. Middle Georgia has both statewide and regional bike routes:^{3 4}

Middle Georgia Bicycle Routes – Statewide

- March to the Sea – North/south starting north of Eatonton, GA (in Putnam County) and ending east of Milledgeville, GA (in Baldwin County)
- Central – North/south starting west of Forsyth, GA (in Monroe County) and ending south of Perry, GA (in Houston County)
- TransGeorgia – East/west starting in southern Crawford County and ending in Allentown (in Wilkinson County)

Middle Georgia Bicycle Routes – Regional

- Highway 96 – East/west starting west of Fort Valley (in Peach County) to Allentown (in Wilkinson County)
- Highway 41 – North/south starting west of Forsyth (in Monroe County) to south of Perry (in Houston County)
- Highway 441/Highway 24 – North/south starting north of Eatonton (in Putnam County) to east of Milledgeville (in Baldwin County)

Trails are centrally located in the region, mostly around Macon-Bibb County and Milledgeville. Featured trails in the region include the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail and the Oconee River Greenway.^{5 6} The Ocmulgee Heritage Trail is a series of trails in Macon-Bibb County paralleling the Ocmulgee River. Out of the 12 trails, half are completed, and the other half are under construction or slated as future connectors. The Oconee River Greenway is a park and riverwalk located next to the Oconee River in Milledgeville. The 2015 Regional Assessment for Middle Georgia also notes that the Central Georgia Rail Trail Association is working on a rails-to-trail project in the region.⁷ The project will be a 33-mile route along an abandoned railway from Macon-Bibb County to Milledgeville.

³ <https://www.dot.ga.gov/GDOT/Pages/BikePed.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.bikewalkmacon.com/mapsandguides>

⁵ <https://newtownmacon.com/ohr/trail-map>

⁶ <https://www.visitmilledgeville.org/listings/oconee-river-greenway/41728>

⁷ https://www.middlegeorgiarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Regional_Assessment_Update_1113151.pdf

6.0 Existing Transit Plans

A review of studies pertinent to Middle Georgia was conducted to understand the issues, opportunities, and recommendations that have been previously identified for the region and its individual municipalities. The Regional TDP will take previous planning efforts into consideration to identify comprehensive transit solutions for Middle Georgia.

6.1 GDOT Georgia Statewide Transit Plan

The Georgia Statewide Transit Plan (SWTRP) was last updated in 2020. The SWTRP identifies transit needs and opportunities, reviews local, county, and regional plans, and recommends policy and priority projects for implementation across the state. The plan describes the different types of transit service provided in the state, including:

- Demand response
- Fixed route
- Vanpool
- Flex route
- Microtransit
- Express bus
- Intercity transit
- Heavy rail
- Streetcar
- Ferry

Demand response refers to small bus operations that require advance reservation and provide door-to-door service. Demand-response service does not operate on a fixed route or schedule but rather meets passengers' needs by picking up and dropping off at desired locations. In rural areas of Georgia, transit service is focused on the demand-response model. The SWTRP notes that there were 80 transit systems across the state which provide demand-response service at the time of publication. Five of these 80 cover multiple counties (26 counties). The demand-response systems provided 1.8 million trips to Georgians in 2017.

Fixed route typically refers to bus operations that follow a determined route with known stops and a set schedule. Fixed-route service is a good option for an urbanized area with multiple destinations, such as a downtown shopping area or route with businesses.

The SWTRP reported that there were 908,785 transit trips in the Middle Georgia region in 2017. This is in the middle range compared to other regions across the state. Of these trips, Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority provided 847,984 trips (93.3 percent), with the remaining 60,801 trips coming from the rural demand-response systems.

Other trends reported in the SWTRP include the following:

- **The rising populations of low-income, elderly, disabled, and zero-car households.** In Middle Georgia, low-income, youth, elderly, and disabled populations and zero-car households were higher than the state average in several counties. LEP populations were largely below the state average.

- **Transportation-related technological advances.** Ridesharing programs are becoming more accepted as a viable means of travel, and both accompany transit as well as compete with it. Digital platforms that aid trip scheduling have the potential to meaningfully impact ride scheduling and reliability. Connected and autonomous vehicles need to be part of the transit conversation.
- **Rural areas that are growing in population may be absorbed into urban areas.** This changes the federal funding calculation.

Additionally, the SWTRP contains an Implementation Report that is updated annually to report on transit performance. The last Implementation Report was published in 2022 and includes transit service information for 2021 and 2022. This report details statewide goals, performance measures, and strategies. Goals identified in this report that are relevant to Middle Georgia include the following:

- Increasing regional and multi-county transit systems,
- Coordination between GDOT and Department of Human Services (DHS) transit systems,
- Allowing rural providers to cross county lines,
- Increasing revenue service hours and trips per service hour, and
- Utilizing smartphone apps (such as GDOT's Let's Ride App) for trip planning.

6.2 GDOT Georgia Statewide Transportation Plan/Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan

Updated in 2021, the combined Georgia 2050 Statewide Transportation Plan (SWTP) and Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan (SSTP) plans focus on how GDOT will carry out Governor Kemp's strategic goals for the state, specifically focused on meeting the transportation needs of all Georgians. These plans detail the status of the statewide transportation system and future trends, opportunities, and challenges through 2050.

The public outreach for these planning efforts identified Georgia residents' top three transportation concerns for the future, which include:

- More public transportation options,
- Reduction in traffic congestion, and
- Better roadway system connectivity.

The plans are broken into sections such as Statewide Freight and Logistics, People Mobility in Metro Atlanta, and People Mobility in Emerging Metros and Rural Georgia. One of Governor Kemp's goals is to strengthen rural areas in the state, and GDOT sees regional teaming and partnerships as vital to improve life in rural communities. Additionally, increasing access to jobs, goods, and services throughout emerging metro areas and rural areas is a theme that runs through this report.

In terms of transit and shared mobility, these reports focus on the state's urban transit systems but present a wealth of content regarding the changing dynamics in rural areas. These trends include, but are not limited to, increasing population and employment, an aging population, an increase in individuals with disabilities, and a high vehicular crash rate.

6.3 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan

Completed in 2023, the Georgia 2050 Rural and Human Services Transportation (RHST) Plan was a joint effort of GDOT, DHS, and the Department of Community Health (DCH) to develop a five-year update to the state’s RHST Coordination Plan. This plan provides a framework for coordination among Georgia’s agencies interested in delivering rural mobility services. The focus areas of the plan are the state’s three systems for rural mobility services: rural public transit, administered by GDOT; human services transportation, administered by DHS; and non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), administered by DCH.

6.4 GDOT Group Transit Asset Management Plan

The 2022 Group Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan Update was completed in September 2022. TAM is a business model which prioritizes funding for transit projects based on the condition of assets, with the goal of maintaining a state of good repair (SGR) for all participating transit networks.

As required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the TAM Plan covers a four-year period. The most recent Group TAM Plan from 2018 ends in fiscal year 2022, and consists of the following elements:

- Inventory of Capital Assets: The three categories of public transit assets are Rolling Stock, Equipment, and Facilities
- Condition Assessment: Each asset within a provider’s inventory for which it has direct capital responsibility is evaluated

- Decision Support Tool: This section analyzes data from the previous sections and comes up with a methodology for prioritizing SGR re-investment needs among the assets
- Prioritized List of Investments: Based on the decision support tool and projected funding over the four-year period, this section concludes the TAM Plan

Federal law requires GDOT, as the Group Plan sponsor, to set annual SGR performance targets for each type of asset, which are updated on an annual basis. These performance measures are as follows:

- Rolling Stock: Percentage of revenue vehicles that have either met or exceeded their Useful Life Benchmark (ULB), as determined by their asset type
- Equipment: Percentage of non-revenue, support-service, and maintenance vehicle equipment that has either met or exceeded its ULB
- Facilities: Percentage of facilities rated below condition 3.0 on the Transit Economic Requirements Model scale

All transit providers within Middle Georgia were included in the 2022 TAM Plan. Buses and cutaway buses were among the proposed investments for the region’s participants; most of these projects were prioritized for fiscal years 2024 through 2026.

6.5 MATS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

As the MPO for the Macon urbanized area, the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) is required to develop and maintain a comprehensive transportation planning process which includes the preparation of Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The purpose of the MTP is to assess transportation needs and opportunities for the 20-year planning period with the goal of “fostering an efficient, convenient, safe, secure, and sustainable transportation system.”⁸ The most recent version of the MTP covers the planning period from 2022 to 2050. It includes a list of goals and objectives, population and land use forecasts, overview of the public involvement process, a list of prioritized projects, and planning recommendations. The plan considers the entire MATS area which includes all of Macon-Bibb County and parts of Monroe and Jones Counties.

While the MTP covers all modes, there were several transit-supportive goals and objectives presented:

- Promote multimodal and affordable transit choices,
- Improve air quality, protect the environment, improve quality of life, and support the linkage between land use and transportation planning,
- Connect people to jobs, education, and other important destinations using all modes,
- Enhance transit services, facilities, and amenities and maintain them in best operating conditions, and

- Ensure equity by meeting transportation needs for all populations, especially the senior, youth, low-income, mobility-impaired, limited English proficiency, and zero-car populations.

There are two transit providers in the MATS area, the Macon-Bibb Transit Authority (MTA) and Jones County Transit. MTA provides fixed-route bus service and demand-response paratransit in Macon-Bibb County. Jones County Transit offers a demand-response system that is split between the MGRC’s Department of Human Services (DHS) Coordinated Transportation Program and the Section 5311 Rural Public Transit program. Jones County Transit provides trips within Jones County and into neighboring counties. Between MTA and Jones County Transit, the following transit plans and recommendations were presented in the MTP:

- Achieve an equitable system by adhering to Title VI, ADA, NEPA, and other environmental justice-related policies,
- Support and be active in the development of passenger rail between Macon-Bibb County and Atlanta,
- Provide real-time bus location and notification services to MTA riders,
- Continue the capital improvement program to increase the number of bus shelters and benches in the MTA service area, and
- Pursue plans to implement a new MTA route in southern Macon-Bibb County to address service needs in the area.

Monroe County does not currently have a transit system in place. This could change in the future as transit demand increases with forecasted growth and development.

⁸ 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, MATS 2022. https://www.maconmpo.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/MATS2050MTP_AMENDED_20230503.pdf

6.6 WRATS 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) is the MPO for the Warner Robins urbanized area which encompasses all of Houston County and part of Peach County, including the cities of Byron, Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins. As the MPO, WRATS is required to maintain a comprehensive transportation planning process which includes the development of the MTP. The 2045 MTP provides recommendations and a list of projects to address mobility needs and improvement of the transportation system for the planning period from 2020 to 2045. This MTP builds off the recommendations laid out in the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan.

The MTP lists two transit providers within WRATS, Warner Robins Transit (WRT) and the rural transit system in Peach County. WRT provides fixed-route bus service in Houston County with two routes in Warner Robins. WRT has expressed interest in continuing to improve transit options and accessibility in the broader WRATS region. The rural transit system in Peach County provides demand-response service to residents of Peach County and is partially funded by Section 5311. A major transit challenge identified in the plan was the large lack of awareness of existing transit services within WRATS.

