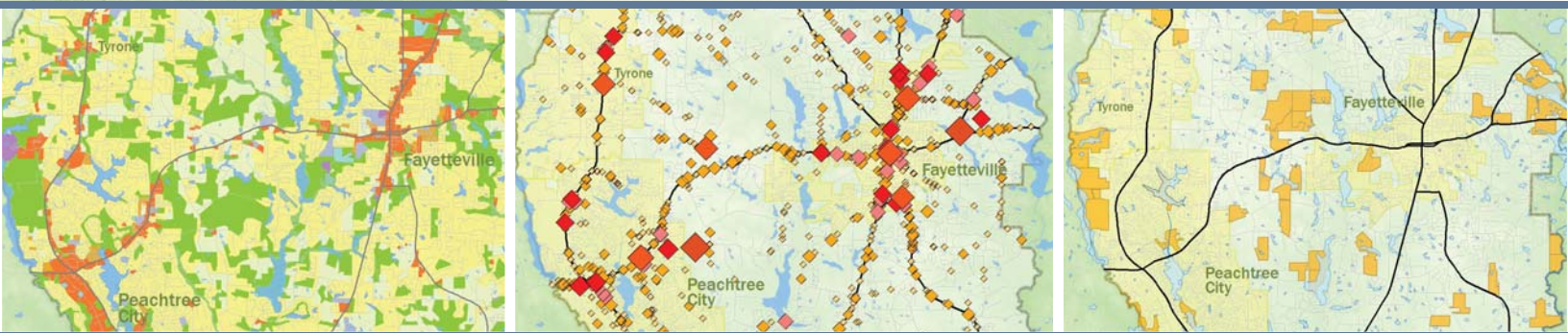


Executive Summary



1.0 Executive Summary

The Fayette Forward Comprehensive Transportation Plan was developed from late 2008 through mid-2010 by a cooperative effort of Fayette County; the Cities of Peachtree City, Fayetteville and Tyrone; and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). Fayette Forward identifies project and policy recommendations that are supportive of the adopted comprehensive plans and is intended to serve the County and its municipalities through the year 2030. It was funded and developed under ARC's County Comprehensive Transportation Plan Assistance Program (referred to more generally as the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, or CTP, program) and will serve as the basis for future Fayette County projects in ARC's long-range regional transportation plan (RTP) and transportation improvement program (TIP). Within Fayette County, it is intended to guide transportation investments over the next twenty years.

What does this plan do?

Fayette Forward is primarily a plan for transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and multi-use paths, and policy on how that infrastructure will be maintained, enhanced and expanded. Specifically, the plan does the following:

- Articulates a vision for the County's desired character and quality of life and establishes a series of goals for the County to meet in carrying out the plan;
- Studies and describes the existing characteristics, strengths, and deficiencies of the County's transportation system;
- Considers current and future needs based on the County's intended patterns of growth to the year 2030;
- Recommends transportation projects to meet these needs; and
- Recommends policies that support the County's investment in these projects and help maintain existing infrastructure.

Why this transportation plan?

Fayette County's last transportation plan was completed in 2003 and it served as the basis for the County's transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), which generated revenue via a one-cent sales tax from April 2005 through March 2010. By 2010, many of the recommendation in the 2003 plan have been implemented or are underway and therefore a new plan is needed to establish new short-term priorities for the next five years and reconsider projects appropriate for mid and long-term planning. In addition to updating project lists, there are three principal reasons for developing this new transportation plan: 1) to consider land use and other community planning concerns in making transportation decisions, 2) to integrate the overall transportation goals and policies of the unincorporated County and its five municipalities, and 3) to allow the County to continue qualifying for federal and state assistance in project funding. ARC has inaugurated the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) program since the completion of Fayette County's 2003 plan, and the agency has been working with counties throughout the Atlanta region to provide assistance for each to complete a CTP following a similar format and set of considerations.

