



DEKALB 2050 UNIFIED PLAN

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

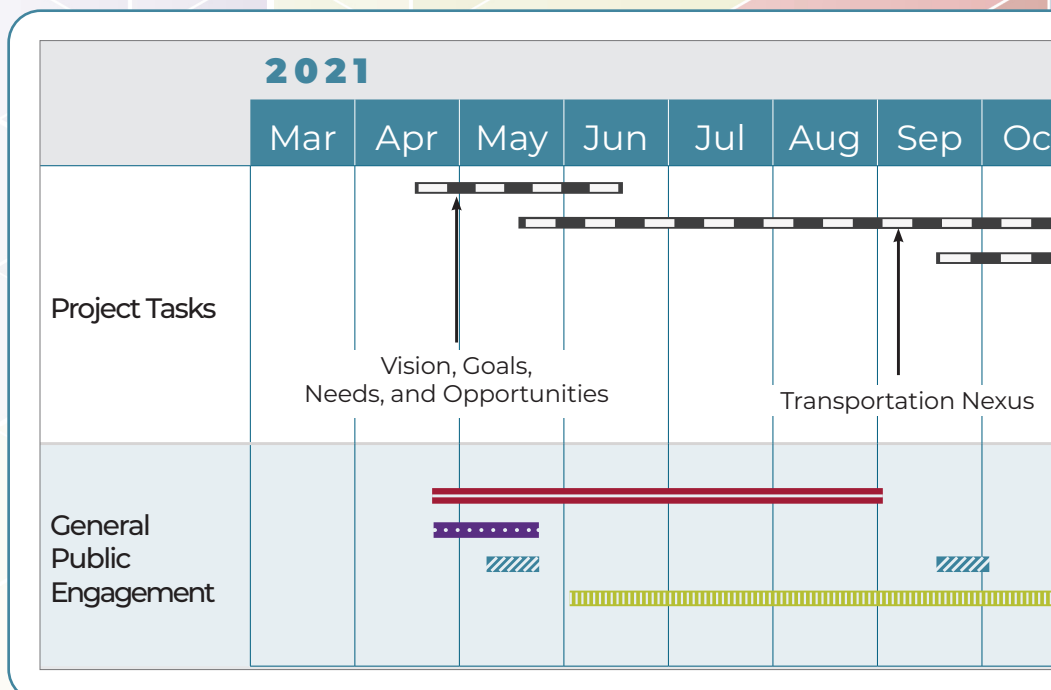
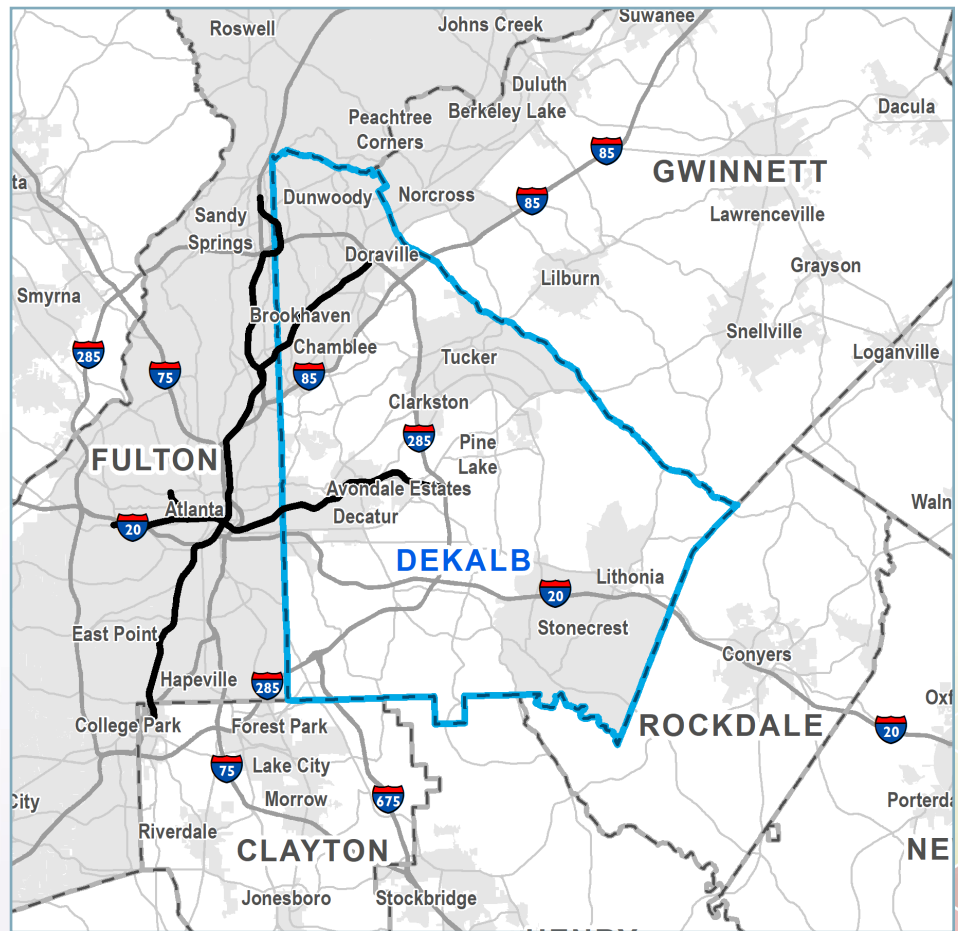
OCTOBER 2022

# INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIFIED PLAN

An age-old debate: does transportation investment pave the way for new growth and changing land uses, or does new development spur the need for additional transportation infrastructure and options? While the interrelatedness of land use and transportation is often apparent, our ability to plan simultaneously for both (particularly in larger cities and expansive areas) is much more complex with multiple plans, separate departments, and separate (often uncoordinated) regulatory and implementation responsibilities.

Recently, DeKalb County—in partnership with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)—saw an opportunity to better coordinate and align its comprehensive transportation plan (CTP) with its comprehensive land use plan and other quality of life priorities to create a more holistic view and coordinated plan for the County’s future: the result is the DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan.

This Unified Plan document serves as the culmination of the planning process as well a summary and integration of the two individual, but coordinated documents—one for land use and one for transportation.



## SCHEDULE

The DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan was developed over a period of eighteen months and included four major phases:

**Vision, Goals, Needs, and Opportunities** – This phase established a baseline of understanding of where the County’s land use pattern and transportation system is today and where the community envisions to go over the next 30 years.

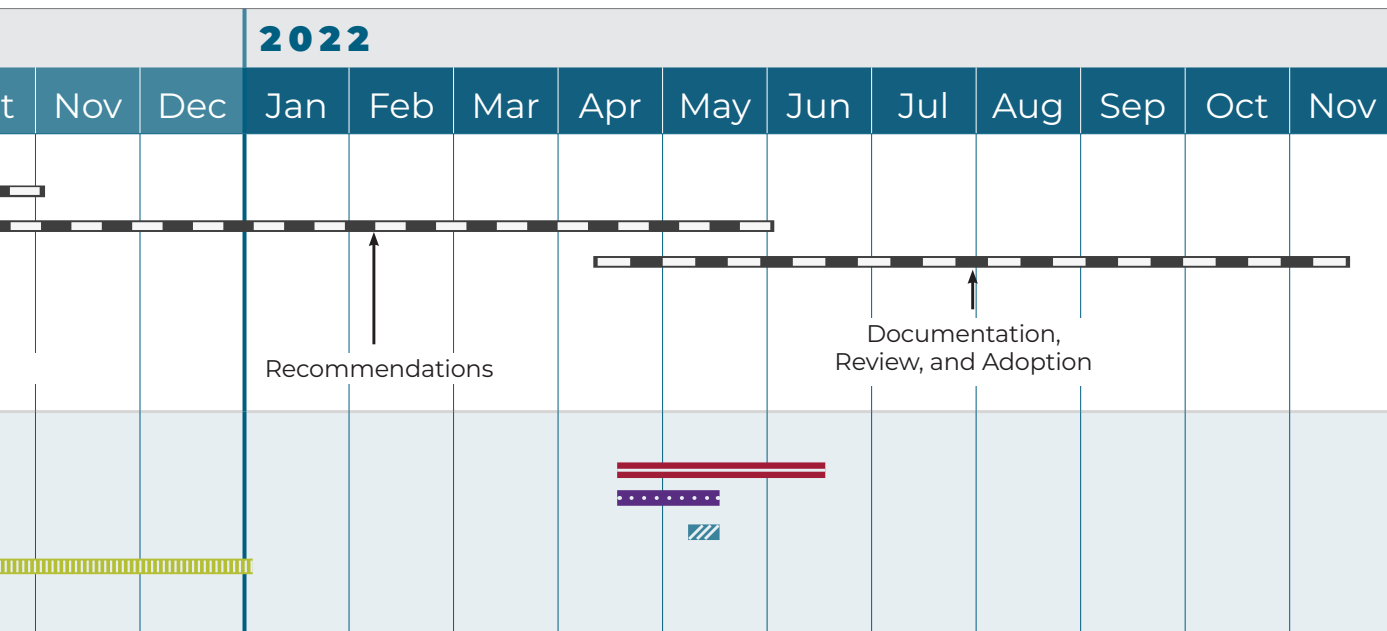
**Transportation Nexus** – The next phase chronicled feedback and findings received in the previous phase to inform a dynamic system of qualitative and quantitative themes designed to evaluate how future projects should be prioritized and to discover how they interlink with each other.

**Recommendations** – With the Transportation Nexus established, this phase identified, evaluated, and prioritized a wide range of land use and development policies as well as transportation investments, policies, and actions that will help the County achieve its future short-term and long-term vision.

**Documentation, Review, and Adoption** – The last phase documented all recommendations, feedback, and findings into the final Comprehensive Land Use and Comprehensive Transportation Plan documents for public review and subsequent County adoption.

In every phase, extensive stakeholder and community engagement played a vital role in visioning, development, and compilation of the Unified Plan. A range of engagement exercises and venues were used, including public open houses, community event outreach, online surveys, and focus groups and strove to help ensure that broad and diverse swaths of the County were reached and engaged throughout the process.

**Legend:**  Online Survey  Community Events  Public Meetings  Focus Groups



# STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement had a significant influence within the DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan and its development. In addition to the general public, stakeholders were organized into four categories that determined the type and frequency of engagement as well as the topics covered in discussion. These four groups of individuals played key roles within the engagement process.

**Leadership**

DeKalb County leadership provided critical guidance to the Unified Plan team. More than 30 meetings, including Commissioners and/or Executive Branch leadership, allowed for input on vision and priorities, project recommendations, and transportation and land use policies.

**Committees**

The project included transportation and land use committees inclusive of DeKalb County departments, Decide DeKalb, the DeKalb School System, DeKalb Cities, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), ARC, the Department of Community Affairs, GDOT, and MARTA.

**Stakeholder Groups**

Stakeholder groups included key community and business representatives such as civic and business associations as well as the higher education and medical community. They provided important insight through two rounds of discussions.

**Focus Groups**

Focus group meetings were conducted for targeted policy topics and population groups, including housing, arts and culture, bicycle/pedestrian/trails, resiliency and sustainability, retail, health and wellness, and public safety. The team also met with various multicultural groups throughout DeKalb.

**Multicultural/BIPOC Focus Groups include:**

**Engaging Multicultural and BIPOC Communities**

DeKalb County is tremendously diverse and includes people of many racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as a communities of individuals who sought political asylum from countries around the world. These Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities are part of DeKalb County’s uniqueness and vibrancy. Many also have transportation and quality of life needs that mirror other communities within DeKalb County and often exceed them, including access to public transportation and well-lit sidewalks, job training and access to less physically intensive jobs, support for small businesses, affordable housing options, access to healthy, cultural food options, and more robust translation services.

Special thanks to the following organizations who helped to organize these critical focus groups:

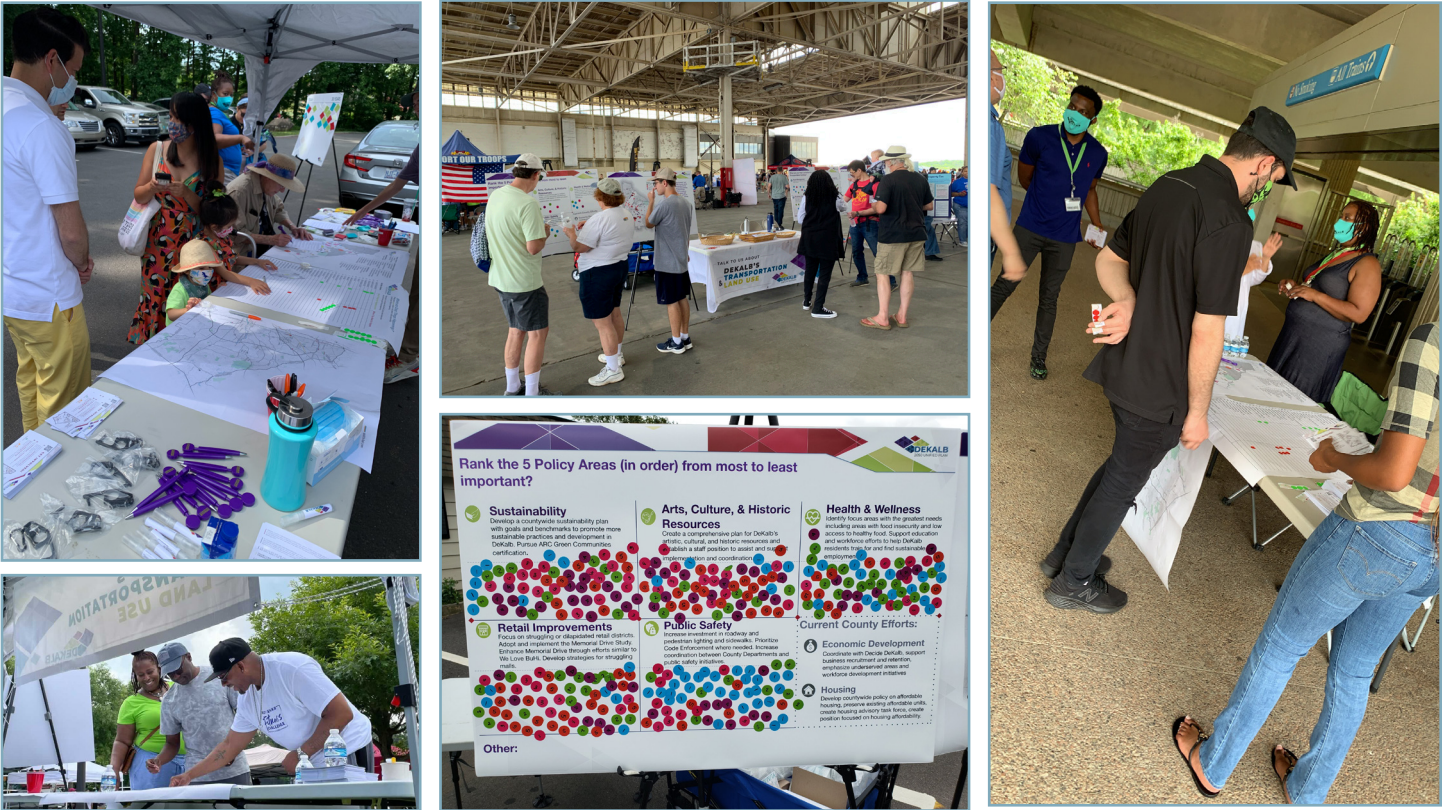
- Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS)
- Amani Women Center
- Latin American Association (LAA)
- NAACP



