

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



METROPLAN

SMART PLANNING MAKES SMART PLACES.

On the cover (from top right)

- Highway 89 stakeholders review plans in meeting at Metroplan;
- Rockefeller Elementary students join in for Ditch the Keys on May 19, 2017.
- RPAC member Dr. Sybil Hampton speaks passionately about the 30 Crossing project, with Dr. Becky Adams.
- The Southwest Trail task force hikes in January 2017 on the proposed trail in Pulaski and Saline Counties. Participants included (left to right) Mike Sprague, Arkansas Parks and Tourism; Ashley Smith, ArDOT, Shannon Hills Mayor Mike Kemp, Saline County Judge Jeff Arey, and Daniel Siskowski of ArDOT.
- Metroplan hosted one final public meeting at Pulaski Tech in May, 2017 to get feedback on 30 Crossing.

Executive Director's Letter

Dear Reader,

2017 was a time of transition for Metroplan and for the region itself. First, long time Executive Director Jim McKenzie retired after 28 significant years at the helm of Metroplan. Assistant Director Richard Magee also stepped down after an even longer tenure. Together, these retirements ushered in a sea change for staff, for the organization and for the broader regional dialogue.

The primary headliner in any history of 2017 will certainly be the 30 Crossing project. This freeway widening was a logical culmination and extension of many small local decisions over the years, building a region that still caters to automobiles rather than alternative modes, and freeways over arterial streets. For all who hated the 30 Crossing project, and it was more hated than loved, we can say with Pogo “We have met the enemy and he is us!” Likewise, one could say that Metroplan’s long standing six-lane cap on interstates was slowly undermined, piece by piece, by a region that did not more aggressively pursue other transportation options in the past. That same project justification can be powerfully used again in the years ahead. If we want a different result . . .

2017 also heralded changes for Metroplan itself. While the 30 Crossing decision strained relationships, it also pointed toward new approaches—beginning with organization. McKenzie was pulled out of retirement to draft a White Paper on organizational structure. Out of his research and effort, Metroplan is currently considering its first major restructuring in over twenty-five years. A restructured Metroplan can implement best planning practices and bend the extension of the past into a better future.

In 2017 Metroplan introduced the Better Communities Lecture Series to bring in expert speakers on the very best planning and transportation practices from around the country. Joe Minicozzi, the inaugural speaker, drew capacity crowds at two lectures from a cross section of the region’s political, business, and residential communities. His message speaks directly to the economic side of developing a smart region, re-examining the long-term value and cost of different forms of development. Minicozzi’s talk also helped set the lecture series and Metroplan as a leader in educating the broader region.

While neither the best of times nor the worst, 2017 was eventful and may one day be seen as a watershed year. Enjoy this report; even save it for future reference.



Mayor Art Brooke
City of Ward
Metroplan President



Tab Townsell
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tab Townsell".

Tab Townsell
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Art Brooke".

Mayor Art Brooke, City of Ward
Metroplan President

A Year of Transition at Metroplan

The year 2017 began with Tab Townsell taking charge as Metroplan's fifth executive director. Early in the year Tab named Casey Covington to serve as the organization's Deputy Director, overseeing much of its day-to-day work. At the year's outset Metroplan faced two prominent major tasks, in addition to its customary planning and public-involvement responsibilities:

- The financially large (\$631.7 million) and controversial widening of a six-mile stretch of Interstate 30 through downtown Little Rock and North Little Rock.
- A five-year update to the *Imagine Central Arkansas* (ICA) plan, extending its planning horizon to the year 2050.

In addition to these responsibilities, Metroplan continued assisting with the administration of five Jump Start local planning projects, and its customary busy schedule of administering transportation projects, publishing the newsletters and reports and answering requests for planning assistance and data from its member governments and the general public.

Metroplan has operated with a structure for planning and decision-making that was last substantially revised in the early 1990s. During 2017, Tab asked Metroplan staff to review the structure in light of past experience, as well as to examine

other metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) around the country. Tab asked former Metroplan Executive Director Jim McKenzie to scope and write a White Paper, aimed at reviewing Metroplan's organizational structure.

As part of this effort, Metroplan staff asked members of the Metroplan Board, as well as members of its Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Regional Planning Advisory Council (RPAC) committees to review the organization in terms of a "SWOT" analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Late in the year, Metroplan staff were also asked to give their views. By year's end the White Paper was nearing completion, outlining options for organizational change to be presented to the Metroplan Board.



Senior Transportation Planner Susan Markman facilitates a lively RPAC meeting.



The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly. Committee members of the TCC (left) and RPAC give their insights into the metropolitan planning process.

The White Paper

Every structure needs a rethink from time to time. The White Paper of 2017–2018 presents some ideas for the Metroplan Board to consider as it reviews its organization. Metroplan has functioned under several different structures since its founding in 1955. The size and membership of the Board itself have varied over the years, as have its standing committees as well as staff size and composition.

The following quotes are some of the White Paper's more provocative excerpts:



The White Paper ends by listing proposed modifications to Metroplan's current structure, including:

- Shifting monthly meetings and the bulk of decision-making to the Executive Committee, which might hold monthly meetings while the main body meets quarterly or bi-annually.
- Expanding Board membership to include a representative of the Governor's office, a member of the State Highway Commission, or others.

- "The Arkansas Department of Transportation chooses the unconstrained policy plan approach. The practical impact of this approach is that projects selected in subsequent TIPs may have little connection to the plan and appear "out of the blue" to most member jurisdictions."
- "The high learning curve and the constant turnover of Board members makes it difficult to sustain previous consensus and adopted regional policy over time."
- "While the Board gets to see the regional perspective through Metroplan, members of their governing boards and committees do not."

- Expanding the term of Metroplan President to two years.
- Merging the TCC and RPAC into one committee responsible for both technical concerns (TCC) and public outreach and involvement (RPAC).
- Standing up multiple separate single-issue task forces, comprised of citizen stakeholders

The above is merely a summary of the paper's many thought-provoking conclusions and suggestions. It remains merely a starting-point from which the Board will decide Metroplan's future organizational structure.

