Stakeholder Roundtables Summary
December 2011

In December 2011, a series of five stakeholder roundtables was conducted for the Connect Cobb Alternatives Analysis. The purpose of the roundtables was to gain insight from community members, planning partners, key stakeholders, special interest groups, elected and appointed officials, and agency staff about the study's purpose, need, goals and objectives as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate the study's alternatives.

The individual roundtables were organized by topic and included transportation and air quality, land use, economic development, environment, and financial. Over eighty attendees participated in the roundtables, many attending more than one or even all five. A broad cross-section of stakeholders was achieved with representation from the general public; local, state and regional agency staff; the business community; environmental groups; civic organizations; and advocacy groups. The following table lists the details for each roundtable. All roundtables were held at Cobb County Department of Transportation.

Topic	*Date and Time*	*Number of Attendees*
Transportation and Air Quality	December 6, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	43
Land Use	December 6, 2011 6:00 -7:30pm	30
Economic Development	December 8,2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	29
Environment	December 8, 2011 6:00 – 7:30pm	19
Financial	December 13, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	21

Upon arrival at the roundtables, attendees signed-in, were offered an information folder and asked to select seating in at a six-person group table with a facilitator. Each roundtable began with a short presentation directed at the entire audience, followed by a breakout group exercise. See attached documents for agenda and handouts for each roundtable.

In the breakout exercise, attendees were asked their thoughts on the draft goals and objectives, specifically how well they reflected the issues in the study area and if any pertinent statements had been left out. Next, attendees were asked to discuss the draft purpose and how well the statement married with the goals and objectives. A facilitator guided the conversation, and a recorder documented the verbal comments. The following summaries detail the collective conversations compiled from each table at the individual roundtables. Also included are comments submitted by attendees after review of the summary notes.

Environment Roundtable
Stakeholder Comments
December 8, 2011

General Discussion

- Locating transit close to low income population affords the opportunity to use
- Accessibility to the elderly (the underserved) and safe
- The elderly are not commuters, they are not contributing to the congestion
- Topography affecting mode operations
- The Chattahoochee River is the most daunting environmental challenge; also Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park
- Flight paths at Dobbins ARB and McCollum Field impact location of structures (infrastructure with federal funds)
- Destinations into Cobb (i.e. festivals, special events) create problems to be addressed.
- Hazardous Waste Sites
    - Tower Road Recycling Center
    - Canton Road metal fabricator
- Air quality (tropospheric ozone and particulates - see historical data from Atlanta's Olympics experience to show the difference taking single-occupancy vehicles off the road can make)
- Dense traffic increases idling time (which disproportionately contributes to greenhouse gases released)
- Expanded highway lanes reduce green space
- Creating bikeways enhances green space
- Promoting telework enhances quality of life in a number of ways, including the environmental benefits
- Creating a mind-set in the next generation that does not insist of a near total reliance on single-occupancy vehicles can have a ripple effect of fostering a wider range of environmentally sound attitudes.
- Setbacks and landscaping very important
- US 41 corridor, supports redevelopment
    - Not much environmental issues in the area, already a community bound by transportation needs
- Noise impacts are important
- Concern for historic structures, corridor has many historic resources that would be impacted
- Kennestone Hospital, downtown Marietta are very important to connect to but in between are largely historic areas, very difficult to plan
- Concern from a public health perspective, septic impact in residential areas for people not hooked up to city sewer. Small lots would be impacted, how would this be handled is a concern.
- Train following CSX or I-75 would impact the environment the least but the circulators, connection – where would they connect to the train?
- Lots of vacant space on SR 92 east of I-75, great potential with least amount of environmental impact
- Historic areas are very highly problematic to create a new line unless you utilize existing rail

- Buses are more flexible and viable
- A combination of rail, bus, etc. might be the most feasible
- Groups traveling shorter distances (5 miles or less) might be underserved as "stakeholders"
- Bus riding has a certain stigma in Cobb County
- Buses vs. LRT – newer technology is available for buses, less polluting will enhance environmental justice in these underserved communities. Transition away from diesel for air quality reasons
- Ridership is in lower economic groups, they must be served
- Students need to be served as an important community group, 3 colleges. This gives students options to live in other places. Provides convenience
- Strong neighborhood groups don't really participate, which is a problem
- Getting participation, especially in the Franklin Road corridor, will be very difficult. Need planning advocacy
- If BRT down I-75, want to see the cleanest vehicles employed. Air quality is of paramount concern. Pollution (and noise) drifts.
- North end of the county is more difficult that south end. The north end may not use transit as much, especially buses.
- Social impacts are going to be very important for this study; more important than the environment
- CSX corridor has potential from an alignment standpoint, adjacent property would be less expensive. CSX would have to put down an additional line and this would be difficult. Using the CSX corridor would only serve Cobb County residents though.
- If the aim is to get people off of I-75 and US 41, the CSX corridor wouldn't satisfy that.
- Economic sustainability (where the project is self-sustaining) is very important.