- ▶ NAACP
- ▶ Black Leaders
- ▶ Korean
- ▶ Burmese
- ▶ Bhutanese
- ▶ Hispanic/Latino
- ▶ African Diaspora (By Language)
  - ▶ Tigrigna
  - ▶ Dinka
  - ▶ Amharic
  - ▶ Somali
  - ▶ Kiswahili

Public outreach is a key component in developing any successful community plan. The DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan conducted two rounds of public outreach efforts that included both online and in-person components. Engagement efforts were developed to be consistent across formats—public meetings and community intercepts asked some of the same questions as the online survey to gather the same types of information from different groups.

The goal of these outreach efforts was to gather public input from across the County through direct engagement and the input of community proxies. Providing such a wide array of opportunities for public participation ensures that the Unified Plan reflects the values and priorities of DeKalb County as accurately as possible.



<b>30+</b> meetings with Commissioners and/or Executive Branch leadership	<b>19</b> meetings with focus groups
<b>8</b> meetings with Community Councils and Planning Commission	<b>12</b> virtual public meetings, charrettes, and/or town halls
<b>9</b> meetings with stakeholder committees and groups	<b>13</b> community intercepts
<b>2</b> online surveys	<b>2</b> social media platforms
<b>1</b> website	

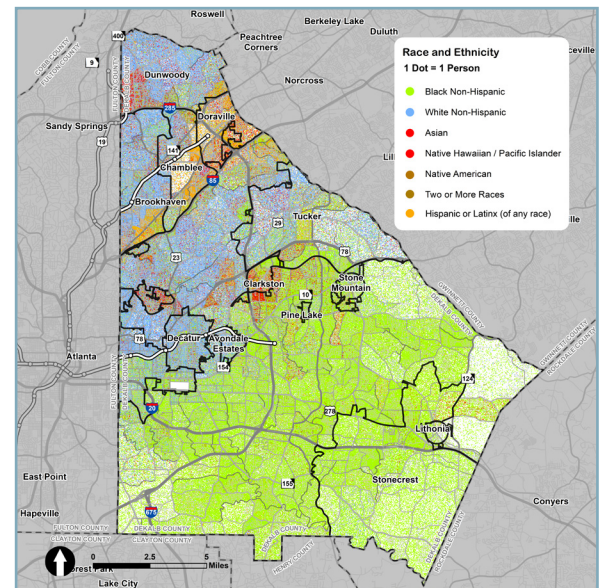


# HIGH LEVEL SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment (ECNA) Report analyzes and assesses the many interworking characteristics of DeKalb County, including demographics, economic development, land use patterns, environmental features, and transportation infrastructure to create an in-depth understanding of the County's needs and opportunities. Based on the review of some 60 previous plans and programs documented in the report, a series of key themes were identified and are highlighted below.

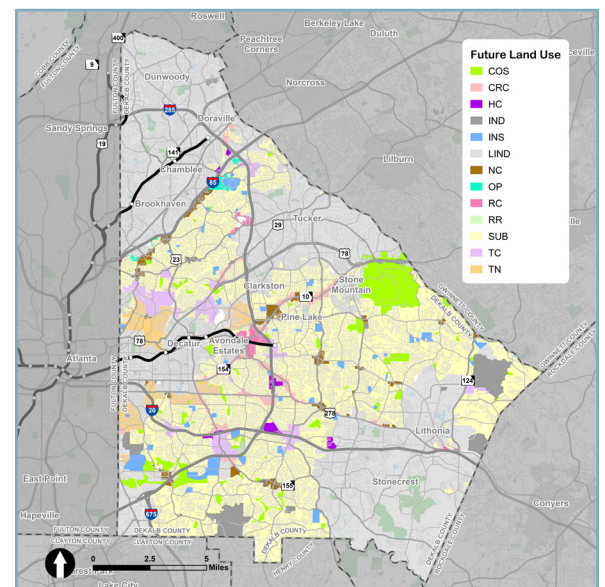
## PEOPLE

Understanding the people that make up DeKalb County is integral to a well-rounded Unified Land Use and Transportation Plan, including both general population and specific demographic measures. Notable demographic measures documented include Seniors, Race/Ethnicity, Limited English Proficiency, Persons with Disabilities, Zero-Vehicle Households, and Level of Educational Attainment. These measures are especially important in informing equitable development and transportation strategies as well as guiding targeted community outreach approaches. DeKalb County's diverse majority-minority population, robust population growth, and medium- to high-density development patterns present unique opportunities and challenges for its transportation and quality of life future.



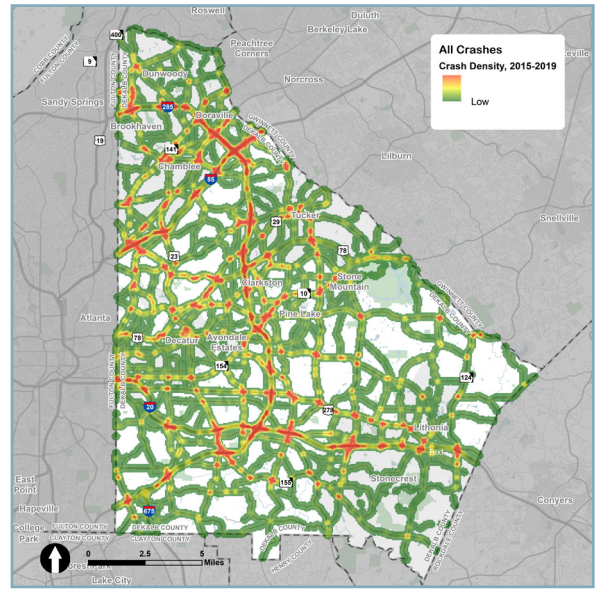
## PLACES

A central tenant of the DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan is that existing and future land use patterns across the County directly impact the need for transportation investments, and vice versa. How and when communities in DeKalb County have developed informs a deeper understanding of the overall character of each community and its need for transportation improvements. In addition, proximity to a range of public amenities (e.g., parks, grocery stores, and schools) directly correlates to residents' quality-of-life. While DeKalb County is highly developed, certain pockets, particularly in the south and east, have limited access to some of these amenities.



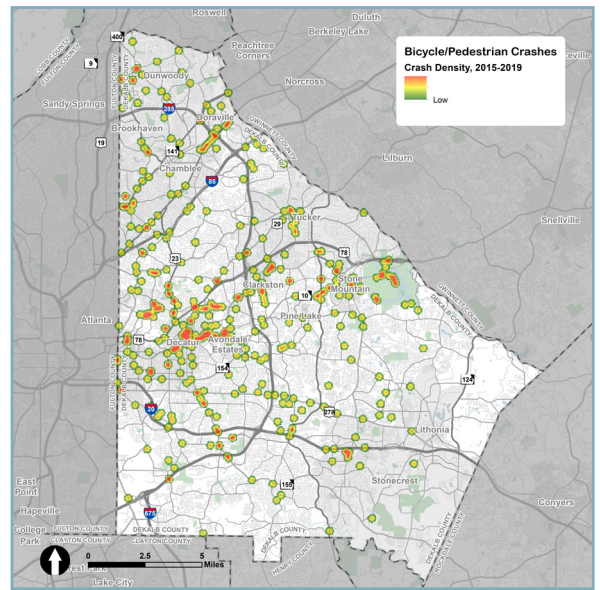
**SAFETY**

Understanding historical crash data across the County plays a pivotal role in identifying transportation improvements that both mitigate areas with high crash rates and alleviate traffic congestion resulting in those crashes. While the medium to high-density development patterns in the county tend to occur on I-285 and other high-volume freeways, many hot spots were identified on the County's arterials, including Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Buford Highway, Covington Highway, and North Druid Hills Road. Intersections with high crash rates were found at Henrico Road at West Side Place in South DeKalb and a heavy concentration of intersections along Peachtree Road and Peachtree Boulevard in the City of Chamblee.



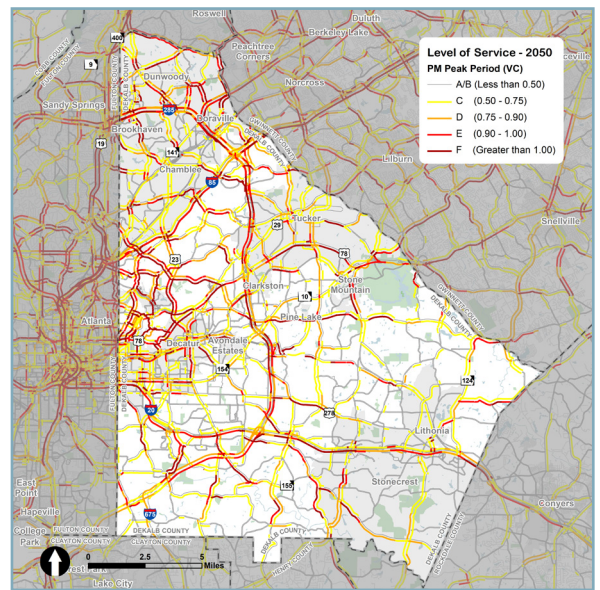
**TRANSIT AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure incentivize greater use of alternative modes of transportation as opposed to driving, alleviate traffic congestion on the County's roads, and contribute to a greater quality-of-life. The lack of sidewalks within one mile of activity centers and lack of bicycle facilities within two miles of activity centers were found to significantly limit their use as alternatives to driving. Crashes involving bicycles and pedestrians most often occur in higher density areas of the County, near bus stops, and at MARTA rail stations. Enhanced transportation investments must be leveraged to improve the safety and viability of these alternatives modes of transportation.



**CONGESTION**

Capacity-based traffic congestion often limits mobility in DeKalb County whether driving or taking transit. The ARC Travel Demand Model and other sources were used to identify corridors and intersections with high rates of congestion and delay. Congestion is almost always expected to increase along DeKalb County's roadways as traffic volumes grow over the next 30 years. Making strategic transportation investments is necessary on this front to combat traffic congestion, mitigate bottlenecks, and enhance the movement of people and goods to achieve efficiencies for both.



# COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN: GUIDING PRINCIPLES



## Activity Centers, Nodes, and Corridors

In order to support continued growth and development within the County, while protecting existing single-family areas, new and more intense development will be focused within activity centers, nodes, and corridors.



## Protect Existing Single-Family Neighborhoods

Preserve and enhance the integrity and quality of existing residential neighborhoods through appropriate transitions, buffers, and infill.



## Development Intensity

Focus new and higher intensity development in existing developed areas, particularly in locations with existing services, facilities, and infrastructure with capacity to support additional development.



## Density Bonuses

Provide density bonuses for projects that provide community benefits (e.g., affordable workforce and senior housing components, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity improvements, or functional green space) and if they do not negatively impact or affect surrounding single-family neighborhoods.



## Housing Options

Provide a variety of housing options for County residents at all stages of life. Denser and more innovative housing options should be focused in or near activity centers, nodes, and corridors.



## Environment and Sustainability

Development should prioritize sustainability and the preservation of DeKalb County's dwindling natural spaces and undeveloped areas and be focused in areas where it will have the least negative impacts to the natural environment.



## Multimodal Development

Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled by promoting new development and redevelopment at or near activity centers, developing quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and providing better transit access.



## Cultural Diversity

Promote activities to highlight historic and cultural assets in the community and provide opportunities for community interaction.



## Healthy Neighborhoods

Promote healthy living in neighborhoods by incorporating a pedestrian environment that encourages socialization, walking, biking and connectivity. Update or implement the recommendations of the Master Active Living Plans (MALPs).



## Transit Oriented Development

Promote and provide incentives for transit-oriented development (TOD) near existing rail stations. Identify locations for additional development near planned premium transit stations.



## Tree and Greenspace Preservation

Establish tree preservation and landscaping standards. Prioritize the preservation of existing tree canopy and undeveloped areas.

A critical element of any planning process is the visioning that happens early in the process and the creation of statements that guide the direction of the plan. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan's Guiding Principles and the CTP's Priorities serve as those statements.

The Guiding Principles are a set of overarching themes that provide guidance and direction for development across DeKalb County. They are aspirational in nature, and they serve as a foundation for the County to achieve the vision established by Future Land Use Map. These principles apply in all character areas across the County and shape the more detailed policies that are outlined in each character area, such as Activity Centers.



## COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN: PRIORITIES

**Provide Transportation Options through Connectivity across Mode**

Improve travel for all users by increasing connections across roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes.

**Enable Healthy Communities and Improve Quality of Life**

Leverage transportation infrastructure to encourage an active lifestyle and overall improved quality of life.

**Improve Safety**

Provide for safe travel by all users across all modes of travel.

**Improve Maintenance**

Ensure the long-term care for existing infrastructure, including roadway paving or resurfacing roads and repairing bridges and signal systems.

**Promote Equity**

Prioritize improvements that increase transportation access to all parts of the County, especially in communities where a lack of transportation options create substantial barriers

**Increase Funding for Improvements**

Pursue new local revenue sources that will allow the County to implement additional transportation projects.

**Increase Access to Jobs and Education**

Prioritize transportation investments that allow workers and students to have easier access to these key destinations.

**Encourage Economic Development**

Leverage transportation projects that help encourage revitalization and new development throughout the County.

**Respect and Improve DeKalb County's Character**

Implement transportation projects that improve mobility while taking into consideration local character and context.

**Practice Fiscal Responsibility in Transportation Investments**

Prioritize transportation projects that can be implemented in a reasonable timeframe and provide a strong return on investment.

**Better Accommodate Movement of Goods**

Implement transportation projects that improve freight movement in the County either by truck or by rail.

These Transportation Priorities consider the goals of both the previous transportation plan and the recent transit master plan as well as guidance from regional, state, and federal transportation agencies. These priorities shaped the analysis of needs, project evaluation criteria, and the creation of transportation policy.

# TRANSPORTATION NEXUS

The central goal of the DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan is to combine the County's transportation and land use visions into a single unified, actionable plan. Transportation and land use elements have direct and intrinsically interlinked relationships with each other.

The Transportation Nexus (center of page) explores those interlinked relationships in detail. A product of substantial public and community engagement, the Transportation Nexus was developed to convey top line issues that the project team gathered through the engagement and technical analysis processes, mapping them to better understand the themes and connections between them.

Based on these efforts, the project team uncovered a total of seven top line issues pertinent to DeKalb County's transportation and land use future:

**Housing:** Providing enough quality affordable housing and a variety of housing options to meet demands and needs of DeKalb County residents to slow down rapid increases of housing prices

**Activity Centers:** Establishing and maintaining dynamic activity centers throughout the County tailored to residents' needs and promoting higher population and/or jobs densities in these areas

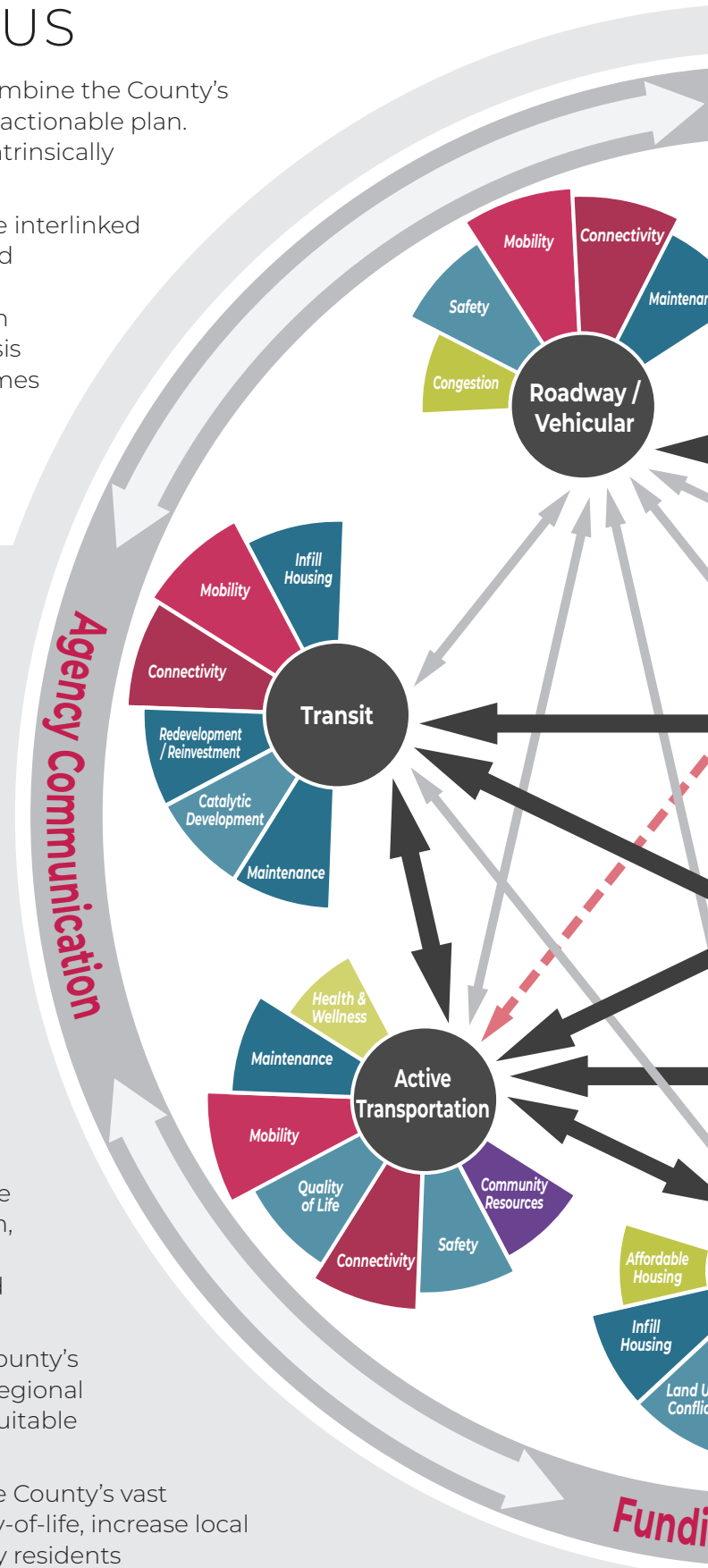
**Economic Development:** Promoting and incentivizing new population and job opportunities and celebrating the County's diversity as an asset

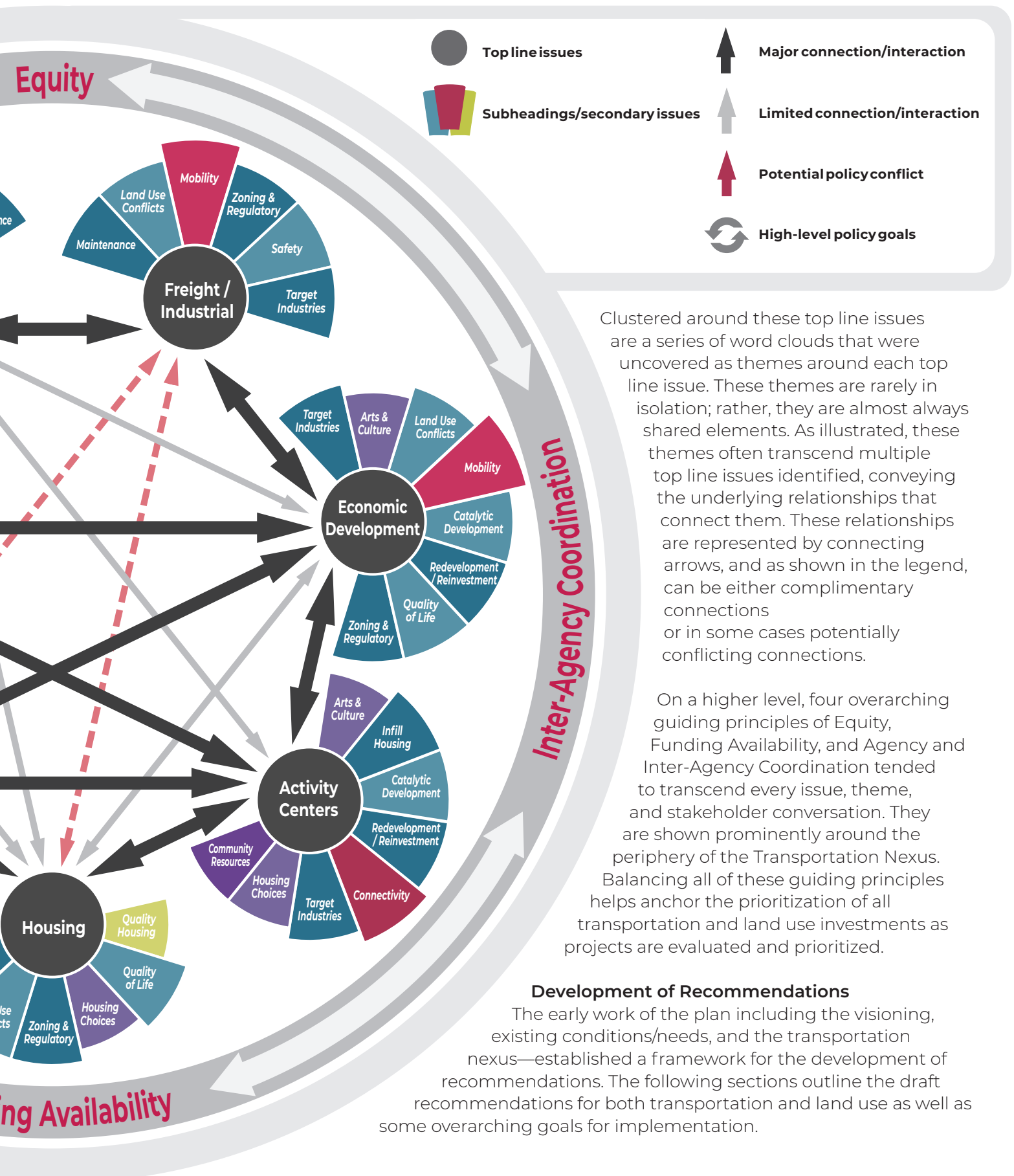
**Freight/Industrial:** Focusing on the County's well-established freight and industrial sector and continuing to encourage further development opportunities for jobs and skillsets it can generate

**Roadway/Vehicular:** Investing in improvements to the County's vast roadway network to mitigate congestion, contribute to efficiencies in the movement of both people and goods, achieve a state-of-good-repair, and enhance safety and mobility

**Transit:** Leveraging, expanding, and enhancing the County's existing transit network in strategic ways to increase regional mobility, connect residents to jobs, and provide an equitable balance of transportation options

**Active Transportation:** Enhancing and expanding the County's vast sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure to enhance quality-of-life, increase local connectivity, and promote the well-being of all County residents





Clustered around these top line issues are a series of word clouds that were uncovered as themes around each top line issue. These themes are rarely in isolation; rather, they are almost always shared elements. As illustrated, these themes often transcend multiple top line issues identified, conveying the underlying relationships that connect them. These relationships are represented by connecting arrows, and as shown in the legend, can be either complimentary connections or in some cases potentially conflicting connections.

On a higher level, four overarching guiding principles of Equity, Funding Availability, and Agency and Inter-Agency Coordination tended to transcend every issue, theme, and stakeholder conversation. They are shown prominently around the periphery of the Transportation Nexus. Balancing all of these guiding principles helps anchor the prioritization of all transportation and land use investments as projects are evaluated and prioritized.

**Development of Recommendations**

The early work of the plan including the visioning, existing conditions/needs, and the transportation nexus—established a framework for the development of recommendations. The following sections outline the draft recommendations for both transportation and land use as well as some overarching goals for implementation.

# PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

After hearing from the community and evaluating the County's existing conditions and needs, the DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan team identified a Universe of Projects to guide the development of a recommended project list. The Universe of Projects contains numerous projects for the County to consider that address transportation needs.

More than 40 planning studies were reviewed to develop the Universe of Projects. Documents included the following:

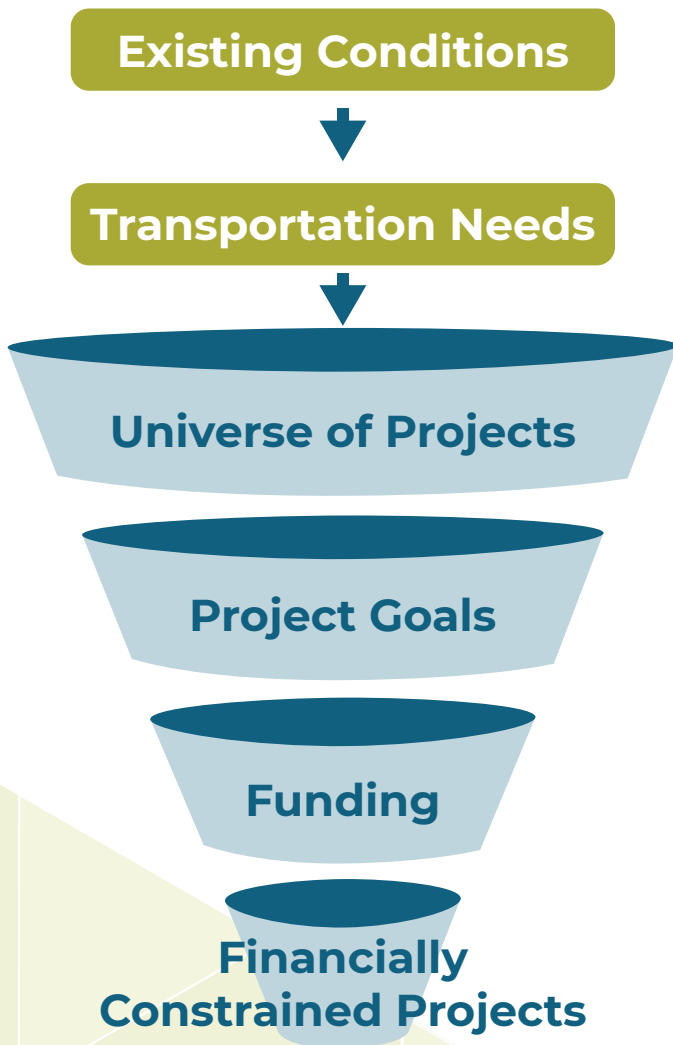
- ▶ **2014 Comprehensive Transportation Plan**
- ▶ **State and Regional Transportation Plans**
- ▶ **City Transportation Plans**
- ▶ **CID Transportation Plans**
- ▶ **DeKalb SPLOST Program**
- ▶ **Corridor Studies**
- ▶ **Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Plans**
- ▶ **Small Area Plans**
- ▶ **Master Active Living Plans**
- ▶ **Transit Oriented Development Plans**
- ▶ **Freight Cluster Plans**
- ▶ **Trail Master Plans**

More than **1,200** projects were identified as a part of the Universe of Projects, both within unincorporated DeKalb and its Cities.

