

Cobb **FORWARD**

Comprehensive Transportation Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADOPTED FEBRUARY 8, 2022



INTRODUCTION

Residents and visitors alike rely on transportation to access education, health care, and jobs, while surrounding cities and industries rely on a functional network to keep the region moving. CobbForward, the County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), considers how Cobb County will grow in the next 30 years. Ultimately, the CTP offers a program of policies and multimodal improvements to the transportation network and helps to position Cobb County for implementation through local, state, and federal funding strategies.

This Executive Summary reflects the results of the CobbForward development process and includes a variety of transportation projects identified and prioritized through substantial technical analyses and a robust public engagement effort.

PLAN SCHEDULE

The comprehensive transportation planning process includes three overarching steps:

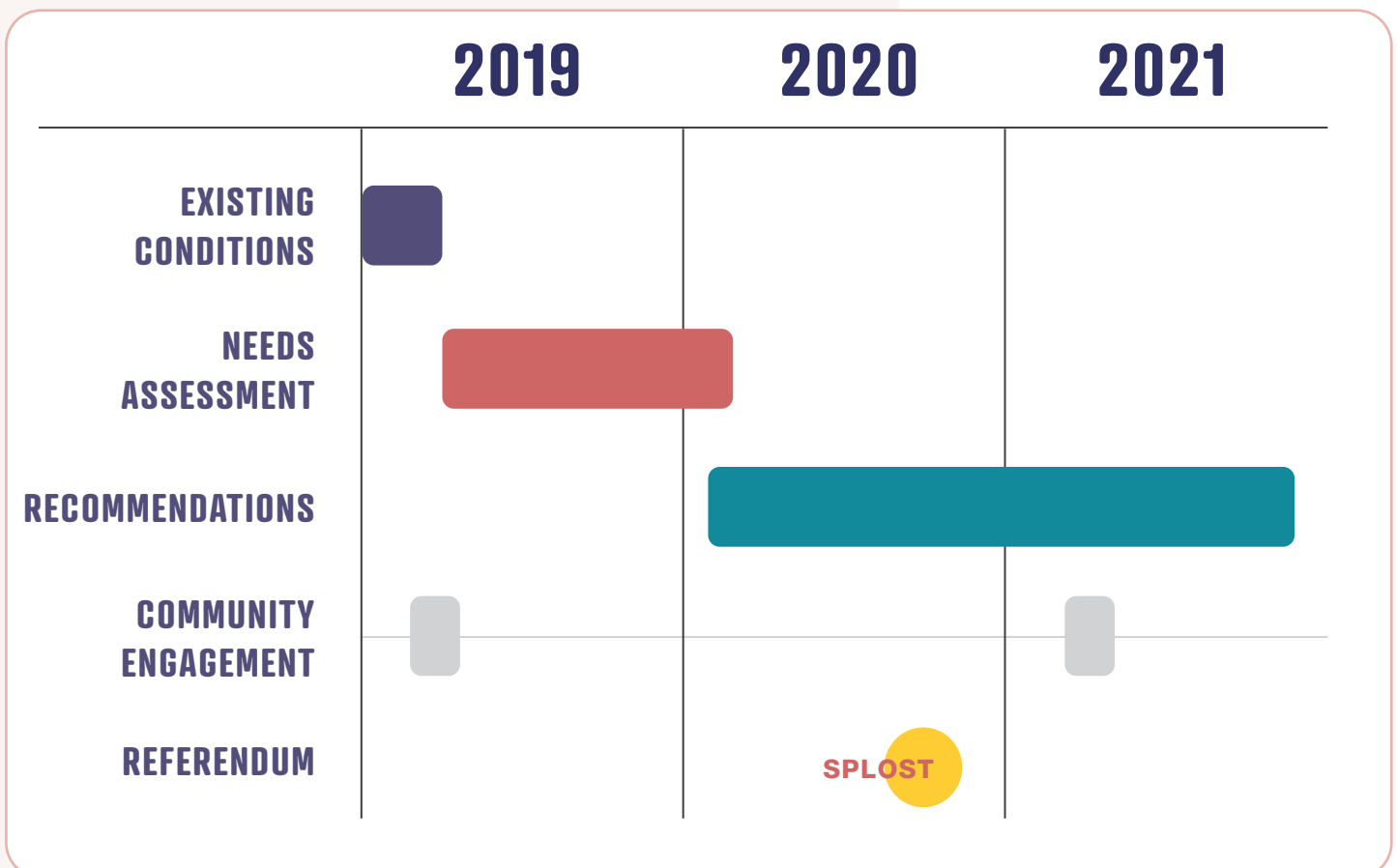
Existing Conditions: focuses on establishing a baseline of where we are today, understanding demand and patterns of travel as well as transportation infrastructure condition.

Needs Assessment: involves understanding future demand for transportation and anticipating projected mobility needs that may exist.

Recommendations: includes the combination of projects and policies that can collectively look to address the needs identified in the second phase of the process.

Throughout the life of the plan, stakeholder and community engagement plays an important role in guiding the process—from the initial visioning and development of goals to the determination of needs and the vetting of draft recommendations.

In November 2020, Cobb County held a referendum to renew its countywide Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). Transportation projects ultimately recommended for inclusion were considered as a part of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) process.



PLAN GOALS

The goals established early on provide direction for the entire planning process.

The goals of previous Cobb County plans as well as those of regional, state, and federal agencies formed the basis of discussion with stakeholders in an initial visioning meeting. Members of the public provided feedback on the goals during the first round of community engagement in the spring of 2019.



IMPROVE HEALTH & SAFETY

Provide a transportation system that is safe and supports healthy living for all users.



ENHANCE MOBILITY

Improve travel times for all users with multimodal solutions.



USE INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Use innovative transportation technologies and access to information to enhance the efficiency of the transportation network.



BE COST EFFECTIVE

Prioritize investments that maintain reliable transportation infrastructure and maximize return on investment.



SUPPORT EQUITABLE ACCESS

Provide mobility choices that are accessible and equitable for all communities and users.



INTEGRATE LAND USE/DESIGN

Support land use and urban design that enhances accessibility and connectivity between land uses for all users.

STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A successful planning process requires a balance of technical analysis with robust stakeholder and community engagement.

Technical and stakeholder committees provided input at multiple steps in the process, offering feedback that guided interim decisions and serving as a sounding board before larger public outreach efforts. The plan also received multiple rounds of feedback from the County's Transit Advisory Board.

The plan included two rounds of public engagement—the first to understand the mobility needs of the community across a variety of modes and the second to request feedback on possible recommendations and transportation scenarios.



ROUND 01

9 public meetings with
320+ participants

6 community events with
700+ participants

2,772 surveys completed

82 e-mails received covering
20 transportation themes

ROUND 02

3 virtual public meetings with
160+ participants

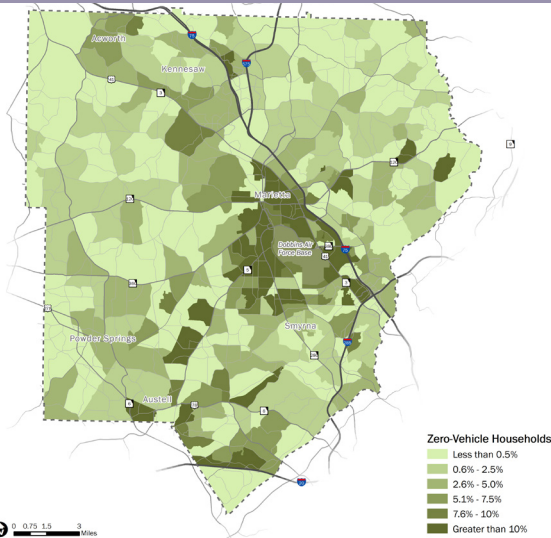
5 in-person town hall meetings with
160+ participants

1,000 online survey participants

4,300 scientific survey participants

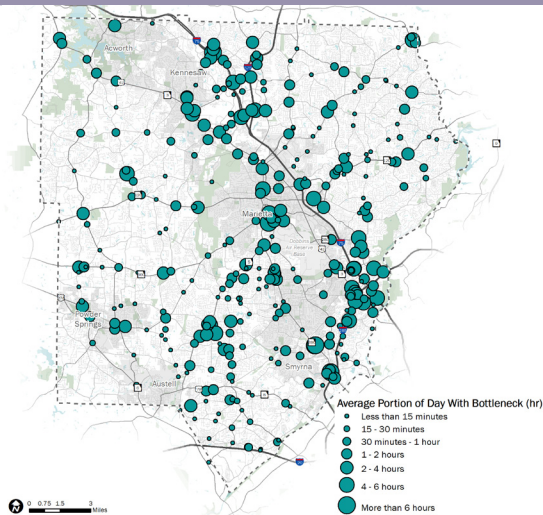
Throughout the planning process, the CobbForward team met with the Board of Commissioners to update them on the process and to gather input and policy direction for the plan.

TODAY'S SYSTEM



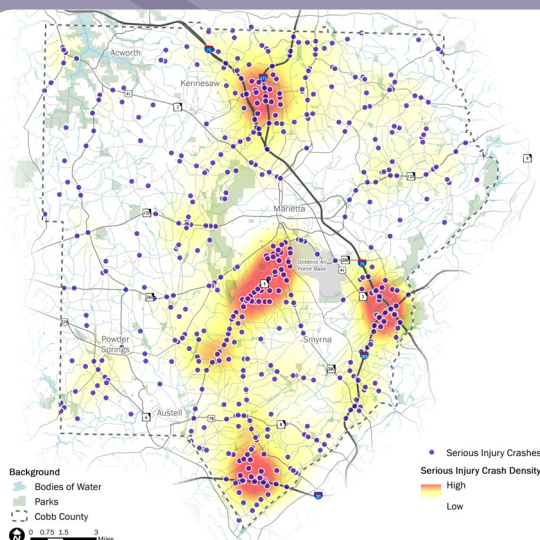
POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS:

It is important to understand the population of people that live in the County. This includes not only population density but also demographics, including race and ethnicity, income, and concentrations of zero-vehicle households. This information shapes transportation decisions and guides community engagement to specific population groups.