The MTP presents various transit-supportive goals:

- Maximize mobility for all transit users, especially the transportation disadvantaged, through an integrated, connected, and accessible transportation system,
- Provide a connected, multimodal transportation system that provides safe access between residential and activity centers,
- Identify vulnerable areas of the system that impact the reliability of travel and identify strategies to address them, and

- Promote transportation investments and strategies that improve regional accessibility for travel and tourism.

The following strategies and recommendations were provided in the MTP to achieve these goals:

- Promote the consideration and improvement of public transit within WRATS,
- Promote the development of transportation improvements in important economic sectors to support tourism, regional travel, and economic opportunity, and
- Expand and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities which could support the improvement of transit infrastructure.

6.7 County Transit Development Plans

As the planning and development agency for the Middle Georgia region, the MGRC prepares transit development plans (TDPs) for various counties within its planning area. The TDPs serve as guides for the provision of transit services in each county over a five-year planning period with the goal of providing safe, reliable, and efficient transit services that meet the demand of each county. Each TDP includes a review of existing conditions and trends, needs assessment, proposed transit alternatives, and planning recommendations for each county. TDPs for the following counties are reviewed in this section:

- Baldwin County TDP (2020-2025)
- Crawford County TDP (2021-2026)
- Jones County TDP (2017-2022)
- Monroe County TDP (2018-2022)
- Peach County TDP (2018-2022)
- Pulaski County TDP (2016-2021)
- Putnam County TDP (2019-2024)
- Twiggs County TDP (2016-2021)
- Wilkinson County TDP (2019-2024)

As documented in the TDPs, existing transit providers vary between counties. All counties are served by the DHS Coordinated Transportation System. This system provides service for specialized transportation needs to residents who are elderly, mentally or physically disabled, and/or low income. The Section 5311 Rural Public Transit program provides demand-response service to the public in all of the counties listed above, except for Monroe County. Each county manages their Section 5311 service individually. Some counties also have private transit providers offering rideshare or taxi services.

There are various common themes across all TDPs. Total population and population density are expected to increase in the region with varying rates from county to county, suggesting future increases in transit demand. Additionally, most counties are experiencing growth in their senior population, potentially increasing demand further. Youth are another target population that could benefit from the expansion of transit services, as most are not served by the existing demand-response format. Across each county, transit-dependent populations were identified. Additionally, Peach and Baldwin Counties host unique higher education student populations who are likely to use transit services. Georgia College and State University offers campus, shopping, and late-night shuttle services to current students.

Most notably, all TDPs express the need for inter-county transit and out-of-county trips. Various counties were labeled as “bedroom communities,” highlighting the need for greater connectivity between counties and their transit systems. Almost all plans recommend collaboration between transit services in each county to develop a regional transit program that will improve connectivity and access to regional destinations and form a more expansive public transit network.

Other common challenges presented in the TDPs were lack of awareness of transit options, limited hours of operation, and lack of service for education- and employment-related trips. The TDPs present the following planning recommendations to address these challenges:

- Develop diverse marketing and outreach tools to inform residents about the services available to them,
- Develop a program to quantify transit needs in each county using a variety of survey techniques and public input forums,
- Expand weekday service hours of Section 5311 transit in order to expand accessibility for more individuals, including workers and students,
- Work with vanpool companies and major regional employers to develop employer-funded vanpool programs,
- Implement limited fixed-route service in more urbanized areas and between major origins and destinations, and
- Designate areas as park and ride lots to support carpooling and vanpooling.

7.0 Existing Transit Services

Currently, one urban and eight rural public transit services operate in the Middle Georgia region. Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority, the urban provider, operates fixed-route buses. The eight rural operators operate demand-response transportation and mainly provide service to a single county, though most systems provide out-of-county trips on a limited basis.

The transit agencies that provide these services are detailed in the section below. No commuter bus or rail transit services are provided within Middle Georgia. All profiled agencies are open to the general public and are funded through local and FTA grant programs. Additional shared transportation services that target certain population groups such as seniors or those with disabilities also operate within the region.

7.1 Local Services

7.1.1 Baldwin County Transit

Baldwin County Transit provides demand-response transportation to those in the Milledgeville/Baldwin County area. All county residents are eligible to ride. Service is available Monday-Friday from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM and must be booked 24 hours in advance.

Fares are \$2.00. Service is provided for in-county trips only. Additional service statistics for Baldwin County Transit are provided in **Figure 22**.

7.1.2 Crawford County Transit

Crawford County Transit operates demand-response service Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM for all county residents. Riders may also use the service to access destinations in Houston, Macon-Bibb, Peach, and Upson Counties. In-county fares are \$1.00 per trip. Out-of-county fares are \$2.00 per trip. Each additional stop is \$1.00.

Service statistics regarding Crawford County Transit are found in **Figure 23**.

7.1.3 Jones County Transit

Jones County Transit operates in Gray, Georgia, and the surrounding areas of Jones County. County residents may schedule a ride on the demand-response service by calling 24 hours in advance. Service is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Fares are \$2.00 per one-way trip.

Service details for Jones County Transit can be found in **Figure 24**.

7.1.4 Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority



Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority (MTA) offers both fixed-route service along nine routes, two of which are also served by limited-stop express buses, and ADA comparable paratransit service. MTA also runs a shuttle service connecting the Mercer University campus with downtown Macon-Bibb County. Most routes run from around 5:30 AM to 9:00 PM Monday through Friday. Saturday service ends around 7:00 PM for most routes.

Fares are \$1.25 one way, with a \$0.50 fee to transfer buses. Paratransit rides are \$2.50. Reduced fares are available for students, children, and seniors. For frequent riders, ride passes, and unlimited monthly passes are also available at discounted prices.

In-depth service statistics for MTA are provided in **Figure 25**.

7.1.5 Peach County Transit

Peach County Transit provides public transportation services to all residents on weekdays between the hours of 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Trips outside of Peach County are available for riders taking medical trips. Rides should be scheduled at least one day in advance. In-county fares are \$1.00 per stop, up to a maximum of five stops. Out-of-county fares are \$2.00 per stop, up to a maximum of three stops.

Additional service statistics for Peach County Transit are available in **Figure 25: Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority Statistics**

Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority

Small Urban Public Transit Service (Section 5307)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Fixed Route, ADA Paratransit
- ✓ Service Area: Macon Urbanized Area

FARES

\$1.25
Regular Fare

\$2.50
Paratransit Fare

\$0.60
Senior Citizen Fare

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Saturday 5am – 9pm



Available to
the general public



Book paratransit
24 hours in advance

Fleet Size: 29 vehicles



x5

Sources: Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 26.

7.1.6 Pulaski County Transit

Pulaski County Transit operates demand-response service Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Service is in-county, with one out-of-town shopping trip scheduled for the first Friday of each month. Fares are \$1.00 each way.

Service statistics regarding Pulaski County Transit are found in **Figure 27**.

7.1.7 Putnam County Transit

Putnam County Transit provides demand-response transportation services to all county residents. Riders may also use the service to access destinations in Baldwin and Greene Counties. Putnam County Transit operates Monday through Friday between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM. All trips must be scheduled 24 hours in advance. Fares are \$2.00 per one-way trip.

Additional data regarding Putnam County Transit can be found in **Figure 28**.

7.1.8 Twiggs County Transit

Twiggs County Transit operates demand-response transit available to all county residents. Transportation services are available from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. Riders must make a reservation 24 hours prior to their trip. Fares are \$1.00 for one-way, in-county trips and \$4.00 for round trips that leave Twiggs County.

Additional information regarding Twiggs County Transit can be found in **Figure 29**.

7.1.9 Wilkinson County Transit

Wilkinson County Transit operates demand-response transportation service to any destination in Wilkinson County. This service is available to all county residents. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Fares are \$1.00 for seniors over the age of 61, and \$2.00 for all other riders. Rides may be scheduled same-day, subject to the availability of buses.

Additional service data for Wilkinson County Transit is given in **Figure 30**.

Figure 22: Baldwin County Transit Statistics

Baldwin County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Demand Response
- ✓ Service Area: Baldwin County

FARES

\$2.00
Regular Fare

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Friday 7am – 6pm



Available to
all county residents



Book rides
24 hours in advance

Fleet Size: 2 vehicles



OPERATIONS SUMMARY

8,109 Trips in 2019

4,006 Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours **63,174** Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles

\$16.37 Average Cost Per Trip

\$33.14 Average Cost Per Hour

\$2.10 Average Expense Per Mile

FUNDING

Fare Revenues	\$15,708	11.8%
Local Funds	\$58,530	44.1%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$58,530	44.1%
Other Funds	\$0	0.0%
Total Operating Funds	\$132,768	100%

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Fare Revenues	\$0	-
Local Funds	\$0	-
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$0	-
Other Funds	\$0	-
Total Operating Funds	\$0	100%

Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Sources: Baldwin County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 23: Crawford County Transit Statistics

Crawford County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Demand Response
- ✓ Service Area: Crawford County

FARES

\$1.00

Inside Crawford County

\$2.00

To Surrounding Counties

+\$1.00

Per Each Additional Stop

OPERATIONS SUMMARY

3,248 Trips in 2019

4,736

Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours

64,668

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles

\$36.83 Average Cost Per Trip

\$25.26 Average Cost Per Hour

\$1.85 Average Expense Per Mile

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Friday 7am – 3pm



Available to all county residents



Book rides 24 hours in advance

Fleet Size: 5 vehicles



Sources: Crawford County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

FUNDING

Fare Revenues	\$6,144	5.1%
Local Funds	\$56,745	47.4%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$56,745	47.4%
Other Funds	\$0	0.0%
Total Operating Funds	\$119,634	100%

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Fare Revenues	\$0	0%
Local Funds	\$13,480	10.0%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$121,321	90.0%
Other Funds	\$0	0%
Total Operating Funds	\$134,801	100%

Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Figure 24: Jones County Transit Statistics

Jones County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Demand Response
- ✓ Service Area: Jones County

FARES

\$2.00

Regular Fare

OPERATIONS SUMMARY

3,971 Trips in 2019

4,176

Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours

50,235

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles

\$43.99

Average Cost Per Trip

\$42.83

Average Cost Per Hour

\$3.48

Average Expense Per Mile

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Friday 8am – 5pm



Available to **all county residents**



Book rides **24 hours in advance**

Fleet Size: 3 vehicles



FUNDING

Fare Revenues	\$5,193	3.0%
Local Funds	\$84,430	48.6%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$84,112	48.4%
Other Funds	\$0	0.0%
Total Operating Funds	\$173,735	100%

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Fare Revenues	\$0	-
Local Funds	\$0	-
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$0	-
Other Funds	\$0	-
Total Operating Funds	\$0	100%

Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Sources: Jones County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 25: Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority Statistics

Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority (MTA)

Small Urban Public Transit Service (Section 5307)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Fixed Route, ADA Paratransit
- ✓ Service Area: Macon Urbanized Area

FARES

\$1.25

Regular Fare

\$2.50

Paratransit Fare

\$0.60

Senior Citizen Fare

OPERATIONS SUMMARY

592,201

Trips in 2019

64,260

Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours

1,119,955

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles

\$9.52

Average Cost Per Trip

\$87.76

Average Cost Per Hour

\$5.04

Average Expense Per Mile

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Saturday 5am – 9pm



Available to the general public



Book paratransit 24 hours in advance

Fleet Size: 29 vehicles



x5

FUNDING

Fare Revenues	\$608,914	10.8%
Local Funds	\$2,478,186	43.9%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$2,478,186	43.9%
Other Funds	\$74,435	1.3%
Total Operating Funds	\$5,639,721	100%