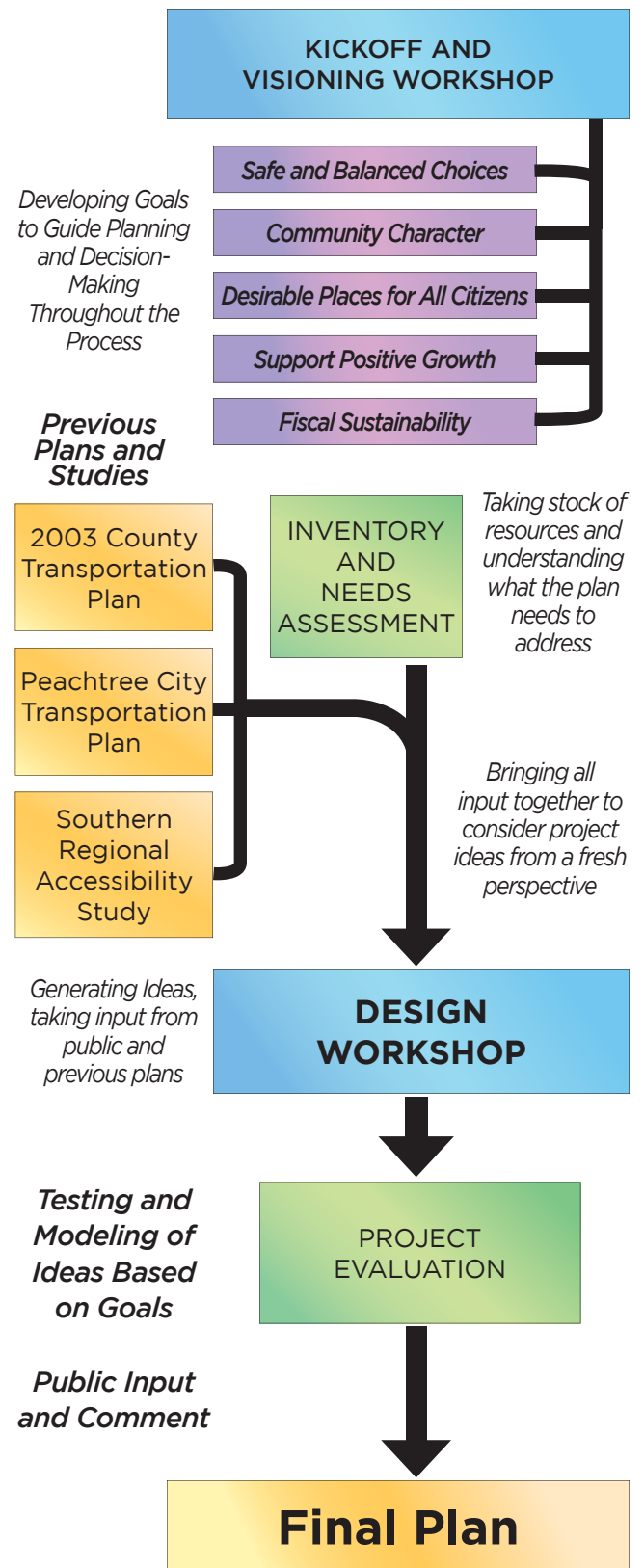


This new approach to transportation plans represents an emerging understanding throughout the United States that land use and transportation decisions inextricably affect one another. Permitting land development without adequate infrastructure to support it constrains a community's ability to move people and goods and to promote economic prosperity, while at the same time the type of investment in transportation infrastructure tends to set community expectations for what types and amounts of development will be physically and politically practical. Communities and planning agencies are learning that these decisions cannot be made in isolation from one another, and the two must be planned to an appropriate degree in order to be consistent with community desires and expectations.

The transportation-land use connection has special relevance in Fayette County, a place that is in many ways unique in the Atlanta metropolitan region. Although Fayette has seen dramatic growth since the 1980s, it retains many areas that are undeveloped or are developed with rural land uses. It does not have an Interstate highway passing through its boundaries, and it has sought to maintain its current land use patterns through strong zoning and policies, even in the face of increased region-wide development pressure. These are all reasons that the citizens of Fayette County choose to live there: they value the proximity to Atlanta and the services and amenities that it offers yet wish to maintain a more relaxed atmosphere and rural landscape in their home community.

However, there still remains room for the County to grow and develop. How and to what extent it develops can be shaped by its land use policies, and its transportation facilities should correspond appropriately to these development patterns. This suggests that unlike most metropolitan Atlanta counties that are seeing rapid growth, Fayette County can assert a relative degree of confidence in understanding its land use future and can plan transportation infrastructure accordingly. Transportation should serve the land uses of the County but should not alter them in a way that is detrimental to the County's quality of life and place-based characteristics.

The Fayette Forward Planning Process



In addition, the County’s population is changing. Senior citizens are expected to increase in number and in proportion to the County’s overall population. With this demographic change, and based on comparable trends occurring in other communities throughout the United States, more County residents may choose not to drive—or may not be able to. In addition, travel needs will be less oriented to long-distance commuting to employment centers and will focus more on access to local commercial and recreational destinations. The current commuting citizen’s concerns of access to the Interstate highway system and to the large share of jobs outside of the County are likely to be joined by concerns of local travel, specifically route alternatives and safety of existing infrastructure.

How was the plan developed?