CONGESTION:

Understanding vehicular travel is a long-standing element of a transportation plan. Traditionally, we look at historic growth in traffic on roadways and use models to project how future congestion. By leveraging new passive data reported by cell phones and vehicle GPS systems, we can now understand locations of bottlenecks that may occur because of elevated demand, operational challenges, or incidents and crashes.



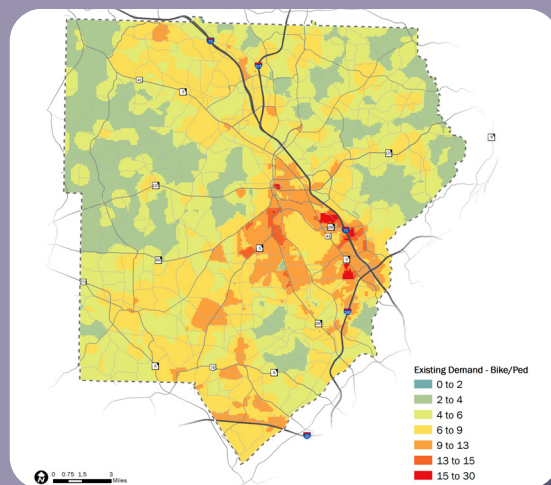
SAFETY:

In addition to the pain and suffering that affects those directly involved, crashes and other incidents impact our ability to travel reliably from place to place. A component of this analysis includes a review of crash locations, types, and severity to look for hot spots. Crashes across modes includes a review of heavy vehicles, rail crossings, bicycles, and pedestrians.

TOMORROW'S NEEDS

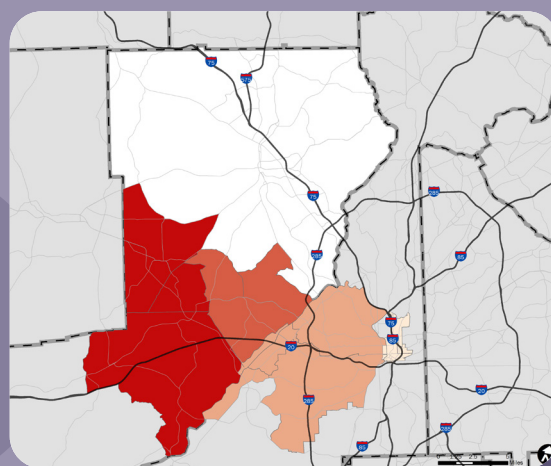
DEMAND:

When prioritizing investments in alternative modes (bicycle, pedestrian, and transit), it is important to understand where demand exists. Factors that drive demand include demographic elements such as income, age, race, household vehicle access, and density as well as proximity to employment and community resources like schools, parks, transit, and civic spaces.



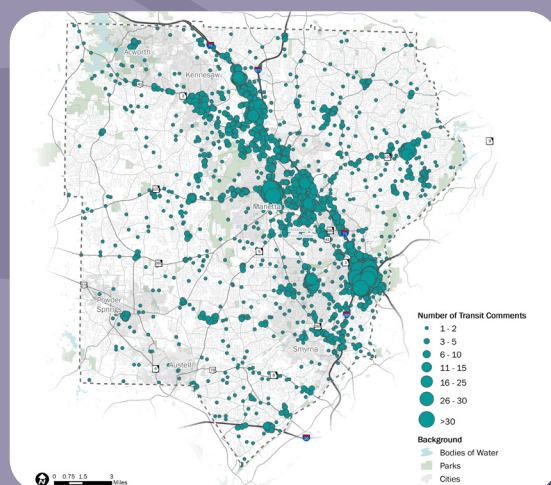
TRAVEL PATTERNS:

People travel to get from one place to another. Developing a successful transit system relies in part on understanding which travel patterns are the greatest so that the appropriate modes and levels of service can be applied. A robust travel pattern analysis included an exploration of patterns within Cobb as well as connecting to major regional centers outside of Cobb.



PUBLIC INPUT:

Determining mobility needs goes beyond technical data analysis to hearing directly from the community. As a part of the first round of public engagement, residents, employees, and other interested parties had the opportunity to indicate what types of transportation needs they had and where those needs existed. The information contributed to the creation and the evaluation of projects.



The first document created encompassed two of the three major phases in the transportation plan—the existing conditions and the needs assessment. An extensive amount of data analysis and spatial mapping helped to uncover some of the greatest transportation needs in Cobb County across multiple modes of travel: vehicular/roadway, freight, bicycle and pedestrian, and transit.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

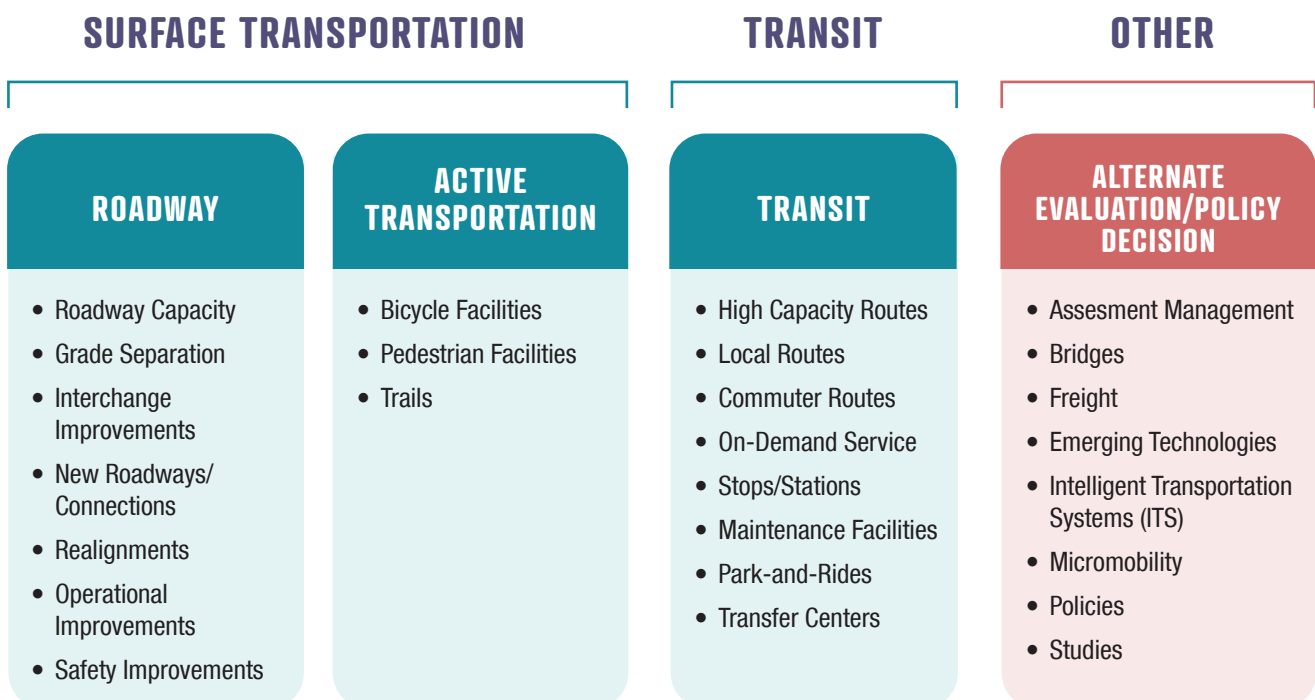
Following the completion of the needs assessment, the CobbForward team assembled a Universe of Projects that could address the identified needs. The base of projects came from Cobb's many previous planning efforts including the 2015 CTP, the Greenways and Trails Master Plan, and the CobbLinc Short-Range Transit Plan, among others. Additional projects were added including ongoing projects still in need of funding, those recommended by Cobb DOT, city, and CID staff, and projects generated directly from the CTP.

Projects fell into three overarching categories: **Surface Transportation, Transit, and Other.**

Surface Transportation: includes projects considered to be roadway (new capacity/ widening, new roadways, and intersection operational and safety projects) as well as active transportation (bicycle, pedestrian, and trail).

Transit: includes all relevant elements of a transit system including high capacity, local, and commuter routes, on-demand service including microtransit and paratransit services, various stations and facilities, and any other programs needed.

Other: includes categories of projects that require a funding set-aside but where no specific projects were identified in the CTP.



PROJECT EVALUATION

The need always exceeds the amount of funding required to build and maintain all of the projects. Therefore, it is critical to develop a prioritization process that scores individual projects and identifies the projects most able to address the needs and meet the goals of the community.

Following project evaluation, available local, state, and federal funding formed the structure of the tiers of financially constrained projects highlighted on future pages.

Universe of Projects

Previous Plans

- 2015 CTP
- Greenways and Trails Plans
- CobbLinc Short-Range Transit Plan
- City/CID Plans
- Other agency plans including GDOT and ARC

Ongoing Projects Still in Need of Funding:

- SPLOST 2022
- Cobb DOT staff input
- City and CID projects
- New CTP generated projects from technical analysis and community input

EXISTING CONDITIONS



TRANSPORTATION NEEDS



UNIVERSE OF PROJECTS



PROJECT GOALS



FUNDING



FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED PROJECTS



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding funding options is a critical component of the CTP process. As part of the CobbForward process, the team explored nearly one hundred different federal, state, local, and project-specific funding sources that could potentially support the maintenance and growth of Cobb County's transportation infrastructure.