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Fare Revenues	\$0	0%
Local Funds	\$324,057	10.0%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$2,916,508	90.0%
Other Funds	\$0	0%
Total Operating Funds	\$3,240,564	100%

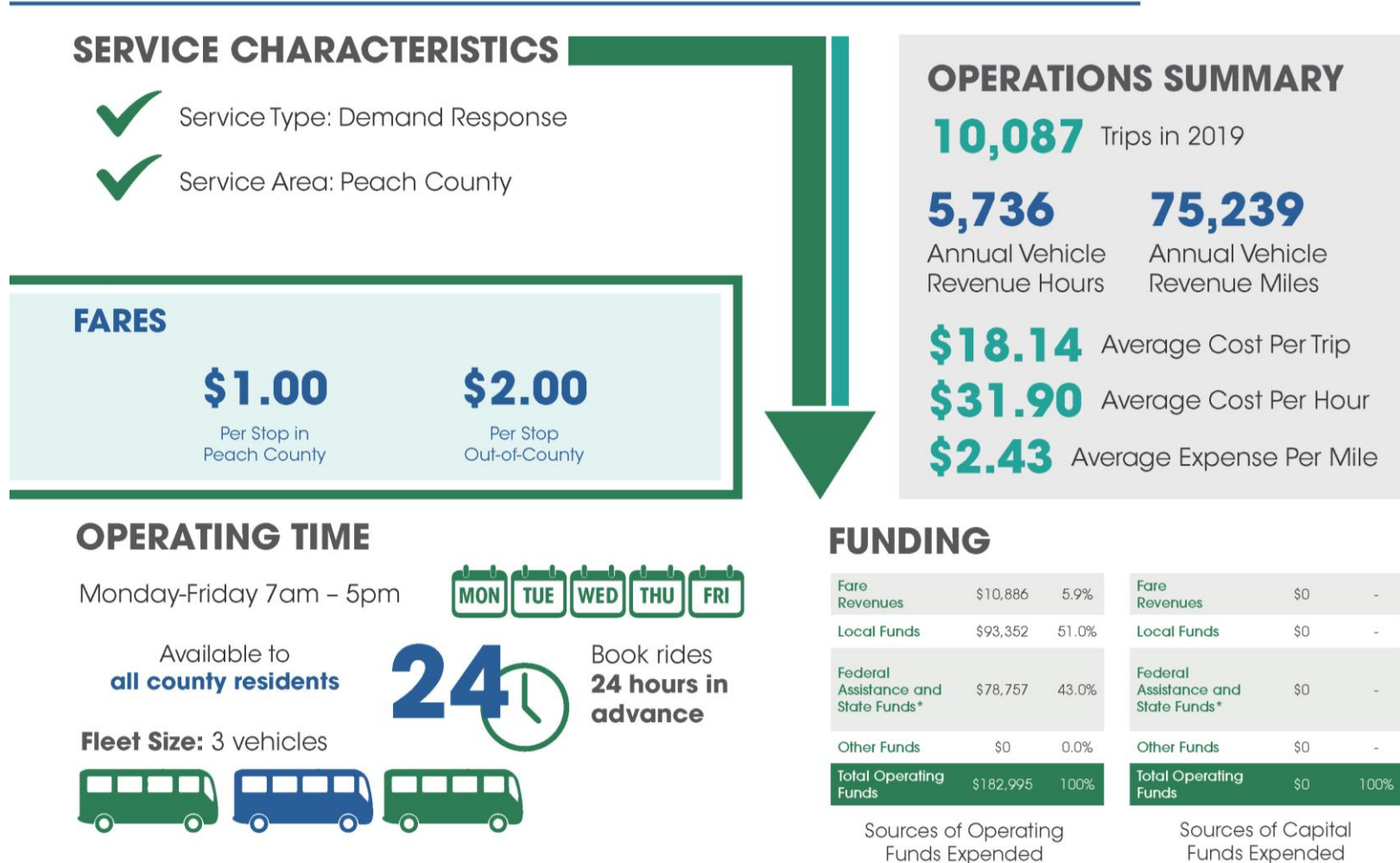
Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Sources: Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 26: Peach County Transit Statistics

Peach County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)



Sources: Peach County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 27: Pulaski County Transit Statistics

Pulaski County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Demand Response
- ✓ Service Area: Pulaski County

FARES

\$1.00

Regular Fare

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Friday 8am – 5pm



Available to
all county residents



Book rides
72 hours in advance

Fleet Size: 1 vehicle



OPERATIONS SUMMARY

4,069 Trips in 2019

1,960

Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours

15,462

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles

\$16.59 Average Cost Per Trip

\$34.43 Average Cost Per Hour

\$4.36 Average Expense Per Mile

FUNDING

Fare Revenues	\$3,123	4.6%
Local Funds	\$31,469	46.6%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$32,184	47.7%
Other Funds	\$0	0.0%
Total Operating Funds	\$67,491	100%

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Fare Revenues	\$0	-
Local Funds	\$0	-
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$0	-
Other Funds	\$0	-
Total Operating Funds	\$0	100%

Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Sources: Pulaski County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 28: Putnam County Transit Statistics

Putnam County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Demand Response
- ✓ Service Area: Putnam County

FARES

\$2.00

Regular Fare

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Friday 8am – 4pm



Available to
all county residents



Book rides
24 hours in advance

Fleet Size: 4 vehicles



OPERATIONS SUMMARY

15,799 Trips in 2019

5,784 Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours

104,073 Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles

Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles

\$15.05 Average Cost Per Trip

\$41.10 Average Cost Per Hour

\$2.28 Average Expense Per Mile

FUNDING

Funding Source	Amount	Percentage
Fare Revenues	\$26,942	11.3%
Local Funds	\$105,381	44.3%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$105,381	44.3%
Other Funds	\$0	0.0%
Total Operating Funds	\$237,703	100%

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Funding Source	Amount	Percentage
Fare Revenues	\$0	0%
Local Funds	\$0	0%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$2,559	100%
Other Funds	\$0	0%
Total Operating Funds	\$2,559	100%

Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Sources: Putnam County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 29: Twiggs County Transit Statistics

Twiggs County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Demand Response
- ✓ Service Area: Twiggs County

FARES

\$1.00

In-County
One-Way

\$4.00

Out-of-County
Round Trip

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Friday 8am – 5pm



Available to
all county residents



Book rides
24 hours in advance

Fleet Size: 2 vehicles



OPERATIONS SUMMARY

7,274 Trips in 2019

2,920

Annual Vehicle
Revenue Hours

56,570

Annual Vehicle
Revenue Miles

\$15.29 Average Cost Per Trip

\$38.09 Average Cost Per Hour

\$1.97 Average Expense Per Mile

FUNDING

Fare Revenues	\$7,273	6.5%
Local Funds	\$51,975	46.7%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$51,975	46.7%
Other Funds	\$0	0.0%
Total Operating Funds	\$111,233	100%

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Fare Revenues	\$0	0%
Local Funds	\$4,547	10.0%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$40,922	90.0%
Other Funds	\$0	0%
Total Operating Funds	\$45,469	100%

Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Sources: Twiggs County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

Figure 30: Wilkinson County Transit Statistics

Wilkinson County Transit

Rural Public Transit Service (Section 5311)

SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Service Type: Demand Response
- ✓ Service Area: Wilkinson County

FARES

\$2.00

In-County
One-Way

\$1.00

Senior Fare
One-Way

OPERATING TIME

Monday-Friday 8am – 5pm



Available to
all county residents



Subject to availability,
rides may be booked
same day

Fleet Size: 3 vehicles



OPERATIONS SUMMARY

6,490 Trips in 2019

4,555

Annual Vehicle
Revenue Hours

80,913

Annual Vehicle
Revenue Miles

\$28.76 Average Cost Per Trip

\$40.97 Average Cost Per Hour

\$2.31 Average Expense Per Mile

FUNDING

Fare Revenues	\$7,483	4.0%
Local Funds	\$89,577	48.0%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$89,577	48.0%
Other Funds	\$0	0.0%
Total Operating Funds	\$186,637	100%

Sources of Operating
Funds Expended

Fare Revenues	\$0	0%
Local Funds	\$8,723	10.0%
Federal Assistance and State Funds*	\$78,510	90.0%
Other Funds	\$0	0%
Total Operating Funds	\$87,233	100%

Sources of Capital
Funds Expended

Sources: Wilkinson County Transit Website, FTA National Transit Database, 2050 GDOT Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan. *GDOT currently administers Federal 5307/5311 funds for transit operators in Georgia.

7.2 Transit Services in Surrounding Communities

Several transit agencies in surrounding communities were identified for peer comparison purposes. These agencies were selected based on three criteria. The first criteria was that the peer agency must be located in Georgia. When compared to the various systems located within Middle Georgia, these agencies must also have roughly the same ridership and be in areas with similar population density. These peer agencies can provide useful performance measure comparisons and potential best practices.

The National Transit Database (NTD) provides standardized performance data for all federally funded transit agencies in the United States. Though the most recent available NTD dataset is from 2021, this report uses 2019 data. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, transit ridership was greatly reduced, so 2020 and 2021 data may not give an accurate representation of transit funding and operations.

7.2.1 Albany Transit System

The Albany Transit System (ATS) operates 11 city bus routes within the Albany urbanized area, as well as the Ram Rush, a dedicated shuttle that moves students and faculty between the East and West Campuses of Albany State University free of charge. ATS also operates ADA comparable paratransit service for those unable to ride ATS fixed-route service.

Most city bus routes run hourly between 5:00 AM and 7:00 PM during weekdays, with service starting at 6:00 AM on Saturdays. There is currently no Sunday service. Fares are \$1.70 per trip, with seniors and children's fares available for \$0.50. Monthly passes are available for \$45.00. Students who have paid all tuition and fees are qualified to ride any city bus route free of charge with a valid Albany State University ID card.

During the academic year, the Ram Rush operates every 45 minutes from 6:45 AM to 9:40 PM on weekdays, and every 45 minutes from 8:15 AM to 2:10 PM on Saturdays. Only students and faculty with a valid Albany State University ID card may ride.

7.2.2 Augusta Transit

Augusta Transit operates nine city bus routes within the Augusta urbanized area. Augusta Transit also provides ADA comparable paratransit service for those unable to ride fixed-route service. Most routes run from around 6:30 AM to 8:00 PM Monday through Friday. Saturday service ends around 7:00 PM for most routes.

Fares are \$1.25 one way, with a \$0.50 fee to transfer buses. For frequent riders, weekly and monthly passes are available. Reduced fares are available for students, seniors, and riders with a disability.

7.2.3 Crisp Area Regional Transit

Crisp Area Regional Transit (CART) provides demand-response transit services across Crisp County. Service operates from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays. Fares are \$1.00 for trips within Cordele, with additional distance-based fare for trips outside the city.

7.2.4 Wilcox County Transit

Wilcox County Transit provides demand-response transit services to the general public within Wilcox County. Transit services are provided on weekdays between the hours of 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Fares are \$4.00 for a one-way trip within the county and \$6.00 for a one-way trip out-of-county up to 40 miles.