RPAC Strengths	TCC Strengths	Metroplan Staff Strengths	Board Strengths
Diversity	Technical expertise	Highly skilled and efficient	Represents all parts of the region
Expertise	Continuity (longest-serving committee)	Creative	Places value on building consensus
Commitment	Productive working relationship with staff	Works well as a team	Broad and visionary perspective
Continuity	Regional expertise	Always willing to help members	Collaborative efforts

The Better Communities Lecture Series

Joe Minicozzi on Urban Finance August 14 and 15, 2017¹

Everybody shops, and most people live, in the suburbs. That's where the money is, right? *No*, contends Minicozzi, leavening his surprising observations on city finance with plenty of gentle, self-deprecating humor. Land use economics are full of surprises. Joe compared a Wal-Mart in his home town of Asheville, NC against an office building his firm recently redeveloped. As the image shows, the Wal-Mart sits on 34 acres, while the mixed-use building takes up less than one-fifth of an acre. Their total property tax revenues are in the same ballpark but, when you look at revenue per acre, the downtown building yields \$634,000 per acre, versus \$6,500 for the Wal-Mart—nearly one hundred times as much. This is no exception; it fits with similar cases across the country and right here in Central Arkansas.²

This is relevant, Joe reminded his audience, because every city and county is an incorporated entity. As citizens we're all investors through sales and property taxes, and as residents we're shareholders with a stake in the corporation's financial well-being. And we aren't doing so well. When developers deed their new streets over to a city, they're conferring a liability, not an asset.

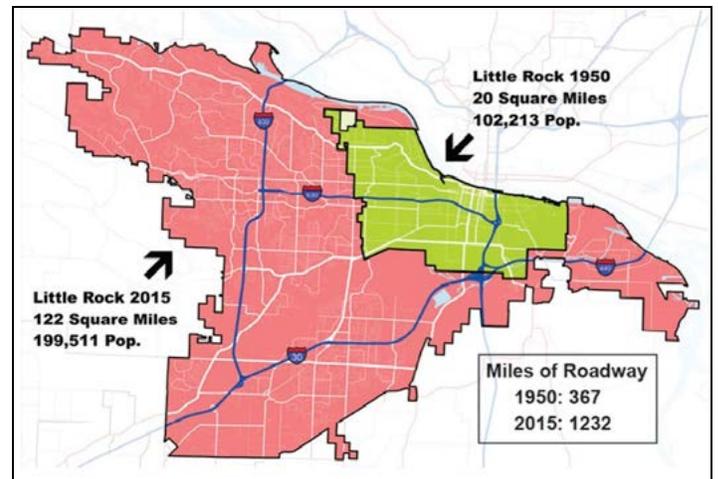
Suburban growth involves infrastructure costs that are well-hidden at the front end, but become a drag about 40 years on, as pavement cracks and pipes wear out. As Joe pointed out, the typical suburban shopping structure is built with a 15-year anticipated life cycle, unlike downtown structures that have been handed to us from one or

two centuries past. Cities and counties must recognize who really pays their bills, and who rides along at discount rates subsidized by public debt. Looking to the future, governments need to recognize that even small investments in existing downtown areas can leverage their values, and hence their revenue returns, to a huge extent.



Urban ³		Asheville Walmart	Downtown
Land Consumed (Acres):	34.0	00.2	
Total Property Taxes/Acre:	\$ 6,500	\$634,000	
City Retail Taxes/Acre:	\$ 47,500	\$ 83,600	
Residents per Acre:	0.0	90.0	
Jobs per Acre:	5.9	73.7	

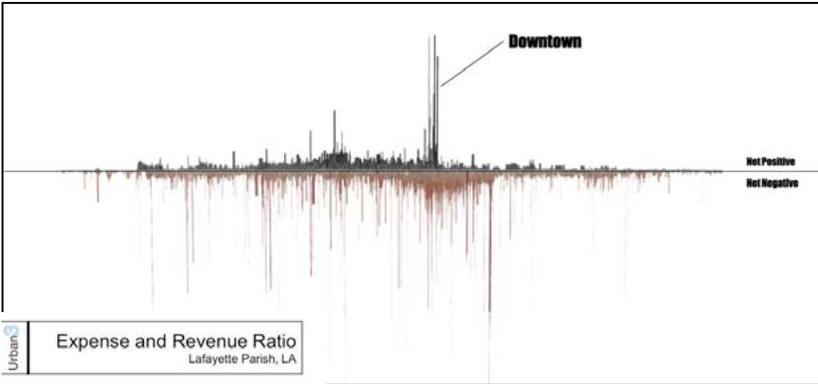
When you factor in density, you find that suburbs get more in city services than older, denser areas, yet give less back.



Like many U.S. cities, Little Rock has added land area faster than it has added new population over the last 65 years.

¹ For video or PowerPoint, visit www.metroplan.org/content/lecture-series.

² A similar study by the City of Conway involving sales tax revenues was featured in the *Metrotrends 2015 Demographic Review and Outlook*, p. 11, at <http://www.metroplan.org>.



This chart shows how downtowns and densely-developed areas yield the bulk of city tax revenue, while low-density suburbs account for the largest costs.



Minicozzi mixes fun with policy wisdom.



Jim McKenzie

Panel Discussion

A month after the Minicozzi lecture, Metroplan sponsored a panel discussion between public and private community leaders. Former Metroplan Executive Director Jim McKenzie moderated the discussion. Here are excerpts:



Mike Watson, Mayor of Maumelle:

... a large area that had 200 acres got a break on their taxes while everybody across the road with smaller parcels had higher tax rates. And that 200 acres has a lot more road frontage that we're responsible for maintaining, so that kind of made me look at things a little differently.



Ward Davis, Hendrix Village developer:

To me the real key to encouraging development downtown ... is actually to knock down the regulatory barriers that stand in the way. There are two sources of barriers. One is the tax code, which makes it hard to aggregate land. The second piece is, generally our zoning codes and technical design standards are aimed at suburban areas. [this] makes it very difficult to do mixed-use development.



Gabe Holmstrom, Executive Director, Little Rock Downtown Partnership:

We have now a historic rehabilitation tax credit... If you really increase that incentive, that's going to [attract development] in some of our downtowns in Little Rock and across the state.



Jimmy Moses, downtown real estate developer:

We had a downtown development plan and it actually seeded the River Market. Not many people know that. [it] set the stage for the private sector to put money into the urban core.