Recognizing that not all projects could be funded, evaluation criteria provided an opportunity to identify high performing projects.

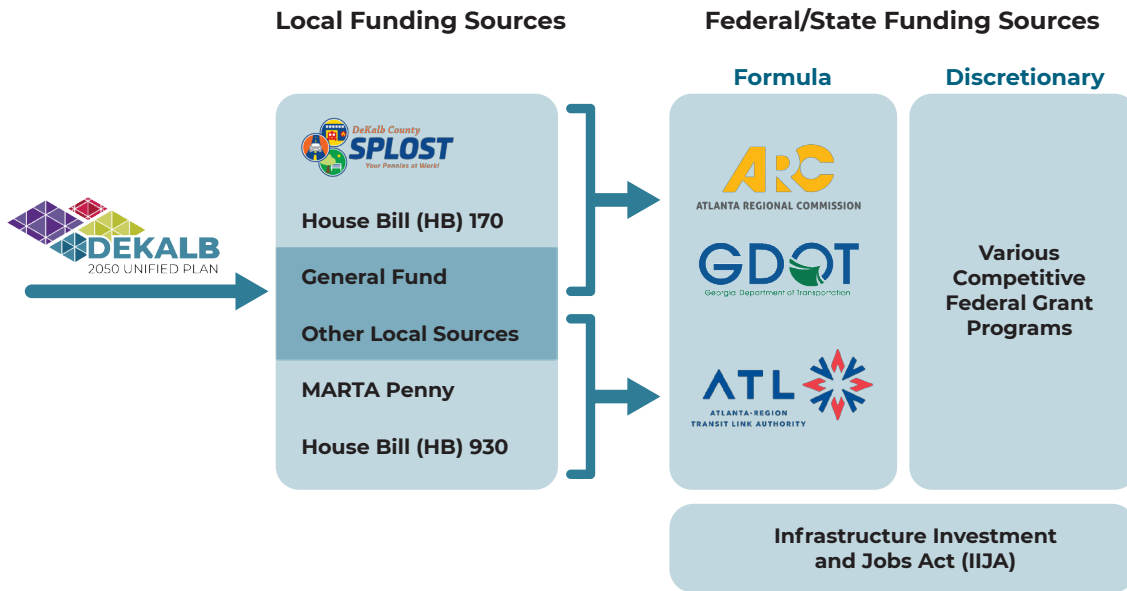
The project evaluation criteria developed for the Universe of Projects built on the transportation priorities identified at the onset of the Unified Plan to ensure that the project prioritization reflects the goals of the community.

- ▶ **Access to Existing/Planned Transit Facilities**
- ▶ **Access to Community Resources**
- ▶ **Safety Improvement**
- ▶ **Equitable Access**
- ▶ **Employment and Educational Impact**
- ▶ **Economic Development Impact**
- ▶ **Mobility Improvement**
- ▶ **Freight Movement Improvement**
- ▶ **Previous Plans Support**
- ▶ **Public Support**



# FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

The Unified Plan considers multiple funding sources, including local, state, and federal funding. The image below depicts the different types of funding sources considered during the planning process. Currently, DeKalb County leverages SPLOST, General Fund and other sources, and the MARTA Penny for local transportation funding and leverages those dollars to secure state and federal funding matches where possible.

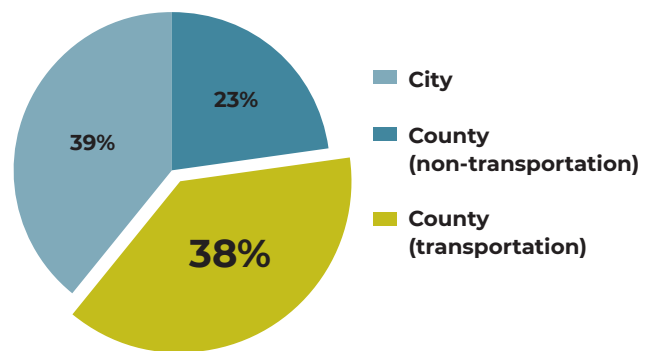


The DeKalb Unified Plan financial framework is based on current funding measures and constraints with assumed state and federal funding matches consistent with recent project awards. Additional local funding sources could be considered in the future. However, the primary source assumed in the development of this financial framework is a renewal of the countywide SPLOST program. The plan includes conservative assumptions regarding revenue projections and allocation to transportation in Unincorporated DeKalb County.

## Financial Assumptions

- ✓ Countywide SPLOST continues
- ✓ Conservative tax revenue assumptions
- ✓ City allocation of SPLOST remains the same
- ✓ Transportation allocation of SPLOST remains the same
- ✓ Existing MARTA penny continues to be used primarily for state of good repair

## SPLOST Fund Allocation



Total Annual Countywide SPLOST Revenue Projected: **\$106 million**

Portion of Annual SPLOST for Unincorporated DeKalb Transportation: **\$40 million**



# SURFACE TRANSPORTATION: SET-ASIDES AND PROJECTS

The table below displays the overall financial framework for unincorporated DeKalb County. The timeframe is broken into three tiers: Tier 1 (short-range), Tier 2 (mid-range), and Tier 3 (long-range). Rows are then grouped into two major categories—set-aside funding categories (programmatic funding) and project funding categories.

## Highlights on Set-Aside Funding Categories:

- ▶ Asset Management is the largest category, and greatest need in DeKalb County. This programmatic fund includes roadway resurfacing, capital bridge investments, and a pavement asset management system and plan. Less funding may be needed in future years or tiers as DeKalb County’s backlog of road maintenance shrinks.
- ▶ Pedestrian Improvements is the second largest set-aside category, including sidewalks and crossings. Following the completion of a sidewalk inventory and condition assessment, locations of greatest need and priority for pedestrian investments can be determined.
- ▶ Additional categories in the set-aside categories include project/program management, funding for Commission District identified projects, technology and smart corridor investments, and a small discretionary fund for directed planning and support efforts.

## Highlights on Project Funding Categories:

Three categories of project funding are included in the plan—each includes different subtypes that are reflected on the following pages:

- ▶ Multiuse Trails include any off-road trail projects in their own right-of-way or along utility easements. They also include sidepaths alongside of a roadway.
- ▶ Small Scale Roadway Improvements include all roadway projects with a cost of less than \$4 million. This may include intersection operational or safety improvements, signal technology projects, or small scale freight projects.
- ▶ Large Scale Roadway Improvements include all roadway projects greater than \$4 million. These may include large intersection improvements as well as multimodal projects, corridor operational improvements, capacity/widening projects, new connections, or interchange improvements.

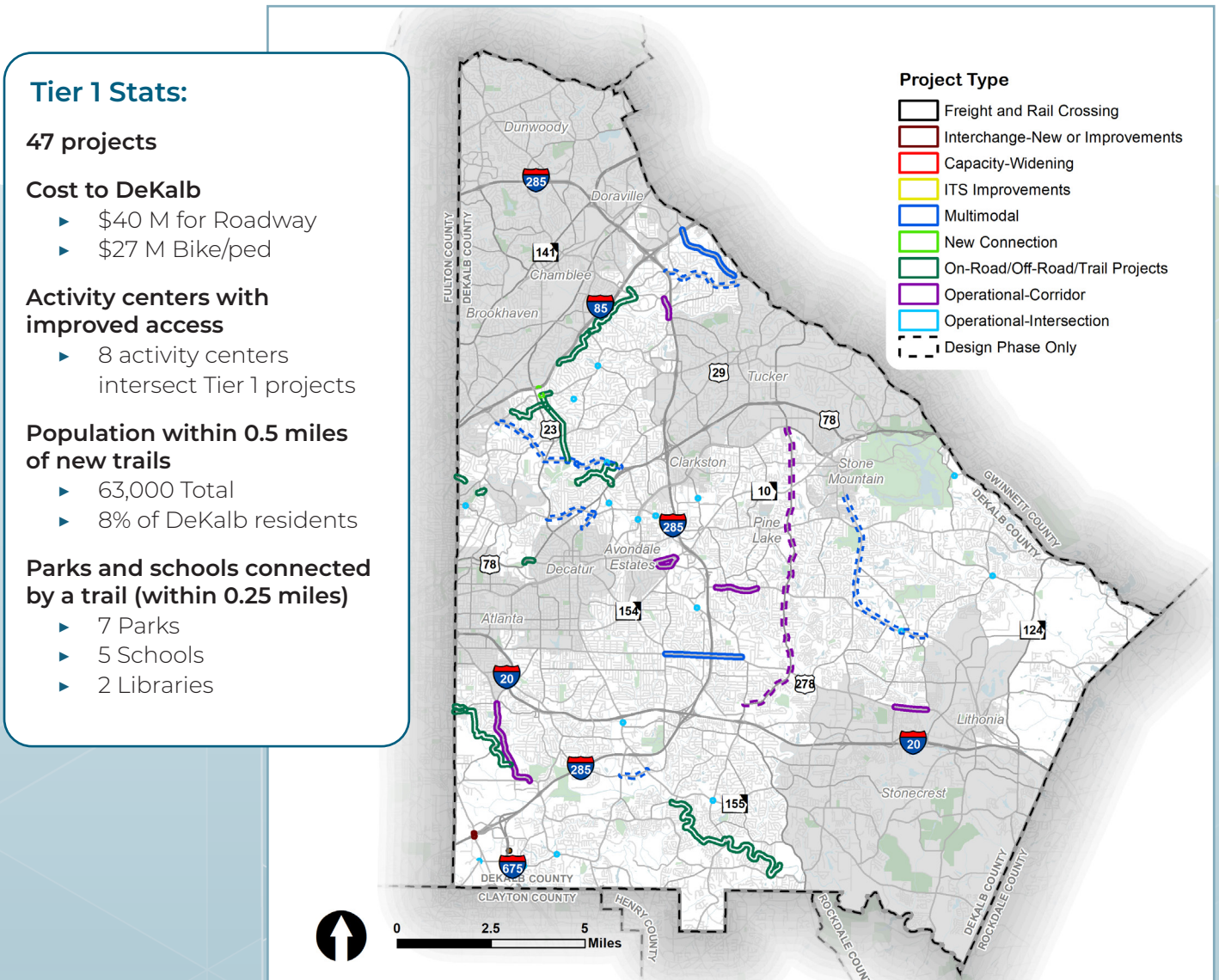
	Tier 1 6 Years	Tier 2 6 Years	Tier 3 15 Years
<b>Set-aside Funding Categories</b>	<b>\$179,000,000</b>	<b>\$162,000,000</b>	<b>\$371,000,000</b>
Asset Management (Resurfacing*, Bridge)	\$127,500,000	\$107,000,000	\$206,000,000
Transportation Project Management (5% of Program)	\$12,500,000	\$13,000,000	\$37,000,000
Commission District Projects (\$1 million/District)	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$17,000,000
Technology/Smart Corridor Investments	\$6,000,000	\$9,000,000	\$30,000,000
Pedestrian Improvements (Sidewalks, Crossings)	\$24,000,000	\$24,000,000	\$75,000,000
Discretionary (Planning, etc.)	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$6,000,000
<b>Project Funding</b>	<b>\$71,000,000</b>	<b>\$103,000,000</b>	<b>\$363,000,000</b>
Multiuse Trails	28,000,000	26,000,000	94,000,000
Small Scale Roadway Improvements	25,000,000	23,000,000	30,000,000
Large Scale Roadway Improvements	18,000,000	54,000,000	242,000,000
<b>Total Transportation Funding</b>	<b>\$250,000,000</b>	<b>\$265,000,000</b>	<b>\$734,000,000</b>

The total transportation funding is based on an assumption of \$40 million per year with a modest growth rate. If actual revenues exceed projections, the Unified Plan team recommends that additional funds be allocated to asset management (specifically resurfacing) and then to pedestrian improvements. In the final tier, additional revenues could support the asset management needs of projects constructed in the first two tiers of the plan as well.

# TIER 1 SHORT-RANGE (YEARS 1-6)

Tier 1 projects include those that can be funded in the short range—or the first 6 years—of the plan. This timeframe is consistent with a new renewal of the countywide SPLOST. A total of \$71 million is assumed from Tier 1 of DeKalb County’s Project Funding toward implementation of these projects, with additional funds for new sidewalk and crossing investments (\$24 million) and technology investments (\$6 million). Project funding per year is lowest in Tier 1 due to the substantial investment in asset management, specifically resurfacing, needed to continue the work of the current SPLOST and improve overall road conditions in the County.

Levels of investment across project types that are similar to those in the chart on page 14 with Multiuse Trails having the largest funding amount and Large Scale Roadway Improvements having the smallest. Many of the larger roadway projects include early concept and preliminary engineering work in Tier 1 with funding for right-of-way and construction phases happening in later tiers.



# TIER 2 MID-RANGE (YEARS 7-12)

Tier 2 projects include those that can be funded in the mid range (or the second 6 years) of the plan. This timeframe is consistent with an additional renewal of the countywide SPLOST. A total of \$103 million is assumed for DeKalb County’s contribution toward implementation of these projects, with additional funds for new sidewalk and crossing investments (\$24 million) and technology investments (\$9 million). Project funding per year increases over Tier 1 due to a small assumption in growth of the sales tax base as well as a reduced need to fund asset management. This allows more funding to go to the development of new projects.