7.2.5 Baldwin County Qualitative Peer Comparison

In Baldwin County, Milledgeville is home to Georgia College and State University. Statesboro Area Transit (SAT) was identified as a peer transit system, providing an example of fixed-route transit service being provided through Section 5311 rural formula funding. Valdosta On-Demand was chosen as another peer transit system, providing an example of a microtransit service operating in an area with similar population density to Milledgeville.

Since there is no NTD data available for SAT and Valdosta On-Demand, the peer comparisons for Baldwin County Transit are limited to the qualitative descriptions provided below.

7.2.5.1 Statesboro Area Transit

On May 22, 2023, SAT began operating two routes across the city, including service to Georgia Southern University. Buses run Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM. With 24 hours' advance notice, curbside pickup is available within a quarter mile of the established route. SAT is a service of the Coastal Regional Commission and is funded primarily through FTA's Section 5311 grant program. Curb-to-curb service is available in Statesboro and Bulloch County through Coastal Regional Coaches.

Fares are \$1.00 per trip, with discounts available to seniors, college students, and individuals with disabilities.

As Statesboro Area Transit is a new transit service, annual operational data are not yet available.

7.2.5.2 Valdosta On-Demand

Launched on April 27, 2021, Valdosta On-Demand provides demand-response transit within Valdosta city limits. Often called microtransit, this mode uses an app resembling those used by transportation network companies such as Lyft or Uber to book shared rides for the general public. Trips are provided using branded vans; passengers needing a wheelchair-accessible vehicle can request such within the app. The microtransit service operates Monday through Friday from 5:30 AM to 9:00 PM.

Fares are \$2.00 per trip, with \$1.00 added for each additional passenger.

Annual operational data are not yet available through NTD.

7.3 Performance Measures

Along with U.S. Census data, NTD datasets can be used to analyze performance measures that track how efficiently or effectively transit systems operate. Though performance measures are effective in quantifying operational characteristics of transit operators, every community and every transit operator faces a different series of operating conditions and challenges. Recognizing that these performance measures cannot convey every aspect of a system's operation is an important factor in analyzing systems' past operation.

Table 19 **Table 19** shows several performance measures for transit operators in Middle Georgia: MTA and an average of the eight county-operated rural transit systems in the region. The table also shows data for their peer systems.

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Table 19: Performance Metrics for Middle Georgia Transit Systems and Selected Peers (2019)

	MTA Peer Performance			County-Operated Rural System Peer Performance		
	MTA	ATS	Augusta Transit	Average MGRC County System	CART	Wilcox County Transit
Service Data						
Service Area Population	153,691	75,616	201,793	20,413	22,713	8,841
Population Density (per sq. mi.)	2,195.59	4,448.00	8,071.72	63.59	80.83	23.14
Annual Operating Budget	\$5,639,721	\$4,235,167	\$4,689,813	\$151,642	\$483,125	\$163,659
Unlinked Passenger Trips	592,201	773,757	668,888	7,381	21,093	5,622
Vehicle Revenue Miles	1,119,955	746,895	715,543	63,792	290,210	208,015
Vehicle Revenue Hours	64,260	46,127	56,356	4,234	13,743	8,646
Population Metrics						
Trips per Capita	3.85	10.23	3.31	0.36	0.93	0.64
Revenue Hours per Capita	0.42	0.61	0.28	0.21	0.61	0.98
Cost Metrics						
Cost per Trip	\$9.52	\$5.47	\$7.01	\$20.54	\$22.90	\$29.11
Cost per Mile	\$5.04	\$5.67	\$6.55	\$2.38	\$1.66	\$0.79
Cost per Hour	\$87.76	\$91.82	\$83.22	\$35.82	\$35.15	\$18.93
Fare Metrics						
Fare Revenue per Trip	\$1.03	\$1.03	\$0.90	\$1.40	\$0.36	\$0.65
Recovery Ratio	10.8%	18.8%	12.8%	6.8%	1.6%	2.0%

Source: FTA National Transit Database, 2019 Annual Data Tables

8.0 Transit-Supportive Land Use and Development

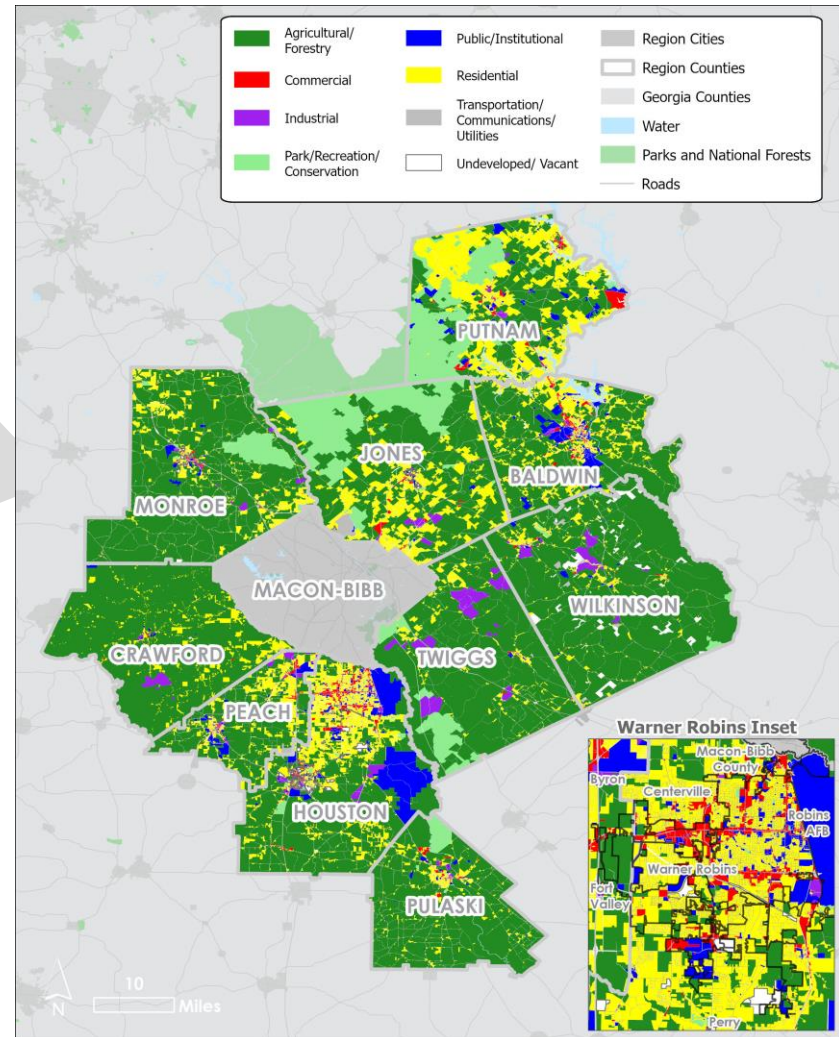
This section analyzes zoning and land uses in Middle Georgia to determine where transit-supportive land uses are within the region and where future development could occur. In addition to land uses and zoning, key destinations and essential services, Developments of Regional Impact, affordable housing, and senior centers are also identified and discussed in this section.

8.1 Existing Land Use and Zoning

There are 8 categories of existing land use for Middle Georgia: Agriculture/Forestry, Commercial, Industrial, Park/Recreation/Conservation, Public/Institutional, Residential, Transportation/Communication/Utilities, and Undeveloped/Vacant. The Middle Georgia region, as shown in **Figure 31**, is primarily made up of Agriculture/Forestry, with concentrations of Residential and Commercial uses in the incorporated areas of each county. There are also high concentrations of Industrial, Public/Institutional, and Park/Recreation/Conservation land uses in various counties across the region.

Transit-supportive land uses include Residential, Commercial, and Industrial. For Residential and Commercial, high concentrations are located in Baldwin, Jones, Houston, Macon-Bibb, Monroe, Peach, and Putnam Counties, largely centered around the region’s major cities and recreational areas. Industrial land uses are most present in Crawford, Houston, Jones, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties. Public/Institutional and Park/Recreation/Conservation land uses may also provide key regional activity centers for transit including Fort Valley State University in Peach County and Georgia College and State University in Baldwin County, as well as K-12 schools, government offices and services, and public safety training facilities in various counties.

Figure 31: Existing Land Use



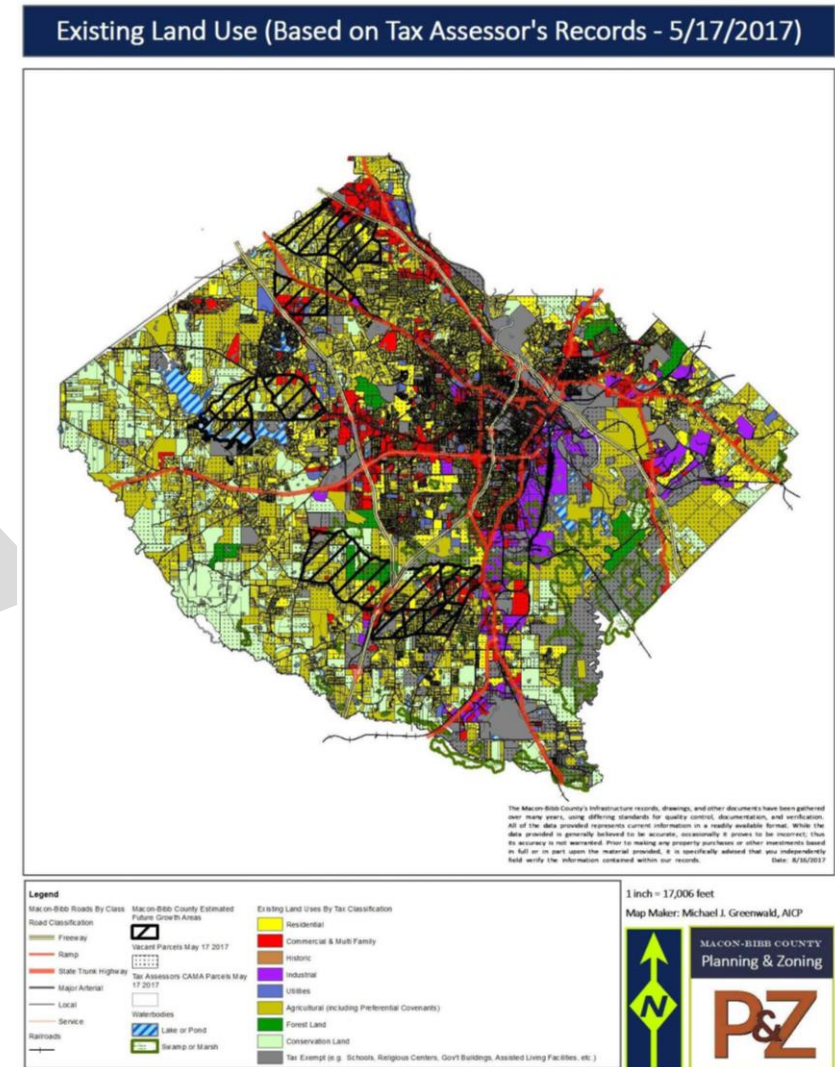
Source: Middle Georgia Regional Commission

8.1.1 Macon-Bibb County Existing Land Use

Macon-Bibb County has nine land use categories: Residential, Commercial and Multi Family, Historic, Industrial, Utilities, Agricultural, Forest Land, Conservation Land, and Tax Exempt. Tax Exempt consists of schools, religious centers, government buildings, assisted living facilities, and other similar uses. The most common type of land use is Agricultural. Agricultural land uses exist throughout Macon-Bibb County but are most prominent on the east side of the county. Transit-supportive land uses include Commercial and Multi Family and Industrial areas. These zones are mostly parallel to major corridors in central Macon-Bibb County, such as Highways 129, 41, and 80, I-75, and State Route 74. Some residential areas are also close to these transit-supportive land uses. This is important to emphasize the connection to essential services and activity centers that having access to transit can provide.