Comprehensive List of Comments Received Regarding the Proposed Need and Purpose Statement:

"This Alternatives Analysis will focus on public transportation improvements that can best serve future demand, by building an integrated regional network that can support existing and future needs in the Northwest Corridor."

- Mirrors what came out of Concept 3
- May want to add something about the corridor's congestion ranking - from a listing of bad bottlenecks in the US. Also, the corridor is home 3 Fortune 500 Corporations – Home Depot, Genuine Parks, Coca Cola Enterprises.
- Include statement about importance of clean transportation alternatives. Prefer CNG/light rail over diesel.
- Clarification
    - Reduces Traffic Congestion
    - Sustainable Financially
    - Optimize trip time
    - Corridor Development
    - Interface with future regional transit networks while reducing travel times versus the no-build condition.
- There is nothing about cost effectiveness or accommodating bicycles and pedestrians

    - Planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities will help access to potential transit stations.
- Need to add Health Systems, this is a very important component
- Need to incorporate minimizing adverse environmental impacts into the need and purpose
- With regards to financial aspect of the Need and Purpose Statement
    - The primary objective is that this needs to be as cost effective as possible.
    - The secondary objective needs to include that the project be financially realistic to build/operate.
- Clarification
    - The P3 project should be included in analysis
        - It can be utilized for BRT
        - There would be a seamless integration for long distance and corridor commuting

Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Ron Sifen

From: Rsifen@aol.com [mailto:Rsifen@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 20, 2011 2:02 AM
To: hansen-dederick@sycamoreconsulting.net
Subject: Re: Connect Cobb Roundtables Summaries

Hi Kristine. I am requesting that this email be included in the official comments for this Alternatives Analysis study.

I have reviewed the meeting summaries from all 5 AA Roundtables, and I am alarmed at several omissions.

It is my understanding that the purpose of the 5 Roundtable sessions was to obtain and document public input. It is my understanding that the discussion summaries should include and document all comments, and not selectively omit or alter any comments, nor target certain types of comments for omission. Accurate consolidation would have been acceptable. Outright omission is unacceptable, and is evidence of bias.

I made the following comments during these Roundtables, and these comments should have been included in the meeting summaries. In most cases, there was extensive discussion about these points, so it is surprising that these points are completely omitted from the summaries of various Roundtables.

Environment Roundtable

The following points were discussed at the Environment Roundtable, and should be included in the discussion summary for the Environment Roundtable..

* The primary objective of this project should be alleviating traffic congestion.

* Traffic congestion and air quality are both environmental concerns, so alleviating traffic congestion is beneficial to the environment.

* This project cannot contribute to alleviating traffic congestion unless it provides a transit alternative that meets the needs of commuters who currently drive their cars.

* Commuters will not use transit as an alternative to driving unless transit provides trip times that are reasonably competitive with driving.

* Time-competitive trip times cannot be achieved if there are too many stops. More stops results in slower trip times.

* There are several places along the route where slopes may be too steep for light rail. It may be necessary to build elevated stretches, that may have to be at extreme elevations.

* If fixed guideway transit is built along Cobb Parkway, it will have to cross I-285. Cobb Parkway goes under I-285 and it is unlikely that light rail could be added to that underpass. And that is a place where slopes are steep anyway. If it has to go over I-285, it may have to do so at an incredibly extreme elevation.

* Crossing the Chattahoochee River will be through National Park Service land. Again, especially if slopes require high elevations, there may be issues with the National Park Service.

* The Northwest Connectivity Study discovered that most of the Fulton County portion of I-75 right-of-way is maxed out, and that all of the alternatives (elevated, underground, or neighborhood buyout) would add massively to the cost.

- All of the above was discussed at the Environment Roundtable, and it should be included in the discussion summary for the Environment Roundtable.

Purpose and Objectives statement

* At all 5 Roundtables, when we got to this part of the discussion, I recommended that the statement needed to state that cost-effectively alleviating traffic congestion was a primary objective.

Please also note. This project is already marred by bias. Several Cobb County officials repeatedly declared this would be light rail, before the AA even started. This continued until numerous citizens questioned whether the AA was a sham, and the conclusions had already been predetermined. Even worse, at one point, Cobb almost approved spending millions of dollars to start building a transit station and parking in a specific location, which led to questions as to whether the AA was a sham, and that the conclusions were already pre-determined, and also raising questions as to whether Cobb was attempting to force the AA to approve what was already being built!!!

If the process is supposed to document all points of view, and all comments and recommendations, then that is what this record should reflect. The summaries should not have all of these selective omissions. The meeting summaries be corrected. And again, I want all of my comments in this email to be included in the official records for this AA study.