Mark Stodola, Mayor of Little Rock:

I appreciate the analysis. I think it certainly tells the story of maximizing value and minimizing the kind of expense that we cities have for streets, sewers, drainage, gutters and all kinds of things.

Little Rock has done a great job from a zoning standpoint to encourage mixed-use development in the center...

See video of the panel discussion. <http://tinyurl.com/yd2ducho>
See transcript of the panel discussion: <https://tinyurl.com/yxc35b6a>

30 Crossing Reaches Decision Point in 2017

Metroplan's biggest story involved Interstate 30 in downtown Little Rock, labeled "30 Crossing." Numerous public meetings were held, reliably polite but undeniably contentious. The question was: would the Metroplan Board endorse 30 Crossing at the request of ArDOT¹ for a major widening and reconfiguration of the freeway in downtown Little Rock? During the previous year, the Metroplan Board had already granted a waiver of Metroplan's long-standing policy of restricting regional freeways to six lanes. During 2017, ARDOT asked Metroplan to put 30 Crossing onto its transportation plans: the Long Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (LRMTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).



One of several public meetings on 30 Crossing hosted by ArDOT.



Deputy Director Casey Covington describes likely traffic profiles that will result from different design options.

Since Metroplan is directed by Federal law to provide a public forum, the organization hosted numerous meetings to encourage people to air their concerns. Metroplan's web site and Facebook page also hosted public comments. While some comments and emails favored ArDOT's 30 Crossing plans, the majority opposed the project. For example, during a public comment period on the LRMTP in the Spring, 118 comments were received, with 7 favoring 30 Crossing and 111 opposed. On June 15, 2017, Metroplan's citizen advisory body (the RPAC) considered an amendment to the region's Long Range Plan to include the complete scope and funding of 30 Crossing, but voted 10 to 8 to recommend against it. The Metroplan Board approved the amendment later in June. The Long Range Plan was the first hurdle; the TIP would be the last hurdle.

Since the TIP is the official list of regional projects for the next four years, its role is central to project development. Metroplan's Executive Director Tab Townsell pointed out during the February, 2017 Metroplan Board meeting that amending the TIP would be "the last controlling action the MPO has to impact the project." Recognizing this, the Metroplan Board chose to await an EA (Environmental Assessment) on 30 Crossing before deciding on the project. Late in 2017, it became clear that the EA would not be complete until early 2018.

However, in August, ArDOT cited a disputed federal regulation, and chose to prohibit other projects in the region from proceeding until Metroplan's TIP matched its Long Range Plan. This action required Metroplan Board approval of the 30 Crossing TIP amendment to allow development of other projects. In a letter dated October 30, 2017, ArDOT Executive Director Bennett informed Metroplan "The Hwy. 64/Sunny Gap Road Signal project in Faulkner County was already pulled from the November letting." In effect, ARDOT stopped this and all other projects until the Board granted approval for 30 Crossing.

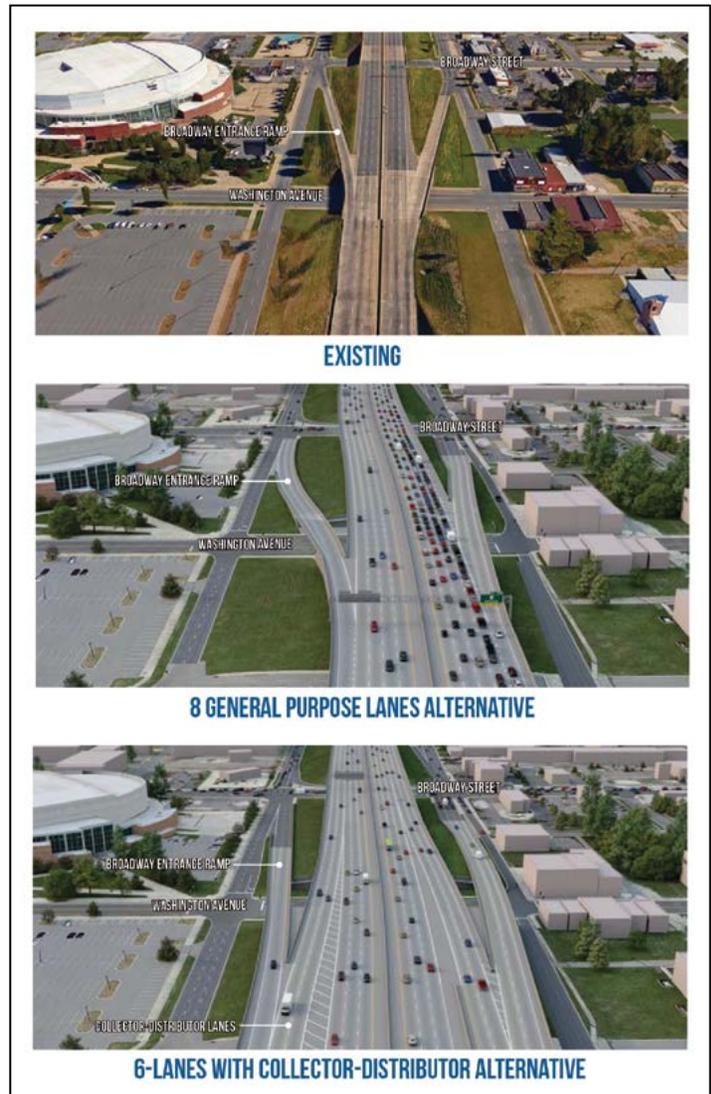
¹ Formally known as the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department prior to a name change, which became effective July 1, 2017.

A Little Background

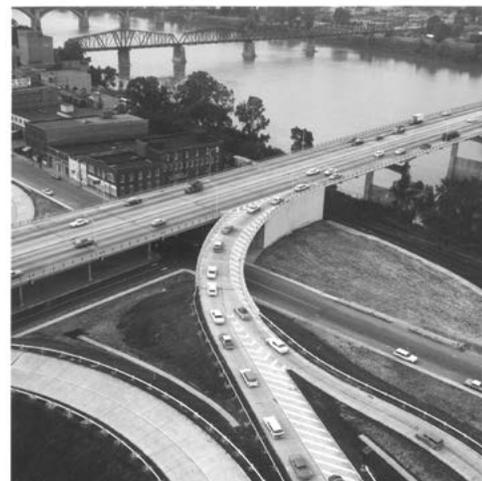
Metroplan is a local Central Arkansas organization which works with local governments to map out the region's long-range transportation future. Since part of Metroplan's legal status and funding come from the Federal Government, it must abide by Federal rules. The following is a primer to help you understand how Metroplan's decision-making process works.