Local revenue sources are particularly important as they can fund projects completely or be used as a match to obtain state or federal funding for higher cost projects. Ultimately, four local funding options were identified to best support transportation investments: the current countywide SPLOST, the general fund, and two potential new SPLOSTS.

The current countywide SPLOST program funds various services such as libraries and parks, public safety, and transportation (e.g., resurfacing roads, safety and operational improvements, sidewalks, etc.). The CobbLinc transit system is currently funded out of the General Fund.

Two new SPLOST opportunities are available to Cobb County and are being collectively called the Mobility SPLOSTS: one for surface transportation, including roadway and active transportation (e.g., bicycle, pedestrian, and trail) projects and one for transit projects. The County, currently at 6% sales tax, has the ability to consider up to one full percent for each of the surface transportation and transit SPLOSTS, up to 8% total. The County also can decide to pursue a partial percent for each.

EXISTING LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR TRANSPORTATION



COUNTYWIDE SPLOST

GENERAL FUND

Effective Sales Tax Rates (January 1, 2021)

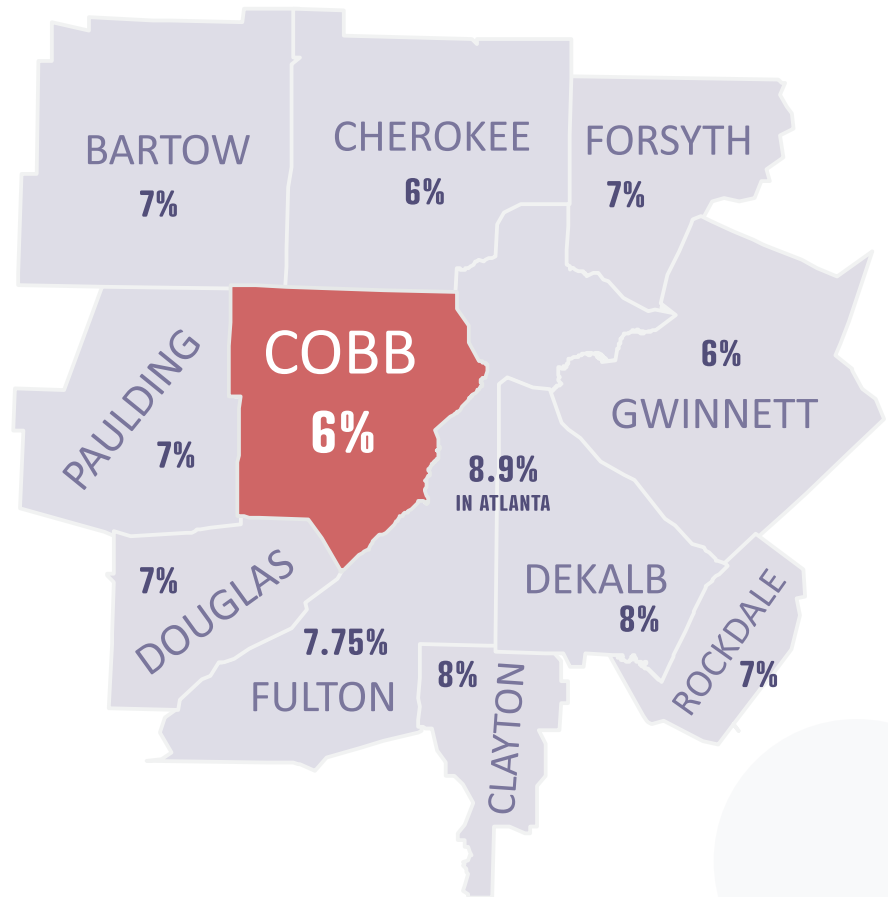
Mobility SPLOST Quick Facts

House Bill 170:

- Amount: up to 1%
- Duration: up to 5 years
- Best used for: surface transportation including roadway and active transportation (e.g., bicycle, pedestrian, and trail) projects

House Bill 930:

- Amount: up to 1%
- Duration: up to 30 years
- Best used for: transit projects (to fund both capital and operations)



Estimated revenue from 1% sales tax for 30 years

\$4.23 billion (2020\$)

\$7.35 billion (Year of Expenditure \$)

POTENTIAL LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES

MOBILITY SPLOSTs

Surface Transportation
(HB 170)

Transit
(HB 930)



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW

Surface transportation recommendations include a combination of funding set-asides and individual projects. The funding set-asides include a portion of revenue allocated directly to the cities, funding for sidewalks that will be identified through a separate prioritization process, new technology and traffic management allocations, and other projects that enhance streetscapes and general roadway beautification. Nearly half of the funding in the 30-year plan is dedicated to these set-asides. The remaining funding is allocated to specific projects that are detailed on the following pages.

Not included in the surface transportation set-asides are monies for maintenance of roads, bridges, and signal systems. This funding is assumed to be a part of the countywide SPLOST distribution.

LONG-RANGE PLAN (30-YEAR)

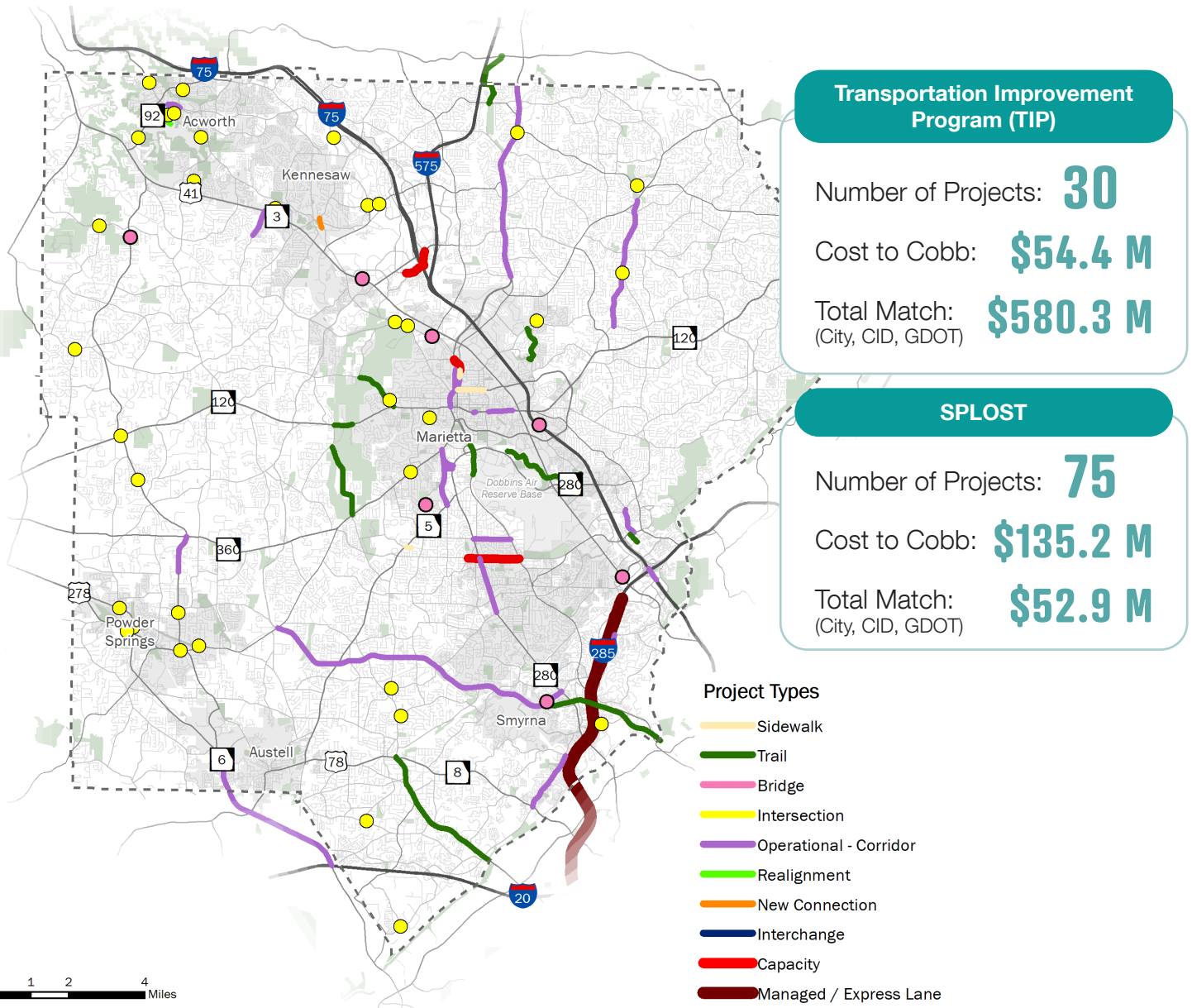
SET-ASIDES	COST ¹	PERCENT
City Set-Aside	\$939.9	26.8%
Sidewalks	\$240.4	6.9%
Traffic Management, Technology, Planning (excludes Traffic Signal System Preservation)	\$165.0	4.7%
Other (e.g., City-joint, beautification, streetscape, etc.)	\$240.0	6.8%
SET-ASIDE TOTAL	\$1,585.3	45.2%
PROJECTS		
Trail	\$310.2	8.9%
Roadway Capacity	\$676.0	19.3%
Grade Separation	\$180.7	5.2%
New Roadway/Connections	\$122.9	3.5%
Operational Improvements (includes realignments and intersections)	\$259.5	7.4%
Remaining Funds for Allocation	\$369.5	10.5%
PROJECT TOTAL	\$1,918.8	54.8%
TOTAL	\$3,504.1	

¹ Costs are reflected in 2020\$ and in millions.