Thanks

Ron Sifen

Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Bob Hovey

Goal 1/ Objective 1:
Emissions for all justification calculations must be NET. That means that savings in automotive pollution must be reduced by increases in power plant pollution required to produce electricity, bus emissions, as appropriate, for the proposed transit systems.

Goal 1 / Objective 2:
View shed degradation is a cost to the natural environment and citizens'
enjoyment of public and private property, especially in parts of Cobb with historic significance. The group identified power lines, transformer farms, and fenced right of ways as areas where the proposed transit could make the view and appearance of the affected area much worse. In Cobb, these concerns are well documented in zoning fights over cell towers, and the long battle over the big transmission lines on Dallas Highway. Significant public opposition can be expected.

Goal 1 / Objective 4:
Station location proposed so far does not help Smyrna, Marietta, Lockheed, Southern Poly, Acworth, much less Mableton, Six Flags and the rest of South Cobb. These are the "traditionally underserved communities" that should be addressed by the Alternatives Analysis.

Strong advocacy by business interests for the main station in Cumberland CID is eclipsing less capable underserved populations so far in this analysis.
This is obvious by checking the attendance list at the Alternative Analysis Roundtables.

Goal 1 / Objective 6:
The plan proposed is not sustainable. There is no ongoing source of funding for the long term "public" part of operations and maintenance for the alternatives offered. There is no legal taxing body, and there is no tax structure. It is widely accepted that the fare box will only provide 25% of the needed revenue. It is also widely expected that current proposals for new taxes will be challenged in court on constitutional grounds. Those issues need to be resolved before we build a transit system that will sit parked for lack of operating funds.

Goal 2 / Objective 1:
The requirement for coordination with neighboring jurisdictions has not been met by the Alternatives Analysis so far. No one has attended that represents the governing bodies of Fulton County or City of Atlanta at the Roundtables. The majority of the transit line is in those jurisdictions, not in Cobb.

Environmental Roundtable
Stakeholder Excercise
December 8, 2011

DRAFT Environmental Goal and Objectives

Goals	Objectives
Minimize adverse environmental impacts to the built and natural environment	Reduce level of air quality degradation projected for 2040 Minimize potential impacts to the natural environment Minimize disruptions to community resources Minimize burdens to Environmental Justice and traditionally underserved communities in the corridor Promote sustainable transportation solutions
Consult with local and regional stakeholders	Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions Seek input from all benefited and burdened communities Provide equitable access to educational and informational project material Provide multiple avenues for public comment to ensure participation from all interested parties

Environmental Issues Input from Kick-Off Meeting

- 14% of Stakeholders responded that preserving the natural environment is the most important goal for transit.
- Promote cleaner-fuel technologies.
- Equal public involvement along the entire corridor
- Collaboration between agencies/jurisdictions
- Are other neighboring communities holding stakeholder meetings? What we do will have a great impact on them, i.e. Cherokee, Douglas, etc. (and Atlanta).
- What coordination is being done w/City of Atlanta? A good portion of the corridor is outside of Cobb?

