

Cobb**FORWARD**

Comprehensive Transportation Plan

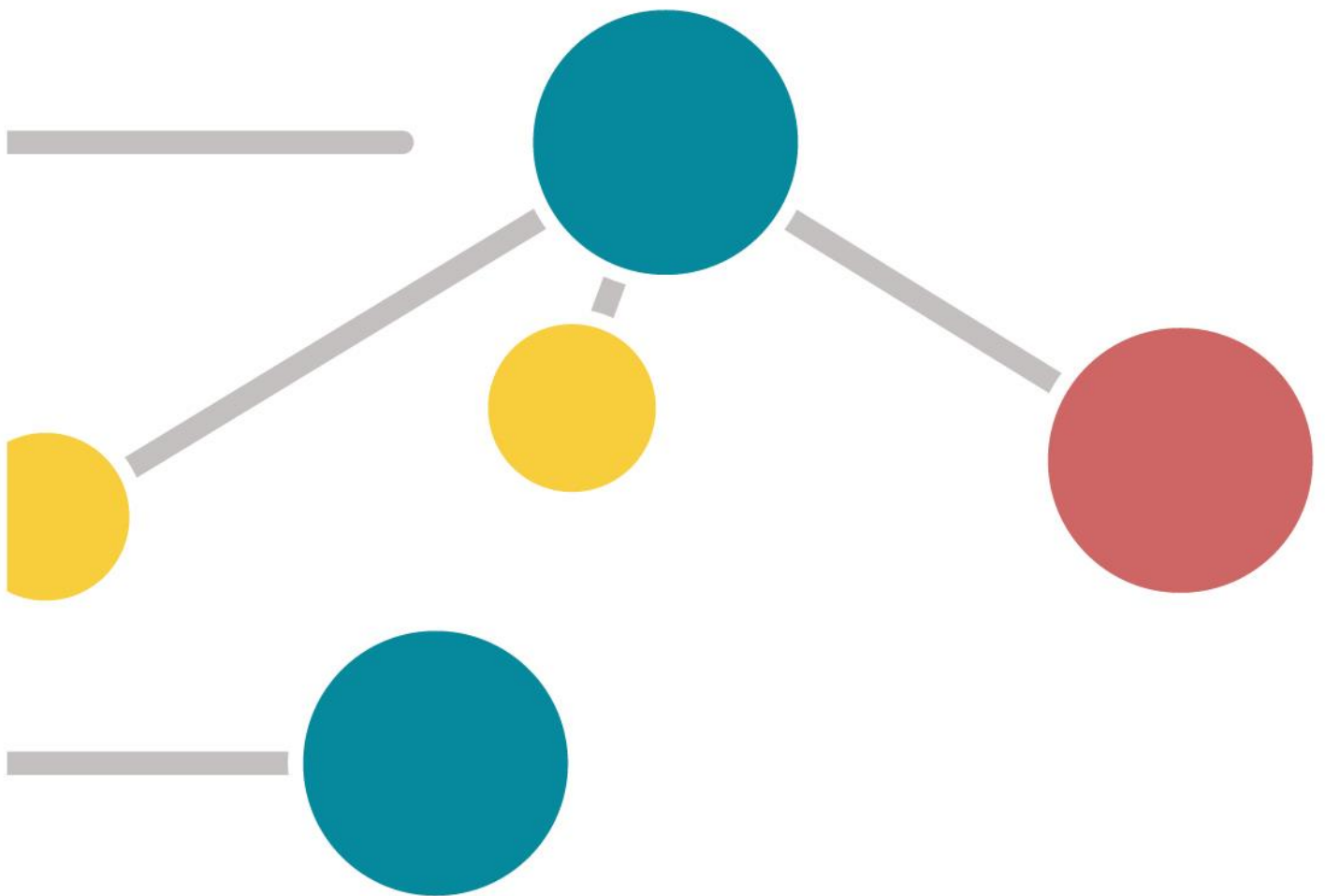


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Introduction

CobbForward is occurring at one of the most dynamic times for transportation in metro Atlanta’s history. To make the most of this opportunity will require an understanding of and focus on local complexities, a vision for what the next generation of transportation can bring, and leadership to implement Cobb County’s vision within the regional context. To do so, the team interacted with a wide spectrum of voices throughout the community, including various stakeholder groups, the broader Cobb community, elected leaders, adjacent communities, regional partners, and Cobb County staff.

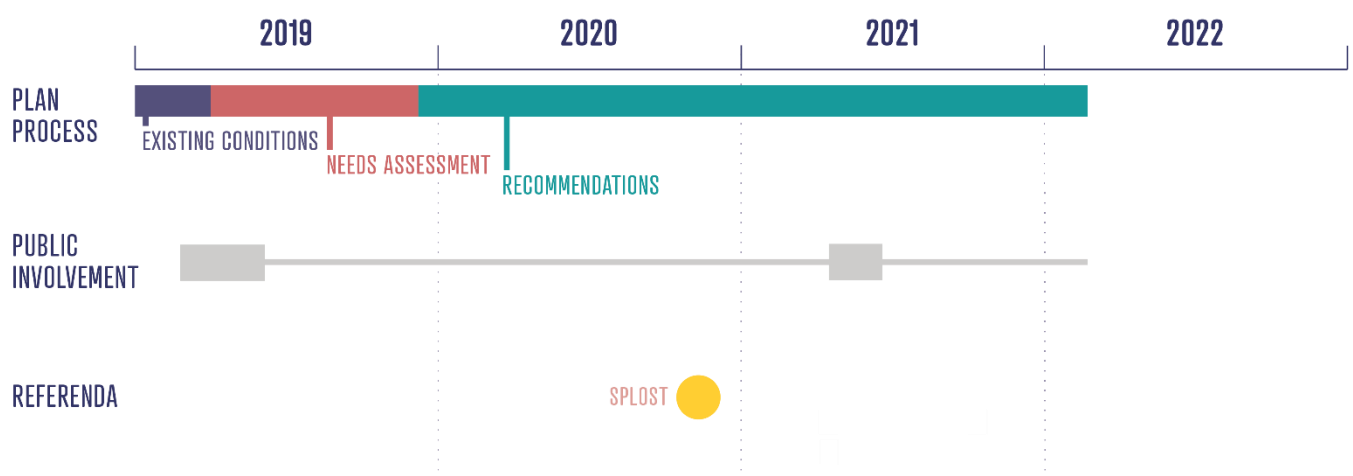
There were two major categories of engagement for the CobbForward Public Involvement Phase 2 and will be further discussed in the following sections:

- Focused Engagement
- Public Facing Engagement

While the first round of engagement, which occurred over nine public meetings in April and May of 2019, focused on the vision and goals for the transportation network as well as needs of the public, the second round, which occurred over eight public meetings in May 2021, focused on obtaining input on draft recommendations. These recommendations reflected earlier input and technical analyses. Public Involvement Phase 2 results are examined in greater detail on the following pages.

Schedule

The graphic below illustrates how public involvement intertwined with the technical and political processes as well as how it played an integral role in CobbForward’s development. Public engagement was timed at key decision points so as to provide input into the technical process – feedback from stakeholders and the community shaped the direction of the plan. Feedback from the public also provided guidance to elected leadership regarding possible transportation referenda.



Methodology and Outreach Process

This section describes the various engagement efforts included in Phase 2 of the public involvement efforts. The engagement methods were split between focused engagement and public-facing engagement.

Focused Engagement

The purpose of the focused engagement meetings was to interact with and learn from various transportation experts, County officials, and municipalities whose thoughts and opinions were integral to the development of the CobbForward CTP.

Technical Committee Meeting

The Technical Committee was formed to get feedback from specific transportation and transit industry organizations to provide overall plan guidance for the development of the CobbForward CTP. The Technical Committee met multiple times during the process at key decision points for plan development. This committee served as a technical review resource, a sounding board and testing ground for the presentation and design of public outreach activities, and plan champions in the community. The Technical Committee met on the following days during the second round of engagement:

- January 22, 2021
- May 4, 2021
- August 23, 2021

City, CID, and Adjacent Community Meetings

The Cities and CIDs were standing members on the Technical Committee. Separate one-on-one meetings were scheduled with staff throughout the Recommendations Phase of the plan to coordinate project priorities. Additionally, Project Team representatives met with various mayors and key representatives from Cities in Cobb County on May 28, 2021, to discuss recommendations and possible transportation referenda under consideration. The team also conducted an Adjacent Communities meeting on August 24, 2021, to coordinate projects across County boundaries.

Transit Advisory Board Meeting

The Transit Advisory Board (TAB) met with Project Team members to discuss the CTP on October 26, 2020 and April 26, 2021. Additionally, there were monthly meetings and various other progress presentations to discuss direction and recommendations. The TAB is a standing committee for CobbLinc that also provided input and feedback regarding transit recommendations, financial planning, and referenda options for the transit element of the CTP. Staff gave monthly CTP progress reports to TAB at their monthly meetings. Key milestone presentations were provided by the Project Team or members of staff throughout the project timeline.

County Commissioner Meetings and Work Sessions

The Project Team met with various County Commissioners and elected officials throughout this public involvement phase. The group met with all of the Commissioners on January 29, 2021, as a part of their board retreat, on April 16, 2021, in small groups to present draft public meeting presentations, and on June 22, 2021, at a Board of Commissioners work session, and in small groups on July 26, 2021. The Project Team met individually with the Commissioners at multiple points in the Recommendations Phase to discuss project and policy recommendations with them.