The Fayette Forward planning team consisted primarily of County staff and their consultants, although this team enjoyed the assistance of many other planning professionals and community leaders, as well as the general public, throughout the process. This team followed a process that relied both on technical analysis and qualitative input and guidance to assess existing conditions and needs and to address those needs with short-term and long-term strategies. In particular, the planning process included the following major components:

Communicating with stakeholders and the general public. The Fayette County community, including those who live and work in the County, was an invaluable source of information that helped the planning team to ‘ground-truth’ the quantitative and geographic data that it analyzed in understanding existing conditions. This input was especially helpful in helping the team to understand the special dynamics of the County’s different demographic and population groups and in small-scale issues that affected the design and development of specific project ideas. The planning team communicated with the public through a series of meetings and workshops, distribution of information on Fayette County’s website, project status newsletters, an Internet-based public survey asking questions about travel patterns and needs, and multiple letters, e-mails and telephone conversations with team members.



Fayette Forward emphasized interaction with stakeholders and the public as a central source of gathering information and testing ideas. The planning team worked with County and municipal staff, staff from partner agencies, members of community and neighborhood groups and County residents.



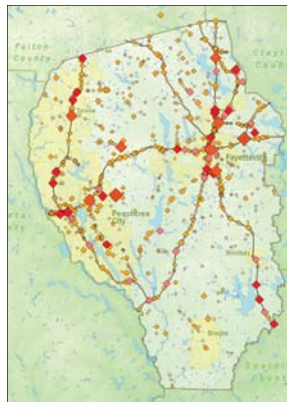
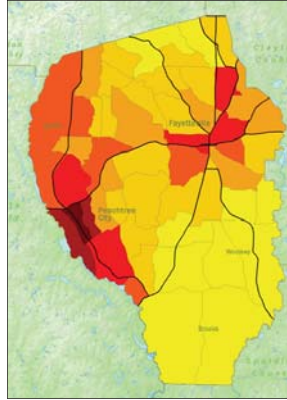
This involvement of the public featured two committees, a Stakeholder Advisory Committee formed by a broad cross-section of Fayette County's citizens and community leaders and a Technical Advisory Committee formed by professional staff from the County's municipalities and partner agencies such as the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Fayette County Board of Education.

The first major milestone of the plan's development came from this public involvement effort: an identification of a vision for the Fayette County transportation system as it relates to the community's future needs, and a series of goals by which project decisions would be evaluated.

Evaluating existing conditions and need.

The plan team reviewed information from the public along with data and information on Fayette County's current transportation system. This allowed the team to document the existing inventory and analyze it for deficiencies and needs for improvement. The identification of needs comes from the planning team's understanding of the Fayette County community's primary values and objectives, expressed collectively through the Comprehensive Plan's vision for the County to remain a desirable place to live where transportation infrastructure is safe and balanced for all users.

Developing a set of project ideas to address this need. Public input also contributed to the project team's development of a set of project candidates that would serve as the foundation for the plan's recommendations. The process involved developing a large list of 'candidate' projects that could be narrowed down through later analysis to a prioritized list of projects. The project team began by considering all project ideas from previous plans and studies, such as the County's 2003 Transportation Plan (and related list of projects associated with the 2004 SPLOST), the City of Peachtree City's Transportation Plan, the Southern Regional Accessibility Study, and the Peachtree City and Fayetteville Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) studies. It also considered projects suggested by public input and developed by the Fayette Forward planning team: these included numerous intersection projects, bridge upgrades or replacements, and a framework for how new development should add new streets throughout the County to manage traffic flow and congestion on existing roadways. Together, these formed the list of 'candidates' to be tested against the project goals.



Fayette Forward involved a detailed inventory of existing conditions and an analysis of existing and future need. The project team responded to needs for safety, access and mobility with a series of project and policy recommendations.



Evaluating the project ideas and forming a list of recommendations. The planning team reviewed all of these project ideas and developed a series of technical evaluation criteria based on the five major plan goals. This allowed the team to carefully articulate the overall benefits of a project and to develop a first set of recommendations based on how well the projects responded to these goals.

After consideration of specific factors with regard to funding and project delivery (especially the limited nature of the 2004 SPLOST funds, which can only be used for projects listed in the 2003 plan or specifically identified in the referendum proposal that led to the tax's approval by voters), the Fayette Forward planning team refined this first draft of a prioritized projects list to ensure that reserved funds would be used within any required time frames and that projects expected or strongly desired by the community were given high priority.

What will the County do with the plan now?

As stated previously, the plan is intended to guide the County in making decisions on transportation projects and policies through the year 2030. Although Fayette Forward will likely be revised and updated over time, it represents a foundational framework based on extensive assessment of need and analysis of suggested projects. The County will use this plan to program projects through its own capital improvement program and to submit to ARC and GDOT for evaluation and future programming of state and federal funds for transportation projects. The County will also use this plan as a means of crafting policy on transportation that is not project-specific, such as access management, roadway maintenance and support of transportation services for special needs populations.