- **MPO.** Metroplan is the "Metropolitan Planning Organization" for the Little Rock region. Every U.S. metro area with over 50,000 population has one.
- **LRMTP, or Long-Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan.** An MPO is required to plan its transportation future via a Long-Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (LRMTP) reaching up to 30 years into the future. In Metroplan's case, this is the *Imagine Central Arkansas* plan, or *ICA*. It emphasizes urban form and connectivity—including pedestrian accessibility, along with freeways—as vital elements in the transportation future.
- **RPAC, or Regional Planning Advisory Council.** This is a citizens' committee, whose members are appointed by the Metroplan Board. The RPAC guides the LRMTP.
- **TIP, or Transportation Improvement Program.** This is a four-year work program of specific transportation projects, with cost estimates and detailed plans. The TIP is more specific, but is guided by the LRMTP.
- While staff and the RPAC had a role in developing both the LRMTP and TIP, all final decisions for each are made by the Metroplan Board. In context of the 30 Crossing project, the Metroplan Board had to amend both the LRMTP and TIP, because the project's final scale had not been recognized in either.

I-30 at Broadway



Three views of I-30 in downtown North Little Rock. ArDOT offered major widenings but never presented any options to fix existing problems at lower cost, with less intrusion on the urban landscape.



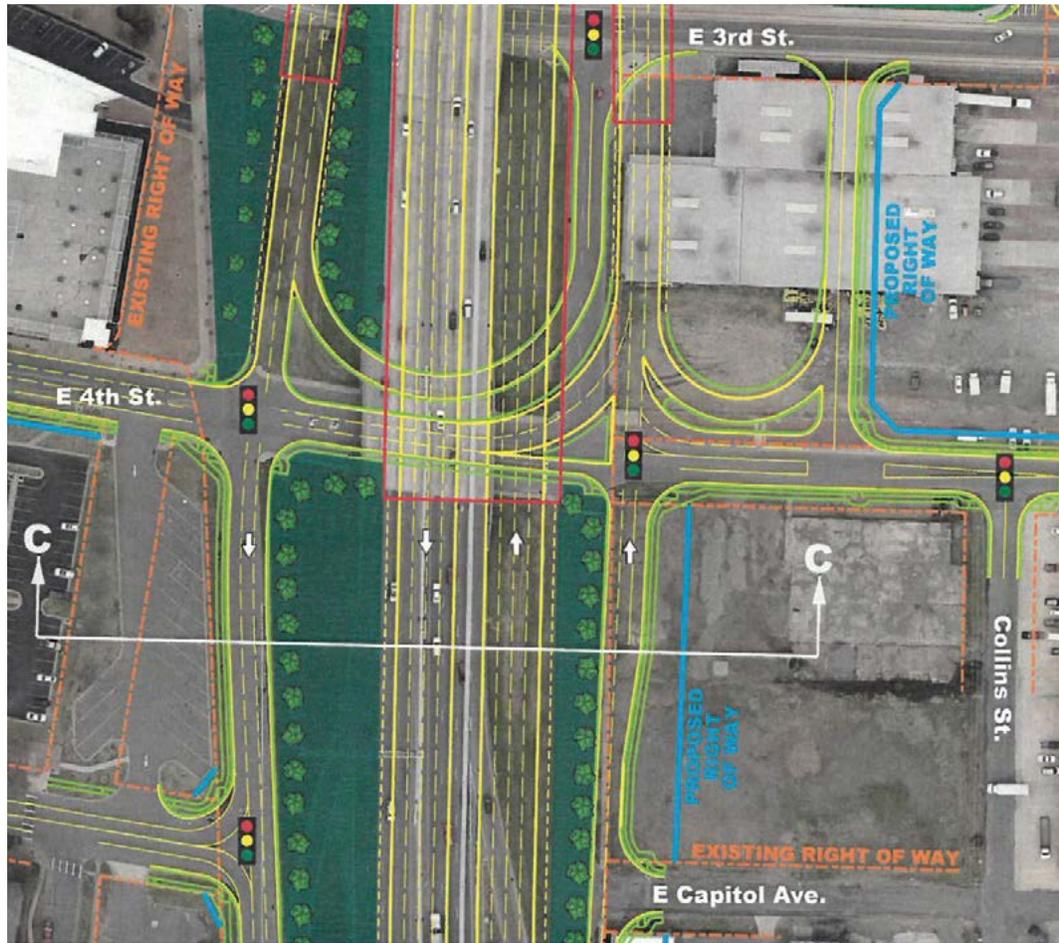
Newly built I-30 in downtown Little Rock.

30 CROSSING

At its December, 2017 meeting, the Metroplan Board, at the request of North Little Rock, Pulaski County and Little Rock, approved Resolution 17-26, formally adding 30 Crossing to the TIP. Metroplan's federally required role was over. While legal challenge by private parties remains possible, Metroplan, and by extension the region's local governments, will have no further legally-binding impact over 30 Crossing—a widening that could have major impacts on the region it serves. While yet to be determined, these possible impacts range from further "domino" widening of other freeways, impacts on traffic and pedestrian flows in and near downtown Little Rock and North Little Rock, to further encouragement of a auto-dependent style of regional land development.



The public weighed in with many points of view at this May 2017 meeting, and at several others.