MARTA and the ATL

The Project Team spoke with MARTA and the ATL at multiple points in the Recommendations Phase to understand priorities within the respective agencies, opportunities to enhance regional connectivity, and regional planning initiatives currently underway and future potential partnerships.

Public-Facing Engagement

Public Meetings and Town Halls

Three public meetings were held virtually at times that would allow residents with varying schedules to be able to attend. In addition, Commissioners hosted in-person town hall meetings for those who desired to participate in person. During these meetings, attendees had the opportunity to engage, ask questions, and provide feedback to the Project Team. Throughout the public involvement process, approximately 160 attendees were able to join one of the three virtual public meetings and another 160 individuals attended the town halls. Public Meetings took place on the following days:

- Virtual Public Meetings:
 - Tuesday May 11th, 2021 | 5:00-7:00 PM
 - Saturday May 15th, 2021 | 9:00-11:00 AM
 - Wednesday May 19th, 2021 | 11:00 AM-1:00 PM
- In-Person Town Hall Meetings:
 - Wednesday May 12th, 2021 | 6:00-7:30 PM (District 3/Cobb County Civic Center)
 - Wednesday May 19th, 2021 | 6:30-8:00 PM (District 4/Cobb County Public Safety Police Training Academy)
 - Thursday May 20th, 2021 | 6:00-8:00 PM (District 1/Lost Mountain Park)
 - Tuesday May 25th, 2021 | 5:00-6:30 PM (Information Station Pop-up at Cobb County Government)
 - Thursday May 27th, 2021 | 5:30-7:30 PM (District 2/East Cobb Park)

Pop-Ups and Ambassadors

Pop-ups were hosted by ambassadors at strategic transit stops and centers. Approximately 75 riders were engaged through pop-ups and the Ambassadors. Pop-up events took place at the two Cobb County transit transfer centers on the following days:

- Tuesday May 25th, 2021 | 8:00-10:00 AM (Cumberland Transfer Center)
- Wednesday May 26th, 2021 | 8:00-10:00 AM (Marietta Transfer Center)



Project Website

A unique web address (www.CobbForward.org) was created to provide easy access to the project information and provide an online format for the public to engage with the plan. The webpage featured information about the plan, including a plan overview, plan schedule, plan resources (meeting presentations, education boards, a narrated video, and plan maps and documents), a comment form to provide feedback, ways to contact the Project Team, information on upcoming outreach events and how to participate in the planning process, related links, and the project fact sheet. The online survey was also embedded on the project-specific website.

Project-Specific Emails

A dedicated email address was created for the CobbForward public outreach (CobbForward@CobbCounty.org) that allowed the community to email the Project Team with their questions, thoughts, or concerns about the plan.

Email Blasts

Frequent email blasts were pushed out using MailChimp during the plan's development. The email blast distribution list featured more than 950 email addresses. Email blast updates included information on the plan status, dates and information on upcoming public open houses or community events, alerts to take the online survey, and other details regarding the plan.

Informational Handouts

Approximately 2-3 weeks prior to the public meetings, various communications and advertisements within the County were utilized to raise awareness of the upcoming meetings. This included flyers, business cards, yard signs, window decals on CobbLinc buses, newspaper advertisements, newsletters, and information dropped off at the following locations:

- Cobb County Collaborative
- United Way Atlanta (Cobb County)
- Universities
- Neighborhood Associations
- Libraries
- Malls (Cumberland, Town Center, Galleria, etc.)
- Supermarkets
- Senior Centers
- Banks
- Trail heads
- Transfer centers
- Transit stops and parks
- CobbLinc buses



Over 150 locations were visited across Cobb County. These information distribution locations are displayed in the following map.

CobbFORWARD
Comprehensive Transportation Plan



Surveys

Two different survey efforts were undertaken in the Recommendations Phase of the plan with the goal of participants sharing their input to influence how the plan takes shape: an online survey and a scientific survey.

Online

The online survey was open to any members of the public and was available through the project website as well as social media posts and advertisements. The online public survey was completed by approximately 1,000 participants.



Scientific

The scientific survey took place over multiple weeks and was conducted through a standalone survey instrument. An independent market research firm administered the scientific survey through email to residents of Cobb County only. Approximately 4,300 residents participated in the survey. The questions in the scientific survey were identical to the online public survey but adjusted slightly to gather slightly more detailed answers in some cases.

Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and NextDoor were used as social media platforms to get the word out regarding the CobbForward CTP, the upcoming public meetings and town halls, and the online public survey. Social media posts continued through June 2021 reminding followers of the survey, meetings, and project website. The posts included links to the project website, and the survey if applicable, as shown in the figure. Social media will be used to share information regarding the final plan with the public as well as information about plan adoption.



Results of Outreach

Results of the Phase 2 Public Involvement efforts, from both the online and scientific surveys, are described in this section. In total, the surveys had about 5,300 responses. Feedback from this engagement phase was used to help shape the comprehensive transportation plan. The following sections are broken out by the overarching topics that the respondents were asked about when completing the survey.

Topic #1 – Trail Projects

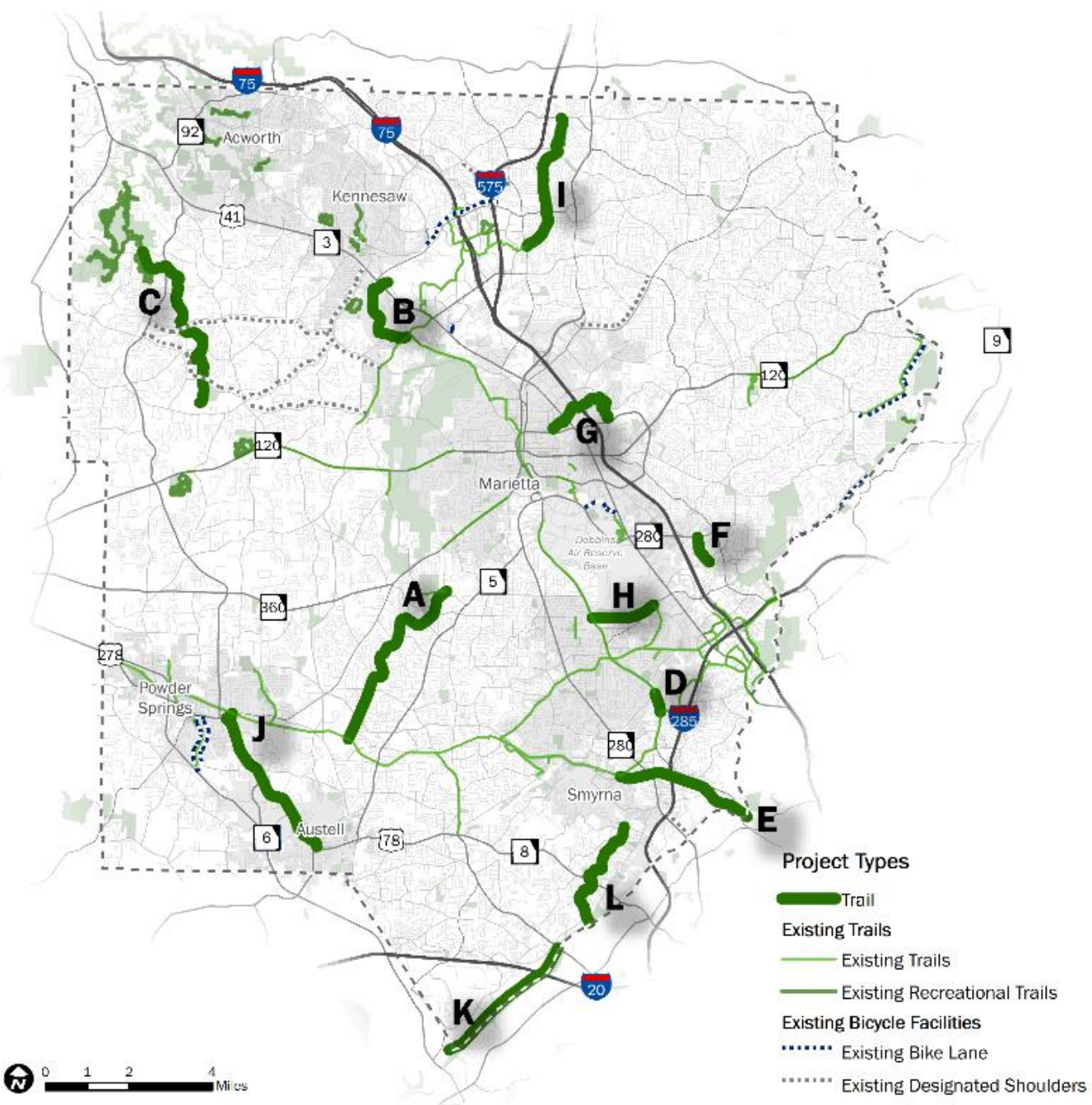
Participants were asked to choose what three trail projects the County should prioritize. The 12 projects listed below are the trail projects participants were able to choose from.