In addition to existing land uses, **Figure 32** also indicates projected future growth areas in Macon-Bibb County. These areas are currently zoned as a mix of Residential, Agricultural, and Commercial and Multi Family. They are located on the east and west sides of the I-75 and I-475 fork, south of State Route 74 on the west side of the county, in between I-475 and Highway 41, and in between Highway 41 and I-75 in the northern part of the county.

Figure 32: Macon-Bibb County Existing Land Use

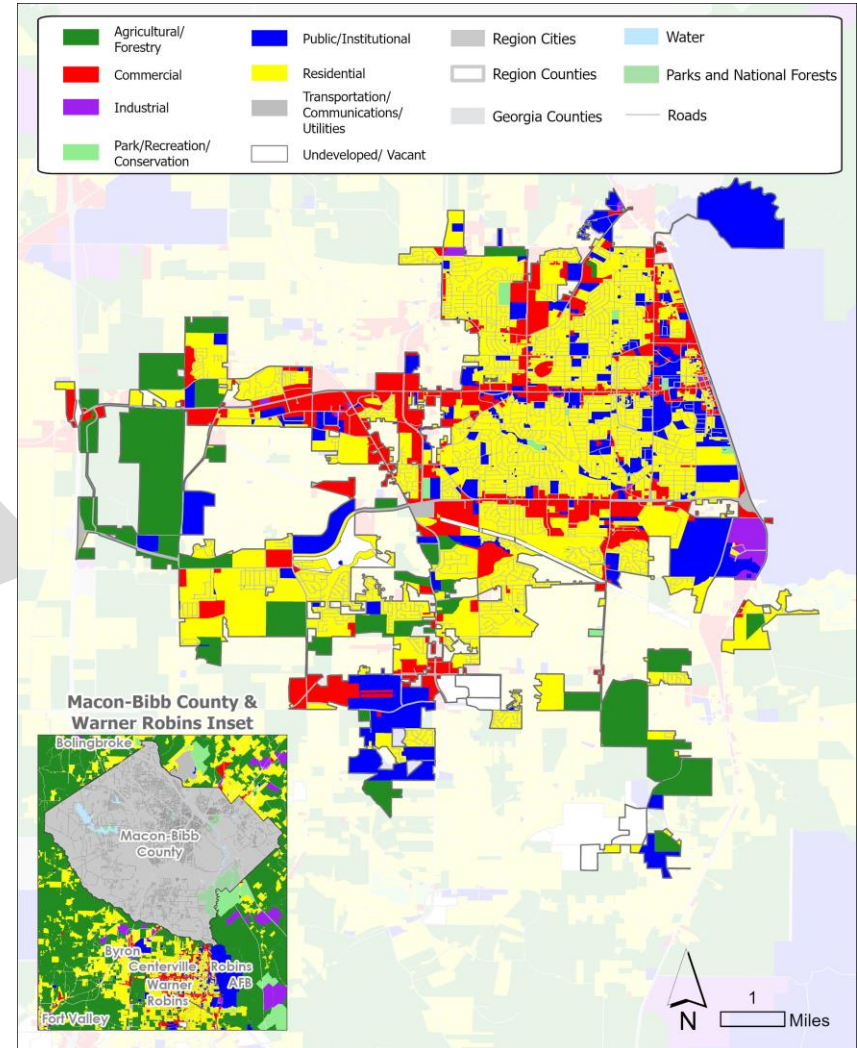


Source: 2050 Macon-Bibb County Comprehensive Plan Update

8.1.2 Warners Robins Existing Land Use

There are 8 categories of existing land use (displayed in **Figure 33**) for Warner Robins: Agriculture/Forestry, Commercial, Industrial, Park/Recreation/ Conservation, Public/Institutional, Residential, Transportation/ Communication/Utilities, and Undeveloped/Vacant. Most of Warner Robins is Residential. Land uses that would encourage transit use are Commercial and Public/Institutional. Major corridors, like Highway 247C and Russell Parkway, are lined with Commercial uses. Many Public/Institutional uses are spread throughout the city, while Agricultural/Forestry is on the west and south sides of the city and Industrial is in the southeast corner of the city.

Figure 33: Warner Robins Existing Land Use



Source: Middle Georgia Regional Commission

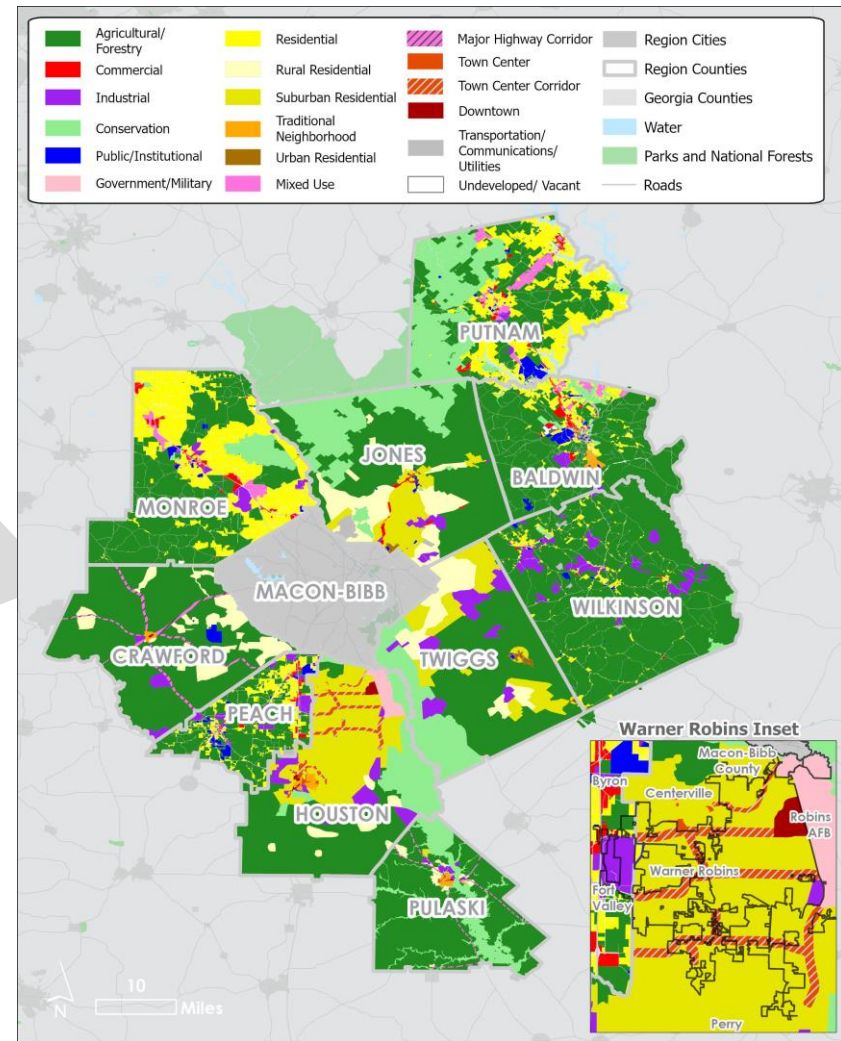
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8.2 Future Land Use/Projected Development Patterns

Future land uses for the Middle Georgia region include Conservation, Industrial, Mixed Use, and various types of Residential uses such as rural, suburban, and urban (**Figure 34**). Growth in Conservation areas is projected to increase in WMAs in Putnam County, Lake Sinclair in Baldwin County, and along the Ocmulgee River and WMA in Houston, Pulaski, and Twiggs Counties due to more land being designated as conservation area in the future. Industrial development is expected along major roads in Houston, Monroe, and Wilkinson Counties. Mixed-Use, Commercial, and Residential development is projected along and to the northeast of the I-75 corridor in Monroe County. Mixed-Use development is also expected in Putnam and Baldwin Counties. Suburban Residential, Rural Residential, and Residential development is expected in all areas surrounding Macon-Bibb County. Houston County is projected to experience major Suburban Residential development with Town Center Corridors in the Warner Robins area. The Town Center Corridor land use would have a mix of Commercial and Institutional land uses in high-density developments nodes with Residential developments along major corridors.

The future land use can support future increases in transit use in the region. More cohesive and continuous Residential development can increase transit-supportive densities and connectivity between neighborhoods. Increased Industrial, Commercial, and Mixed-Use development can also increase transit ridership by bringing more people, origins, and destinations closer together.

Figure 34: Future Land Use



Source: Middle Georgia Regional Commission

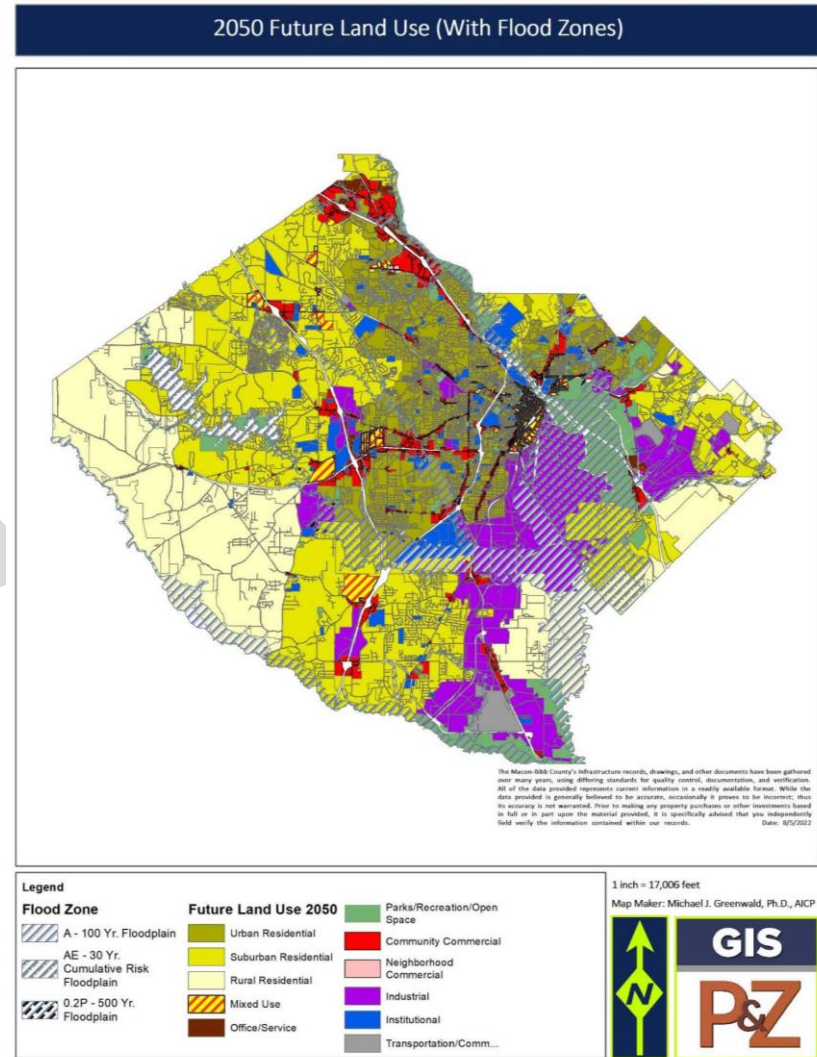
8.2.1 Macon-Bibb County Future Land Use

Macon-Bibb County has 11 categories for future land use: Urban Residential, Suburban Residential, Rural Residential, Mixed Use, Office/Service, Parks/Recreation/Open Space, Community Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, and Transportation/Communication. The county is estimated to be mostly Suburban Residential in the future, as shown in **Figure 35**.