Environmental Issues Related to Transit Projects

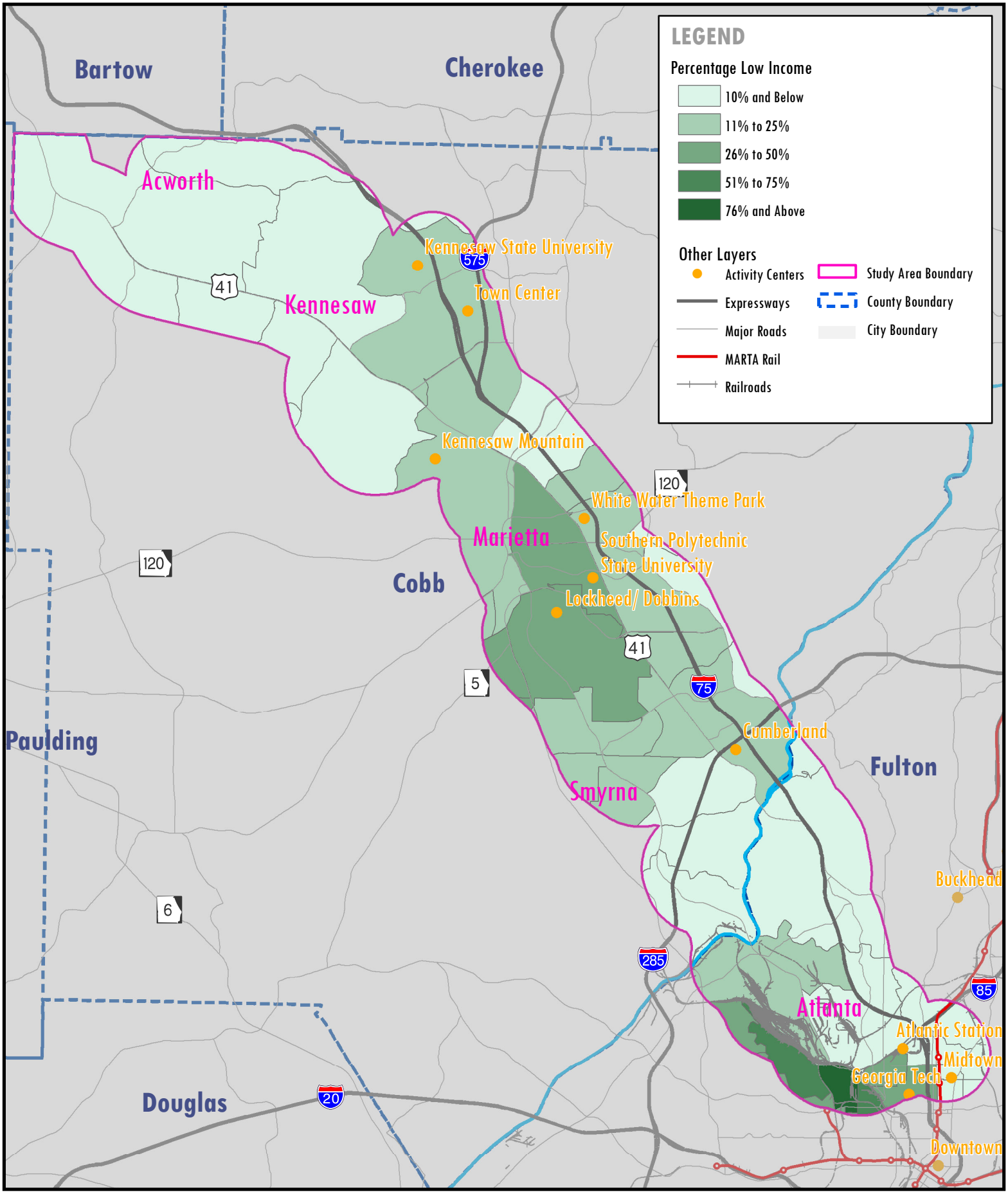
- IMPACT RELATED - Factors that influence alignment and/or station locations
    - Natural – Wetlands, streams, floodplains, endangered species
    - Cultural – Parks, churches, schools, cemeteries, etc.
    - Historical – Historic sites, archaeological sites
    - Physical – Hazardous sites, noise/vibration sensitive sites
    - Social – Low-income and minority populations, elderly and disabled

- BENEFIT RELATED - Factors that influence competitiveness for federal funds

- Air Quality - Reduction in emissions, Greenhouse gases
- Sustainability – Promoting compact urban form, higher occupancy trips
- Livability – Promoting economic development, healthier lifestyles

Analysis Considerations

- More data exists to measure potential impact-related issues (GIS, Census Data, etc,)
- Ways of assessing many of the benefit-related issues are:
  - Related to other major areas of analysis (transportation, land use, and economic development); and/or
  - Still being researched at the Federal level.
- Impacts to air quality and climate change are directly related to the length of the alignment and the type of fuel consumption related to transit technologies.