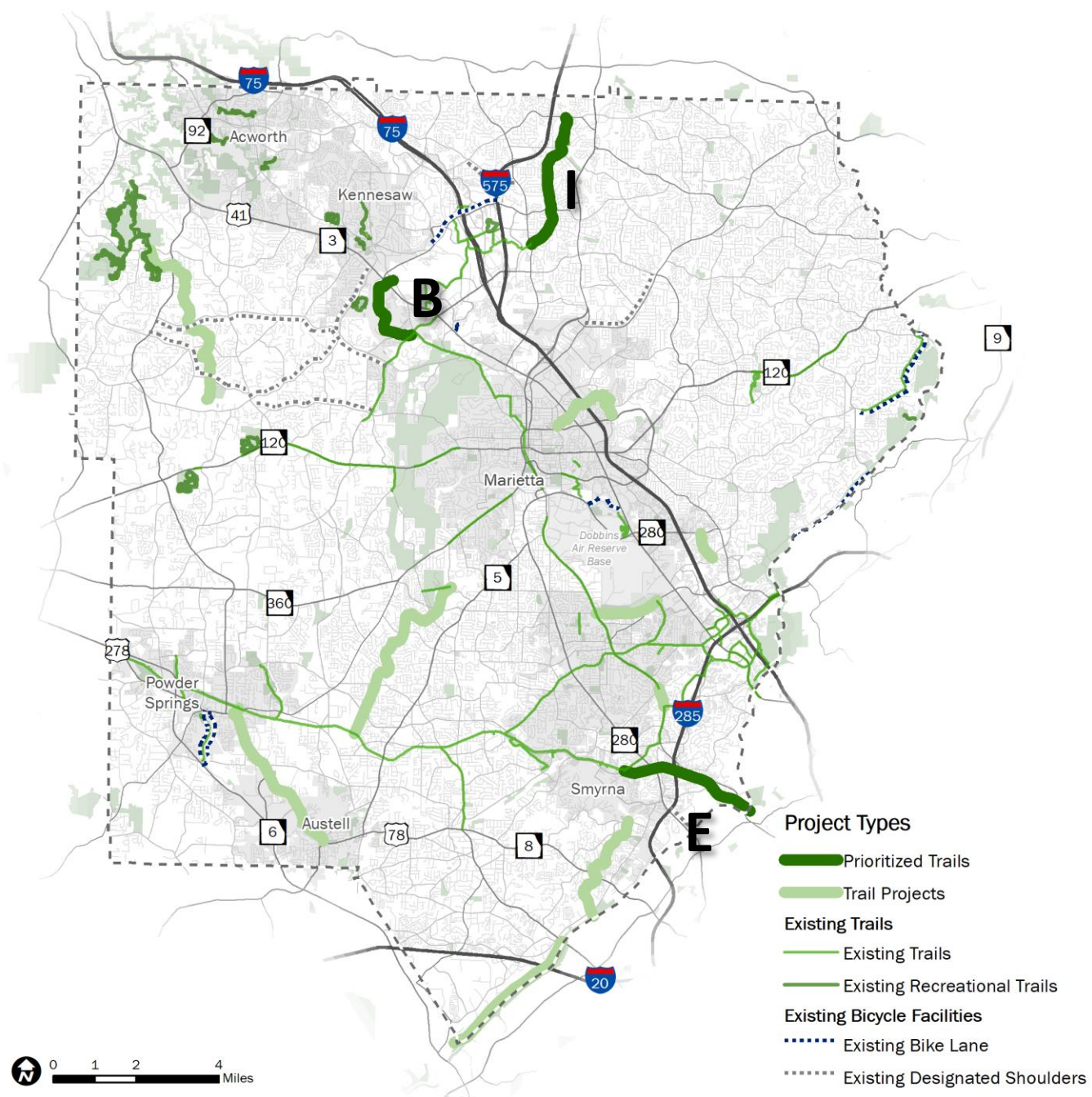
- A - Olley Creek Trail Part C from the Silver Comet Trail to County Services Parkway
- B - Cobb International Boulevard Trail from Barrett Parkway to Old Highway 41
- C - Allatoona Creek Greenway Part A from Harrison High School to Allatoona Creek Park
- D - Atlanta Road Trail from Ridge Road to Spring Hill
- E - Silver Comet – Atlanta BeltLine Connector Trail from East-West Connector to Chattahoochee River
- F - Bentley Road Trail from Delk Road to Terrell Mill Road
- G - Sope Creek Greenway from Fairground Street to Merritt Park
- H - Windy Hill Trail Part A from Village Parkway to Atlanta Road
- I - Noonday Creek Trail – Bells Ferry Road Trailhead to Noonday Park
- J - Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail from Joe Jerkins Boulevard to Silver Comet Trail Linear Park
- K - Chattahoochee River Trail (south of Mableton Parkway) from the Douglas County Line to Mableton Parkway
- L - Nickajack Creek Greenway Part C from the Chattahoochee River to Buckner Road

The top three responses across both surveys were:

- B - Cobb International Boulevard Trail from Barrett Parkway to Old Highway 41
- E - Silver Comet – Atlanta BeltLine Connector Trail from East-West Connector to Chattahoochee River
- I - Noonday Creek Trail – Bells Ferry Road Trailhead to Noonday Park

The maps below show the 12 options that respondents were able to choose from, with the project names matching the list above. The second map below shows the top three trails that were selected by both the online survey and scientific survey participants.





Topic #2 – Major Roadway Projects

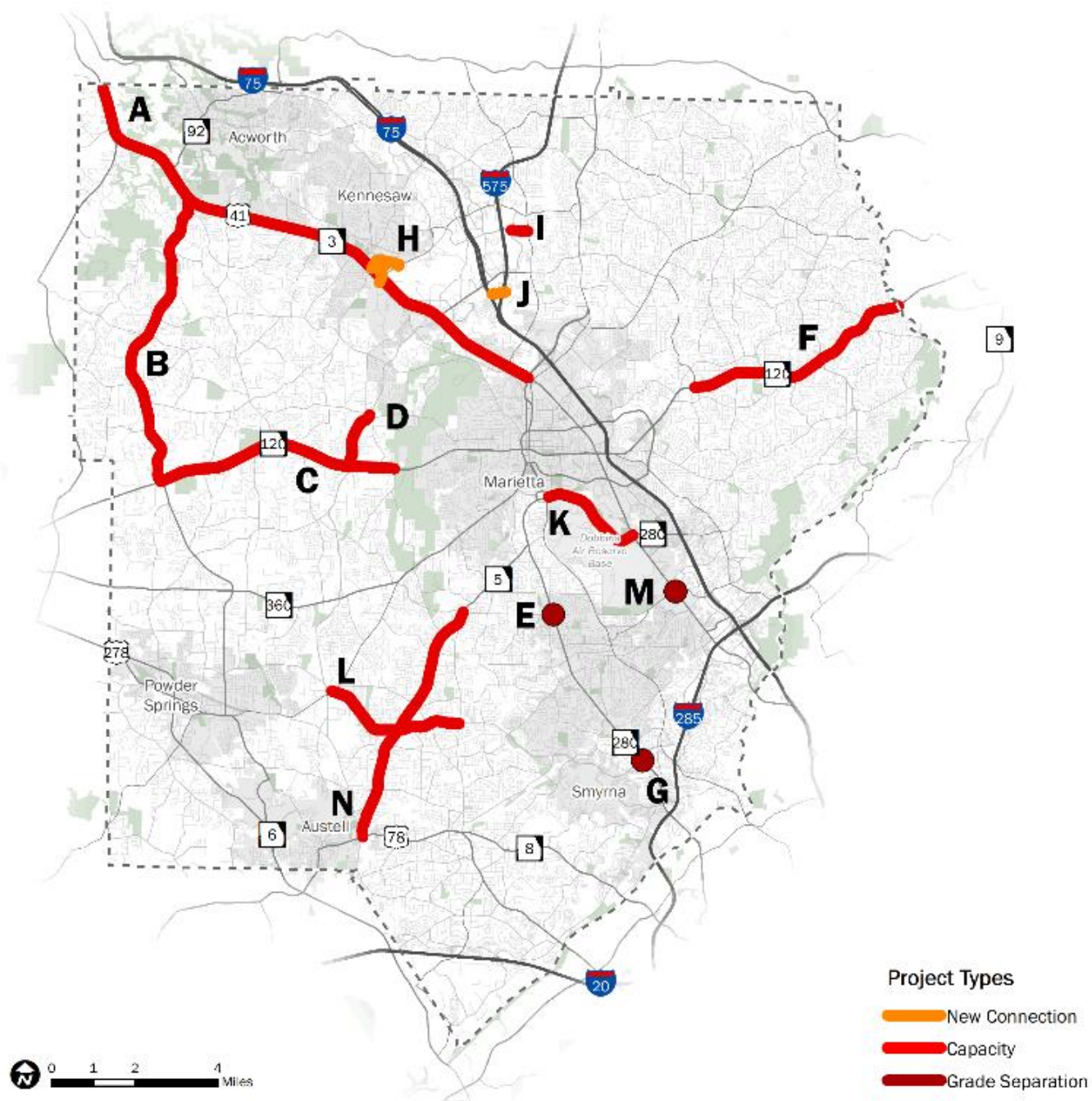
Participants were asked to choose what four major roadway projects the County should prioritize. The 14 projects listed below are the roadway projects participants were able to choose from.