Transit-supportive land uses in Macon-Bibb County include Mixed Use, Community Commercial, Urban Residential, Neighborhood Commercial, and Industrial. Most of these land uses will be located along major corridors like I-75 and I-475, Highways 80, 41, and 129, and State Route 74. There will also be a very large area of Industrial in the southeast portion of the county. The proximity of these areas could support increased transit ridership throughout much of the county.

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Figure 35: Macon-Bibb County Future Land Use

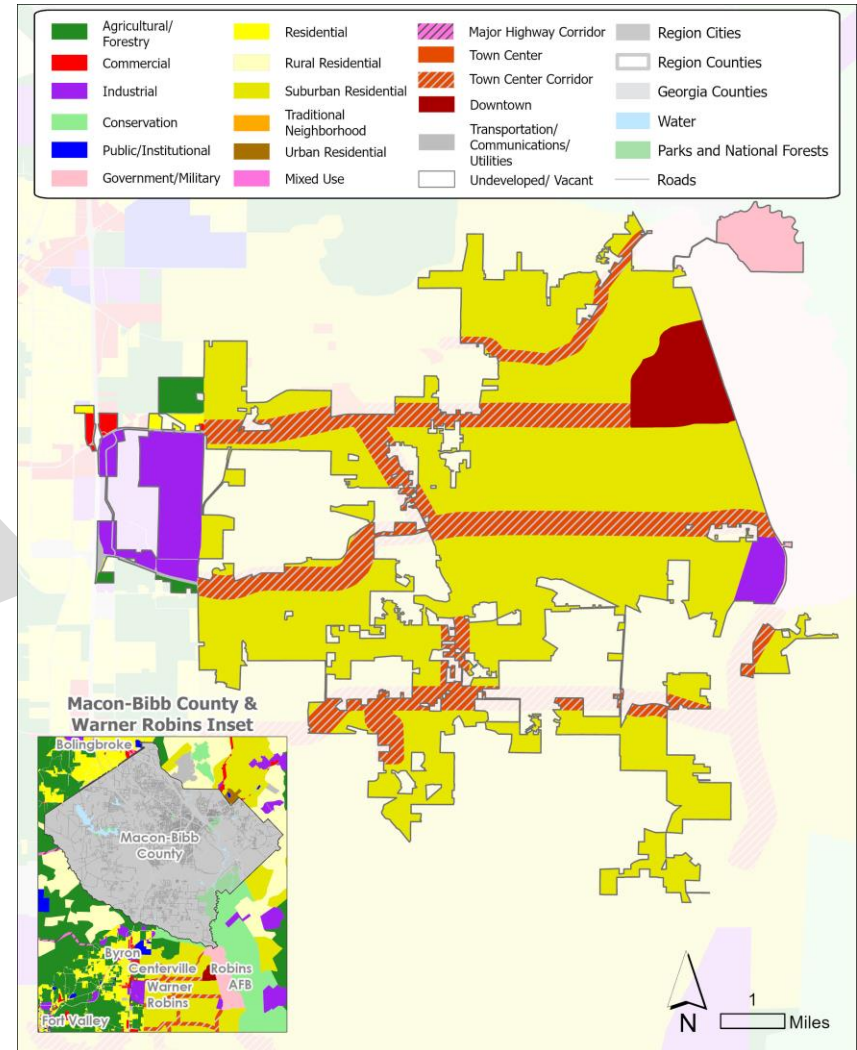


Source: 2050 Macon-Bibb County Comprehensive Plan Update

8.2.2 Warner Robins Future Land Use

Future Land Uses in Warner Robins are: Suburban Residential, Residential, Commercial, Downtown, Industrial, Government/Military, Town Center Corridor, Agricultural/ Forestry, and Transportation/Communications/Utilities. Most of the city, presented in **Figure 36**, will be Suburban Residential. Land uses that could support transit use are: Town Center Corridor, Commercial, Downtown, and Industrial. The Major Corridors will be Town Center Corridor: a mix of Commercial and Institutional land uses in high-density developments nodes with Residential developments along major corridors. One of the corridors leads into a Downtown area on the east; Downtown will consist of mixed-use developments including Commercial, Residential, and Public/Institutional land spaces. Industrial uses will be in the same place the existing areas with an additional industrial area in the west that was previously zoned for Agricultural/Forestry. All other uses will be in small areas on the west side of the city surrounding the future industrial area. The northeast corner of the city will be Government/Military, representing where the Robins Air Force Base currently is.

Figure 36: Warner Robins Future Land Use



Source: Middle Georgia Regional Commission

8.3 Key Destinations and Essential Services

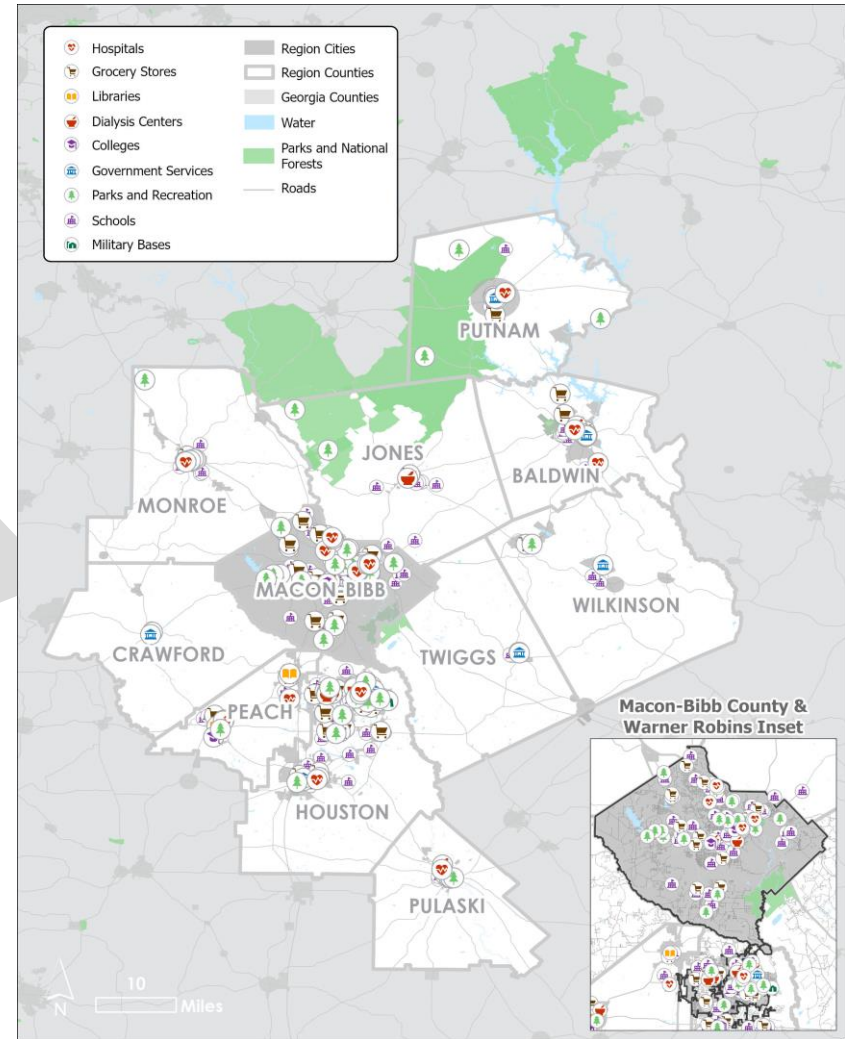
Key destinations and essential services (shown in **Figure 37**) are used by residents or visitors for commercial, social, religious, public safety, recreation, or governmental needs. Schools, government services, and libraries are found in every county. Counties without medical facilities (either hospitals or dialysis centers) include Crawford, Twiggs, and Wilkinson. Residents in Crawford and Twiggs can utilize services in nearby Macon-Bibb County. Residents in Wilkinson County may have to travel to Baldwin County for medical services or to other counties outside the Middle Georgia region. Currently, Crawford County is the only county without a grocery store in the region. Robins Air Force Base is located in Houston County. The top three most common destinations are schools (42.7 percent), grocery stores (15.4 percent), and parks and recreation (14.2 percent). Both Monroe and Houston Counties do not have access to transit. Houston County has 44 destinations and services not accessible to transit, including two hospitals. Monroe County also has 10 services, including a hospital, not accessible to transit.

Table 20: Key Destinations and Essential Services

Type	Number of Services	Percent of Total Services
Hospitals	16	6.0%
Grocery Stores	40	15.0%
Libraries	14	5.3%
Dialysis Centers	18	6.8%
Colleges	9	3.4%
Government Services	16	6.0%
Parks and Recreation	38	14.3%
Schools	114	42.9%
Military Bases	1	0.4%
Total	266	100.0%