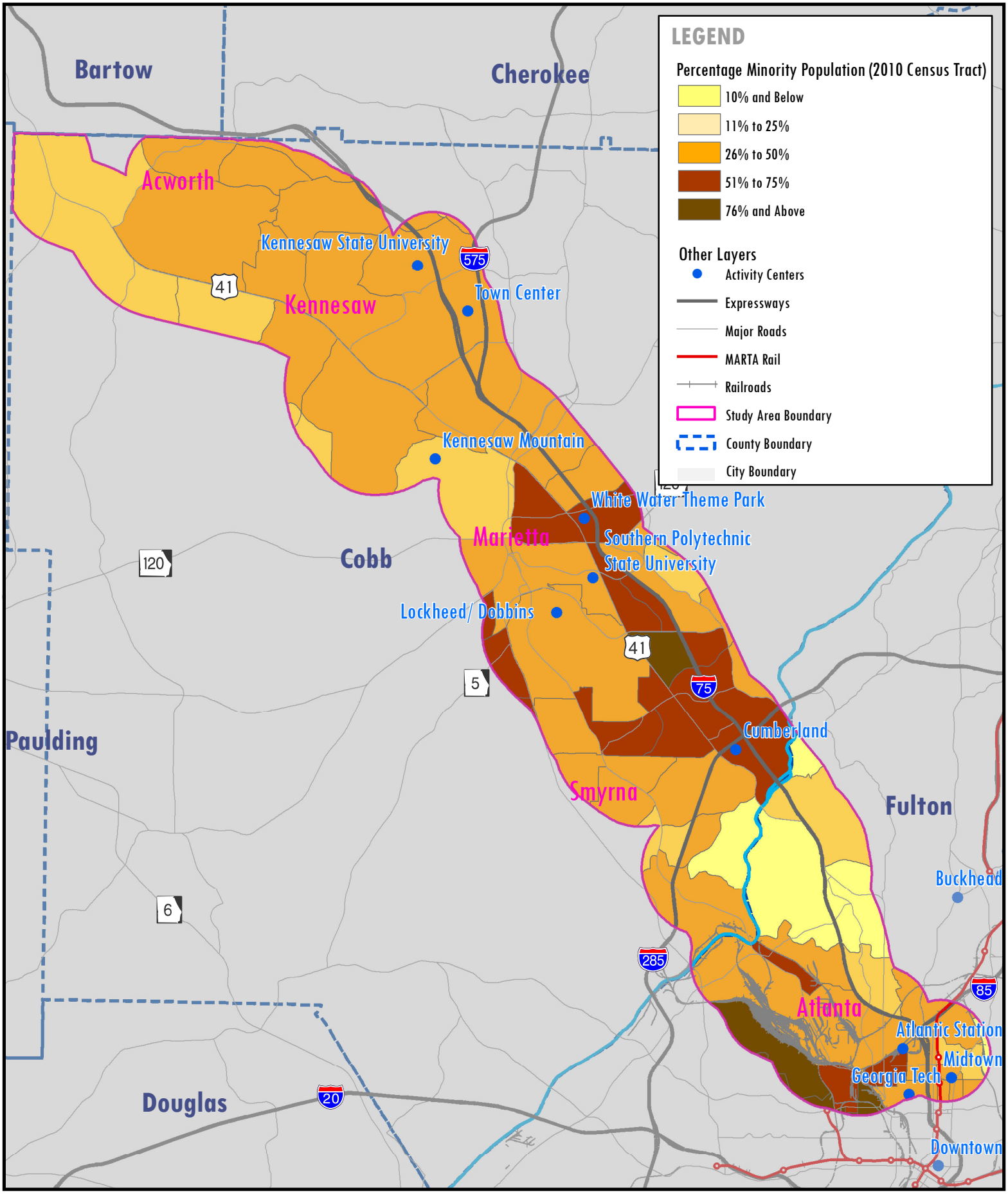


Poverty Level

(2009 American Community Servey Tract)