PROGRAMMED PROJECTS

Programmed projects have funding already identified, both locally or through state or federal level matches. Projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are the short range of the Regional Transportation Plan developed by the Atlanta Regional Commission and often have state or federal funds allocated to them. Numerous SPLOST projects, from 2022 and before, have local funding already identified.

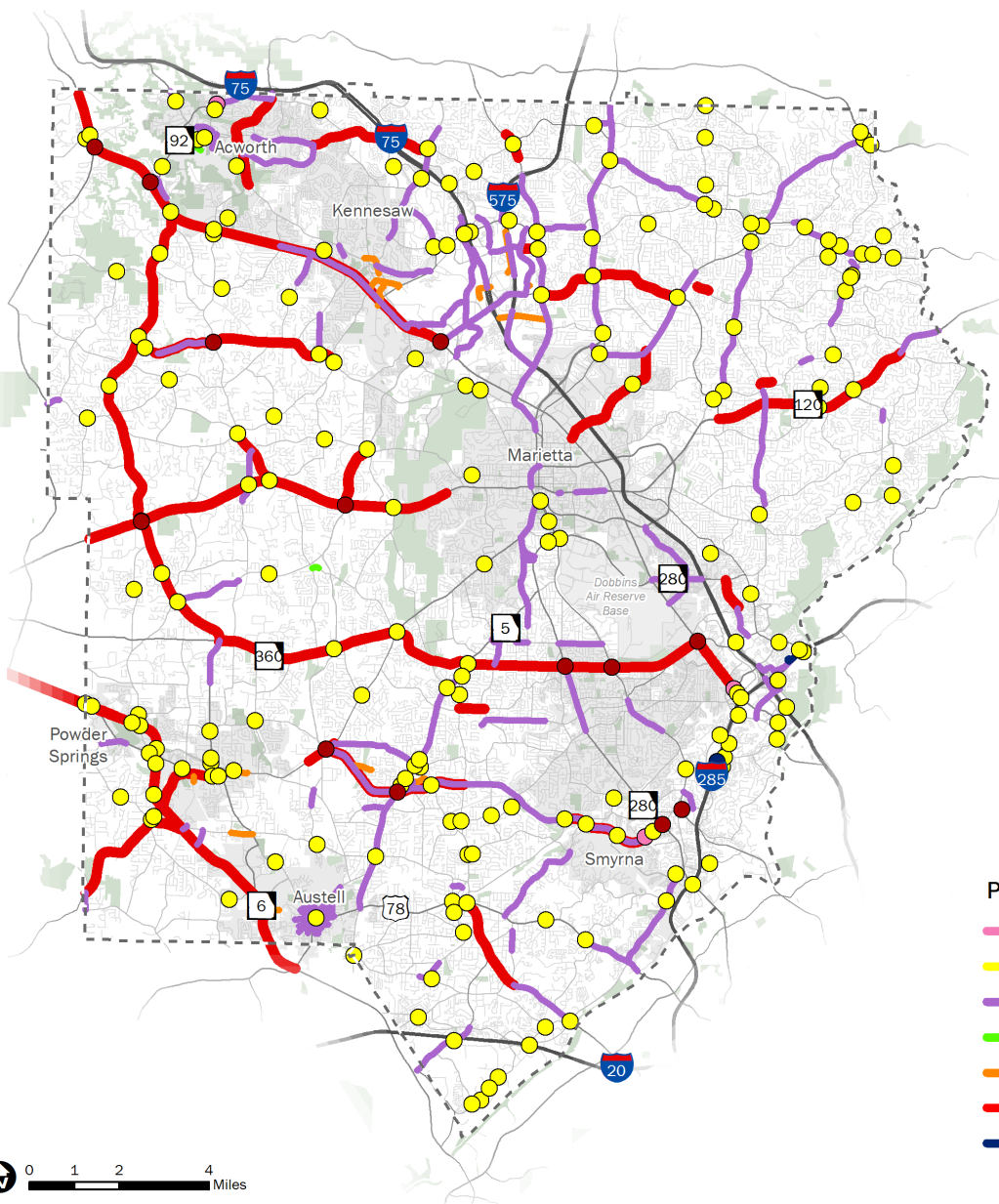
Programmed projects may already be in design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction. These projects are in addition to the prioritized projects shown on the following pages.



LONG-RANGE PLAN (30-YEAR): ROADWAY

Roadway projects identified in the 30-year program of projects include everything from capacity improving projects to new connection projects to intersection safety and operational projects.

A number of themes drove the development of the 30-year list of projects, including enhancing east-west mobility along key corridors, improving operations along corridors where intersection bottlenecks take place, and investing in strategic new location projects. Advancing any of these projects requires additional study and concept development.



135

miles of
capacity
projects

146

intersection
operational
projects

67

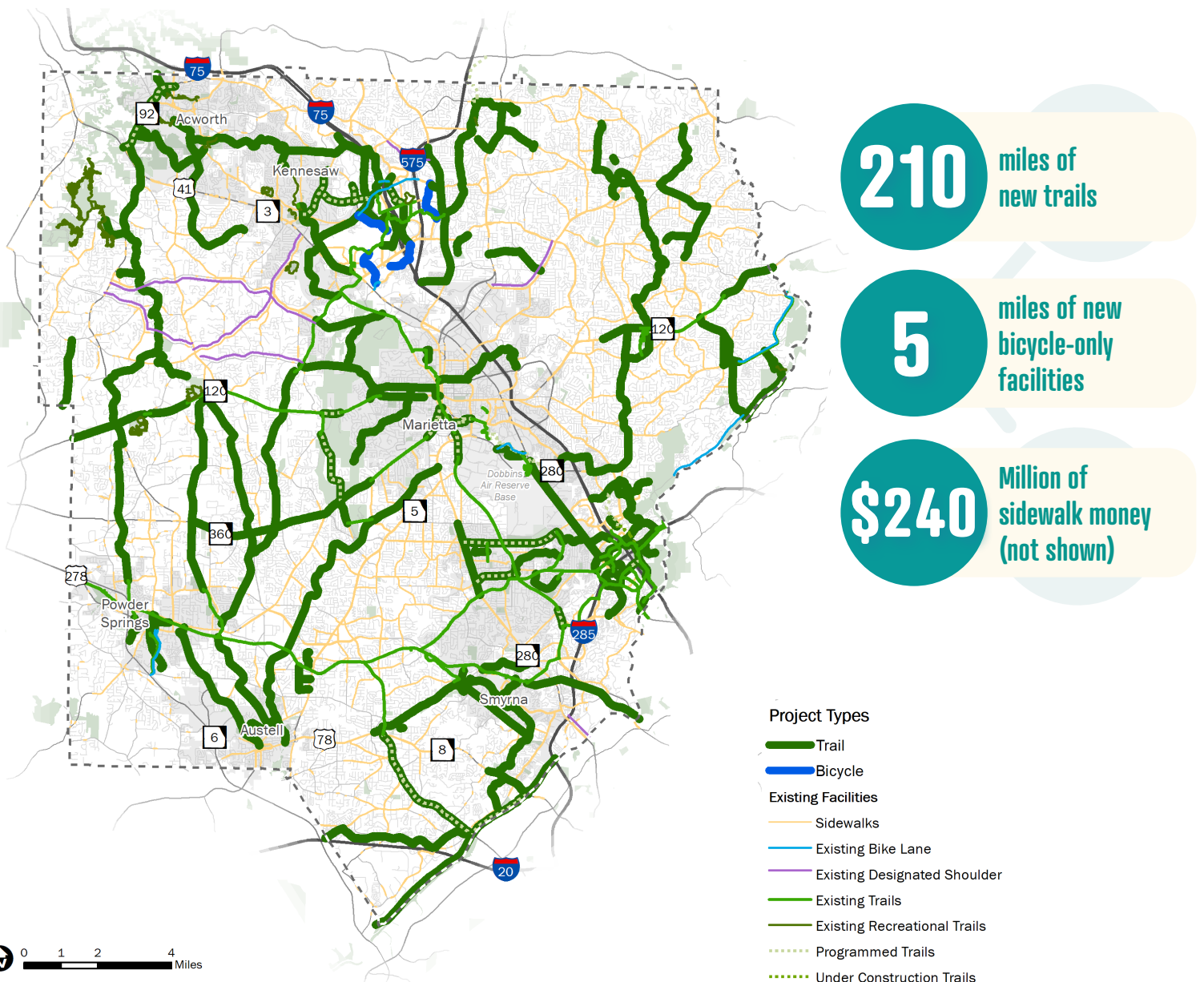
corridor segments
for operational
improvements

Project Types

- Bridge
- Intersection
- Operational - Corridor
- Realignment
- New Connection
- Capacity
- Interchange

LONG-RANGE PLAN (30-YEAR): ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The Greenways and Trails Master Plan identified numerous trail projects, many of which are in the 30-year list of active transportation projects. Beyond these projects, the list also includes multiple bicycle projects in the Town Center area and a set-aside amount of funding for sidewalk repairs and installations. A separate sidewalk prioritization process was developed for County prioritization.



MID-RANGE PLAN (10-YEAR)

As dollar amounts get smaller, particularly in the early years, more of a focus is placed on quality-of-life improvements associated with new trails and smaller intersection operational and safety improvements. In the 10-year plan, a larger percentage of project funding focuses on active transportation than in the full 30-year plan—and the percentage increases even more in the 5-year list of projects.