Source: Middle Georgia Regional Commission

Figure 37: Key Destinations and Essential Services



Source: Middle Georgia Regional Commission

8.4 Developments of Regional Impact

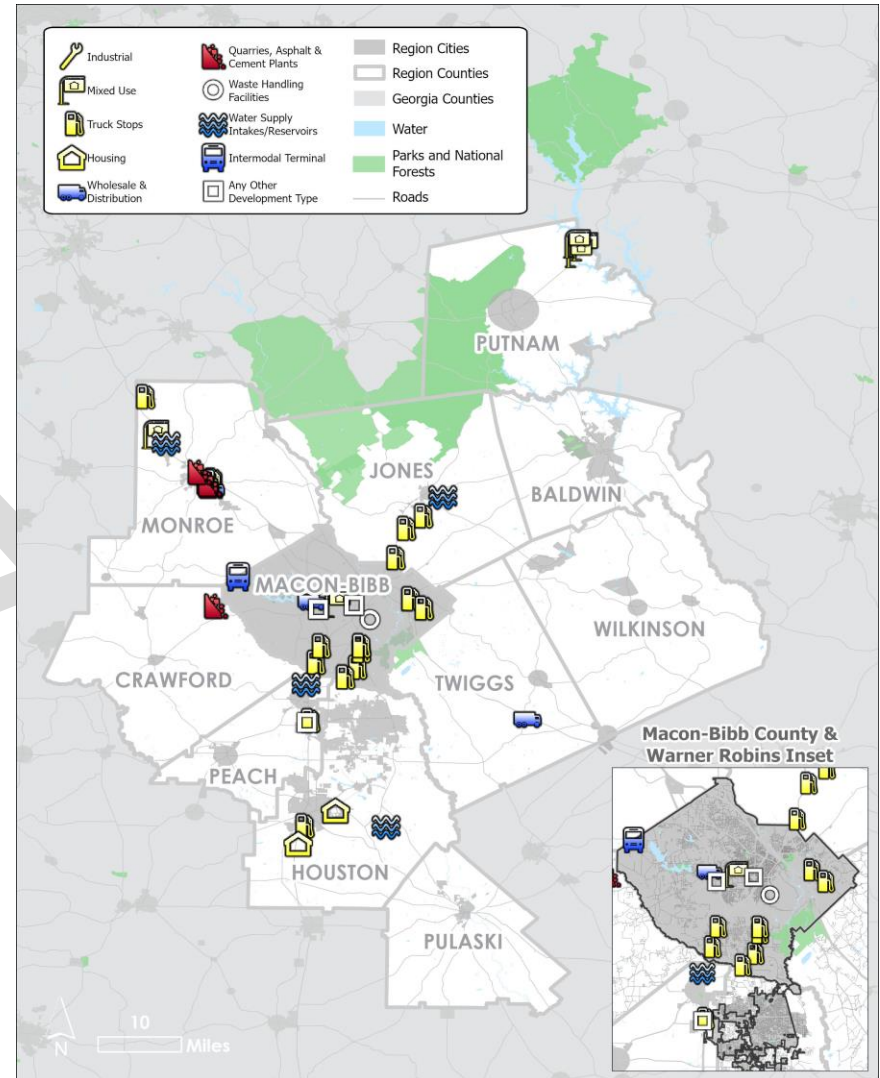
Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) are large-scale developments that are likely to have regional effects beyond the local government jurisdiction in which they are located, displayed in **Figure 38**. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), there is a total of 40 DRIs in the region. Most counties in the region have DRIs except Baldwin, Pulaski, and Wilkinson Counties. Mixed-use DRIs, which are conducive to transit service, are located in Macon-Bibb, Monroe, and Putnam Counties. DRIs are marked as completed if their submission has been reviewed by the DCA. The government entity that submits the application, has the final decision on whether the project will move forward or not.

Table 21: Developments of Regional Impact within the Last Five Years (2019-2023)

County	Number*	Type	Status
Baldwin	0	None	None
Crawford	1	Quarry/Plant	All Completed
Houston	6	Housing, Truck Stops, Waste Facilities, Other	All Completed
Jones	4	Truck Stops, Waste Facilities	All Completed
Macon-Bibb	14	Mixed Use, Truck Stops, Wholesale, Waste Facility, Other	13 Completed, 1 Form Submitted
Monroe	10	Truck Stops, Mixed Use, Quarry/Plant, Wholesale, Waste Facility, Intermodal Terminal	9 Completed, 1 Form Submitted
Peach	1	Water Supply Intakes/Reservoirs	All Completed
Pulaski	0	None	None
Putnam	3	Mixed Use	All Completed
Twiggs	1	Wholesale	All Completed
Wilkinson	0	None	None

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs
 *Excludes DRIs with withdrawn applications

Figure 38: Developments of Regional Impact



Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

8.5 Affordable Housing Initiatives

Affordable housing initiatives consist of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties, multi-family assisted properties, and public housing properties, as shown in Error! Reference source not found.. LIHTC properties are properties that have been acquired, rehabilitated, or newly constructed using tax credits to provide rental housing for lower-income households. Multi-family assisted properties consist of United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) subsidized multifamily rental housing properties with five or more dwelling units. These typically include apartments or town houses, but can also include nursing homes, hospitals, elderly housing, mobile home parks, retirement service centers, and, occasionally, vacant land. For this section, housing and properties for the elderly have been excluded and are instead included in **Section 8.6**. Public housing properties are housing with aid administered from HUD for low-income residents at rents they can afford.

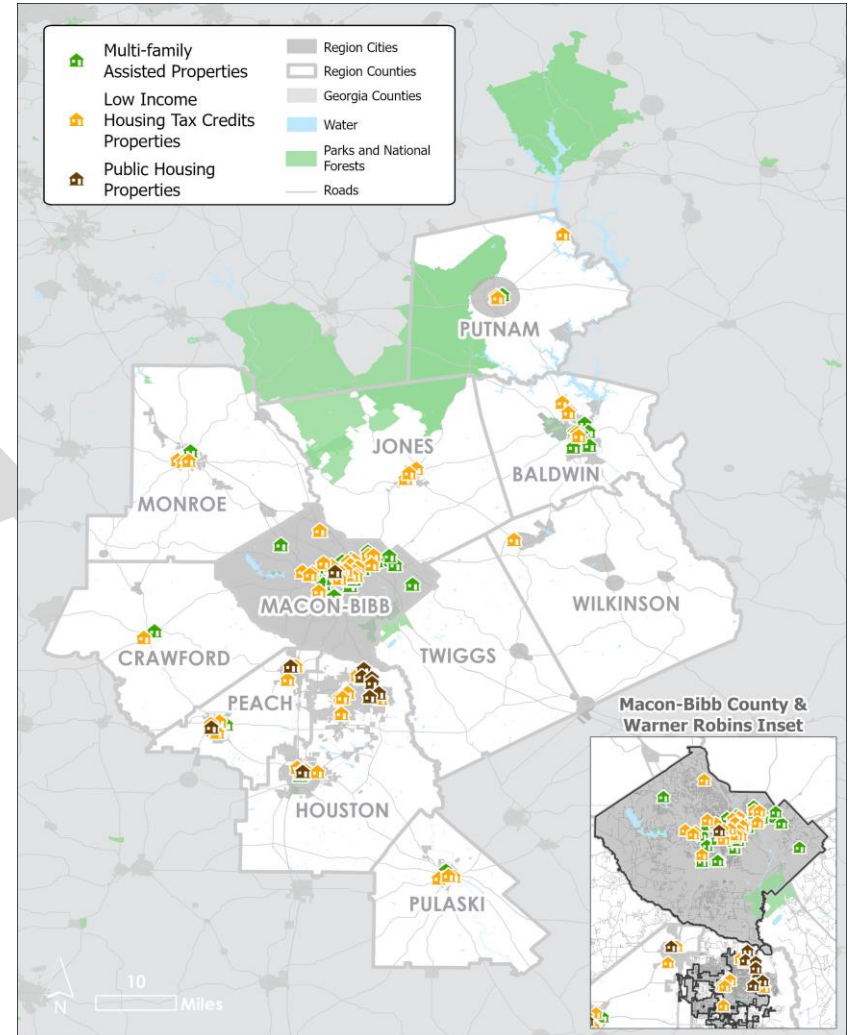
The total number of affordable housing units under these programs located in the region is 144 units. Of these units, 46.5 percent are LIHTC, 45.8 percent are multi-family assisted, and 7.6 percent are public housing. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, these units account for 0.1 percent of all units in the region (222,568 units). Twiggs is the only county in the region without affordable housing under these programs. Of the 144 units, 29 units in Houston County and 7 units in Monroe County (25.0 percent total) are not served by public transit.

Table 22: Affordable Housing Initiatives

Property Type	Number of Properties	Percent of Total Properties
Low-Income Housing Tax Credits	67	46.5%
Multi-Family Assisted	66	45.8%
Public Housing	11	7.6%
Total	144	100.0%

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021 5-Year ACS Data

Figure 39: Affordable Housing Initiatives



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

8.6 Aging Initiatives/Senior Care Facilities

Elderly assisted properties are HUD-subsidized multifamily housing properties specifically for the elderly, excluding insured hospitals with active loans. Nursing homes and assisted living residences are either publicly owned (by the county, for example) or privately owned buildings with multiple dwelling units. In addition to the elderly assisted properties and nursing homes/assisted living residences, there are personal care homes that are privately owned residences, usually containing fewer than six beds for elderly persons. All of these centers (displayed in **Figure 40**) require a license from the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH).

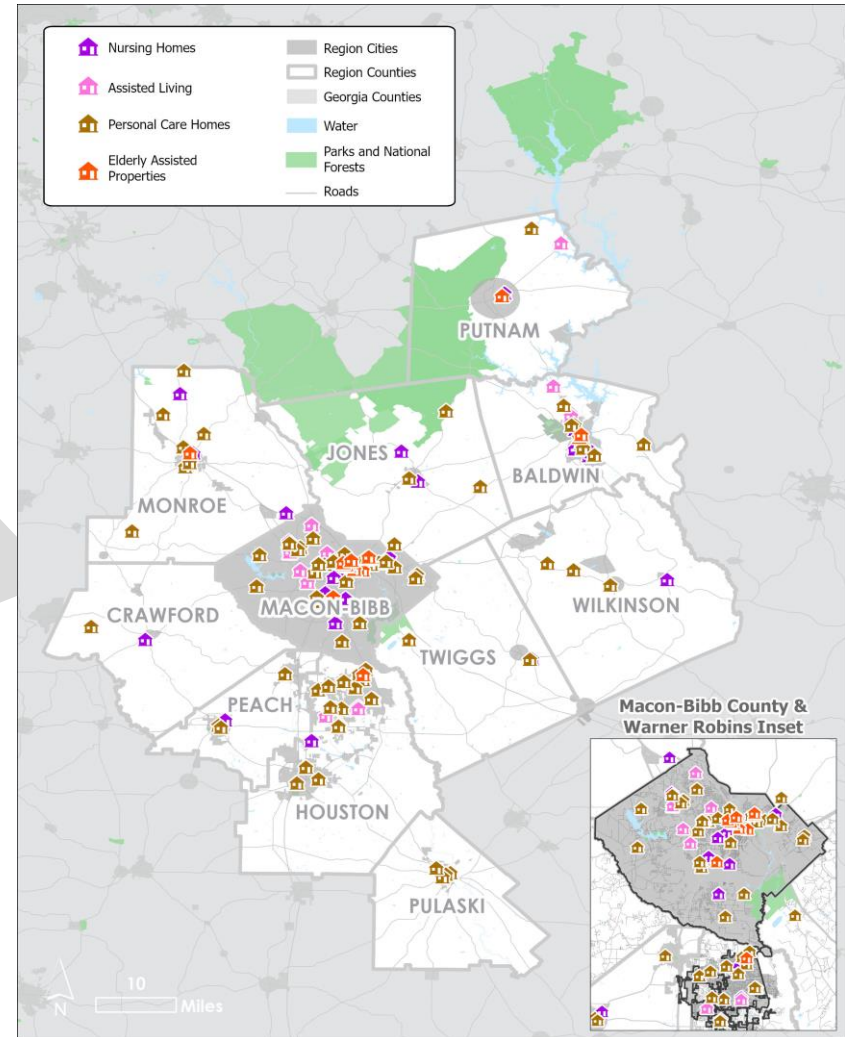
There are a total of 140 senior care facilities in the region. Most of the facilities are personal care homes (57.1 percent), followed by nursing homes (22.9 percent), elderly assisted properties (11.4 percent), and assisted living residences (8.6 percent). The location of the facilities are mostly in the cities and towns of the region. Only facilities located in Monroe, Houston, and Macon-Bibb Counties are also located in the high elderly population tracts noted in **Section 2.4.2**.