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

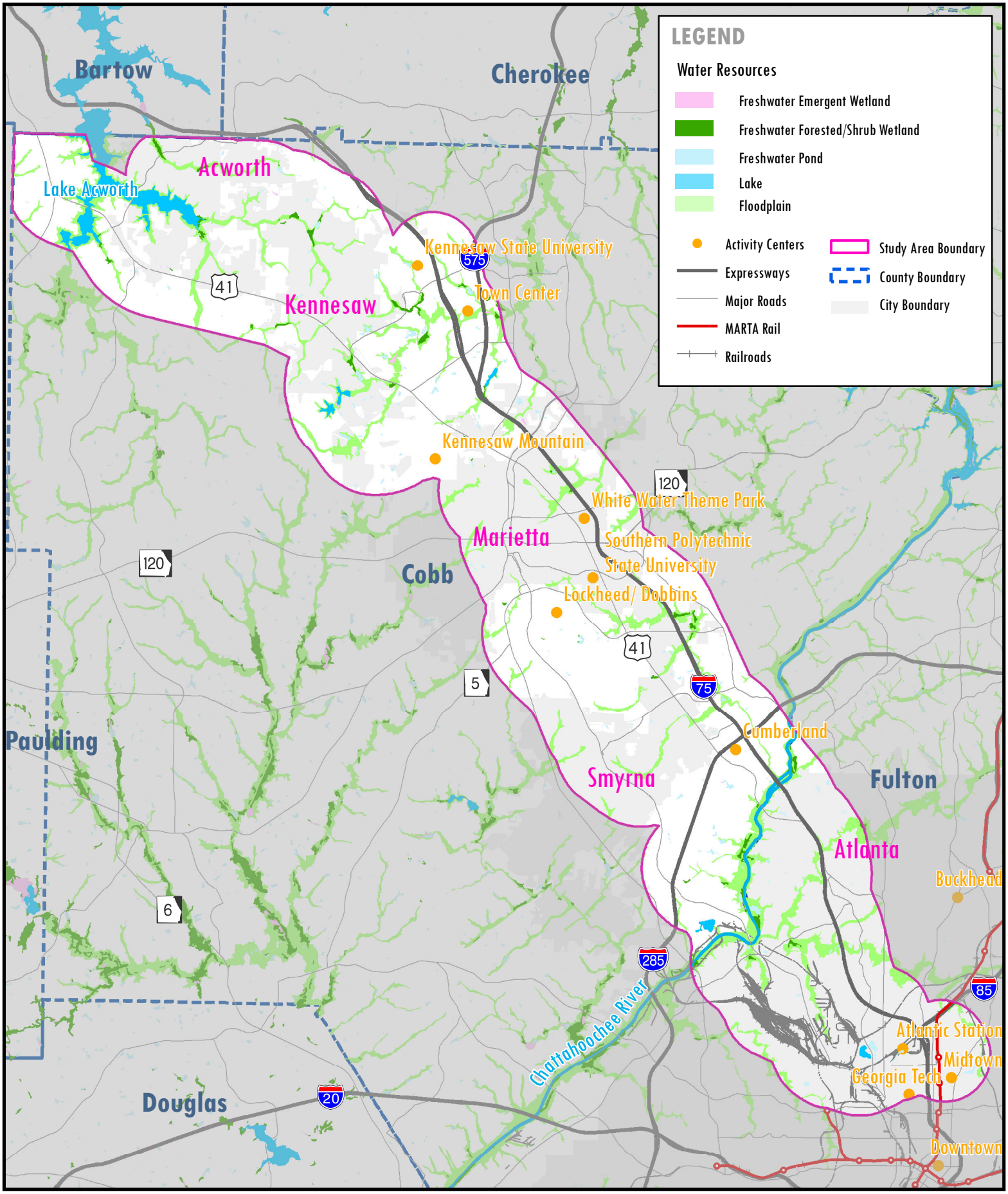


Minority Populations

(2010 Census Tract)

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

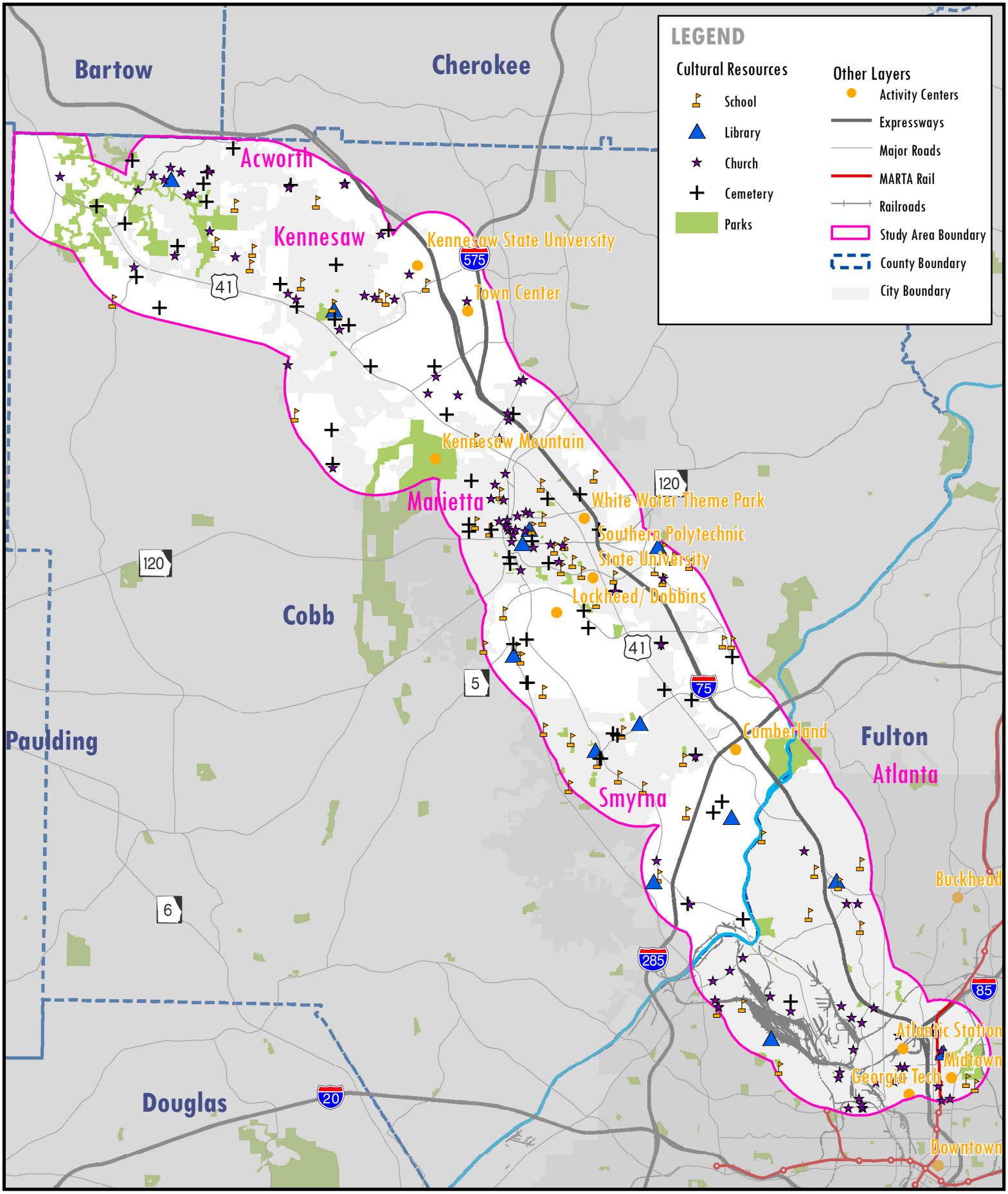
0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles



Water Resources

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles



Cultural Resources

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

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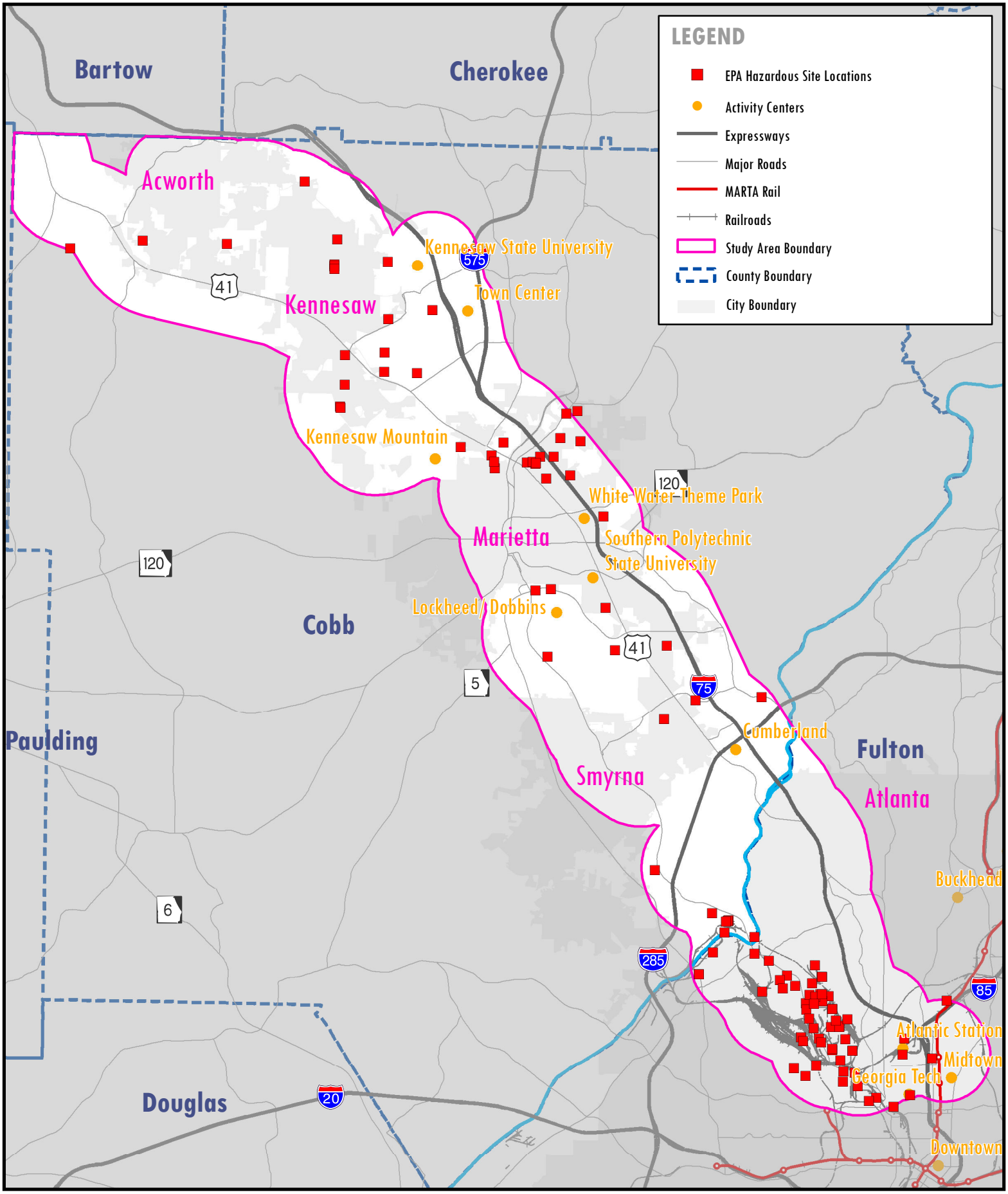
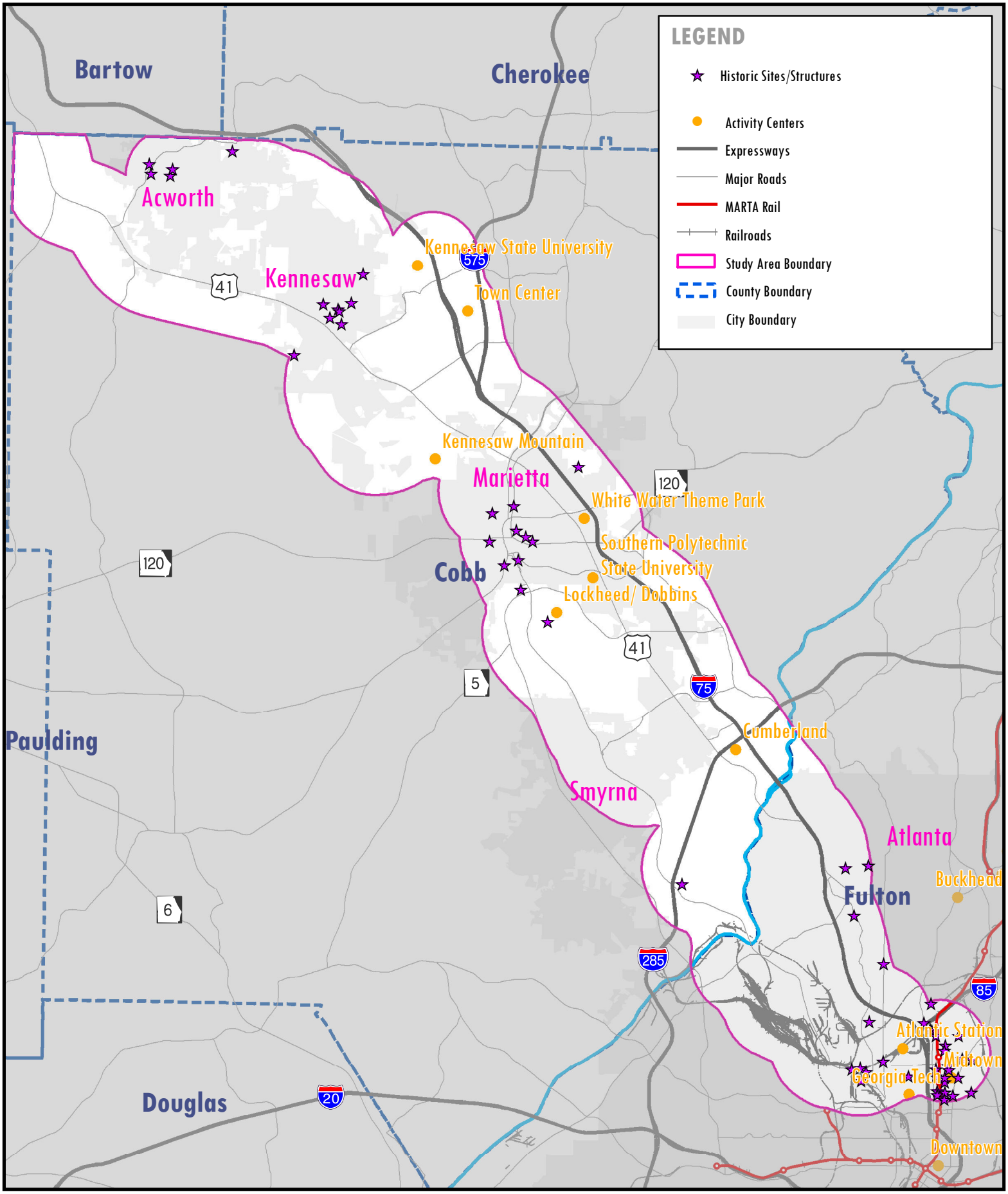


Hazardous Sites

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles



Historic Sites

(National Register of Historic Places)

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Environmental Roundtable
Summary Data of Attached Maps
December 8, 2011

Low Income Population
Data Source: American Community Survey 2009

Total population surveyed: 300,495
Total population in poverty: 41,562
Percent of population in poverty: 13.8%

Minority Population
Data Source: U.S. Census 2010

Total population surveyed: 290,911
Total minority population: 118,800
Percent of minority population: 40.8%

Water Resources
Data Source: Current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory

Emergent Wetland: 131 acres
Forested/Shrub Wetland: 1,459 acres
Pond: 1,908 acres
Lake: 2,982 acres

Cultural Resources
Data Source: ESRI Nationwide Landmarks & Atlanta Regional Commission Community Facilities file

Number of Churches: 99
Number of Cemeteries: 55
Number of Schools: 61
Number of Libraries: 13
Number of Parks: 56 (3,732 acres)

Hazardous Sites
Data Source: Current Environmental Protection Agency Regulated Facilities and Cleanup Areas Site file

Total: 111

Historic Sites
Data Source: Current National Register of Historic Places South Region file

Total Number: 59