This plan provides a series of recommendations upon which this guidance is based. These recommendations can be summarized in three major categories:

1. Short-term projects for which funding is available and that should be implemented in the first five years from plan adoption.
2. Medium-term and long-term projects that do not have committed funding at the time of the plan's adoption but that are recommended for the County to pursue in the 5 to 20 years after adoption (i.e., between 2015 and 2030).
3. Policies that provide direction for the County in forming public policy on transportation. These policy recommendations can be implemented in the form of amended comprehensive plan policies and/or ordinances for specific jurisdictions where they would apply. Future updates to the County and municipalities' comprehensive plans should be consistent with Fayette Forward and guide the local government to work toward achievement of Fayette Forward's goals.



1.1 Transportation Action Plan

This section summarizes the steps Fayette County can take to implement the plan. These are detailed in the Recommendations section of this plan, but can be expressed briefly as a series of steps tied to different points in time. Throughout these steps, reference is made to the system of project tiers introduced in the Recommendations chapter: these are general time-based groups of project implementation priorities.

First Steps

Implementation of SPLOST Projects. Fayette County’s 2004 SPLOST terminated at the end of March 2010 and funds must be used on projects within five years of that date. The County should implement as many of these projects as possible, using Tier 1 of the Fayette Forward project recommendations as a guide. Cost estimates for these projects were originally developed for the SPLOST implementation program but are periodically updated to reflect unforeseen cost increases. As these projects are implemented, the County should continue to reassess particular projects and choose those most critical to the County’s needs to be completed first.

Advancement of Key Project Concepts through Scoping Phases. Projects that are not fully defined under the SPLOST program and for which the County cannot practically assume full responsibility (such as capacity enhancement projects on roads that are part of the Georgia Department of Transportation’s roadway system) can and should be explored in the short term. By developing scoping phases, the County will better understand the extent of specific projects, the design needs, the community impact and the likely cost. This will allow the County to continuously refine the Fayette Forward plan recommendations throughout the lifespan of the plan.

The development of these scoping phases also provides the County an opportunity to explore funding assistance from GDOT and other partner agencies. As the extent of a project is better understood through the scoping phase, Fayette County will have a better sense of strategy on how and when to advance particular projects.

Action Plan Steps

First 5 Years

Complete **projects on the 2004 SPLOST list** to the extent that remaining funds allow by 2015.

Begin **exploring and advancing major project concepts** through Scoping Phases.

5-10 Years

Identify **new funding sources** to continue implementing the Fayette Forward Plan.

Begin **design and construction of Tier 2 projects** to address mid-term needs.

10-20 Years

Develop **regional consensus** on projects serving Fayette County and its neighbors.

Begin **design and construction of Tier 3 projects** to address mid-term needs.

Medium-Term Steps

Identify new funding sources. Fayette County voters did not approve a second special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST) in November 2009, leaving the County reliant on its Capital Improvement Program and General Fund as the only local funding sources. Although state and federal funding are available to assist the County, these funding sources tend only to be available for state roads and projects on other major roadways. Outside funding can be used for multi-modal projects, especially those enhancing sidewalks, trails and other infrastructure for pedestrians, but a major component of the County’s transportation need—the improvement of safety and efficiency at intersections and along local roads—tends not to be eligible for state and federal assistance and must be funded locally.

Fayette County should begin exploring new funding opportunities, including the use of bonds for key projects or the possibility of a new SPLOST, to allow it to continue developing a transportation system that meets the County’s current and future needs. A regional transportation SPLOST, proposed during the 2010 Georgia State Legislature, may be another source of funding to assist Fayette County and other local governments with transportation projects.

Begin implementation of Tier 2 projects. Planning and implementation of projects within the second tier should begin approximately five years after plan adoption. Projects within a tier are not ranked by priority. Instead, the tier represents a general list from which projects may be selected based on funding opportunities and other factors applicable at the time. All of these projects meet a less critical, though still important set of needs for the County and their implementation within ten years of plan adoption will allow the County to continue providing a highly-functional, community-responsive transportation system throughout this time period.

Long-Term Steps

Seek resolution of regional issues. As a part of the Atlanta metropolitan region with close proximity to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Fayette County’s transportation system is closely linked with those of neighboring counties. In some cases, transportation links that are critical to Fayette County’s travel patterns are not located inside the County itself. The County should begin dialogue with its neighbors in the region on how these transportation facilities can be maintained and enhanced so that they continue serving the County’s needs. Some examples include the coordination of State Roads 279 and 92 with their counterpart segments in Fulton County and the heavily-used interchange of State Road 74 and Interstate 85 in south Fulton County. These issues are likely to result in specific projects that will need coordination and consensus with the neighboring counties that they affect.

Begin implementation of Tier 3 projects. The third tier of recommended projects is intended to begin advanced planning and implementation within ten years of plan adoption. As was the case with Tiers 1 and 2, this tier should serve as a general foundation for projects on which to focus funding opportunities.