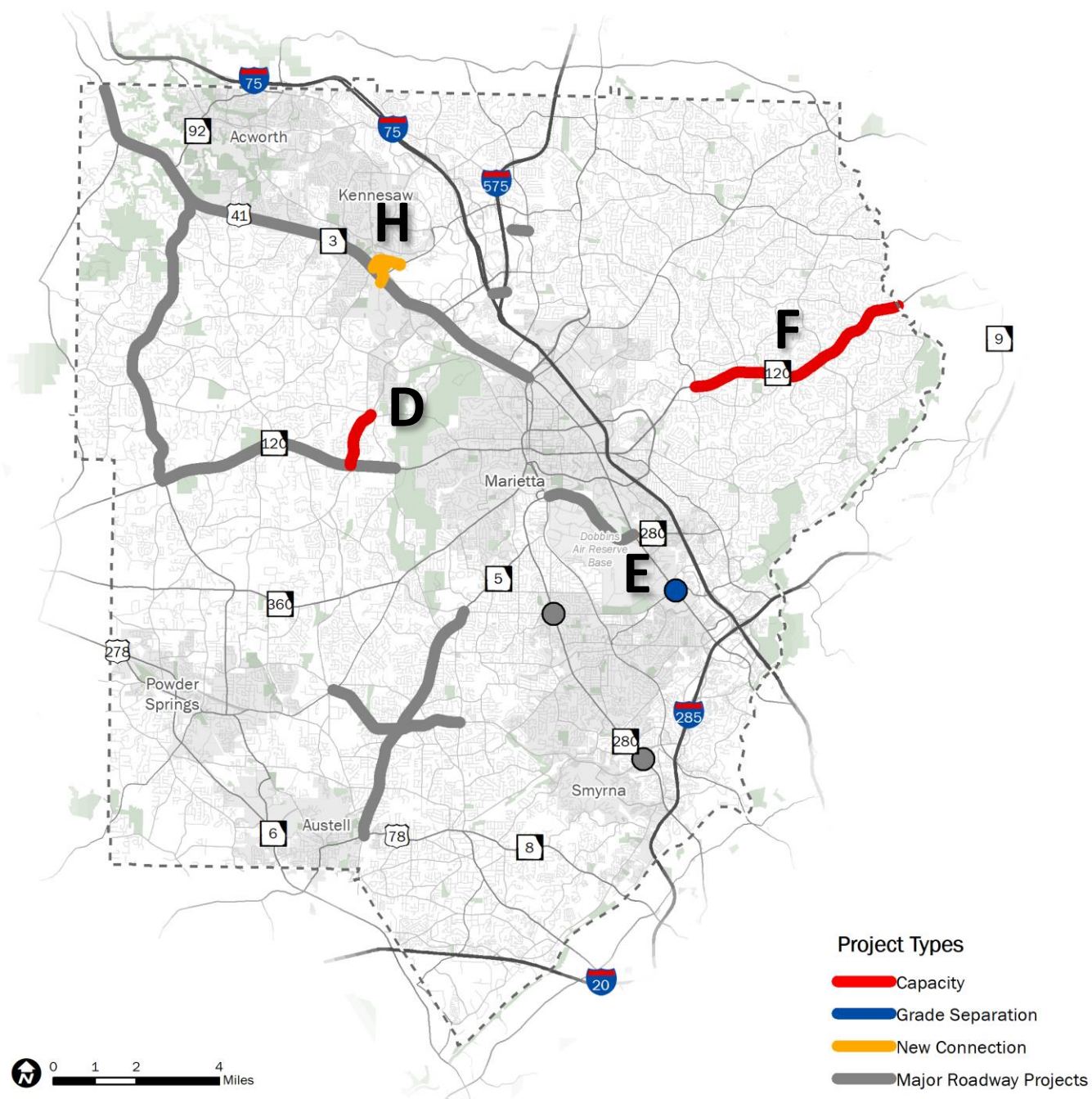
- A - Cobb Parkway Widening from Third Army Road Connector to SR 5 Connector
- B - Mars Hill Road/Lost Mountain Road Widening from Dallas Highway to Cobb Parkway
- C - Dallas Highway Widening from John Ward Road to Mars Hill Road
- D - Barrett Parkway Widening from Burnt Hickory Road to Dallas Highway
- E - Cobb Parkway at Windy Hill Road Grade Separation
- F - Roswell Road Widening from East Piedmont Road to the Fulton County Line
- G - South Cobb Drive at East West Connector Grade Separation
- H - McCollum Parkway/Cobb Parkway/Kennesaw Due West Realignment
- I - Big Shanty Road Widening Phase IV from Chastain Meadows Parkway to Bells Ferry Road
- J - South Barrett Reliever Phase 4 from Roberts Court to Chastain Meadows Parkway
- K - South Cobb Drive Widening from Cobb Parkway to Atlanta Road
- L - East-West Connector Widening from Hicks Road to Powder Springs Road
- M - Windy Hill Road at South Cobb Drive Grade Separation
- N - Austell Road Widening from Veterans Memorial Highway to Windy Hill Road

The top four responses were:

- D - Barrett Parkway Widening from Burnt Hickory Road to Dallas Highway
- E - Cobb Parkway at Windy Hill Road Grade Separation
- F - Roswell Road Widening from East Piedmont Road to the Fulton County Line
- H - McCollum Parkway/Cobb Parkway/Kennesaw Due West Realignment

The maps below show the 14 options that respondents were able to choose, with the project names matching the list above. The second map below shows the top four major roadway projects that were selected by both the online survey and scientific survey participants.





Topic #3 – Safety and Operational Roadway Projects

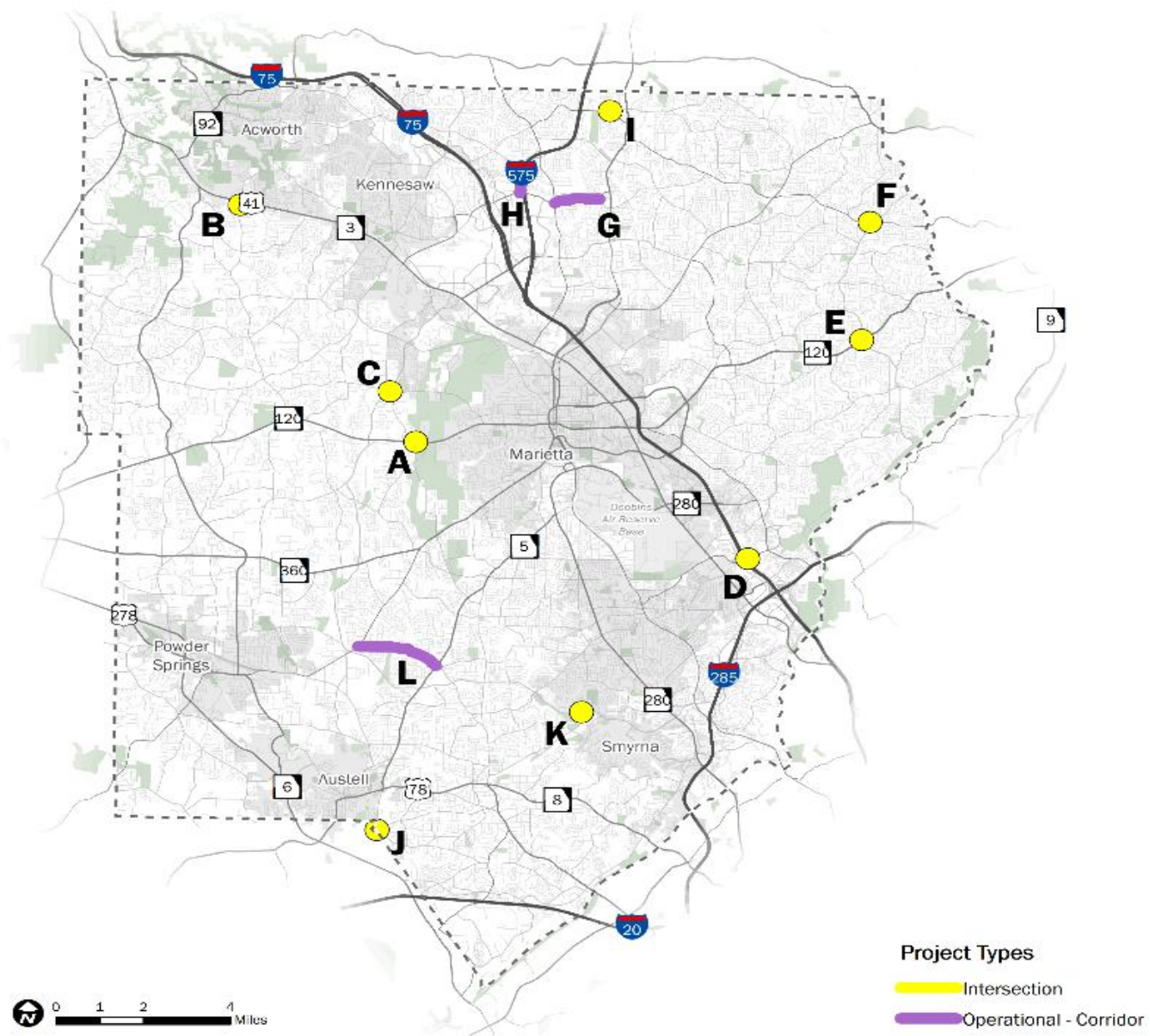
Participants were asked to choose what four safety and operational roadway projects the County should prioritize. The 12 projects listed below were the safety and operational projects participants were able to choose from.