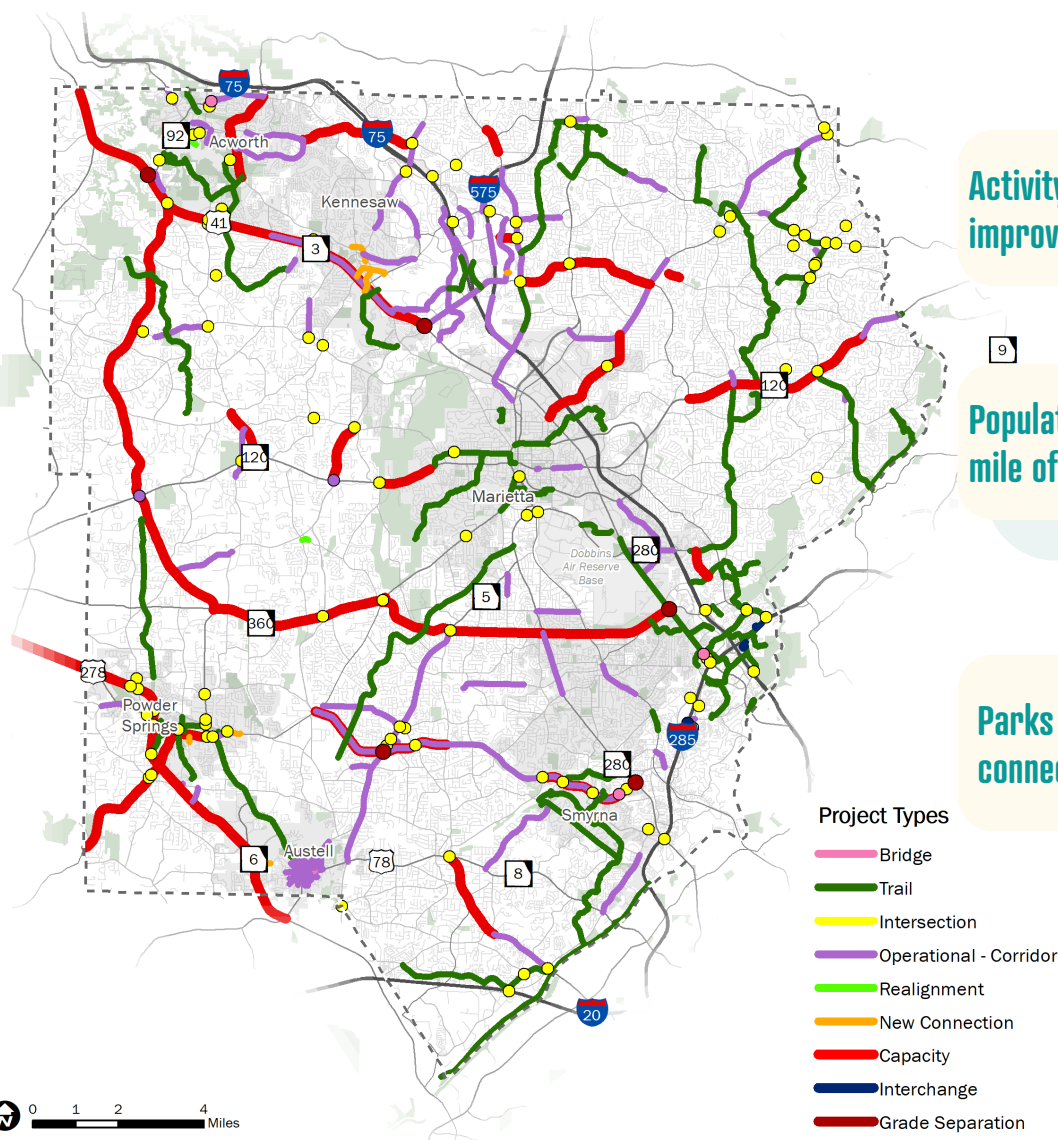
COST TO COBB:

Roadway (80%): \$649.8M

Trail (20%): \$162.4 M

Sidewalk: \$80.1 M

In the 10-year plan, a focus of the larger roadway projects still includes facilitating east-west mobility with some targeted grade separations and a new connection project at McCollum Parkway.



Activity centers with improved access:

19
CENTERS

Population with 1/2 mile of a trail:

35.8%
(247,000)

Parks and schools connected by a trail:

31
PARKS

57
SCHOOLS

(Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Est.)

SHORT-RANGE PLAN (5-YEAR)

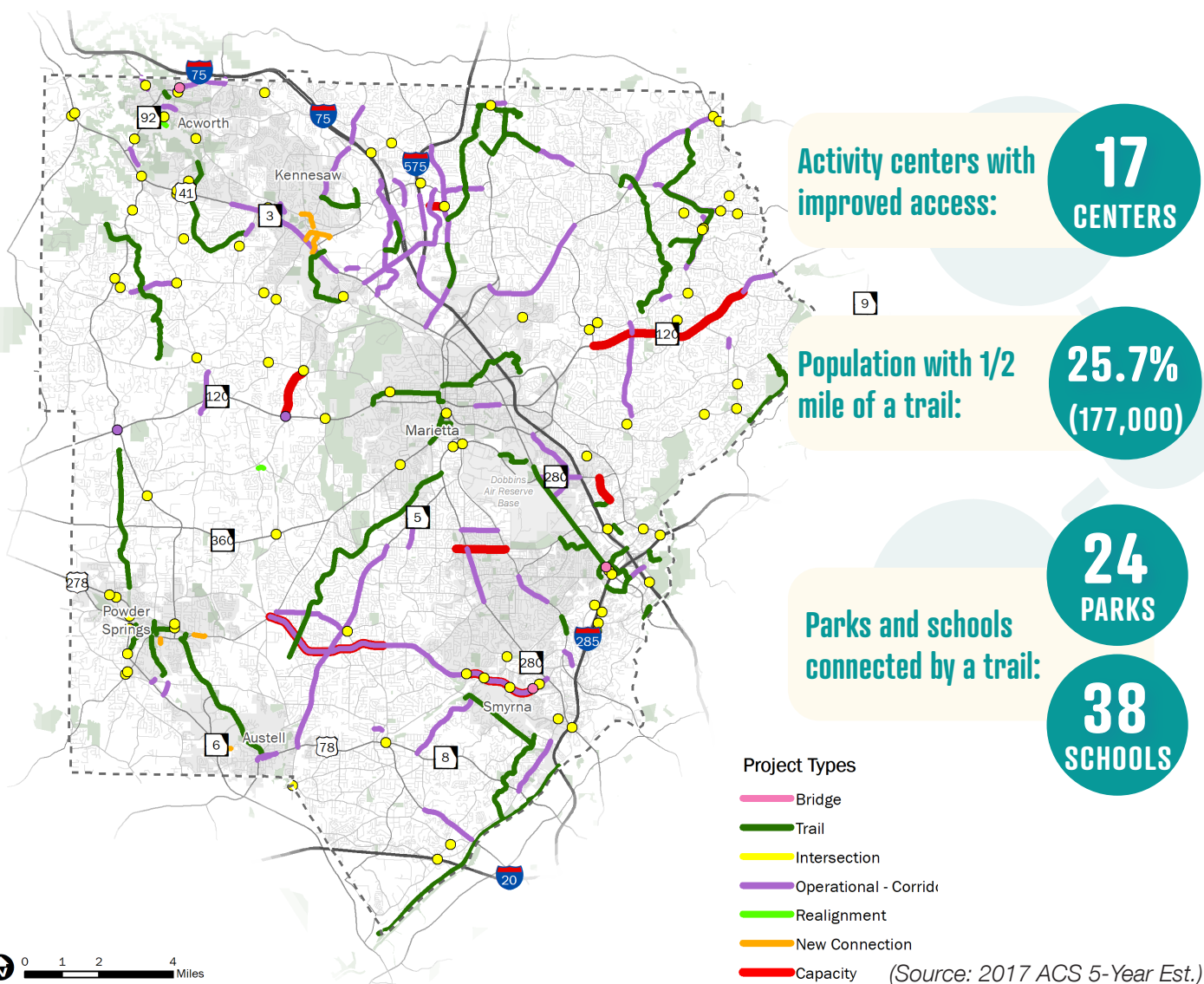
The 5-year plan has very limited capacity and new connection projects due to the overall cost of those types of improvements and the portion of local funding required to complete them. The plan includes key capacity investments needed throughout the County and remaining funds focus on smaller scale improvements that enhance operations, safety, and active transportation. The 5-year plan specifically includes all of the priority trails identified in the Greenways and Trails Master Plan.

COST TO COBB:

Roadway (70%): \$275.8 M

Trail (30%): \$118.2 M

Sidewalk: \$40.1 M

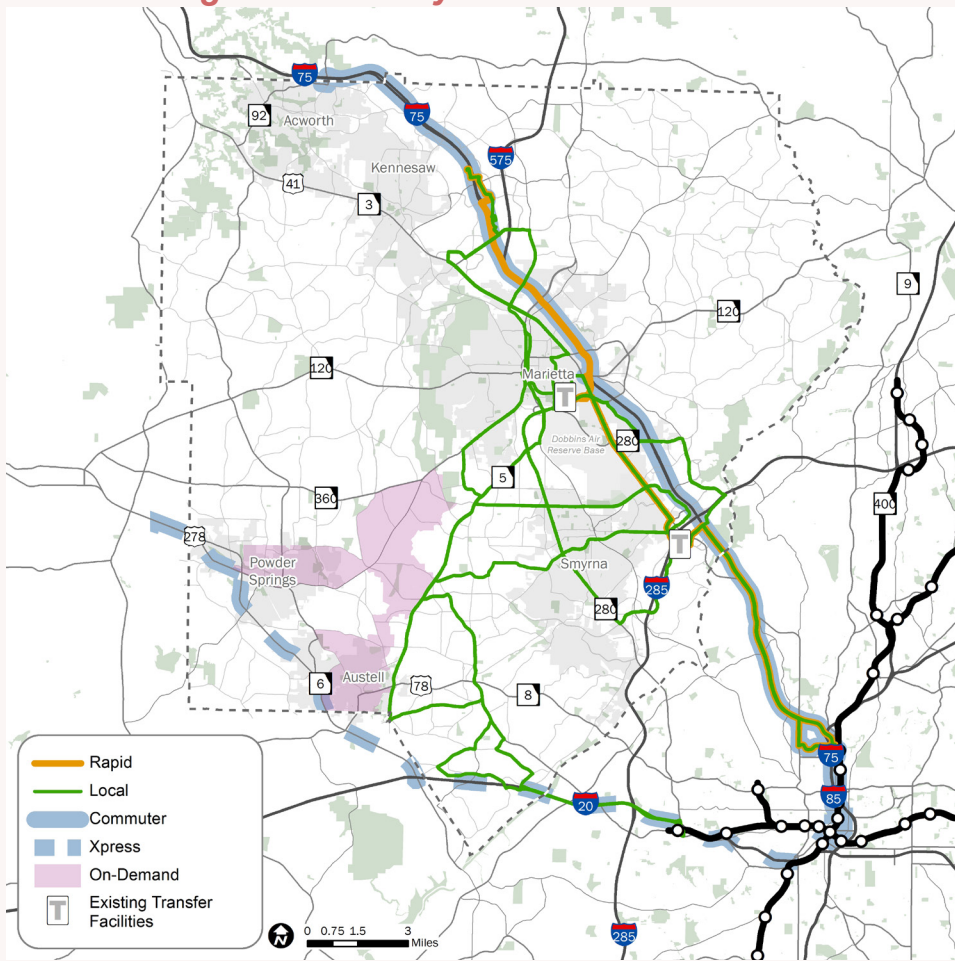


TRANSIT OVERVIEW

The 30-year public transportation program for Cobb County includes a broad set of services ranging from high-capacity transit services, such as Bus Rapid Transit, to call-ahead, on-demand services. The service plan is inclusive of existing public transportation service modes and also new technologies and innovative service delivery approaches that meet the variety of travel needs that exist countywide.

The transit plan recommendations are divided into three phases representing the horizon year of the plan: 30-year (long-range), 10-year (mid-range), and 5-year (short-range). Aspirational recommendations also include projects that could be considered beyond the 30-year financially constrained plan. Major elements within each phase include the following:

Existing CobbLinc System:



Long-range (11 to 30 years)—invests in market-driven, high-quality service to meet the needs of the County's projected growth. The long-range phase is driven by the CobbForward process and other planning efforts.

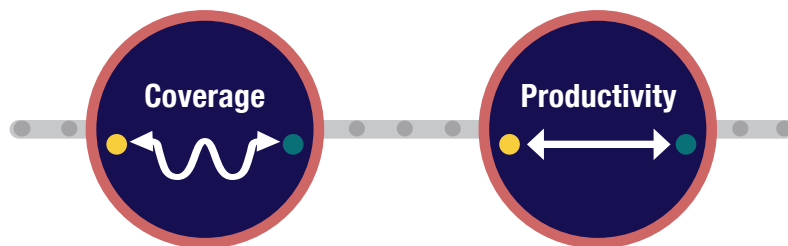
Mid-range (6 to 10 years)—expand service and construct infrastructure for higher productivity service. The mid-range phases the short and long-range plans together.

Short-range (0 to 5 years)—improve service frequency, increase ridership, and enhance rider experience. The short-range is driven by CobbLinc Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) and Transit Development Plan (TDP) (completed in 2019).

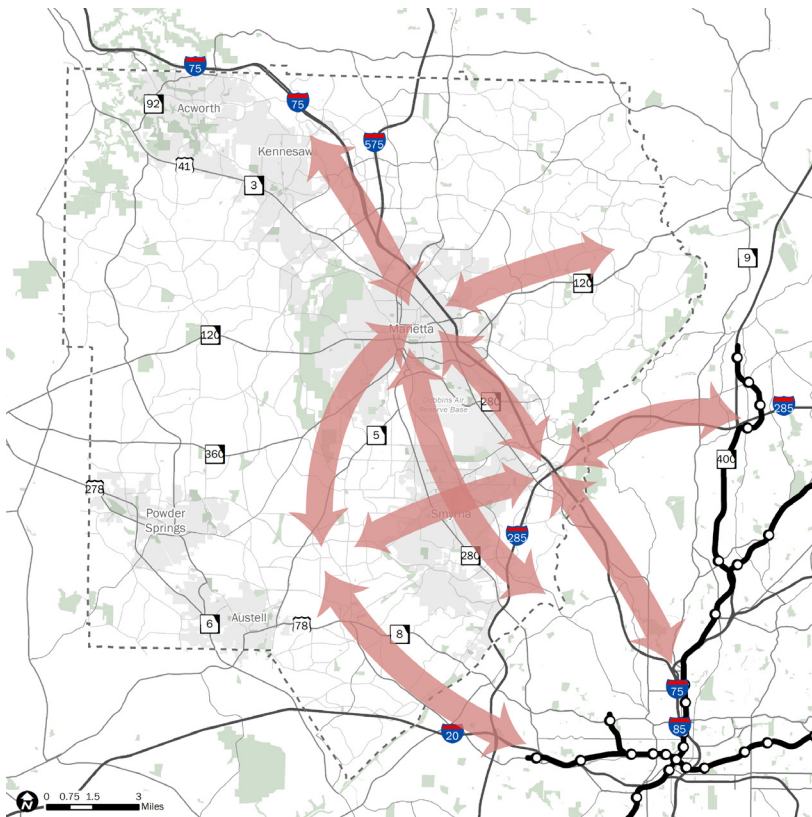
TRANSIT PLANNING DRIVERS

The plan elements reflect opposite ends of a transit service continuum. That continuum blends what are often considered opposing transit policy directives, productivity versus coverage. Constrained budgets contribute to this tension, and agencies work to strike a balance that meets both budget limitations and the public transportation needs within the community.

- **Coverage**—more area has access to transit, but quality of service is lower
- **Productivity**—high quality of service limited to a smaller area



The CobbForward team evaluated high demand travel patterns to determine where some of the most productive (and highest capacity service) should be located within the County and connecting to the rest of the region. The arrows represent the highest demand corridors and movements.



QUALITY OF SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS



How quickly will I get to my destination on transit?



Does transit come frequently enough that it is easy to use?



Do I know that transit will show up when I need it to?

TRANSIT MODES CONSIDERED

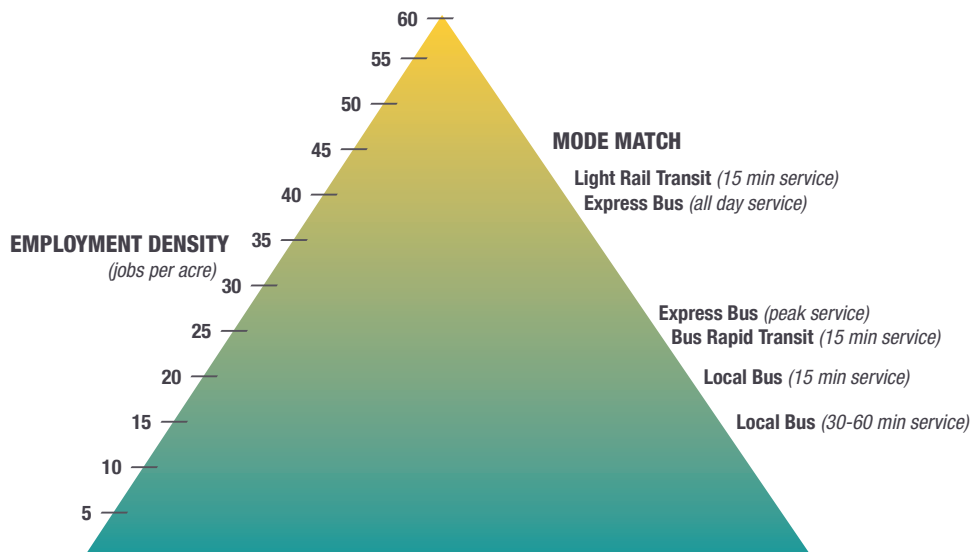
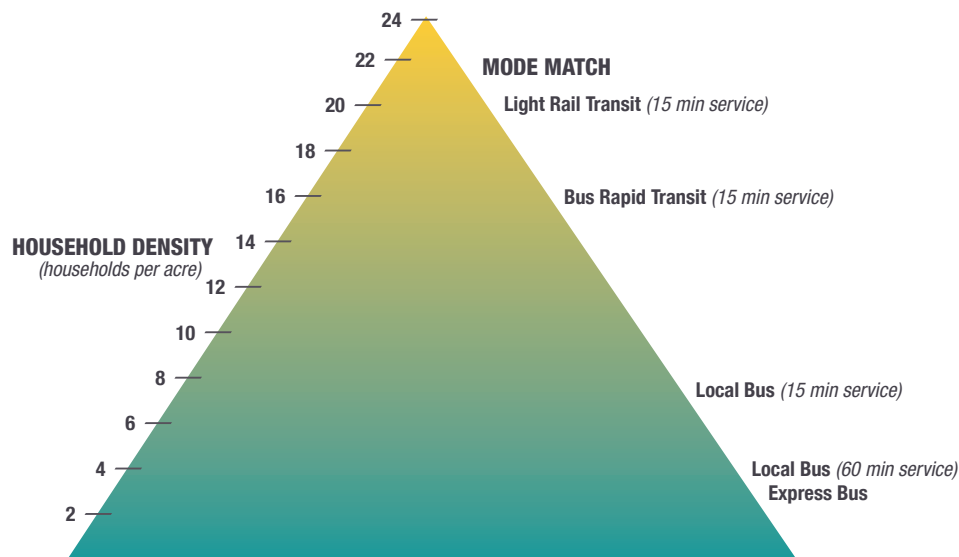
Because Cobb County has a variety of transit needs and levels of demand, the team considered multiple modes to serve the community. Some modes provide high levels of productivity, serving areas of high demand well, while other modes provide better coverage by reaching more places in the County. The plan includes a combination of modes, as depicted in bold below.