One of the options proposed by ArDOT. While the widening will require only limited demolition, it will alter the urban landscape and shift downtown traffic flows

Highway 89: Navigating the North Metro

Since the elimination of the North Belt Freeway from the Long Range Plan, local officials have sought alternatives to connecting I-40 to US 67/167 in the northern metro. An existing arterial may help fill that void. Local, State, and Federal stakeholders requested a study for Highway 89, an existing route on the Regional Arterial Network (RAN). Metroplan partnered with ArDOT



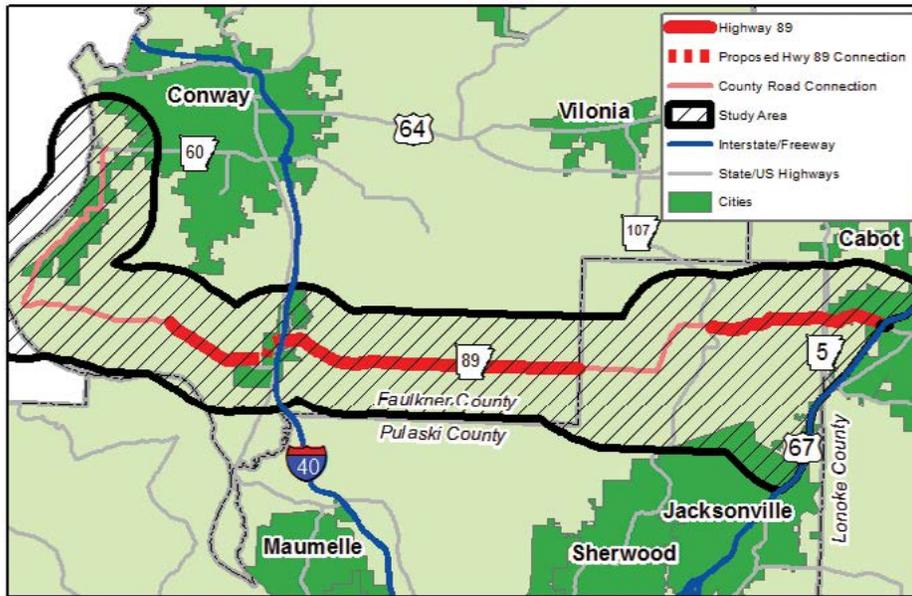
An image of Highway 89 in northern Pulaski County.

to oblige. Garver was selected to lead the study.

The Highway 89 Corridor Study launched in July to explore a continuous arterial route between the major highways with an improved connection to Highway 60 in west Conway. The project aims to address safety, travel time, and freight movement and accommodate alternative transportation while mitigating

negative impacts to adjacent communities and the Air Force Base.

Interested parties provided input at three public meetings in October: Jacksonville, Mayflower, and northern Pulaski County. Residents dropped by to examine potential paths, and supplied the project team with invaluable insight. Commenters stressed safety improvements along the corridor, especially around hilly, curvy segments of the route, and favored bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Study results are expected in 2018.



Several meetings were held at Metroplan offices and in communities with vested interest in the Highway 89 project, including Mayflower, Cabot and Jacksonville. Photo at left courtesy of the City of Mayflower.

Bringing Back Neighborhoods With a Jump Start



The Levy Jump Start project is aiming for a thriving and walkable core area as shown in this rendered perspective along Camp Robinson Road. Illustration credit: Gateway Planning.



Trick or Treat in Levy, October 2017. Photo courtesy of North Little Rock Jump Start Coalition.

have begun their own ventures, including multifamily housing that conforms to the new zoning codes, and a popcorn shop that occupies a rehabilitated post office on Reynolds Rd.

Conway's **Markham Street Neighborhood** project engaged property owners in meetings, with an open house forum for local residents in July. Engineering continued through the year, and design work will give way to bidding during 2018. The plan includes bioswales lining Markham Street to relieve downtown flooding, with separated cycle-tracks for bikers. Street-scaping will include greenery, street furniture and streetlights. The City of Conway has reconstructed adjacent Spencer and Smith Streets, and cleanup has been completed at

Jump Start is a program run by Metroplan to encourage high-quality human-scale redevelopment in several Central Arkansas communities. This is being done through targeted infrastructure investments and changes to local zoning codes. With the help of a HUD Sustainable Communities grant, Metroplan selected five communities for Project Jump Start back in 2013. Two other communities were later added, as part of a disaster-relief effort following a tornado in April, 2014. Several years down the road, all of these projects are making progress:

The **Old Town Bryant** project is being done in-house, with assistance from the Garver engineering firm. Design work was completed during the year, and bidding began in December. This project will include a redesign for a portion of Reynolds Road, with landscaped medians, extensive sidewalks, and a multi-use path for pedestrians and cyclists. Private developers



The Patio on Park Hill event drew large and animated crowds. Photo credit: @parkhillbusiness



the Conway Scrap Metal site. A new four-story JLofts apartment building has begun construction in the neighborhood.

North Little Rock's Jump Start Coalition met monthly to advance ideas and share information on both of the city's Jump Start projects, in **Levy** and **Park Hill**. Their efforts helped them secure a \$1,000 grant from the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention for promotional materials. Both projects sponsored multiple outdoor activities, including block party events, and a Trick-or-Trail event in October for little ones in Levy. The Park Hill project sponsored several events, including two Patio on Park Hill street festivals and a Tour de Bark in April, a mile-long dog "race" down Park Hill's main drag.

Little Rock's **12th Street** Jump Start project invited leaders from the South Main (SOMA) district to share their revitalizing secrets, including branding techniques and business tips. In September, the group staged the 12th Street Link Up event, a festival with food and live music giving community members a chance to meet, exchange ideas, and learn about the project. As with the other projects, public infrastructure investment will help lead the way to private investments.

Metroplan staff played an active role with all of these projects, and will remain engaged into the foreseeable future with oversight and funding help. Redevelopment is happening nationwide as

older communities rejuvenate with a walkable, urban feel. The secret behind much of this success is public-private partnership. By rebuilding cities from within, Metroplan's Jump Start projects have helped keep the Central Arkansas region up with the times.

2017 Jump Start Note-ables

Old Town Bryant

- City received TAP grants for sidewalks on N. Elm Street and NW 3rd.
- Old Post Office renovated for Pookie's Gourmet Popcorn shop on N. Reynolds.
- New multifamily housing on S. Hazel and SE 2nd Street conforms to new zoning.

Conway, Markham Street Neighborhood

- City reconstruction of adjacent Spencer and Smith Streets.
- Conway Scrap Metal site clean-up complete and greenspace engineering funded.
- Four-story apartment building announced, JLofts.