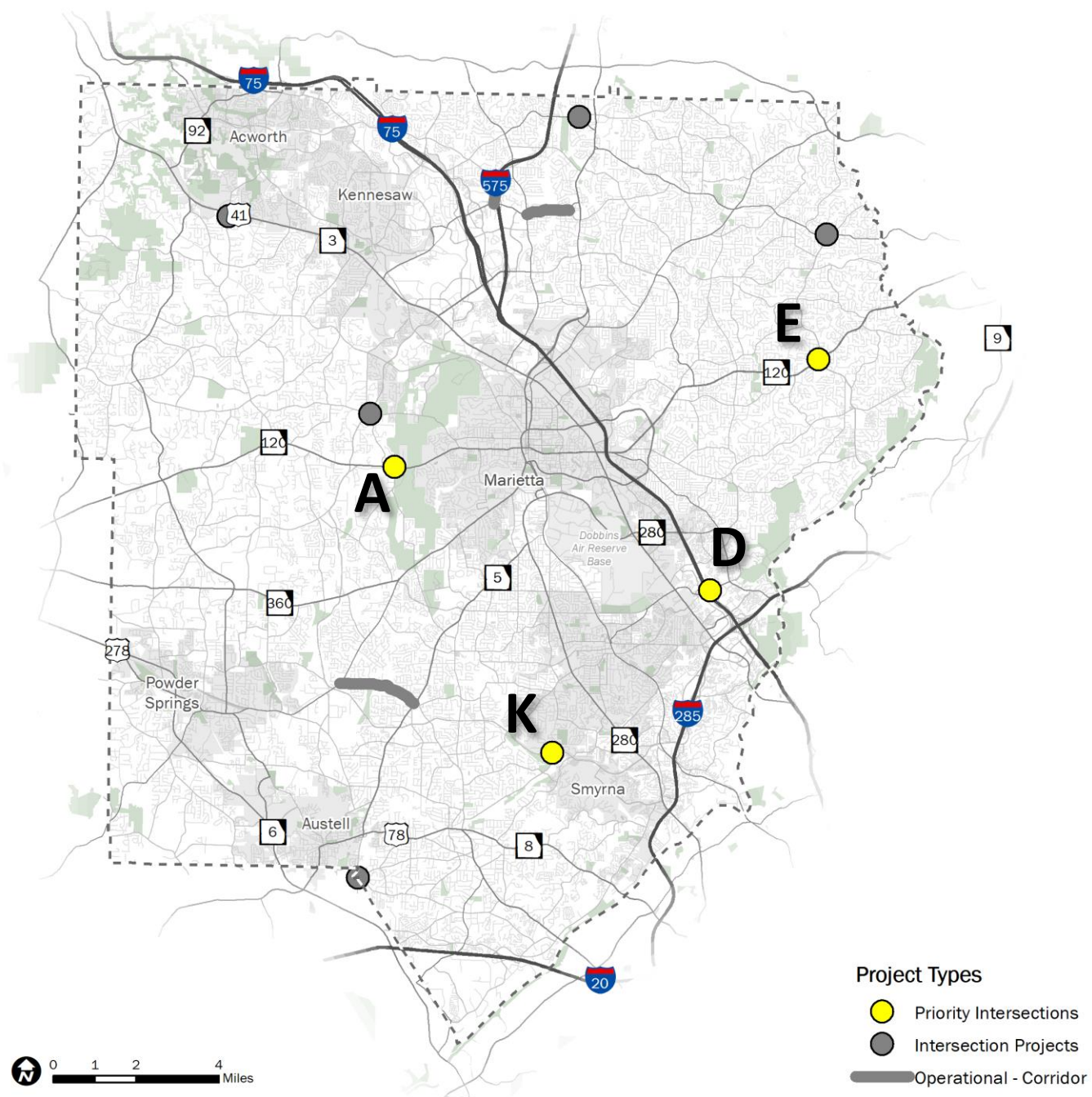
- A - Dallas Highway at John Ward Road Intersection Improvements
- B - Acworth Due-West at McClure Intersection Improvements
- C - Burnt Hickory at Barrett Parkway Intersection Improvements
- D - Windy Hill Road at I-75 Intersection Improvements
- E - SR 120 at Johnson Ferry Road Intersection Improvements
- F - Shallowford Road at Johnson Ferry Road Intersection Improvements
- G - New Chastain Road Corridor Improvements from Bells Ferry Road to Chastain Corner Road
- H - Chastain Road at I-575 Interchange Improvements
- I - Shallowford Road at Farm Valley Road Intersection Improvements
- J - Maxham Road at Old Alabama Road Intersection Improvements
- K - East-West Connector at Fontaine Road South East Intersection Improvement
- L - Hurt Road Corridor Improvements from Powder Springs Road to Austell Road

The top four responses were:

- A - Dallas Highway at John Ward Road Intersection Improvements
- D - Windy Hill Road at I-75 Intersection Improvements
- E - SR 120 at Johnson Ferry Road Intersection Improvements
- K - East-West Connector at Fontaine Road South East Intersection Improvement

The maps below show the 14 options that respondents were able to choose, with the project names matching the list above. The second map below shows the top four safety and operational projects that were selected by both the online survey and scientific survey participants.





Topic #4 – Transit

Based on best practices and key characteristics, participants were asked to evaluate nine priority transit corridors that were identified as the backbone of a larger transit network in Cobb County. Participants were asked to choose their top four choices.

A - Cumberland/South Cobb
B - Marietta/South Cobb
C - Cumberland/Marietta
D - Marietta/Town Center
E - East Cobb/Marietta

F - Smyrna/Marietta
G - Cumberland/Atlanta
H - South Cobb/Atlanta
I - Cumberland/Perimeter

The results of this question were slightly different between the online respondents and the scientific survey participants, so two maps have been included representing the respective survey on the following pages.

Online Survey Results:

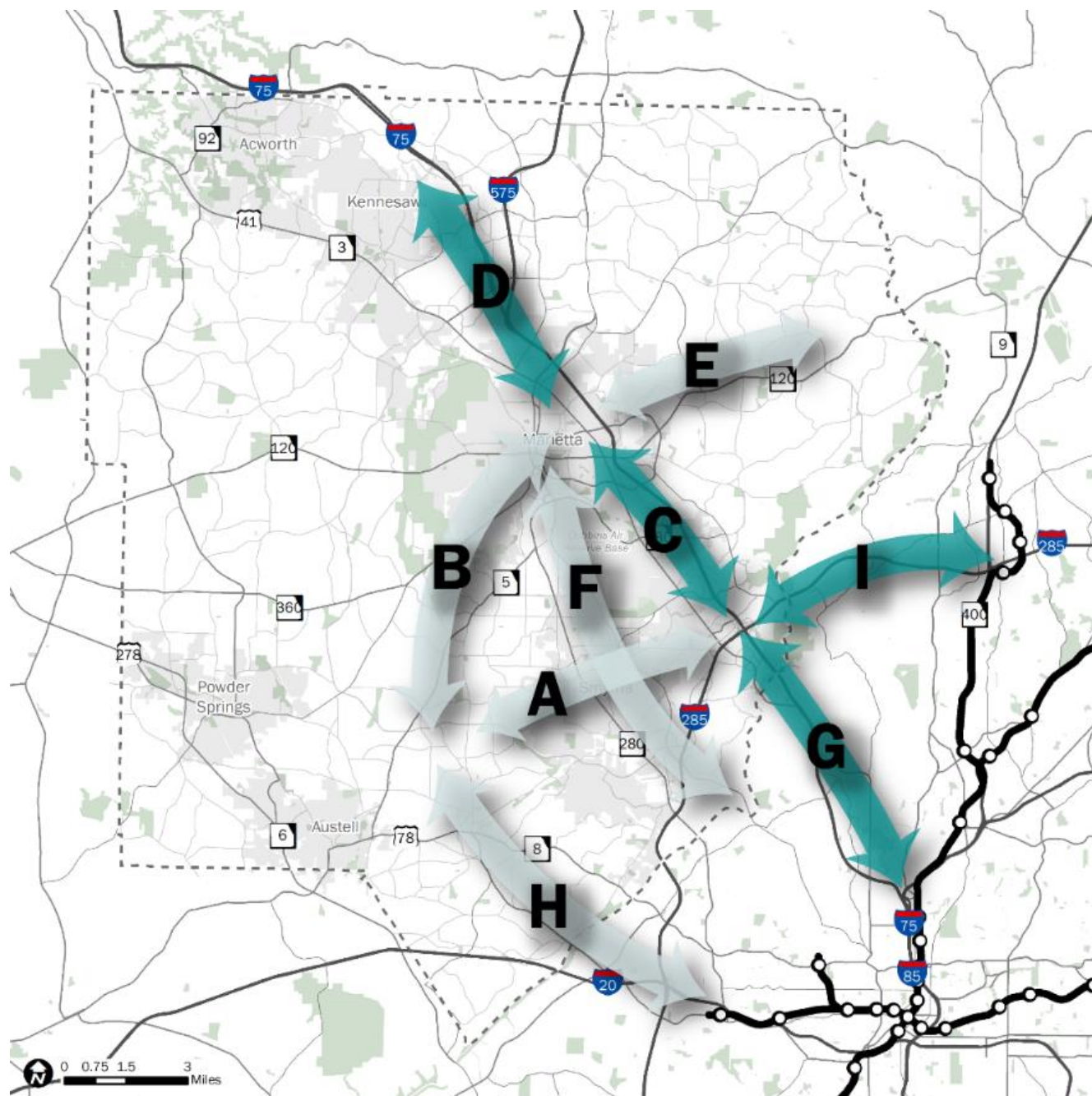
The online survey participants selected the following corridors as their top four priorities:

C - Cumberland/Marietta

D - Marietta/Town Center

G - Cumberland/Atlanta

I - Cumberland/Perimeter



Scientific Survey Results:

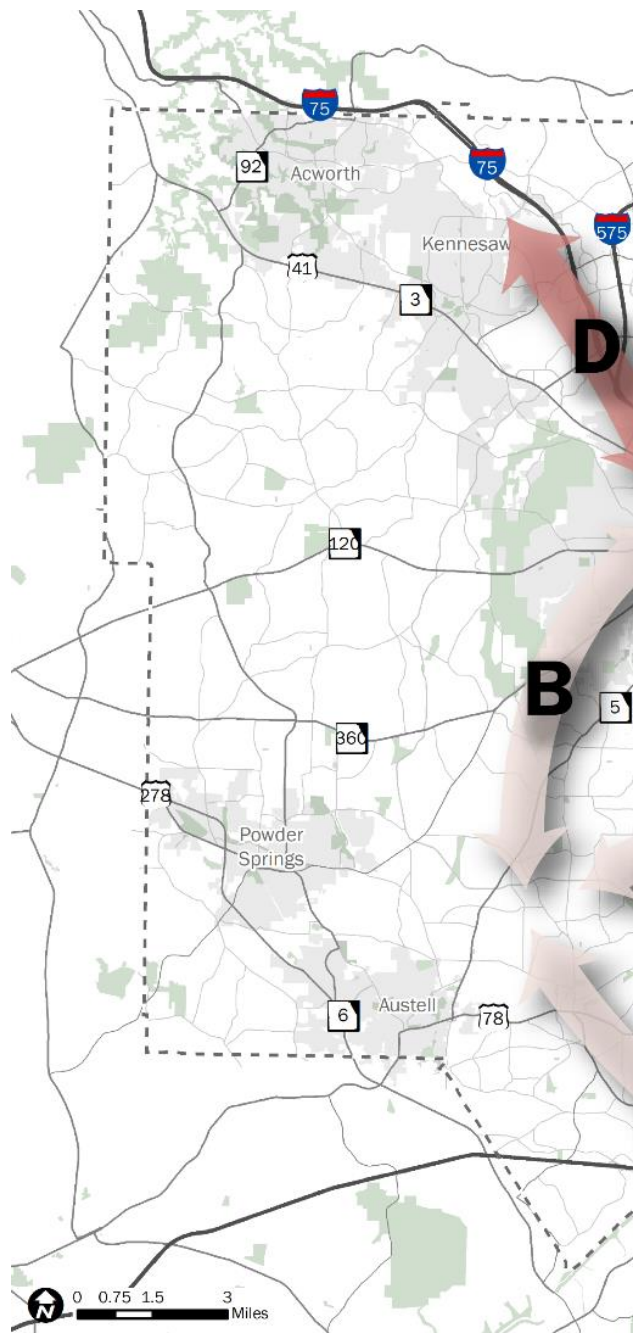
The scientific survey participants selected the following corridors as their top four priorities:

C - Cumberland/Marietta

D - Marietta/Town Center

E - East Cobb/Marietta

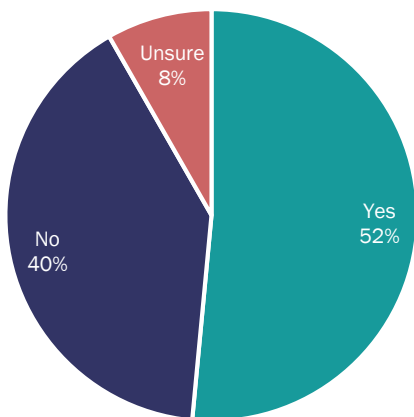
G - Cumberland/Atlanta



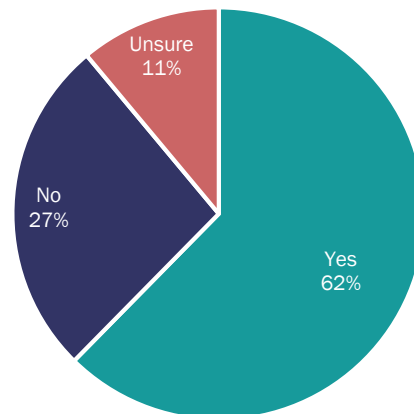
Topic #5 – Financial Considerations

Participants were asked if heavy rail into Cobb County should be considered for future investments. Currently, no heavy rail system exists in Cobb County. There are three ways the existing heavy rail system (MARTA) could potentially connect and extend into Cobb County (see map below). Paying for an individual heavy rail transit option could cost anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of a future sales tax. The results from this question are broken out by online survey and scientific survey.

- From the Online Survey: 52% of respondents said Heavy Rail should be considered for investment.
- From the Scientific Survey: 62% of respondents said Heavy Rail should be considered for investment.



Online Survey

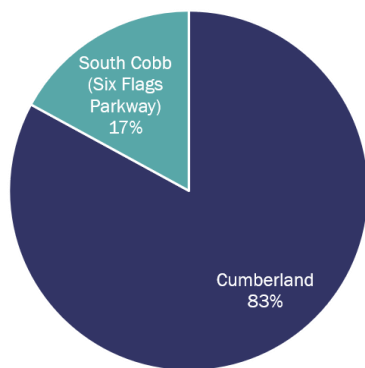
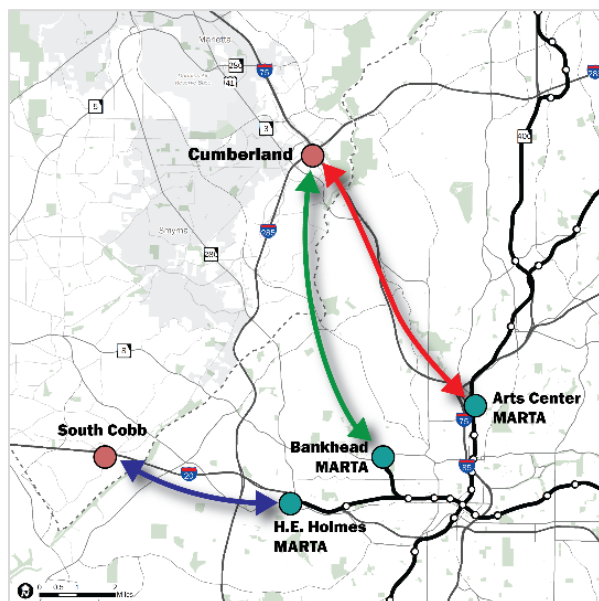


Scientific Survey

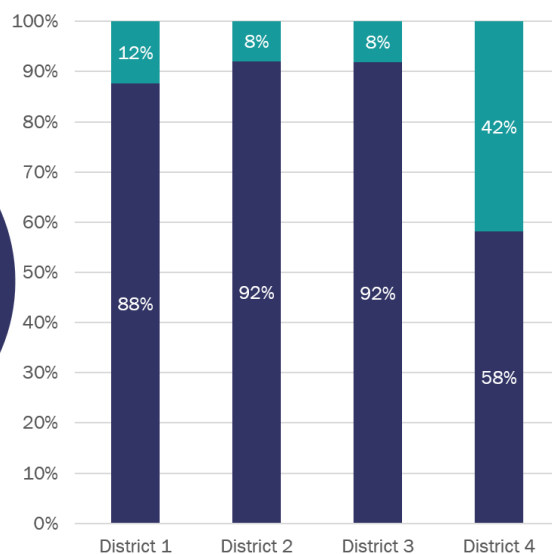
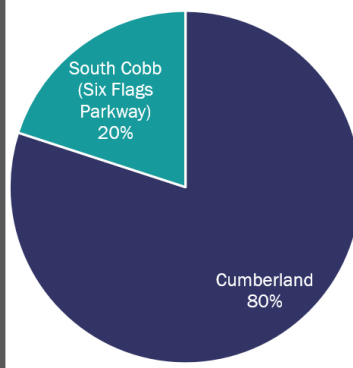
Participants who answered yes or unsure to the previous question (if heavy rail should be considered for investment) were asked to consider their preferred Cobb County destination for a heavy rail extension (the options are shown in the figure on the below right).

It is important to note that since 60-73% of the participants answered yes or unsure to the previous question, there was a smaller number of participants whose answers are shown here.

- Of those who answered yes/unsure to Heavy Rail, 83% of online survey respondents said Cumberland is the preferred location.
- Of those who answered yes/unsure to Heavy Rail, 80% of the scientific survey respondents said Cumberland is the preferred location.
- Districts 1 – 3 voted similarly in support of Cumberland as the preferred destination. However, District 4 was more split regarding their preferred destination. These results are shown in the figure below.