In Tier 2, Large Scale Roadway Improvements have substantially more funding than in Tier 1—this is a result of Tier 1 designs advancing to construction in Tier 2 for multiple projects. Some of the Large Scale Roadway projects also include trails (specifically multimodal projects), helping to advance the larger bicycle/pedestrian network in addition to vehicular improvements.

### Tier 2 Stats:

**64 projects**

#### Cost to DeKalb

- ▶ \$75 M for Roadway
- ▶ \$25 M for Bike/ped

#### Activity centers with improved access

- ▶ 8 activity centers intersect Tier 2 projects

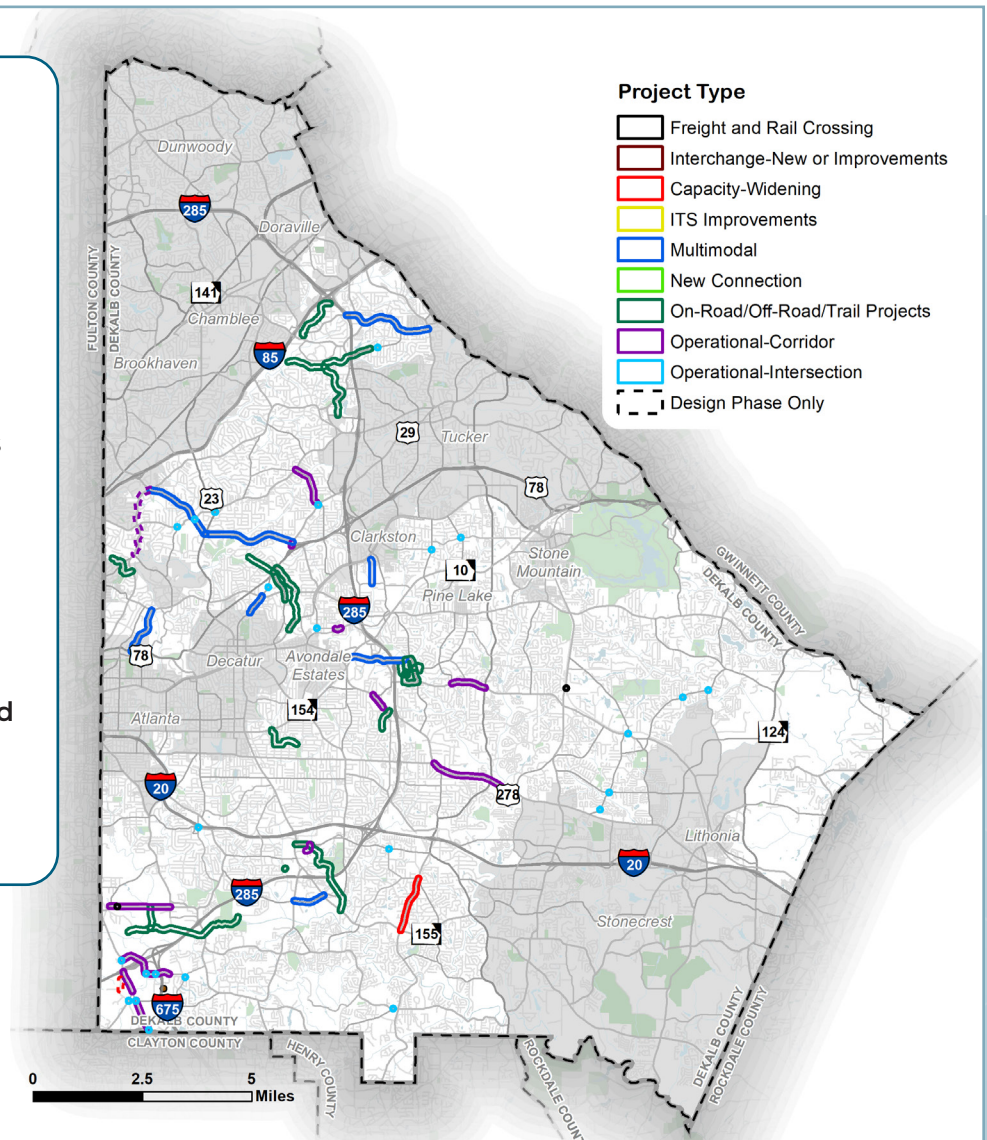
#### Population within 0.5 miles of new trails

- ▶ 61,000 Total
- ▶ 8% of DeKalb residents

#### 41 miles of new trails

#### Parks and schools connected by a trail (within 0.25 miles)

- ▶ 10 Parks
- ▶ 8 Schools





# TIER 3 LONG-RANGE (YEARS 13-27)

Tier 3 projects include those that can be funded in the long range—or the final 15 years—of the plan. This timeframe assumes multiple more iterations of the countywide SPLOST to bring the plan to the year 2050. A total of \$366 million is assumed for DeKalb County’s contribution toward implementation of these projects, with additional funds for new sidewalk and crossing investments (\$75 million) and technology investments (\$30 million). Because this tier is much larger than the previous two, it includes far more funding in most categories, specifically Large Scale Roadway Improvements and Multiuse Trails.

The focus of investment in the last tier is on larger scale investments in operational improvements and alternative modes (whether through multimodal roadway projects or independent trail projects). Many of the vehicular-focused projects improve mobility east-to-west, particularly in the central and eastern parts of the County.

### Tier 3 Stats:

**105 projects**

**Cost to DeKalb**

- ▶ \$273 M for Roadway
- ▶ \$95 M for Bike/ped

**Activity centers with improved access**

- ▶ 14 activity centers intersect Tier 3 projects

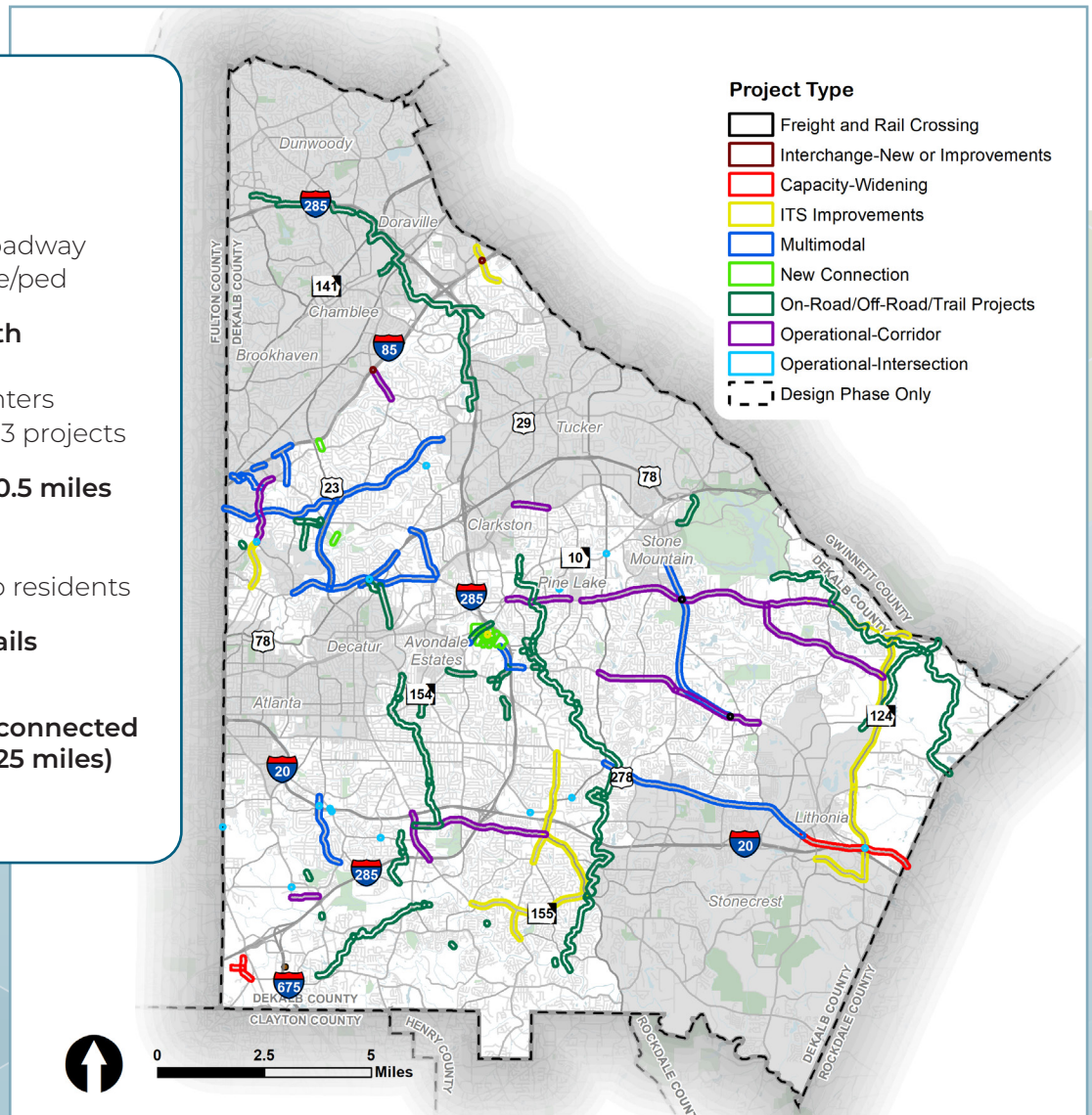
**Population within 0.5 miles of new trails**

- ▶ 160,000 total
- ▶ 21% of DeKalb residents

**122 miles of new trails (off-road)**

**Parks and schools connected by a trail (within 0.25 miles)**

- ▶ 16 Parks
- ▶ 18 Schools



# TRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2019, DeKalb County completed and adopted a comprehensive long-range transit plan, known as the DeKalb County Transit Master Plan (DTMP). The DTMP provides a 30-year vision for future transit investments within DeKalb County and its municipalities. The plan's recommendations include major new transit investments as well as enhancements to existing transit services. The DTMP's goals were to enhance countywide mobility and access, promote economic development, and improve residents' overall quality-of-life.

## THE UNIFIED PLAN RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING

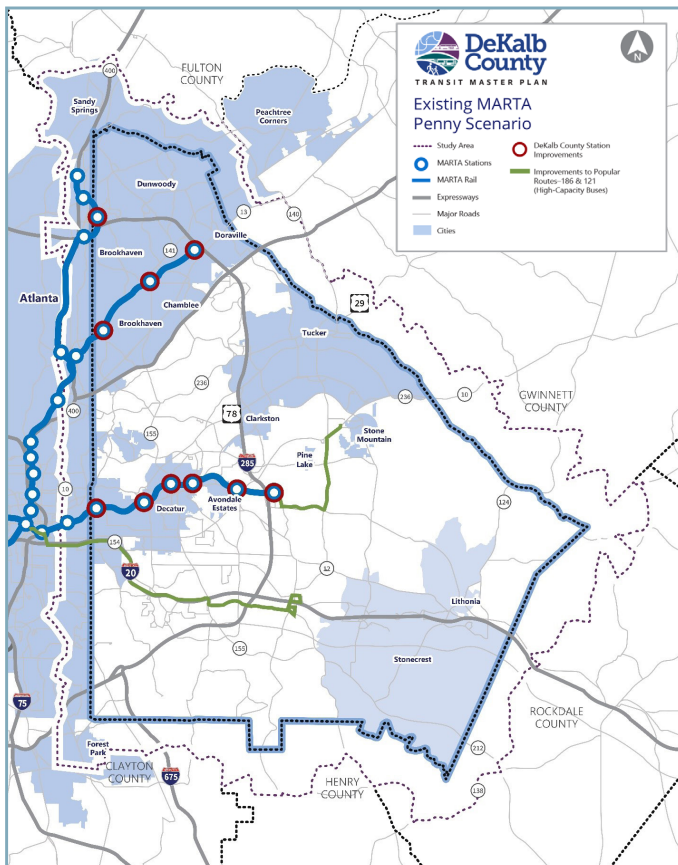
**Update the DTMP With Current Project Definitions**



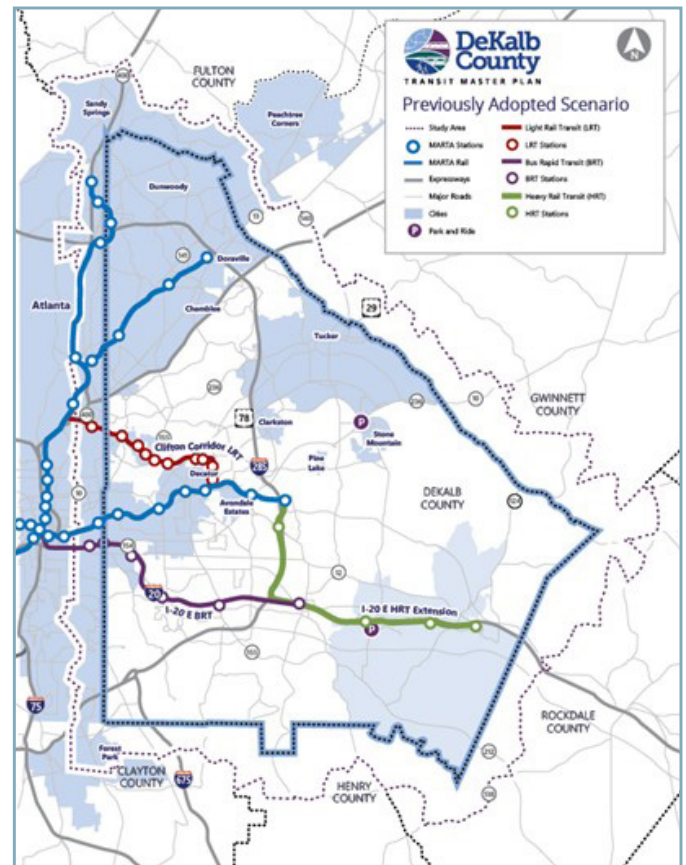
**Continue Education on Transit Funding Options**

### DEKALB COUNTY TRANSIT MASTER PLAN: SHORTLISTED SCENARIOS FOR CONSIDERATION

These two scenarios represent opposite, potential funding extremes—the first considers what may be done by leveraging the existing MARTA penny more for the benefit of DeKalb County. The second scenario explores the scenario previously adopted by MARTA, which exceeds the funding streams currently available to DeKalb County.