Heart of Mayflower

- New connection in downtown, N. Railroad Avenue meets Satterfield Road.
- City considers Master Street Plan amendment for downtown grid.
- Highway 89 Overpass alternative considered.



Metroplan participated in the fun at the 12th Street Link Up event, including Metroplan staffer Daniel Holland, at left. Staff asked festival-goers to "build" their dream neighborhood by identifying the neighborhood's needs. The display emphasized infrastructure improvements and the advantages of walkable places.

Presentations



Amy Whitehead presented to the Board in July, 2017 about the Center for Community and Economic Development, which she directs. Ms. Whitehead drew particular attention to CCED's Community Development Institute, a course offered each summer which educates Arkansas community leaders about methods for boosting economic development along with local quality of life.



Dr. John Landosky, City of Little Rock Bike/Ped Coordinator, describes plans for the Bike Share program to the Metroplan Board in May, 2017. Bantam Strategy Group was selected as the consultant for the implementation of the program. The program should be active in 2018 with 200 bikes on the ground in Little Rock and North Little Rock



Lorie Tudor, Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of ArDOT, visited Metroplan in September, 2017 to describe ArDOT's history, mission, and the challenges with meeting the funding needs for roadway maintenance and new construction with the limited revenue sources available.

Healthy Active Arkansas

Arkansas earned the dubious distinction of most obese state in 2014. Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) is a grassroots initiative to change that. The effort, spearheaded by the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute and the University of Arkansas, brought state and local agencies together to form a 10-year strategic plan for addressing health. A steering committee developed nine focus areas based on Institute of Medicine goals. Groups formed to address wide-ranging challenges from nutrition to physical activity and healthier environments.

In 2017, Metroplan took an active role in the Physical and Built Environment subcommittee. Casey Covington became the

group's priority lead, and other staff shared activity-inducing project examples from across the region. Monthly meetings with representatives from all over the state yielded new tactics to address Arkansas' health challenges, like active transportation plans, inclusive universal design playgrounds, statewide trails, and pop up events to simulate alternative transportation infrastructure. The group also crafted a municipal survey to assess built environments in towns across the state. In September, Miranda Morris presented HAA'S work to Metroplan's Board in hopes that the metro's efforts grow with the support of local officials.



Healthy Active Arkansas has produced a series of videos promoting Complete Streets and the physical and built environment, as well as nutrition, healthy worksites, and others.



Miranda Morris

Investing in Alternatives

ArDOT's October 2017 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) awards announcement proved fruitful for Central Arkansas. The MAP-21 federal transportation legislation empowered states to provide support for alternative transportation projects, like bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, trail facilities, streetscaping, and environmental mitigation activities, through TAP grants. ArDOT allocated \$875,000 in TAP and \$451,000 in RTP funds to area projects.

Ten projects will benefit from TAP and RTP money. Several projects seek to strengthen trail connectivity both locally and regionally. Local trails in Benton, Conway, Little Rock, North Little Rock, and Sherwood will receive funding, as well as Arkansas River Trail and Southwest Trail segments in Pulaski and Saline Counties. In addition, several sidewalks, a streetscaping, and one bridge relocation project were among the recipients.

Metroplan will award its TAP grants in 2018.

ArDOT Projects Awarded in 2017

Transportation Alternatives Program			
County	Sponsor	Project	Award Amount
Faulkner	City of Mount Vernon	Downtown sidewalk improvement project	\$168,000
Lonoke	City of Lonoke	School district sidewalks	\$159,000
Pulaski	City of Jacksonville	Pinewood Elementary sidewalk project	\$132,000
Pulaski	City of North Little Rock	Recycle Bikes for Kids (non-infrastructure)	\$16,000
Saline	Saline County	Old River Bridge	\$400,000

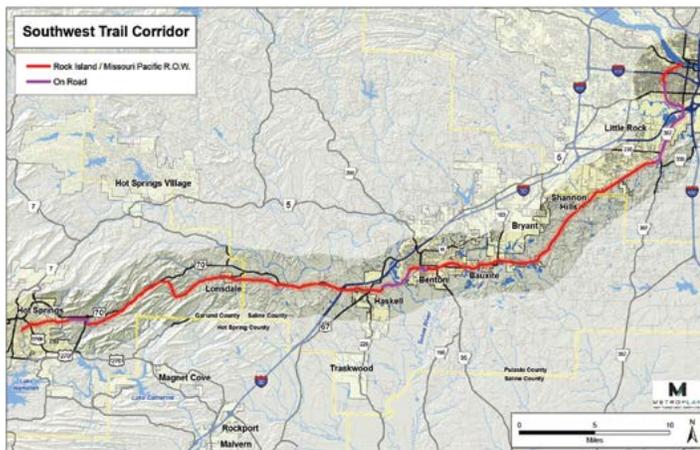
Recreational Trails Program			
County	Sponsor	Project	Award Amount
Lonoke	City of Lonoke	Lonoke Trail	\$65,000
Pulaski	AR Dept. of Parks and Tourism	Pinnacle Mt. State Park shared-use path	\$200,000
Pulaski	City of Little Rock	Ottenheimer Accessibility Trail	\$64,000
Pulaski	U of A Little Rock	Coleman Creek Greenway	\$42,000
Saline	City of Benton	Southwest Trail Loop	80,000



The Dave Ward Dr. pedestrian overpass, in Conway, will safely connect the Stone Dam Trail to the University of Central Arkansas, a burgeoning commercial center, and numerous residences. Area students will be able to walk or ride a bike to campus instead of battling for a parking spot. Illustration credit: Garver and White-Daters & Associates, Inc.

Trail Progress to the Southwest

Metroplan continued to coordinate Southwest Trail efforts in 2017. Since the 2014 Memorandum of Understanding, nine local jurisdictions, citizen-led groups, and four state agencies have contributed invaluable support to the massive undertaking. When completed, the 65-mile trail will stretch from downtown Little Rock to downtown Hot Springs. Its path will trace the former Rock Island-Missouri Pacific Railroad line and the old Southwest Trail, known as Military Road.



FLAP for Trails

The trail is closer to reality thanks to a combined \$4.2 million in grants awarded to Little Rock and Garland, Pulaski, and Saline Counties in 2017. The four jurisdictions' windfall comes courtesy of the Highway Trust Fund's Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), overseen by the Federal Highway Administration. Emphasizing high-use recreation sites and economic generators, the FLAP program supplements State and local resources for public roads, transit systems, and facilities like trails.