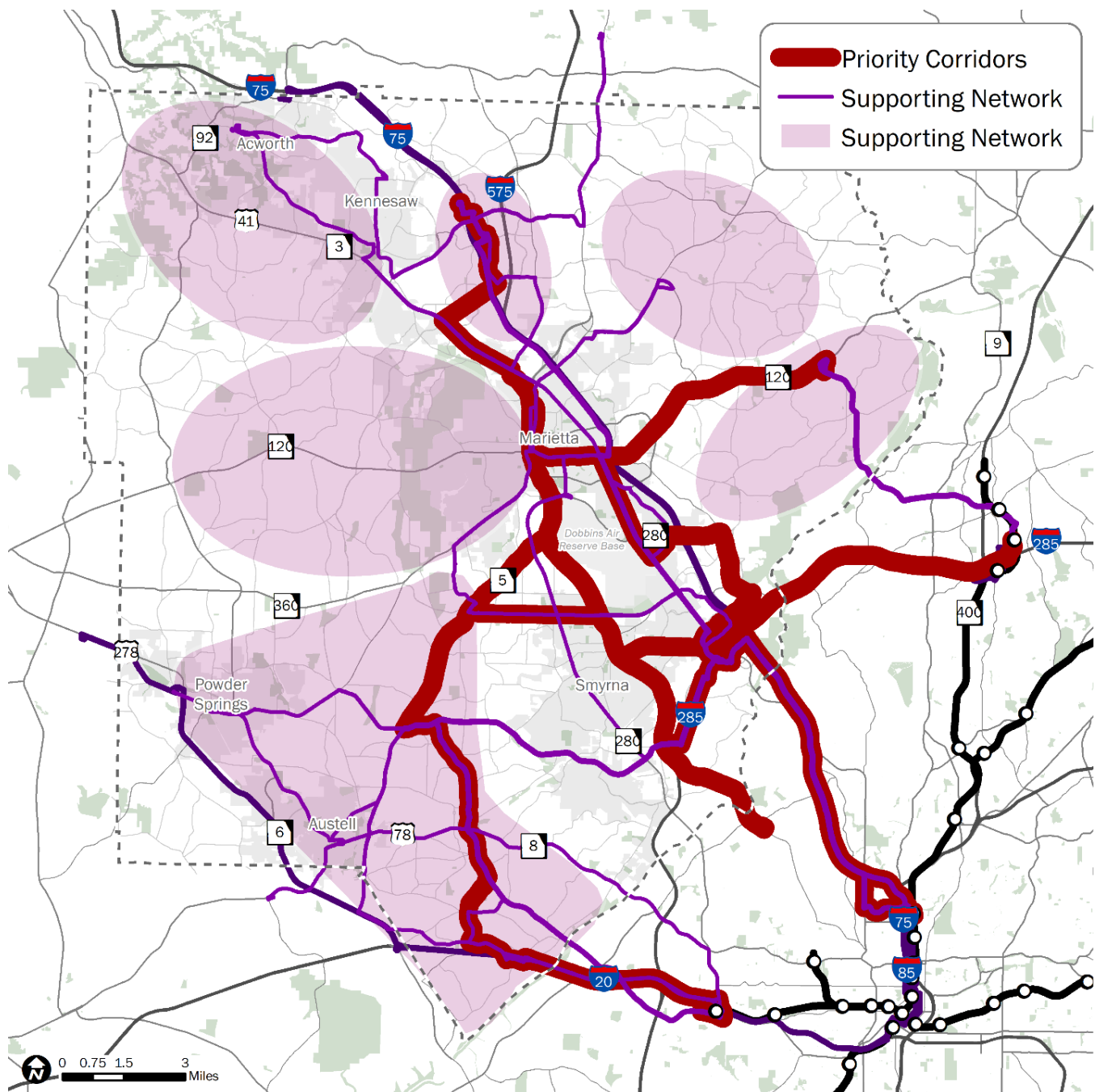
Online Survey



Scientific Survey

The following questions relate to the map below that shows the proposed long-range transit network with **two** categories of transit service:

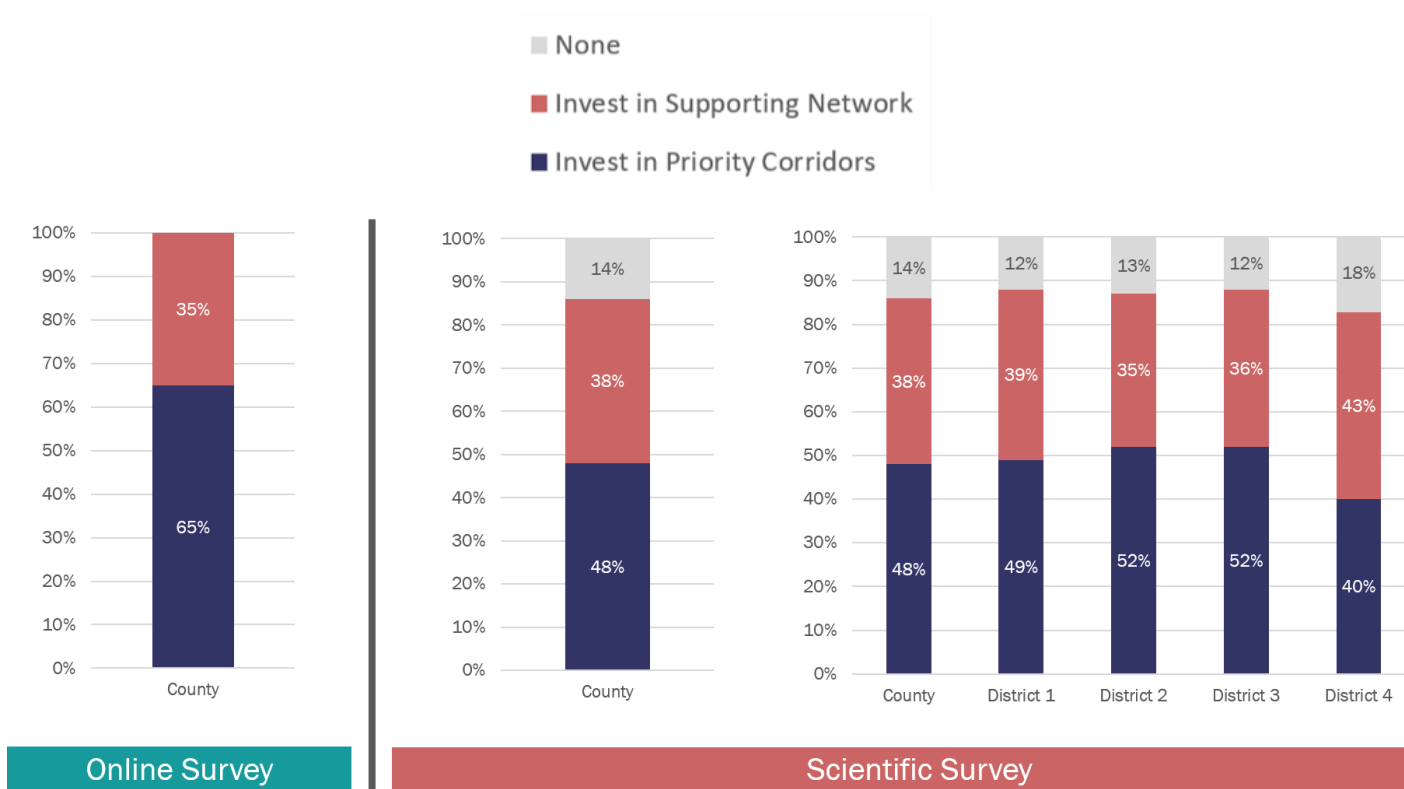
- **Priority Corridors:** fast and frequent service targeting locations with the highest demand
- **Supporting Network:** slower, less frequent service to a larger area



Participants were asked to consider the previous map when answering the following question. Investing in heavy rail will require the County to scale back on other transit investments. If participants selected “Yes” or “Unsure” to considering heavy rail for investment, they were then asked what the priority should be for the remaining investment.

It is important to note that since 60-73% of the participants answered yes/unsure to the previous question, there was a smaller number of respondents whose answers are shown here.

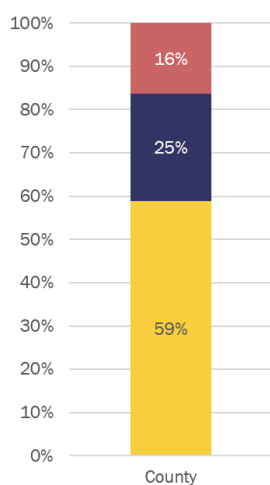
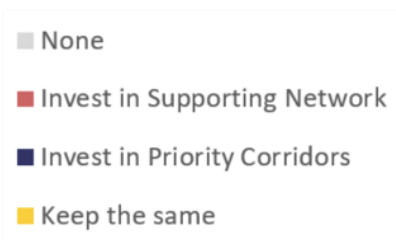
- The online survey participants had a strong favor towards investing in priority corridors over supporting networks.
- The scientific survey participants were more split among their priorities.
- Districts 1 – 3 voted similarly in support of investing in priority corridors as the top choice. However, District 4 was slightly more split regarding their preferred investments. This is shown in the figure below.