**Existing MARTA Penny**



**Previously Adopted MARTA Scenario**

Building on the work completed as a part of the DTMP, the 2050 Unified Plan’s approach to transit planning has been to advance the recommendations of the DTMP, to continue facilitating important conversations related to transit needs and potential investments within the County, and to align recommendations with the Future Land Use Plan.

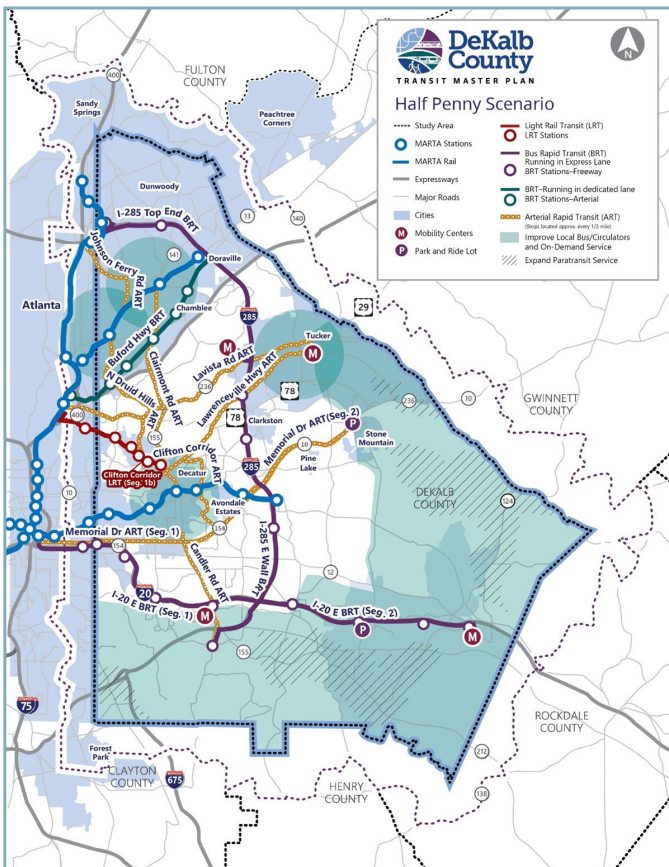
**STEPS REGARDING TRANSIT IN DEKALB COUNTY:**

Reach Consensus on a Transit Infrastructure and Service Investment Strategy

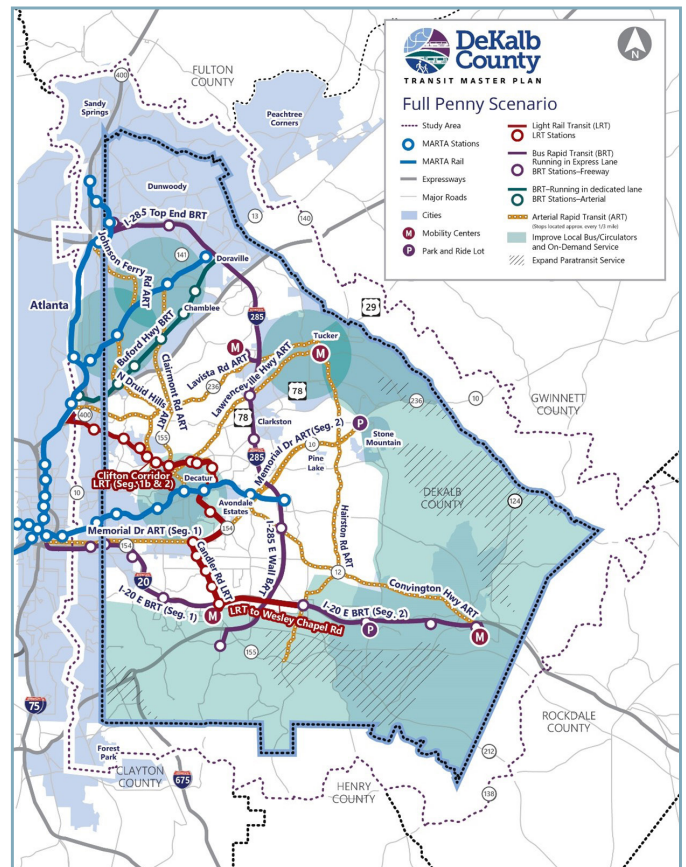


Consider and Prepare for a Successful TSPLOST Referendum

The two scenarios below represent funding options available under House Bill (HB) 930 in which DeKalb County residents could vote to levy a new sales tax of up to one penny for up to 30 years for the purpose of building, operating, and maintaining a mix of transit modes. These modes include high-capacity transit (such as light rail transit [LRT], bus rapid transit [BRT], or arterial rapid transit [ART]), local bus, and more.



Half-Penny Scenario



Full-Penny Scenario

# KEY TRANSPORTATION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Asset Management

Invest resources to adequately maintain existing transportation assets including roadways, bridges, and signal systems. The largest investment in asset management for DeKalb County includes resurfacing and reconstruction – recommendations include using a consistent roadway rating system based on ASTM, implementing a software system to comprehensively manage pavement, and incorporating automated data collection methods for a more consistent and systematic evaluation.

## DeKalb Functional Classification

Assign roadway functional classification based on desired outcomes for mobility and access. Coordinate facility designations with nearby cities and counties to provide more consistent travel across jurisdictional boundaries.

## Transportation Demand Management

Consider actions that reduce the demand for single-occupant vehicle trips in DeKalb County including establishing a transportation coordinator position, creating new transportation management associations (TMAs), and encouraging internal trips in mixed use developments through land development and zoning code modifications.

## Freight

Optimize freight operations throughout DeKalb County by focusing on key aspects of their travel: refining truck routes within the County and coordinating across jurisdictional boundaries; facilitating the creation of truck parking in appropriate locations within DeKalb; and improving at-grade crossings with freight rail to increase safety and vehicular operations

While project recommendations are an exciting part of the Unified Plan, policy and programmatic recommendations can shape the growth and development of the County in many ways as well. Some of the policy recommendations require time but not as much funding, so they offer ways to make incremental progress even when financial resources may be constrained. These eight topics highlight some of the priority areas of focus recommended in the Unified Plan.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian**

Work to create a safe, efficient network of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, particularly in some of the more densely populated areas of the County by implementing the following: identify a department and individual to lead trail planning for the County; complete a countywide trail master plan as well as a sidewalk inventory and condition assessment; incorporate more multimodal elements into new development and roadway improvement projects; and review bicycle and pedestrian crashes to determine targeted areas for safety improvements.

### **Access Management**

Improve traffic operations and reduce congestion through access management tools including coordinated driveway spacing, installation of medians, and creation of interparcel connectivity, to reduce conflict points between vehicles and keep traffic moving efficiently.

### **Complete Streets**

Aspire to design all roadway projects, including new construction and renovation, as facilities that safely accommodate for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit users.

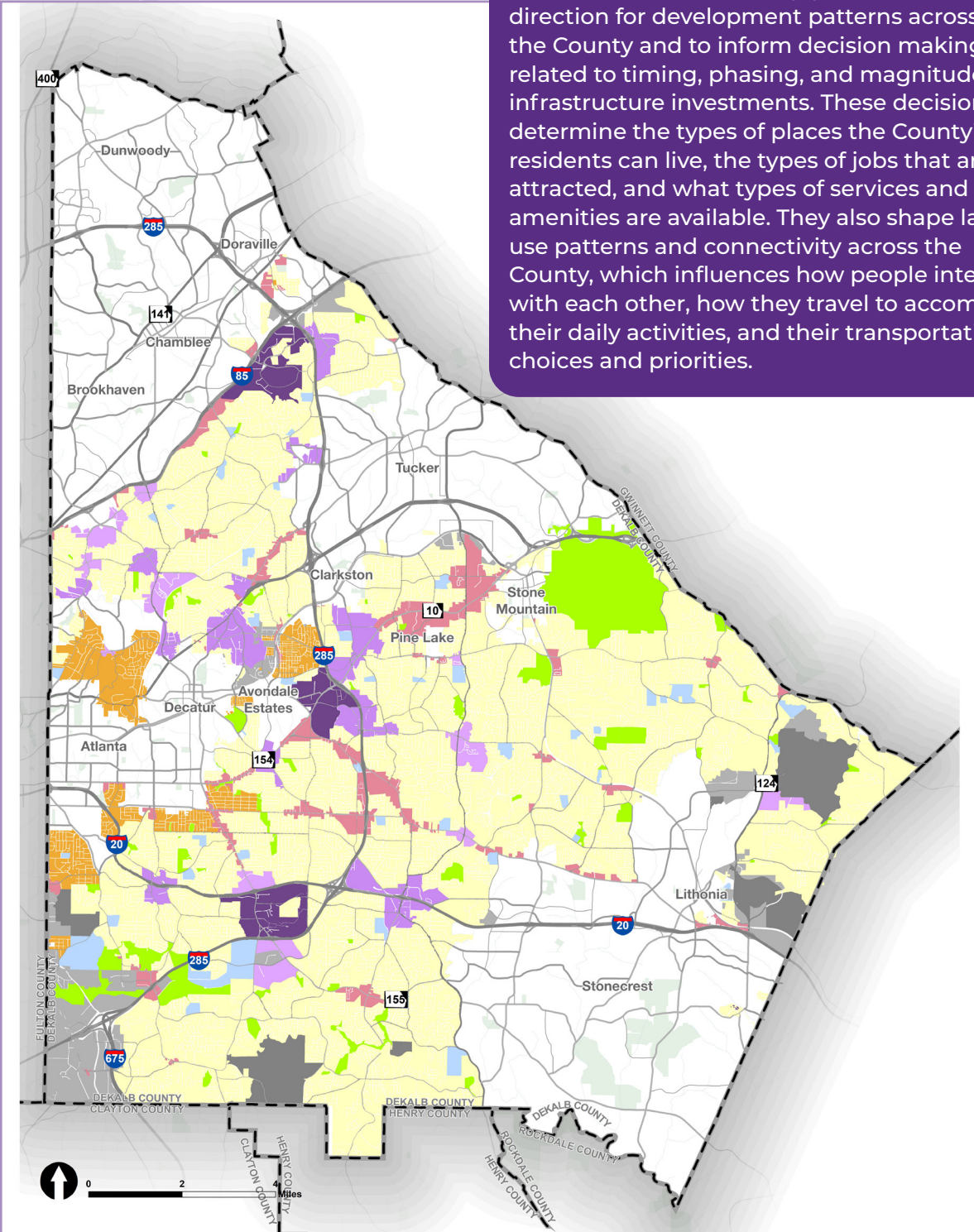
### **Technology and SMART Corridors**

Leverage Intelligent Transportation Systems projects to maximize the operational performance of the existing DeKalb County roadway system. This includes programmatic projects (asset management and software systems), infrastructure projects (physical infrastructure upgrades to signals, communications, etc.), and advanced functionality projects (automated vehicle systems and SMART corridors).

# FUTURE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

The DeKalb County Comprehensive Land Use Plan provides a vision for how the County develops and manages growth over the next 25 years based upon its future land use vision, regulations, and policies. The Future Land Use Map provides a vision for development patterns and policies across the County

The Future Land Use Map provides direction for development patterns across the County and to inform decision making related to timing, phasing, and magnitude of infrastructure investments. These decisions determine the types of places the County's residents can live, the types of jobs that are attracted, and what types of services and amenities are available. They also shape land use patterns and connectivity across the County, which influences how people interact with each other, how they travel to accomplish their daily activities, and their transportation choices and priorities.