Little Rock collected its \$1.6 million award July 15th for the first of three phases, a connection between the Arkansas River Trail and future Southwest Trail. The city proposed a route, next to an active Union Pacific Railroad, under the LaHarpe Bridge to create the Central High Corridor trailhead. Eventually, the trail will tie downtown Little Rock to the Central High School Historic Site and beyond, alongside the current railroad right of way. Three counties, Garland, Pulaski, and Saline, jointly pursued FLAP

money for engineering and design work. An allocation of \$2.6 million will detail a route from Hot Springs National Park to the Little Rock stretch.

New Life for Old Bridge

A key Southwest Trail link in Saline County received Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds from the Arkansas Department of Transportation. The Old River Bridge rehab project, called Saline Crossing, gained an additional \$400,000 in the 2017 ArDOT TAP award cycle. This structure is the second oldest standing bridge in Arkansas, and is in desperate need of restoration. Four phases of work are planned to repair or replace piers, trusses, and decking. Over \$1.5 million in additional Federal and local funds are also committed to the project, and fundraising continues.

Southwest Trail Task Force

During 2017, the Southwest Trail task force conducted several organized hikes on portions of the future trail. The group continues meeting quarterly, exchanging ideas and information about grants and other funding opportunities. There were major strides in 2017, and some segments may begin construction within the next three years.



In January 2017, members of the Southwest Trail task force hiked a 3.5-mile segment of the trail from Geyer Springs Road in Little Rock to Aubrey Lane in Shannon Hills. Participants included representatives from various state agencies, and Metroplan Board members Mayor Mike Kemp of Shannon Hills, Saline County Judge Jeff Arey, and Pulaski County Judge Barry Hyde.

Bike Share Rolls into the Metro

Conway Launches First

Conway, in partnership with Baptist Health, launched Arkansas' first on-demand public bike-sharing service in May. According to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, bike share is a program, often run by local jurisdictions, that allows users to access self-service bike rental stations often for short, spontaneous trips. Bike sharing is a cheap, healthy, and eco-friendly way to traverse a city. The city's efforts are also in line with *Imagine Central Arkansas'* regional multimodal vision.

Initially, the city's five stations house a 20-bicycle fleet. Stations are located on Tucker Creek Trail, Conway Station Park, and in two locations downtown. The system is already a smash hit with the locals, as racks frequently relinquish their bike reserves. Zagster, chosen for its unique docking abilities, manages the bike share. Its method works well in smaller, budget-minded cities because it requires fewer stations. Bikes can be docked anywhere, which allows riders the same flexibility found in large markets with several stations.

How does it work? Bikes, seven-gear "Cruisers", are equipped with adjustable seats, automatic front and rear lights, fenders and chain guards, and an electronic ring lock. Riders can join on an hourly,

monthly, or annual basis, and ride the bike for a continuous 24 hours. Trips under an hour are free, and only \$2 an hour after that. Using the system is easy:

1. Participants download Zagster's mobile app.
2. Enter the bike's number into the app.
3. Unlock the bike when Zagster sends its code.
4. The bike can be locked to any normal rack for mid-trip stops.
5. Return at any station by holding the lock button.
6. Slide the orange tab down and connect the docking cable.
7. Press end ride on the Zagster app.

Coming Soon to Little Rock...

Little Rock and North Little Rock will soon boast a system of their own. In 2017, the cities partnered with Metroplan to bring Bantam Strategy Group and BCycle to the twin cities. A downtown focus is expected, initially, with a 200 "smart bike" fleet set to deploy. The bike share is expected to address Rock Region METROs "last mile problem" that allows transit riders to access bikes at stops further away than ideal from their final destination. Look for BCycle Dash bikes to hit downtown roads in 2018!



Jack Evans Regional Leadership Award

In December, the Metroplan Board bestowed its annual Jack Evans Regional Leadership Award to one of their own. Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola received the nod after being elected National League of Cities 2018 President for a year-long term. Mayor since 2007, Stodola became the first Arkansan to attain the distinction, and will lead the NLC's advocacy, education, research, and membership activities.



Metroplan Board President Art Brooke presented the Jack Evans Award to Mayor Mark Stodola at the December 2017 Board meeting.

Founded in 1924, the NLC

has been instrumental in keeping cities apprised of federal regulations, solutions to common problems, and challenges for the future. NLC represents more than 19,000 cities in the US. Their advocacy work helps craft policies that address challenges in our nation's cities and towns.

At the organization's 2017 City Summit, Stodola recognized that "...cities are taking the lead on the most important issues that impact Americans." As President, his priorities are preparing cities' workforces to be competitive in a modern global economy, expanding equity and opportunity, closing the economic divide, and growing prosperous American cities.

The Jack Evans Regional Leadership Award was established in 1993 to honor

the late Sherwood mayor. The prize is granted to Central Arkansans who demonstrate outstanding public service and advance best regional planning practices. For his part, Mayor Stodola joins a decorated list of past recipients.

Metroplan Staff News

*Metro*trends wins another award



The 2017 *Metro*trends *Economic Review and Outlook* received a Bronze-level award from the Arkansas Advertising Federation, Arkansas Chapter, in the category of Publication Cover Design. Metroplan's Lynn Bell designed the winning entry.