SERVICE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
 Heavy Rail Transit (HRT)	Highest speed and operates on fully grade separated rail lines due to third rail power system; high quality stations every ½-3 miles
 Light Rail Transit (LRT)	Grade-separated or street level due to overhead power system, often in dedicated right-of-way; high quality stations every ½-1 mile
 Commuter Rail Transit	Carries moderate to long distance commuters. Often shares corridor with freight and travels only in peak commute direction; stations spaced 3-10 miles
 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)	Rubber-tire vehicles in primarily dedicated lanes; operates similarly to light rail transit; high quality stations every ½-1 mile
 Arterial Rapid Transit (ART)	Rubber-tire vehicles in some dedicated lanes or queue jumper lanes with transit signal priority; stations ¼-1/3 mile
 Local Bus	Mixed flow traffic with shared right-of-way; stops every ¼ mile
 Rapid Bus	Mixed flow traffic; shared right-of-way; stops less frequently than local bus at key destinations
 Commuter Bus	Rubber-tire coach vehicles; serves long-distance, commute flow; limited stops
 On-Demand Service	Demand responsive bus/shuttle; operates in a defined geographic area without fixed routes
 Transportation Network Companies/ Ridesharing	Partnership programs with individual vehicles used for service; provides subsidies for rides to get to the closest transit stop

TRANSIT DEMAND MATCHING

The graphics below represent industry-standard densities by transit mode for population and employment, respectively. While not the only tool used for selecting appropriate transit modes and technologies, the guidance is useful for determining the subset of options that are most appropriate given a corridor's level of density and overall travel demand. Additional factors for mode selection include cost, feasibility, and public input.

When compared to the proposed employment and population densities in Cobb County, it is apparent that parts of the County are ready for a higher level of transit service including mode type and frequency of service.





LONG-RANGE PLAN (30-YEAR)

The 30-year financially constrained plan considers the highest priority recommendations for improved mobility and quality of service considering local, state, and federal funding opportunities projected over the same time period. BRT corridors serve the travel patterns and corridors of greatest demand, while microtransit coverage is recommended for areas of lower demand still requiring public transportation service. Each of the recommendations requires further study and evaluation to determine appropriate alignments, stations/stops, and corridor investments.

Long-Range Plan Elements:

- **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**—seven routes with primarily dedicated transit lanes, high quality stations, off-board fare collection, and other corridor wide enhancements
- **Arterial Rapid Transit (ART)**—three routes with some dedicated transit lanes along with queue jumper lanes and transit signal priority to keep the system moving through more congested locations
- **Local Bus**—thirteen routes providing routine access to larger portions of the County in mixed traffic
- **Rapid Bus**—three routes providing limited stop service to key destinations and transfer centers
- **Commuter Bus**—five routes connecting major employment centers with park-and-ride lots along key corridors with very limited stops
- **Microtransit Service**—six on-demand transit zones providing door-to-door service in lower-demand areas
- **Paratransit Service**—coverage within three quarters of a mile of fixed route service for individuals with mobility challenges
- **Vanpool**—subsidies for commuter services for people with similar home and work locations
- **Ridesharing**—subsidies for people who live outside of the transit service area to gain access to the nearest transit stop/station
- **Transit facilities**—six transfer or maintenance facilities needed to provide efficient route operations
- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Access**—funding for first and last mile access to transit stations and stops
- **Local Bus Stop Upgrades**—funding for improvements to current and future local bus stops, including shelters, amenities, and sidewalks
- **System Technology Upgrades**—funding for technology enhancements for system operations and user information
- **Fleet Upgrades**—funding for vehicle replacements that have reached the end of their useful life
- **City Set-Asides**—funding for the six Cities to provide local enhancements to transit within their jurisdictions
- **Regional Set-Asides**—funding for Cobb to participate in the advancement of critical regional transit projects

Beyond the 30-year financially constrained plan, other aspirational recommendations that warrant further consideration with other regional and state partners include:

-

of population and

employment with access to transit

of employees within ¼ mile of high-capacity transit

- **79%** households in poverty
- **80%** zero-vehicle households

- **75%** age 65+
- **77%** communities of color

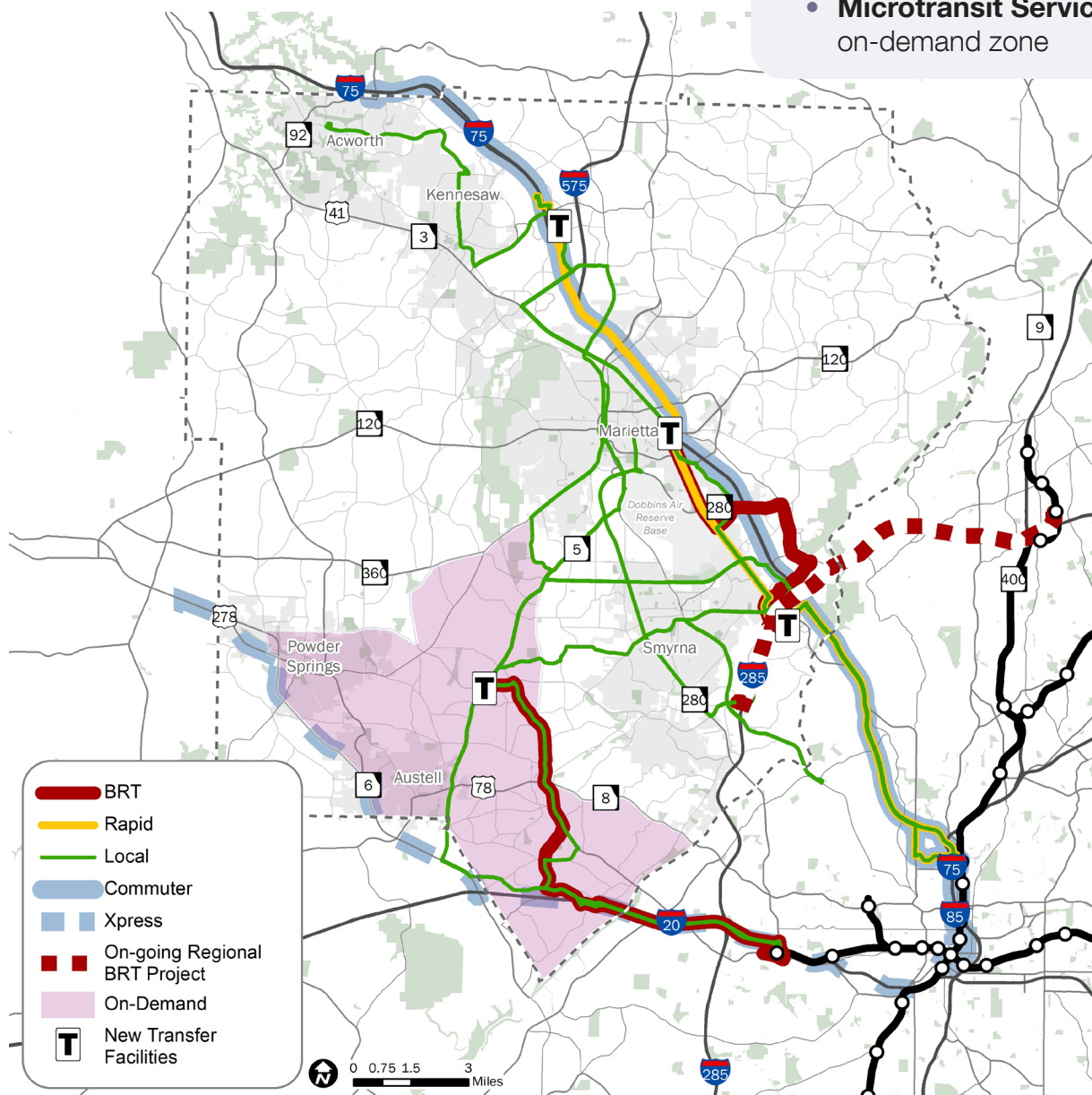
of residents with access to paratransit

MID-RANGE PLAN (10-YEAR)

The Mid-Range Plan includes the first three BRT routes opening to service, including Marietta to Cumberland, South Cobb to the H.E. Holmes MARTA station, and the BRT in managed lanes along the Top End Perimeter of I-285 (a regional partnership project). Other BRT and ART projects will be under design during this phase, along with the construction of multiple transfer and maintenance facilities.