Table 23: Aging Initiatives and Senior Care Facilities

Property Type	Number of Properties	Percent of Total Properties
Nursing Homes	32	22.9%
Assisted Living Residences	12	8.6%
Personal Care Homes	80	57.1%
Elderly Assisted	16	11.4%
Total	140	100.0%

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Georgia Department of Community Health

Figure 40: Aging Initiatives and Senior Care Facilities



Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Georgia Department of Community Health

9.0 Transit Funding

9.1 Existing Funding for Transit

Public transit in the State of Georgia is funded through several sources, including federal, state, and local funds. Direct revenue, such as fares and coordinated purchased transportation, provides additional income sources.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 greatly increases federal outlays for transit funding. Federal grants fall into two categories: formula, which allocates funds based on certain characteristics of the areas receiving funding, and competitive, which require agencies or governments seeking funding to apply for it. In most cases, regardless of grant type, recipients must demonstrate the ability to provide local matching funds covering some portion of project costs.

In addition to the higher levels of transit funding available through the IIJA, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 further increased federal support for transit projects throughout the country. The IRA establishes and extends a range of competitive grant programs and tax credits for zero-emission vehicles, charging infrastructure, and alternative fuels. These funds may be used to help transition transit fleets to battery electric or hydrogen fuel cell fleets, among other uses.

9.1.1 Section 5311 Rural Formula Funding

FTA provides Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation Funding to GDOT to administer to non-urbanized areas with a population of less than 50,000. This funding requires a local match and can be used to provide transit services for all residents and trip types.

Funds are allocated based on an area’s size, population, low-income population, and revenue vehicle miles. Section 5311 funds can be used for capital, operating, planning, and job access-related activities. The federal share is up to 80 percent for capital projects and 50 percent for operating costs; local or state funds must be used to make up the remaining costs. Purchase-of-service contracts can be counted toward the local match, allowing coordinated Section 5311 systems to use Human Services Transportation funding to cover substantial portions of the required local match.

GDOT distributes each year’s Section 5311 funds based on an application process. Distributions fluctuate year to year depending on a system’s vehicle replacement schedule. Historically, the State of Georgia has provided a 10 percent capital funds match for the purchase of rural transit buses.

Table 24 displays five years of Section 5311 distributions for Middle Georgia’s eight rural transit systems.

Table 24: Section 5311 Rural Distributions in Middle Georgia

Funding Recipient	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Baldwin County Transit	\$62K	\$64K	\$81K	\$100K	\$210K
Crawford County Transit	\$140K	\$70K	\$135K	\$71K	\$51K
Jones County Transit	\$84K	\$122K	\$104K	\$86K	\$201K
Peach County Transit	\$79K	\$114K	\$71K	\$108K	\$219K
Pulaski County Transit	\$33K	\$35K	\$90K	\$37K	\$103K
Putnam County Transit	\$115K	\$126K	\$79K	\$184K	\$144K
Twiggs County Transit	\$82K	\$62K	\$37K	\$62K	\$124K
Wilkinson County Transit	\$108K	\$105K	\$65K	\$110K	\$157K
Total	\$704K	\$699K	\$661K	\$757K	\$1.2M

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation

9.1.2 Section 5307 Urban Formula Funding

Formula funding for urban areas is provided through the Section 5307 Urban program. Within Georgia, GDOT serves as the designated recipient for Section 5307 funds allocated to urban areas with populations under 200,000. Section 5307 provides up to 80 percent of capital funding. Though large urban systems may not use Section 5307 funds for operating expenses, urban areas with populations below 200,000 may use Section 5307 to fund up to 75 percent of operating budgets.

Each year, FTA apportions Section 5307 funds to all urban areas with over 50,000 residents. FTA apportionments are for illustrative purposes only. Suballocation of funds is left to the discretion of the designated recipient. As the designated recipient for Georgia’s small urban systems, GDOT distributes Section 5307 funding based on an annual call for projects. **Table 25** provides the FTA allocations for Middle Georgia’s two urbanized areas for the years 2019 to 2023, while **Table 26** shows Section 5307 distributions for the same period.

Table 25: Section 5307 Allocations for Urban Areas in Middle Georgia

Urbanized Area	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Macon-Bibb County	\$2.49M	\$2.28M	\$2.00M	\$2.58M	\$2.63M
Warner Robins	\$2.33M	\$2.21M	\$1.85M	\$2.37M	\$2.40M

Source: Federal Transit Administration

Table 26: Section 5307 Distributions by GDOT in Middle Georgia

Funding Recipient	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
MTA	\$4.13M	\$3.52M	\$3.60	\$2.62M	\$3.63M

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation

9.1.3 Georgia Transit Trust Fund

The Georgia Transit Trust Fund Program (TTFP) is a funding program administered by GDOT that uses a population-based formula to distribute state funds to Georgia’s counties that have existing transit service. Multi-county transit agencies also receive funding distributions based on population, and counties with household incomes below \$45,000 receive additional appropriations. The TTFP is funded through a tax levied on rideshare services and other for-hire ground transportation, as passed by the Georgia General Assembly in 2020. Georgia’s fiscal year 2024 budget is the first budget to distribute these funds to transit agencies statewide, with funds eligible to be used to support both capital and operating expenses. **Table 27** shows the TTFP distributions for the nine transit systems currently operating in Middle Georgia.

Table 27: Georgia Transit Trust Fund Program Distributions in Middle Georgia

Funding Recipient	2024
Baldwin County Transit	\$108,837
Crawford County Transit	\$16,294
Jones County Transit	\$38,078
Macon-Bibb Transit Authority	\$211,363
Peach County Transit	\$37,587
Pulaski County Transit	\$13,238
Putnam County Transit	\$29,616
Twiggs County Transit	\$10,776
Wilkinson County Transit	\$11,924
Total	\$477,713

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation

9.2 Transit Funding Opportunities

FTA formula funds account for the bulk of transit funding, especially in rural areas. However, FTA provides a number of competitive grant programs that transit agencies may use to leverage additional funding. Section 5339, the Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program, consists of one formula and two competitive grants. The first, 5339(a), allocates formula funding for capital projects involving the replacement, rehabilitation, or purchase of buses, vans, and bus-related equipment, or for the construction of bus-related facilities to support fixed-route transit service. The other grant under this program is 5339(c), the Low or No Emission Vehicle Program. This competitive grant program provides federal funding for the purchase or lease of zero-emission or low-emission transit buses and the acquisition, construction, and leasing of required supporting facilities. Federal funds can cover up to 85 percent of the cost of acquiring transit buses and up to 90 percent of the costs associated with acquiring related equipment and facilities. MTA has utilized 5339(a) grants to expand its fleet of battery-electric buses.

In January 2021, the Justice40 Initiative outlined the goal of providing 40 percent of federal transportation investment to disadvantaged communities. Many FTA grant programs are being retooled to meet these priorities. The largest of these programs is the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. RAISE grants are aimed at major capital projects that address climate change, equity concerns, and barriers to opportunity. Over \$5.4 billion in RAISE grants has been awarded over the past three years, with \$983 million awarded to 90 projects in 2021, \$2.2 billion awarded to 166 projects in 2022, and \$2.3 billion awarded to 162 projects in 2023. In 2023, the Baldwin County government was awarded \$4.9 million for its Oconee Heights Streetscape and Safety Improvements Project. As additional competitive programs come online, FTA will update their Justice40 website.⁹

⁹ www.transportation.gov/equity-Justice40

10.0 Key Findings and Next Steps

This section summarizes key findings from the Existing Conditions Report. These findings, along with feedback from stakeholders and public involvement activities, are critical to identifying regional transit needs. This section also provides further guidance on the next stage of the Regional TDP.

10.1 Key Findings

- Macon-Bibb and Houston Counties have a high concentration of transit market demographics.
- High concentrations of low-income populations are found in Macon-Bibb County and the Warner Robins area.
- High concentrations of elderly populations are found in Jones, Houston, Pulaski, Putnam, and Wilkinson Counties.
- High concentrations of zero-car households are found in southwest Peach County and the Macon-Bibb County, Milledgeville, and Warner Robins areas.
- High concentrations of populations with a disability are found in Baldwin, Houston, Macon-Bibb, Pulaski, and Putnam Counties.
- Crawford, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties contain the greatest number of transportation-disadvantaged census tracts.
- Recent data shows that unemployment in the region is on par with the state average and found at the highest concentration in Macon-Bibb County.
- Population projections show the region experiencing modest growth over the next 40 years, with six out of 11 counties expected to increase in population. Five out of 11 counties are expected to decline in population from 2020 to 2030, with this decline projected to continue at an increasing rate through 2060. The region as a whole is projected to grow by 21.1 percent by 2060, below the state's projected growth rate of 32.1 percent over the same time period. Projected growth is consistent with the region's historical growth, which has also been lower than the state's growth rate.
- Key destinations and essential services that can support transit are more commonly found in the Macon-Bibb County, Warner Robins, Perry, and Milledgeville areas.
- Urban fixed-route and ADA paratransit service is provided to the Macon urbanized area. Rural transit service covers most of Middle Georgia through eight different countywide providers. There are opportunities for new multi-county or regional transit systems to operate in Houston and Monroe Counties, where no rural transit service is currently provided.
- The average county rural system in the region performs comparably to, and by some metrics better than, peer systems in areas similar to Middle Georgia. The performance of the region's urban system varies when compared to similar systems in the state, with MTA slightly underperforming across most metrics.
- Most trips in Middle Georgia start and end within the same county (81 percent). Inter-county trips are also common, with Macon-Bibb and Houston Counties as the top destinations.
- Currently, no transit providers in the region are utilizing the Let's Ride smartphone application for transit trip reservations and scheduling. There is an opportunity to better leverage technology to facilitate transit access in the future. Broadband access and accessibility for older adults are important considerations for implementation.

- There are several medical facilities in the region, including Piedmont Macon Medical Center in Macon-Bibb County, Atrium Health Navicent locations in Baldwin, Macon-Bibb, Monroe, and Peach Counties, and Houston Medical locations in Perry and Warner Robins. Crawford, Twiggs, and Wilkinson County residents do not have direct access to hospitals or dialysis centers within their counties and have only limited access through neighboring transit services.
- Mercer University and Georgia College and State University are among the region's highest-enrollment colleges. Both institutions place in the top ten largest employers in the region.
- The region's largest employers in healthcare, food manufacturing, and education are projected to continue creating job opportunities for Middle Georgia's labor force. Additionally, the food services and warehousing and storage sectors are projected to experience significant growth.

- There are only two park and ride lots in the region. Located in counties with existing rural transit systems, these lots could serve as regional multimodal hubs or transit transfer points between the county systems.
- New funding programs at the federal level, particularly those tied to the Justice40 Initiative, may present opportunities for transit service expansion and enhancement to better serve disadvantaged populations.

10.2 Next Steps

The Existing Conditions Report provides a foundation to identify and prioritize the transit needs for each county as well as the Middle Georgia region as a whole. This documentation and analysis will be utilized in the next steps in Regional TDP development, including the Vision and Goals Statement in coordination with stakeholder and public input and the Alternatives Analysis and Recommendations Report.

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