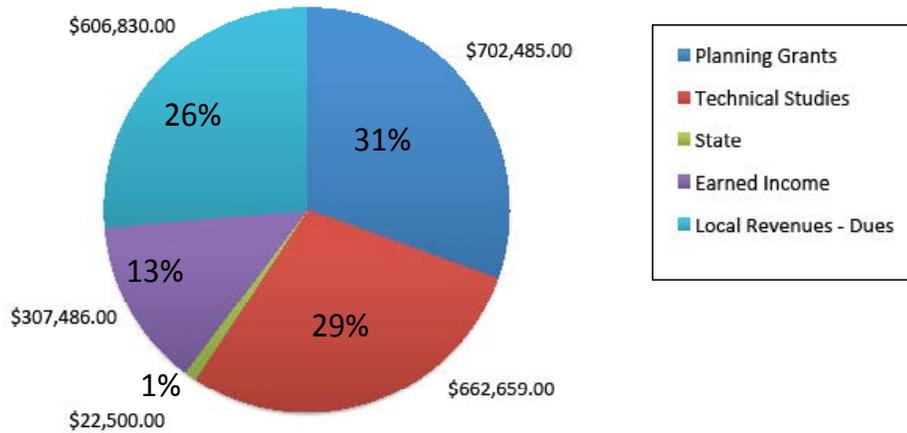
Metroplan's Newest Staff Member



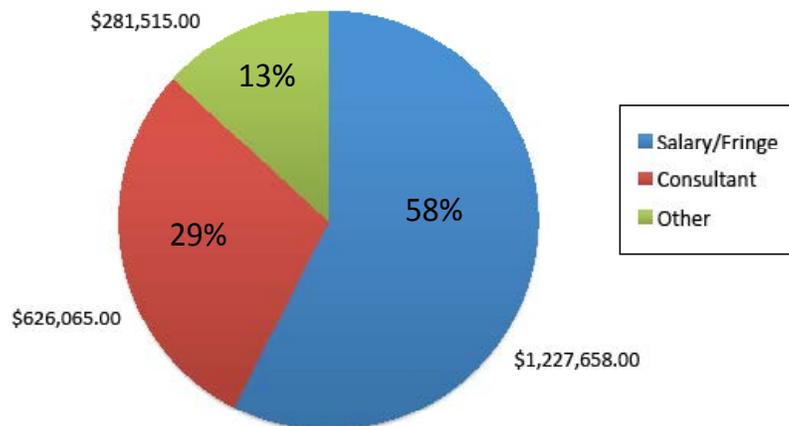
Metroplan welcomed La'Keshia Stewart to the planning staff in 2017. Ms. Stewart earned a BA in Political Science from Rust College and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from Alabama A&M University. She is responsible for public outreach, social media, and planning.

Metroplan 2017 Revenue and Expenditures

Revenue



Expenses



Total Revenue	\$2,301,960.00
Total Expenses	\$2,135,238.00
Revenue over Expenses	\$166,722.00

2017 Metroplan Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Mayor Art Brooke
City of Ward

SECRETARY

Judge Jim Baker
Faulkner County

VICE PRESIDENT

Mayor Jill Dabbs
City of Bryant

TREASURER

Mayor Joe Smith
City of North Little Rock

Mayor Paul Mitchell
City of Alexander

Mr. Keith Keck
Hot Springs Village

Mayor Michael Nash
City of Traskwood

Mayor Bernadette Chamberlain
City of Austin

Mayor Gary Fletcher
City of Jacksonville

Mayor Terry Don Robinson
City of Wooster

Mayor Bill Russell
City of Bauxite

Mayor Mark Stodola
City of Little Rock

Mayor McKinzie L. Riley
City of Wrightsville

Mayor David Mattingly
City of Benton

Mayor Wayne McGee
City of Lonoke

Mayor James Firestone
City of Vilonia

Mayor Bill Cypert
City of Cabot

Mayor Mike Watson
City of Maumelle

Judge Jim Baker
Faulkner County

Mayor David Graf
City of Cammack Village

Mayor Randy Holland
City of Mayflower

Judge Randy Pruitt
Grant County

Mayor Bart Castleberry
City of Conway

Mayor Jonathon Hawkins
City of Mount Vernon

Judge Doug Erwin
Lonoke County

Mayor Sammy Hartwick
City of Greenbrier

Mayor Mike Kemp
City of Shannon Hills

Judge Barry Hyde
Pulaski County

Mayor Sam Higdon
City of Guy

Mayor Joe Wise
City of Sheridan

Judge Jeff Arey
Saline County

Mayor Janie Lyman
City of Haskell

Mayor Virginia Young
City of Sherwood

Ms. Jessie Jones
Arkansas Department of
Transportation

Mr. Jarod Varner/
Ms. Wanda Crawford
Rock Region METRO

2017 Metroplan Staff

Tab Townsell

Executive Director

Casey Covington, PE, AICP

Deputy Director

Transportation Engineer

CARTS Study Director

Cindy Segebarth

Administrator

Lynn Bell

Graphics Specialist

Hans Haustein

GIS Planner

Daniel Holland

Planner

Jonathan Lupton, AICP

Research Planner

Susan Markman, AICP

Transportation Planner/
Title IV/ADA /504

Jeff Runder

GIS Planner

Allen Skaggs

GIS/Planning Technician

La'Kesha Stewart

Planner/Public Outreach

Elizabeth Thomas

Scanning Technician

Iris Woods

Receptionist

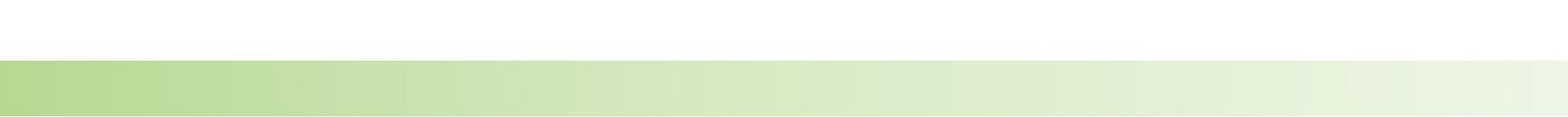
Prepared by: Jonathan Lupton: writing and editing
Daniel Holland: writing and editing
Lynn Bell: graphics and layout
All photos are by Metroplan staff except where noted.

This report was funded in part through grants from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. The views and opinions of the authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Metroplan complies with all civil rights provisions of federal statutes and related authorities that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Therefore, Metroplan does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, age, national origin, religion or disability, in the admission, access to and treatment in Metroplan's programs and activities, as well as Metroplan's hiring or employment practices. Complaints of alleged discrimination and inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies may be directed to Susan Markman, ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator, 501 West Markham Street, Suite B, Little Rock, AR 72201, (501) 372-3300, or the following e-mail address: smarkman@metroplan.org. (Hearing impaired may dial 711.)

This notice is available from the ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator in large print, on audiotape and in Braille.





METROPLAN

SMART PLANNING MAKES SMART PLACES.