MID-RANGE PLAN ELEMENTS:

- **BRT**—three routes
- **Local Bus**—nine routes
- **Rapid Bus**—one route
- **Commuter Bus**—five routes
- **Microtransit Service**—one on-demand zone

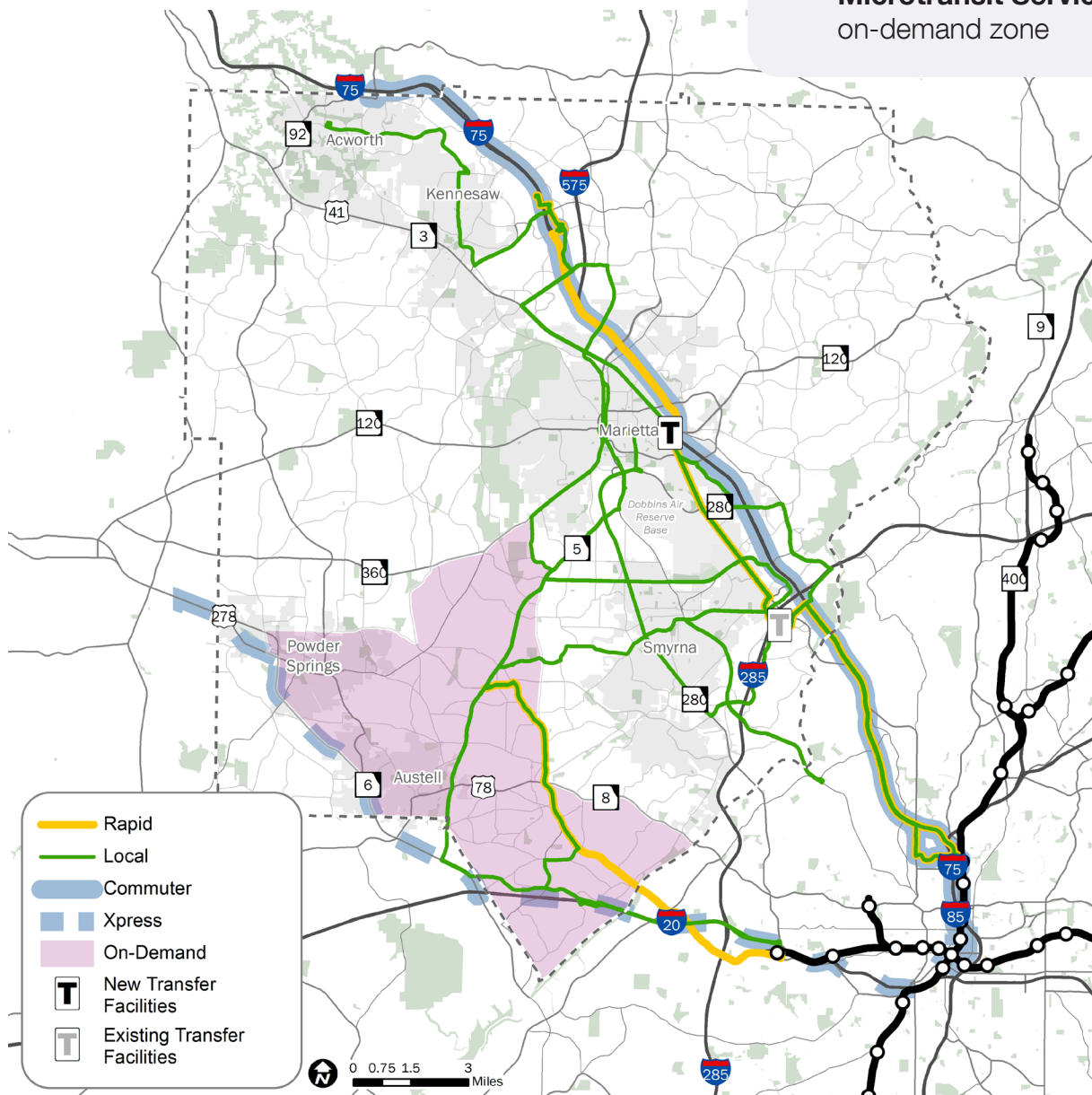


SHORT-RANGE PLAN (5-YEAR)

The Short-Range Plan focuses on building the framework for the life of the program, beginning concept development and design work for some of the BRT corridors that require more time and more substantial funding while also expanding local service to new areas of the County, providing new rapid/limited stop service in South Cobb, expanding current on-demand zones, and increasing frequencies and span of service on existing routes.

SHORT-RANGE PLAN ELEMENTS:

- **Local Bus**—ten routes
- **Rapid Bus**—two routes
- **Commuter Bus**—five routes
- **Microtransit Service**—one on-demand zone



POLICY

Policy recommendations, in conjunction with project recommendations, are both proposed within this plan. While projects are funded through capital improvements, policy recommendations may be implemented at little to no cost and have a large impact to the transportation network. Policy recommendations help shape the future of the County by developing a multimodal network, encouraging new behavior, and strategically investing in new technologies.



SMART CITIES

Leverage technology focusing on priority, opportunity, and resources



EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Strategically integrate advanced technology to existing and future developments



FREIGHT

Provide freight policy recommendations for truck route designation, freight lane restrictions, freight demand management, rail, and truck parking



TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Coordinate transportation and land use decisions to improve mobility and to reduce demand for long-distance vehicular travel while creating opportunities for walking, biking, and transit usage



ASSET MANAGEMENT

Focus on maintaining transportation assets at a rate that stays ahead of deterioration and plans for end-of-life replacement and upgrades



TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)

Coordinated effort to shift trips away from single occupancy vehicle trips toward alternative modes of transportation



SAFETY

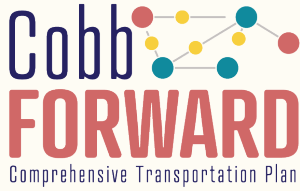
Provide transportation options that are safe and efficient for all users of the system



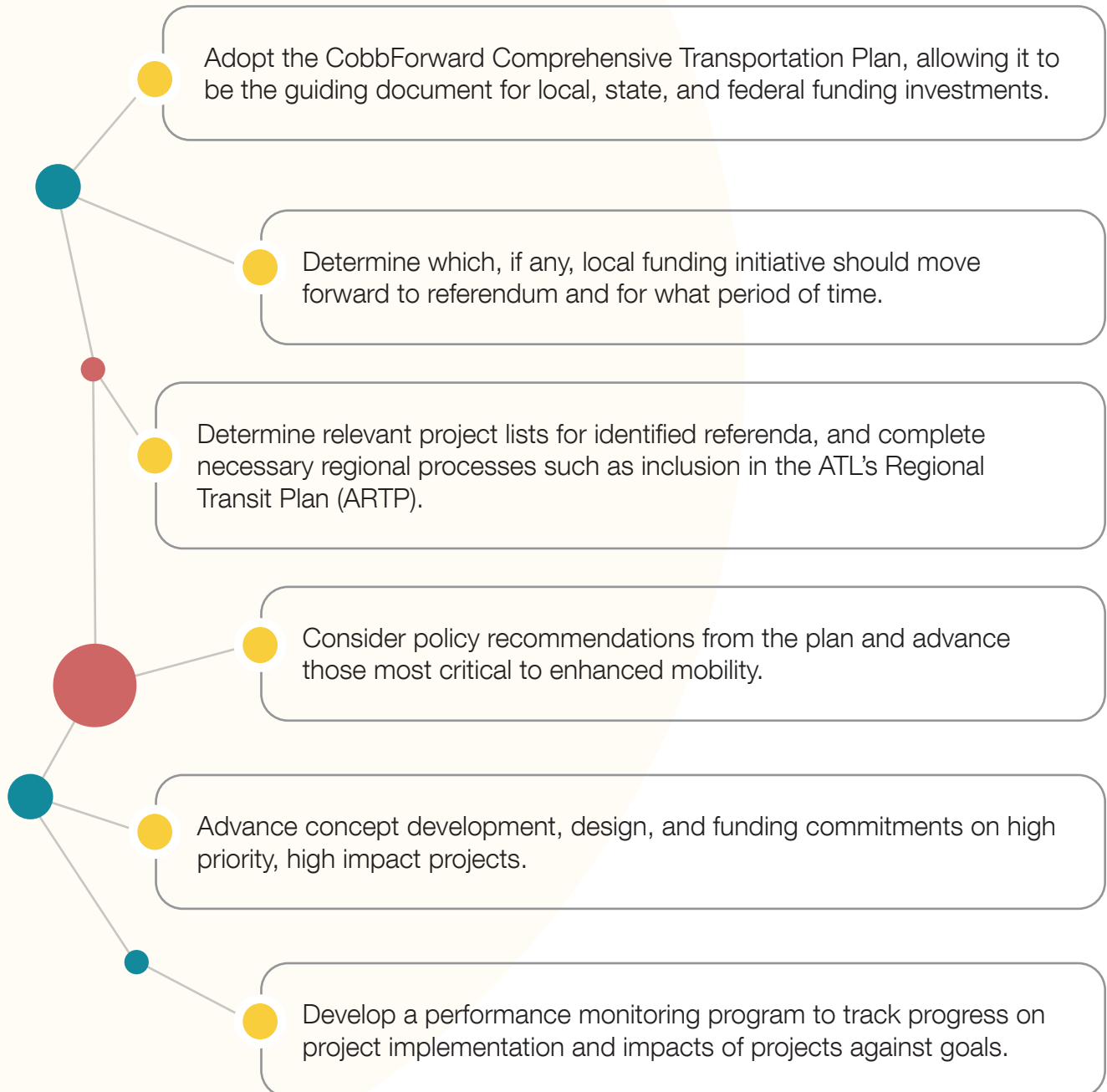
SIDEWALK FRAMEWORK

Prioritize new sidewalk infrastructure based on readily available data and input from the public

IMPLEMENTATION



A plan is only valuable if it facilitates implementation. The CobbForward Plan outlines a framework of projects, policies, and next steps to assist elected leadership and staff with tools to advance mobility for the good of the Cobb community.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Cobb County Board of Commissioners

Lisa Cupid, Chairwoman | Keli Gambrill, District 1 | Jerica Richardson,
District 2 | JoAnn Birrell, District 3 | Monique Sheffield, District 4

Project Management Team

Cobb County Department of Transportation,
Atlanta Regional Commission

Partner Agency Technical Committee Group

City of Acworth, City of Austell, City of Kennesaw, City of Marietta, City
of Powder Springs, City of Smyrna, Cumberland CID, Gateway Marietta
CID, Town Center CID, Cobb County Community Development, CobbLinc,
Keep Cobb Beautiful, Cobb County Parks and Recreation, Cobb County
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