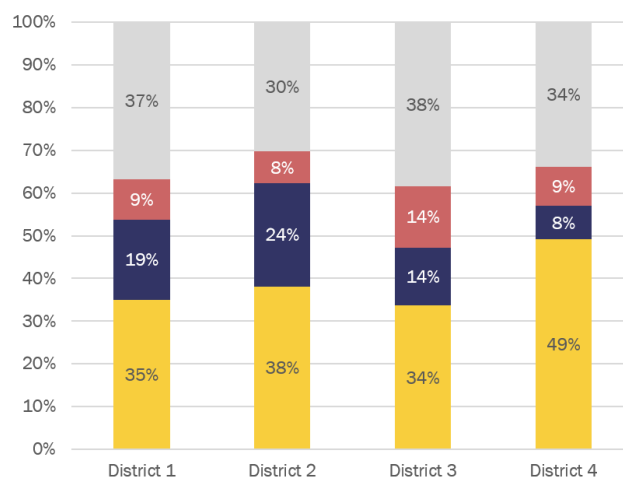
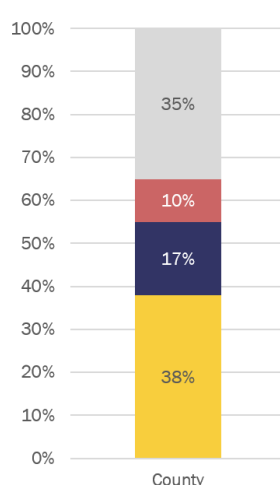
Participants were asked to consider the previous map when answering the following question. Investing in heavy rail will require the County to scale back on other transit investments. If participants selected “No” to considering heavy rail for investment, they were then asked their thoughts on the balance of investments between Priority Corridors and the Supportive Transit Network.

It is important to note that since 27-40% of the participants answered no to the previous question, there was a smaller number of residents whose answers are shown here.

- The online survey participants had a strong favor towards keeping the investment priorities the same.
- The scientific survey participants were more split among their priorities with Districts 1 – 3 voting similarly between the four options.
- District 4 had the strongest support of keeping the investment priorities the same when compared to the other Districts. This is shown in the figure below.



Online Survey



Scientific Survey

Topic #6 – Willingness to Support a New Sales Tax

Participants were asked about their willingness to support a new sales tax that would be considered for surface transportation projects and transit projects. Cobb County has the opportunity to consider implementing a new sales tax of up to two percent (2%), increasing the County's sales tax rate from 6% to 8% or to some percentage in between. Up to one percent (1%) can be considered for surface transportation projects (roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, trail) and up to one percent (1%) can be considered for transit projects. Cobb County is still weighing all the options, and no decisions have been made about new local funding opportunities.

The following table is a summary of the participants responses regarding the new sales tax.

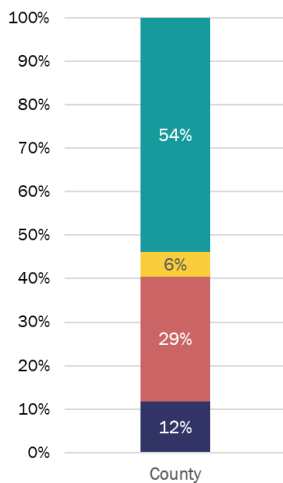
Tax Type	Survey Type	Yes	Unsure	No
Surface Transportation	Online	50%	14%	35%
	Scientific	49%	16%	35%
Transit	Online	49%	12%	39%
	Scientific	48%	15%	37%

Of those willing to support a new sales tax for surface transportation, the following breakdown shows how much of a new sales tax up to one percent (1%) they would support.

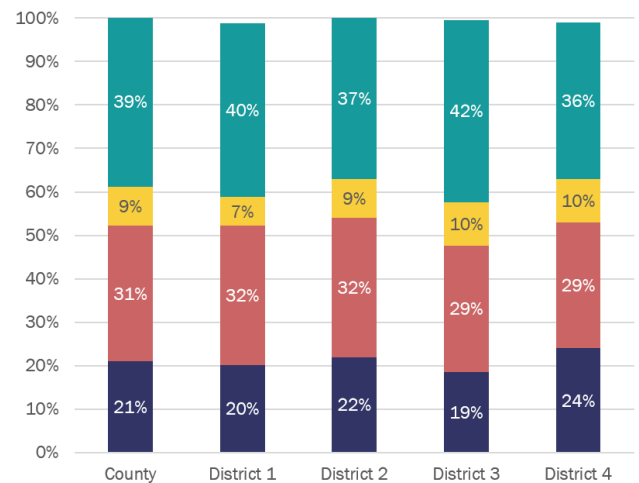
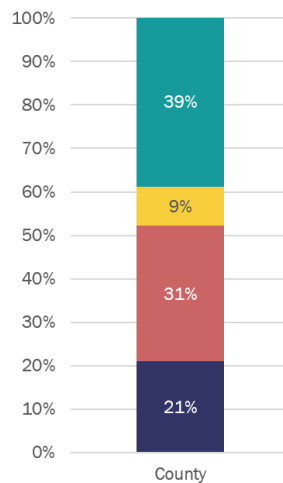
It is important to note that since approximately 64-65% of the participants answered yes or unsure to the previous question, there was a smaller number of respondents whose answers are shown for the following figure.

- 54% of respondents from the online survey said they would support a full penny sales tax, and 29% said that would support a half penny sales tax.
- 39% of the scientific survey respondents said they would support a fully penny sales tax and 31% said they would support a half penny sales tax.

- One-quarter percent
- One-half percent
- Three-quarter percent
- One percent



Online Survey

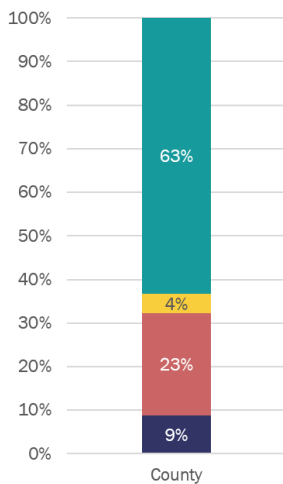
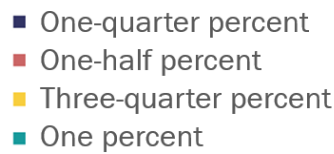


Scientific Survey

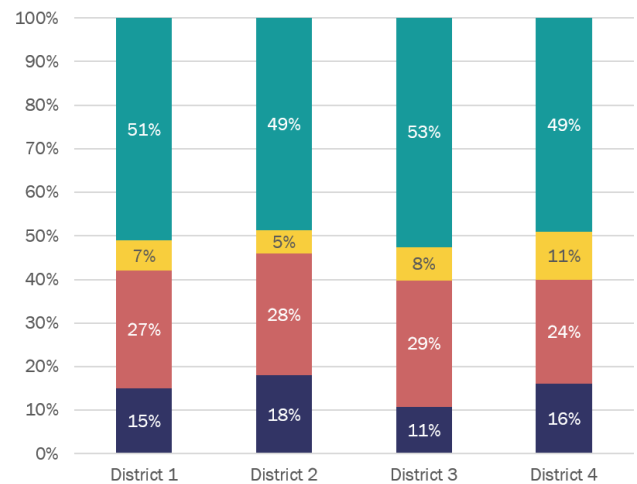
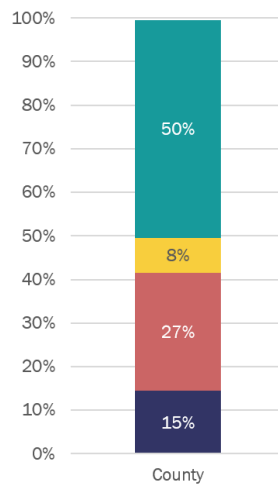
Of those willing to support a new sales tax for transit, the following breakdown shows how much of a new sales tax up to one percent (1%) they would support.

It is important to note that since approximately 61-63% of the participants answered yes or unsure in the previous question to supporting a sales tax for transit, there was a smaller number of respondents whose answers are shown for the following figure.

- 63% of respondents from the online survey said they would support a full penny sales tax, and 23% said that would support a half penny sales tax.
- 50% of the scientific survey respondents said they would support a fully penny sales tax and 27% said they would support a half penny sales tax.



Online Survey



Scientific Survey

Conclusion

Over the public engagement phase, more than 5,300 residents provided feedback via the online survey and scientific phone survey. Approximately 320 residents attended virtual public meetings and in-person town halls, and over 75 transit riders were engaged through the transfer center pop-ups. Flyers, postcards, and public meeting notices were distributed to over 150 public locations across Cobb County. Thousands of people engaged with the plan through social media, email blasts, and the project website. Residents of the County assisted the Project Team in understanding the priority trail projects, major roadway projects, safety and operational roadway projects, and transit projects. The public also provided insight into their interest in future heavy rail projects into Cobb County, as well as their willingness to support additional sales tax for surface transportation and transit investments.

Following the completion of the public involvement efforts for the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, the Project Team began looking at revisions to project recommendations for surface transportation and transit, and modeling long-range scenarios to determine mobility effectiveness, geographic coverage, and equity considerations. The Project Team used the information gathered to develop tiers of prioritization (short, mid, and long-range). The public will be notified as steps are taken by the Project Team to adopt the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.