# FUTURE LAND USE PLAN KEY CONCEPTS

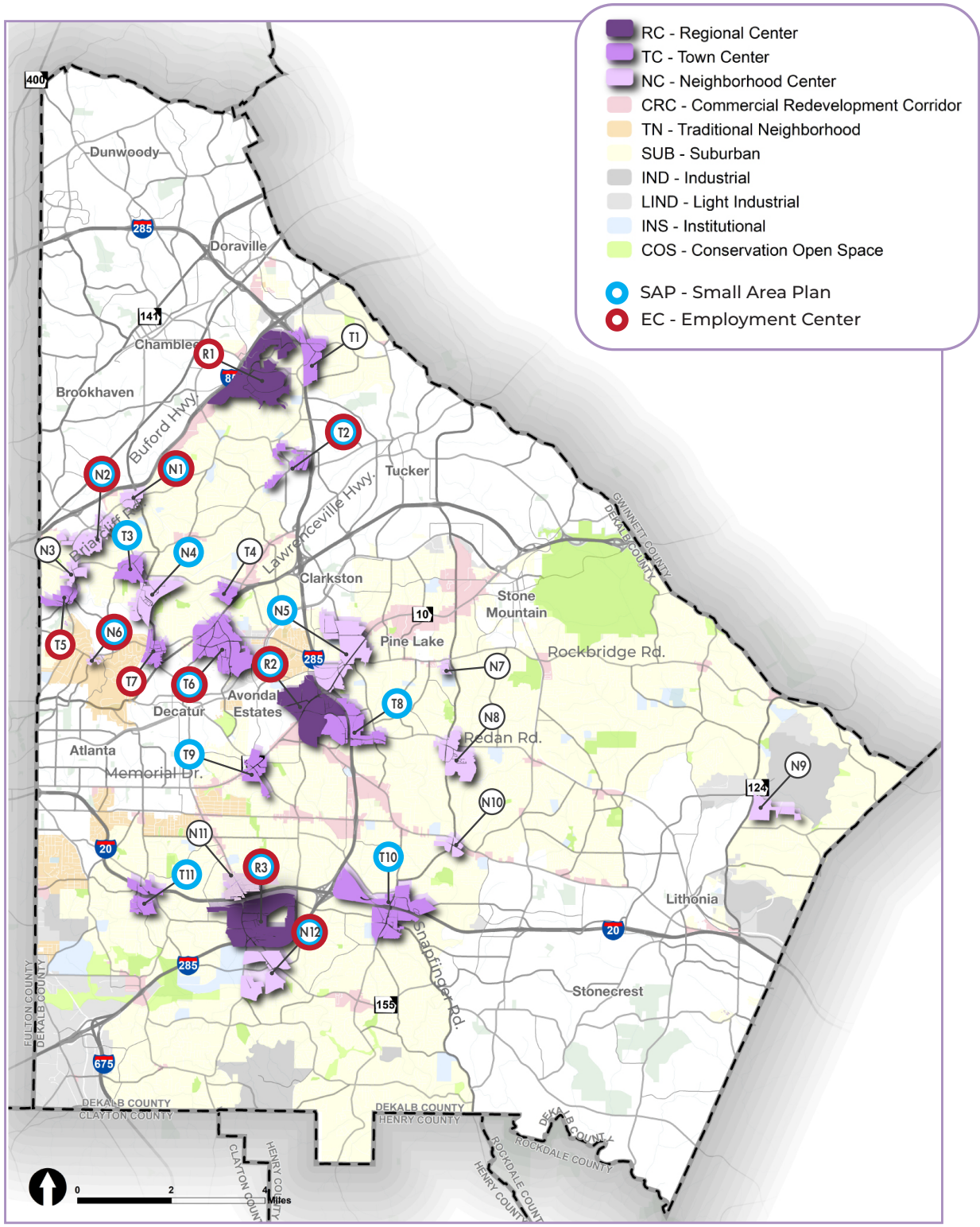
**Character Areas** Character Areas provide high-level guidance on development character for the County, each with its own sub-principles that guide land use decisions.

**Activity Centers** serve as one of the cornerstones of DeKalb County’s Land Use strategy, which are intended to serve as hubs of higher intensity and more clustered development, as well as employment and service destinations.

<p><b>REGIONAL CENTER</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> 75 &amp; Over; No Max</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Townhomes / Condominiums / Apartments / Retail &amp; Commercial / Office / Civic / Entertainment &amp; Cultural / Parks &amp; Recreation / Health Care / Institutional / Technology Centers</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> MR-1, MR-2, HR-1, HR-2, HR-3, MU-1, MU-2, MU-3, MU-4, MU-5, OI, OIT, C-1, C-2</p>	<p><b>TOWN CENTER</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> Up to 60 (75 with approved SAP)*</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Townhomes / Condominiums / Apartments / Retail &amp; Commercial / Office / Civic / Entertainment &amp; Cultural / Parks &amp; Recreation / Health Care / Institutional / Technology Centers</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> RSM, MR-1, MR-2, HR-1, HR-2, MU-1, MU-2, MU-3, MU-4, MU-5, OI, OIT, C-1, C-2, MALP</p>	<p><b>NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> Up to 40 (50 with approved SAP)* (Briarcliff-Clairmont SAP - up to 70)</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Townhomes / Condominiums / Apartments / Retail and Commercial / Office / Civic / Parks &amp; Recreation / Institutional</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> R-60, RSM, MR-1, MR-2, MU-1, MU-2, MU-3, NS, OI, OIT, C-1</p>	<p><b>COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> Up to 30 (40 with approved SAP)*</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Townhomes / Condominiums / Apartments / Retail and Commercial / Office Mixed Use / Institutional</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> MU-1, MU-2, MU-3, MR-1, RSM, C-1, C-2, OI, OD, OIT</p>
<p><b>TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> Up to 12</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Traditional Single-Family Homes / Townhomes / Cottages / ADU's / Apartments / Assisted Living / Neighborhood Retail / Schools / Institutional</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> R-60, RNC, MU-1, MU-2, MR-1, C-1, OI, OIT, NS, RSM</p>	<p><b>SUBURBAN</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> Up to 8</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Single-Family Detached / Townhomes / Clustered Residential / Conservation Community / Neighborhood Retail / Schools / Libraries / Assisted Living / Parks and Recreation / Health Care / Civic</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> MU-1, C-1, OI, NS, RE, RLG, R-100, R-85, R-75, R-60, MHP, RNC, OIT</p>	<p><b>INSTITUTIONAL</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Schools / Religious Facilities / Healthcare Facilities / Civic / Institutional Uses / Libraries / Jails / Prisons / Government Facilities</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> R-100, R-85, R-75, R-60, RSM, MR-1, MR-2, MU-1, MU-2, MU-3, OI, OIT</p>	<p><b>INDUSTRIAL</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Manufacturing / Warehouse Distribution / Wholesale-Trade / Automotive / Entertainment</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> OD, C-2, M and M-2</p>
<p><b>LIGHT INDUSTRIAL</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> Up to 120 (live-work units)</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Warehouse Distribution / Wholesale-Trade / Automotive / Entertainment</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> OD, C-2, M-1, OI, M-2</p>	<p><b>EMPLOYMENT CENTERS</b></p> <p>Based on the DeKalb Strategic Economic Development Plan, of areas located within unincorporated DeKalb County. Other areas have been identified in select DeKalb Municipalities.</p> <p>Kensington MARTA Station, South DeKalb Cluster, Bouldercrest Cluster, Medline/Scottdale North Druid Hills / Briarcliff, Emory, CDC</p>	<p><b>CONSERVATION OPEN SPACE</b></p> <p><b>Density (du/ac)</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Preferred Uses</b> Passive Parks / Nature Trails / Floodplains / Wetlands / Watersheds / Golf Courses / Athletic Fields / Amphitheaters</p> <p><b>Permitted Zoning</b> All zoning designations</p>	

# ACTIVITY CENTERS

The foundation of DeKalb County's Future Land Use Plan is to focus more intense development within Activity Centers. This approach is intended to protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible land uses while allowing for continued growth and investment within the County. This plan utilizes three distinct Activity Center Types: Regional Center, Town Center, and Neighborhood Center.





### Development Core

Activity Centers should focus the most intense development near the geographic center or around major intersections and transit stations within the area, which is considered the “core” of the Activity Center. Higher residential densities are encouraged here, whether as stand alone or as a component of mixed use development. Development should be more clustered and walkable in nature, and a mix of commercial, office, and urban residential is envisioned. Other elements of urban development can include a more connected street grid, multimodal transportation options such as wider sidewalks and bike lanes, and an enhanced level of urban amenities.

### Small Area Plans

One of the primary tools to guide development within Activity Centers is through the use of Small Area Plans (SAPs). These plans allow policy makers and the community to guide development, policies, and investments at a much finer level of detail than can be provided in the comprehensive plan.

### Infrastructure

Activity Centers can take advantage of limited public dollars by focusing infrastructure needs and investments in smaller geographic areas. Focusing infill in both existing and emerging activity centers can reduce both initial investments and long term maintenance costs for the County.

### Neighborhood Center



### Town Center



### Regional Center

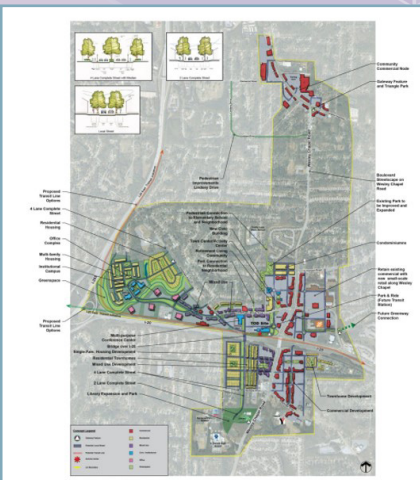
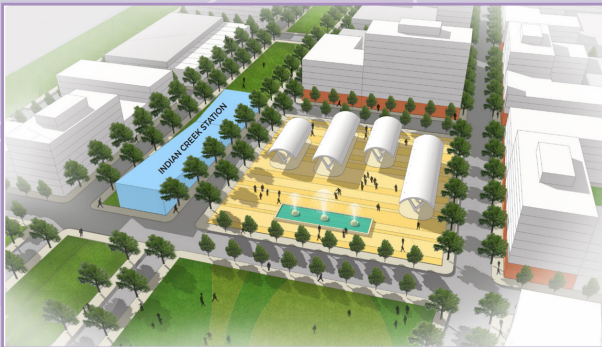


REGIONAL CENTERS			
Map ID	Name / Location	Small Area Plans	Employment Center
R-1	Presidential Parkway	None	I-85/I-285 Cluster
R-2	Kensington MARTA Station	Kensington MARTA Station LCI and Supplemental LCI	Kensington
R-3	South DeKalb Mall	Flat Shoals and Candler Rd LCI	South DeKalb Center
TOWN CENTERS			
Map ID	Name / Location	Small Area Plans	Employment Center
T-1	I-285 & Chamblee Tucker Rd	None	None
T-2	Northlake Mall	Northlake LCI	Northlake
T-3	Toco Hills	North Druid Hills LCI	None
T-4	North DeKalb Mall	None	None
T-5	Sage Hill	None	Emory/CDC
T-6	N. Decatur & Scott Blvd	Medline LCI	Medline/Scottsdale
T-7	North Decatur at Clairmont	None	Emory/CDC
T-8	Redan Rd & Indian Creek Dr	Master Active Living Plan	None
T-9	Memorial Dr and Columbia Dr	Master Active Living Plan	None
T-10	I-20 and Wesley Chapel Rd	Wesley Chapel LCI and MARTA I-20 TOD Plan	None
T-11	I-20 and Gresham Rd	Master Active Living Plan	None
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS			
Map ID	Name / Location	Small Area Plans	Employment Center
N-1	Briarcliff & Clairmont	Briarcliff -Clairmont SAP	Druid Hills/Briarcliff
N-2	Briarcliff & N Druid Hills	North Druid Hills LCI	Druid Hills/Briarcliff
N-3	LaVista Rd & Briarcliff Rd	None	None
N-4	North Druid Hills Rd and Clairmont/Mason Mill	North Druid Hills LCI	None
N-5	GSU/Georgia Piedmont	Memorial Drive Plan	None
N-6	Emory Village	Emory Village LCI	Emory/CDC
N-7	Hairston & Rockbridge	None	None
N-8	Redan & Hairston Rd	None	None
N-9	Swift Creek	None	None
N-10	Covington Hwy & Hairston Rd	None	None
N-11	Flat Shoals Pkwy & Clifton Rd	Candler-Flat Shoals LCI	South DeKalb Cluster

# DEKALB COUNTY SMALL AREA PLANS

SAPs cover a smaller area than a comprehensive plan and are intended to address specific land use and development issues at a finer level of detail. These plans support the general vision, policies, and goals of the community, while allowing for a greater degree of detail in guiding development. SAPs may include additional policies, tailored to the area to shape development. They can include elements such as design guidelines, standards for transitions in development intensities and uses, additional standards for mixed use, investments in infrastructure and connectivity as well as greater opportunities for input from local residents and businesses. SAPs can take a variety of forms, such as LCI, Master Active Living Plans (MALPs), Corridor Plans, or TOD plans. They are the primary tool by which the county intends to shape development in Activity Centers and along Commercial Redevelopment Corridors. The County intends to work towards implementing SAPs in all Activity Centers with SAPs completed to date including the following:

- ▶ Briarcliff Clairmont Road Plan
- ▶ Candler Flat Shoals Activity Center
- ▶ Glenwood Columbia Plan
- ▶ Kensington Activity Center
- ▶ MARTA I-20 East TOD Plan
- ▶ MALPs
- ▶ Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan
- ▶ Medline Activity Center
- ▶ North Druid Hills Activity Center
- ▶ Northlake-Tucker Activity Center
- ▶ Wesley Chapel Activity Center

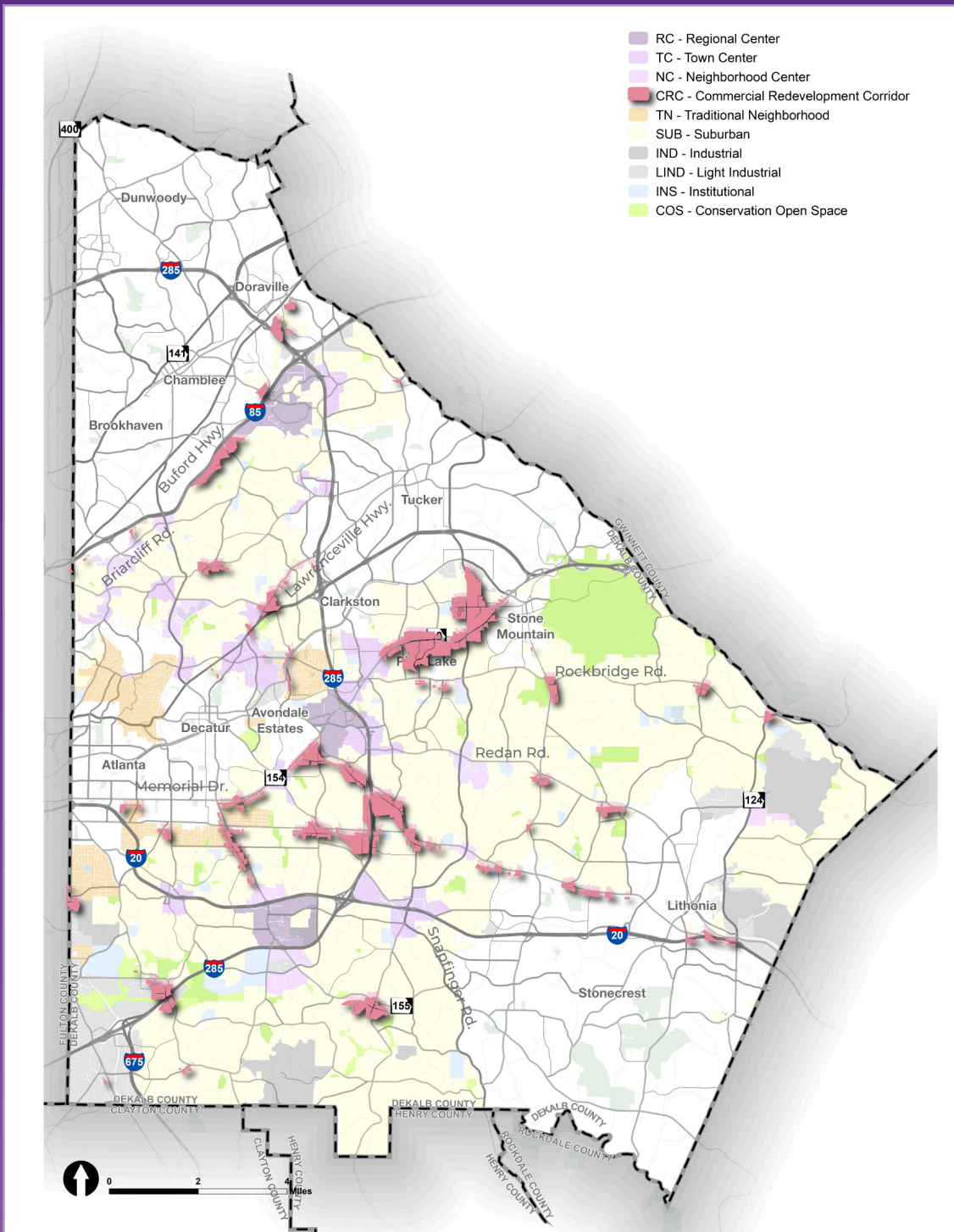


## Character Area Additions

Character Areas provide general guidance on the overall character, intensity of use, and design of an area as well as identify the predominant and supporting land uses that are allowed.

The Commercial Redevelopment Corridor character areas are transition zones within the county. They are intended to support redevelopment along important commercial corridors and may contain a mix of uses. The development intensity is generally less than what is allowed within activity centers, but higher than what is appropriate within residential character areas.

## Commercial Redevelopment Corridor



# POLICY SPOTLIGHTS

In addition to land use and growth management, the 2050 DeKalb County Unified Plan includes a deeper dive into 7 priority policy areas. The full plan includes a summary of current conditions, challenges, and recommended action items to preserve and enhance quality of life and equity throughout DeKalb County.

## Sustainability



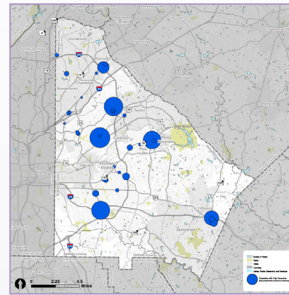
### Comprehensive Sustainability Plan

Create a plan that establishes a unified vision and goals for sustainability within DeKalb County.

### ARC Green Communities Certification

Complete “recertification” as a Green Community and maintain certification.

## Retail



### Memorial Drive Coordination

Create an organization focused on Memorial Drive, similar to We Love BuHi.

### Repurpose Excess Parking

Repurpose excess parking into public spaces, residential or mixed-use development

### Reduce Existing Retail Space

Reduce the amount of existing retail space through coordination with public and private partners

## Economic Development



### Strategic Planning

Update Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP) based on recent market changes and the Unified Plan.

### Equity

Focus targeted economic development in disadvantaged areas and areas of disinvestment.

### Partnership

Continue partnering with Decide DeKalb to position DeKalb County for sustained economic development.

## Health and Wellness



### Staffing

Designate a Health and Wellness point person within DeKalb County.

### Convening

Host a Health and Wellness focused roundtable with community partners to identify common priorities.

## Arts and Culture



### Staffing

Designate an arts and culture point person within DeKalb County Government.

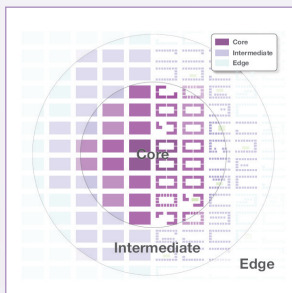
### Arts Council or Organization

Create an arts council or other organization to advise or support of arts-related policy and investments.

### Strategic Planning

Develop an Arts and Culture Master Plan to set a vision and strategically plan for future initiatives.

## Transit Oriented Development



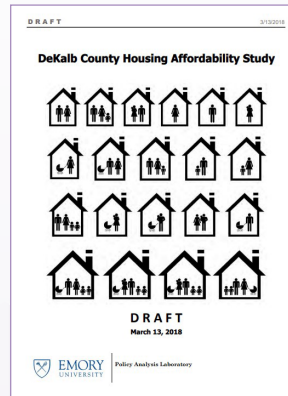
### Additional Study and Engagement

Conduct additional studies and engagement to determine the preferred list of transit projects and funding.

### Station Area Plans

Create or update station area plans for all existing and planned high-capacity transit stations.

## Housing



### Housing Officer

Designate a housing officer to bring together partners and keep the issues around housing at the forefront.

### Housing Advisory Committee

Establish a Housing Advisory Committee to advise on housing related policies and issues.

### Existing Affordable Housing

Maintain and stabilize the existing Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and naturally occurring affordable units.

### Workforce Housing Ordinance

Develop a Workforce Housing Ordinance to encourage and incentivize the creation of new affordable housing.

### Housing Development or Trust Fund

Create a housing trust fund or other fund targeted to address housing needs in DeKalb County.

### Land Bank

Leverage the DeKalb County Land Bank to provide an important relief valve in the cost of housing development.

# ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the Unified Plan process, numerous wide-reaching topics were discussed with stakeholders and members of the public. These topics, summarized in the outer ring of the transportation nexus, transcend topics of land use and transportation and are critical to implementation and improving the quality of life for residents of DeKalb County.

## Equity

- ▶ Provide targeted and sustained outreach to minority communities
- ▶ Create opportunities for immigrant and refugee populations to thrive, including translation services for County functions
- ▶ Identify policies to address housing affordability, aging in place, and gentrification
- ▶ Be intentional about creating transit and trail investments in communities with mobility challenges

## Inter-Agency Coordination

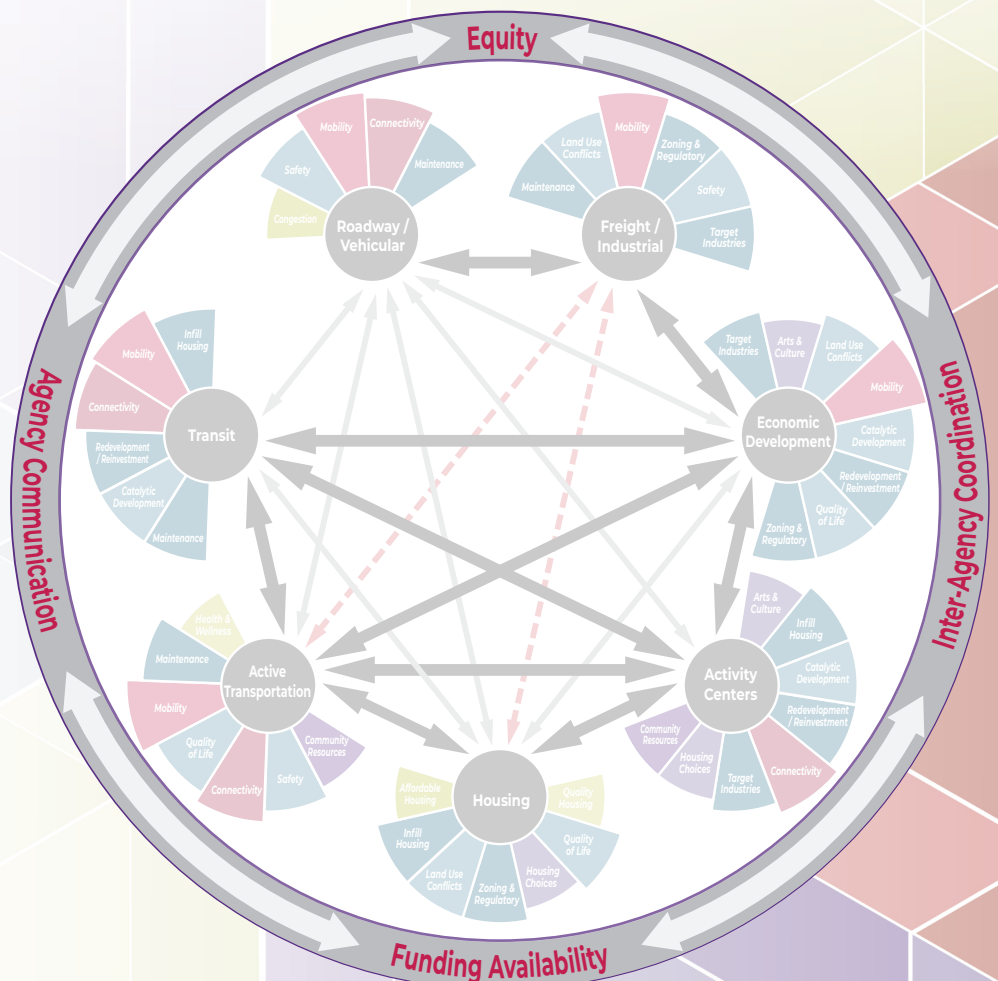
- ▶ Identify staff lead for new focus areas including arts, health, bicycle/pedestrian/trails, transit, etc.
- ▶ Develop strategies to guide new focus areas such as arts, health, etc.
- ▶ Establish regular staff coordination meetings amongst County departments
- ▶ Establish regular staff coordination meetings between County staff and Decide DeKalb
- ▶ Conduct regular meetings with GDOT, MARTA, ATL, and ARC
- ▶ Participate in regional convenings including LUCC, TCC, and Atlanta Regional Housing Forum

## Agency Communication

- ▶ Re-establish a robust countywide community database
- ▶ Conduct regular communication with residents and stakeholders (updates via community councils, community planning academy, email list serves, etc.)

## Funding Availability

- ▶ Identify and prioritize funding for critical areas including transit, sidewalks, pavement and asset management, stormwater, and housing
- ▶ Be proactive about identifying priorities so targeted efforts towards securing funding can be made
- ▶ Identify funding for additional staff hires to support existing staff and County initiatives



# PRIORITY IMPLEMENTATION ITEMS

The 2050 Unified Plan culminates with a list of short and long-term action items for DeKalb County to pursue in order to implement the overall vision. Critical short-term action items and projects are identified below. These include both transportation and land use related implementation items that can be accomplished or started over the next five years.

## Overall Implementation Items

- ▶ Adopt the DeKalb County 2050 Unified Plan, allowing it to be the guiding document for policy changes, funding opportunities, and project recommendations
- ▶ Adopt the truck route network into the Code of Ordinances
- ▶ Revise the land development code to align more with modifications to transportation and land use policies

## Priority Transportation Implementation Items

- ▶ Identify final projects for the current SPLOST list and pull relevant projects from Tier 1 forward; replace projects in Tier 1 with high priority projects in Tier 2
- ▶ Advance high priority projects for concept and professional engineering
- ▶ Conduct countywide sidewalk inventory and condition assessment
- ▶ Develop countywide trails master plan
- ▶ Continue transit prioritization and funding discussions; decide if a new transit referendum is desired
- ▶ Conduct a pavement conditions inventory and assessment
- ▶ Complete programmatic and infrastructure recommendations for technology to prepare the system for advanced technology and future SMART cities opportunities

## Priority Land Use Implementation Items

- ▶ Update the Candler Road Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study
- ▶ Create a small area plan for the Presidential Parkway activity center
- ▶ Establish a housing advisory committee or task force
- ▶ Update the DeKalb County zoning code to address priorities and policy changes
- ▶ Establish an organization focused on celebrating and attracting reinvestment to Memorial Drive
- ▶ Develop a DeKalb arts and culture master plan
- ▶ Create a DeKalb County Sustainability Master Plan

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## DeKalb County Elected Leadership

Michael Thurmond, CEO  
Robert Patrick, District 1 Commissioner  
Jeff Rader, District 2 Commissioner  
Larry Johnson, District 3 Commissioner  
Steve Bradshaw, District 4 Commissioner  
Mereda Davis Johnson, District 5 Commissioner  
Edward “Ted” Terry, District 6 Commissioner  
Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, District 7 Commissioner

## Project Management Team

DeKalb County Department of Planning and Sustainability  
DeKalb County Department of Public Works, Transportation Division  
Atlanta Regional Commission

## Transportation and Land Use Stakeholder Committee/Partners

City of Atlanta; City of Avondale Estates; City of Brookhaven; City of Chamblee; City of Clarkston;  
City of Decatur; City of Doraville; City of Dunwoody; City of Lithonia; City of Pine Lake; City  
of Stone Mountain; City of Stonecrest; City of Tucker; Decide DeKalb; DeKalb Chamber of  
Commerce; DeKalb Chief Operating Officer’s Office; DeKalb County Department of Community  
Development; DeKalb County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs; DeKalb  
County Department of Public Safety; DeKalb County Department of Roads and Drainage;  
DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management; DeKalb County Department of  
Finance; DeKalb County Department of Geographic Information System; DeKalb County  
Department of Sanitation; DeKalb County Community Councils; DeKalb Peachtree Airport;  
DeKalb County School District; DeKalb Entertainment Commission; Chamblee-Doraville  
Community Improvement District; East Metro Community Improvement District; Metro South  
Community Improvement District; Perimeter Community Improvement Districts; Tucker  
Northlake Community Improvement District; Tucker Summit Community Improvement District;  
Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT); Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL);  
Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)

## Consultant Team

Kimley-Horn  
The Collaborative Firm (TCF)  
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RDG Planning & Design  
Perez Planning + Design (PP+D)  
Sycamore Consulting  
Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS)