



REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTERS UPDATE

Timothy Canan
TPB Planning Data and Research Program Director

Greg Goodwin
COG Regional Planner

TPB Technical Committee
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National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

Agenda Item 7

Regional Activity Centers and Transportation Planning

- Good land use planning **IS** an effective regional transportation planning strategy.
- TPB's work program calls for coordinating regional land use and transportation planning to encourage favorable future development patterns that will help optimize transportation investments and promote mobility and accessibility.
- Work program activities include supporting and coordinating with the COG Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) in its work activities:
 - Cooperative Forecast updates
 - **Regional Activity Centers**
 - Analyzing development, demographic and economic trends and their effects on future growth, housing, and transportation.



Regional Activity Centers

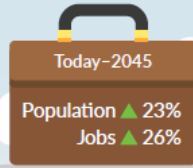
- Concept first proposed by the TPB in its 1998 Vision - calling for the use of Regional Activity Centers to help develop an **“interconnected transportation system that enhances quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy . . . ”**
 - Walkable mix of jobs, housing, services, and recreation
 - Help reduce automobile dependence
 - Optimize existing infrastructure
 - Priority locations for federal employment
 - Prioritize transportation and infrastructure investment



THE CHALLENGE

People travel from their homes to find jobs and opportunities. But jobs and housing are often not near each other, leading to longer commutes. A lack of travel options and affordable housing near jobs leads to congestion and delays.

As the region grows, how can we improve travel for all?



Since 2010, the region has focused on building new homes in Activity Centers, where housing, jobs, and transit are all close to each other.



But, Activity Centers are home to just 29% of the population, despite containing 66% of the jobs.

THE SOLUTION

Here's how we can reduce congestion for everyone, while expanding housing options for people who want to live closer to where jobs are.



Create and support policies that encourage building more housing

- 320,000 new units needed by 2030
- 75% to be affordable and near Activity Centers and transit

Improve travel options in and between Activity Centers

This approach works! More choices mean less congestion.

How we get around is changing

Drive Alone	▼ 13%
Take Transit	▲ 7%
Use Active Travel	▲ Doubled
Telework	▲ Tripled

(Change in each travel type's share of daily commutes, 2001-2019)

THE IMPACT

Source: TPB



Reduced traffic and emissions from transportation



Expanded travel options and shorter trips



Vibrant communities where people can live, work, and play



A stronger economy and improved quality of life

The National Capital Region Transportation Plan (NC RTP), *Visualize 2045*, contains a set of aspirational initiatives, including “Bring Jobs and Housing Closer Together.”

Encouraging future housing and employment growth in Regional Activity Centers helps the region make progress toward this aspiration.



How TPB Uses COG's Regional Activity Centers in Regional Transportation Planning

- Selection criteria for TPB Technical Assistance Grant Programs (TLC, RRSP, TWR)
- Visualize 2050 and TIP Project Submissions...Is the project located in/near a Regional Activity Center?
- Tracking the region's progress against policy goals/initiatives—How much future growth will occur inside/outside Regional Activity Centers?
- Technical analyses of travel and growth trends inside/outside Regional Activity Centers

What are Regional Activity Centers?

- Locations that will accommodate future growth and support prosperity, sustainability, accessibility, and livability (Region Forward Goals).
 - urban centers
 - traditional towns
 - priority growth areas
 - transit hubs
- Proposed in the 1998 Transportation Planning Board's Vision
- 1st Activity Centers selected in 1999
 - updated in 2002, 2007 and 2013
- Activity Centers are updated following every major round of Cooperative Forecasts



Round 10.0 Regional Activity Centers Update Timeline

Q1 2024

- Committee approved eligibility criteria
- COG staff and committee-members identify data and specific metrics

Q2 2024

- Review comprehensive plans / identify local geography with jurisdiction staff
- Apply criteria for all locally-defined Policy Area geography

Q3 2024 and Q4 2024

- One-on-one meetings with jurisdiction staff with initial Round 10.0 RAC Selection
- COG staff re-analyzed data/re-selected geography where appropriate

Q4 2024 and Q1 2025

- COG staff transmitted final Round 10.0 RAC selection via GIS data and technical memoranda
- Jurisdiction staff finalizes RAC names and engages local elected officials on update results

March 2025

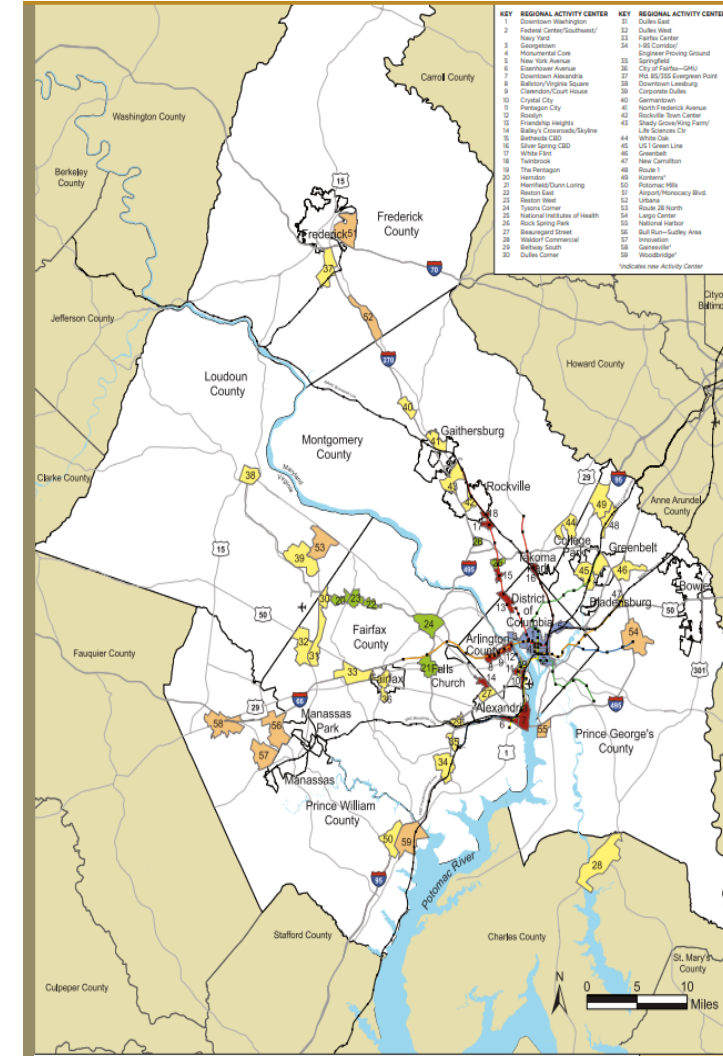
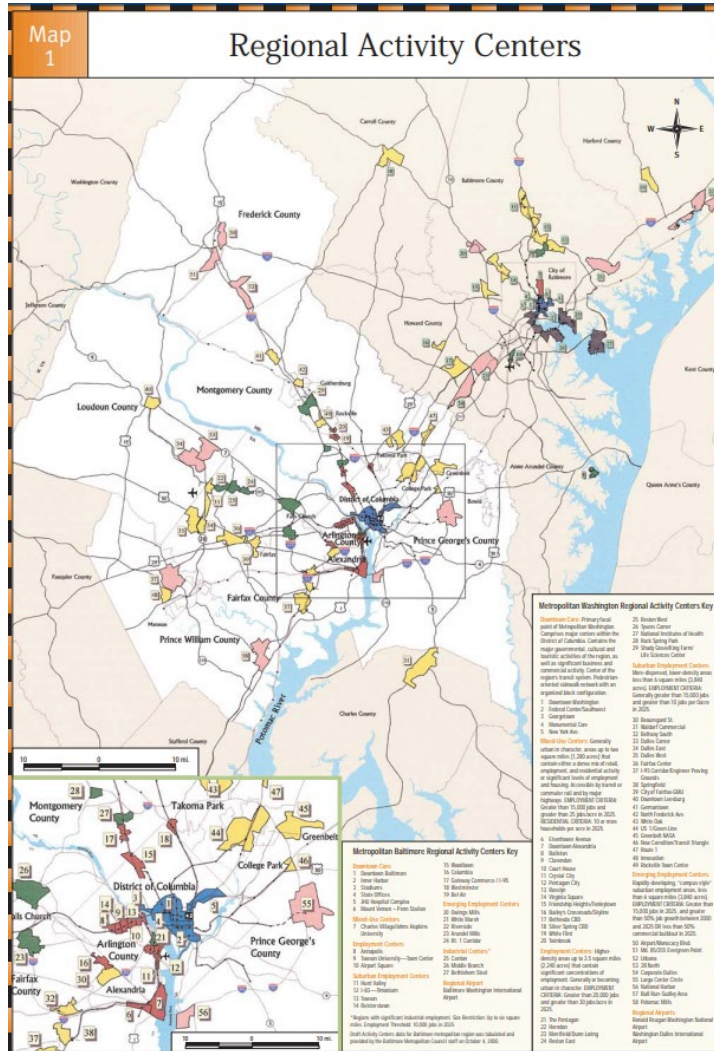
- PDTAC votes to approve new Round 10.0 RACs



First announcement of the Round 10.0 Regional Activity Centers Map update – September 2023



Earlier Versions of the Regional Activity Centers Map



COG Board Approved Core Attributes



Policy: In base year (2023), the center or priority growth area should be designated in a jurisdiction's adopted comprehensive/general plan or other locally-adopted land use plan.



Density: In Horizon Year (2050), have a person per acre density (employment + population) that falls within the top one-half of densities within the jurisdiction.

Median Density Threshold Varied for Each Jurisdiction
in the Density Analysis



COG Board Approved Secondary Attributes for Regional Activity Centers: 2 out of 4 Required



Intersection Density: In base year (2023) have at least 55 intersections per square mile.



Transit Capacity: In base year (2023) have

- Existing high-capacity/performance transit (e.g. Metrorail, BRT, commuter rail, OR light rail) OR
- A planned transit station identified in the constrained element of Visualize 2045, OR
- A planned transit station with dedicated local funding



Land Use Mix: In base year (2023), have a locally-adopted land use plan/ordinance that encourages mixed-use development (e.g. through a mixed-use designation, form-based codes, or overlay zoning).

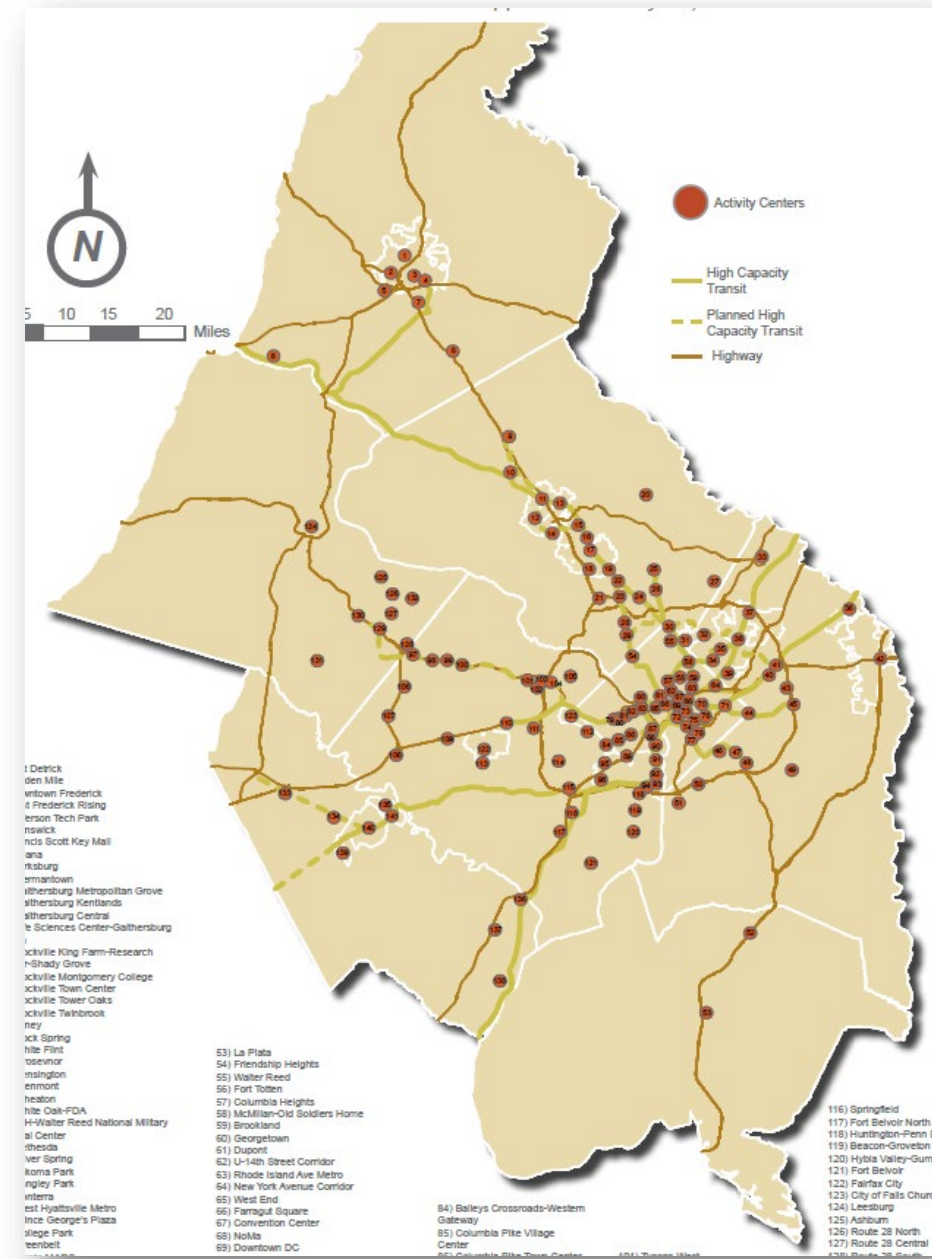


Housing & Transportation Affordability: Combined housing and transportation costs do not exceed 45% of regional median income as measured by the H + T Index.



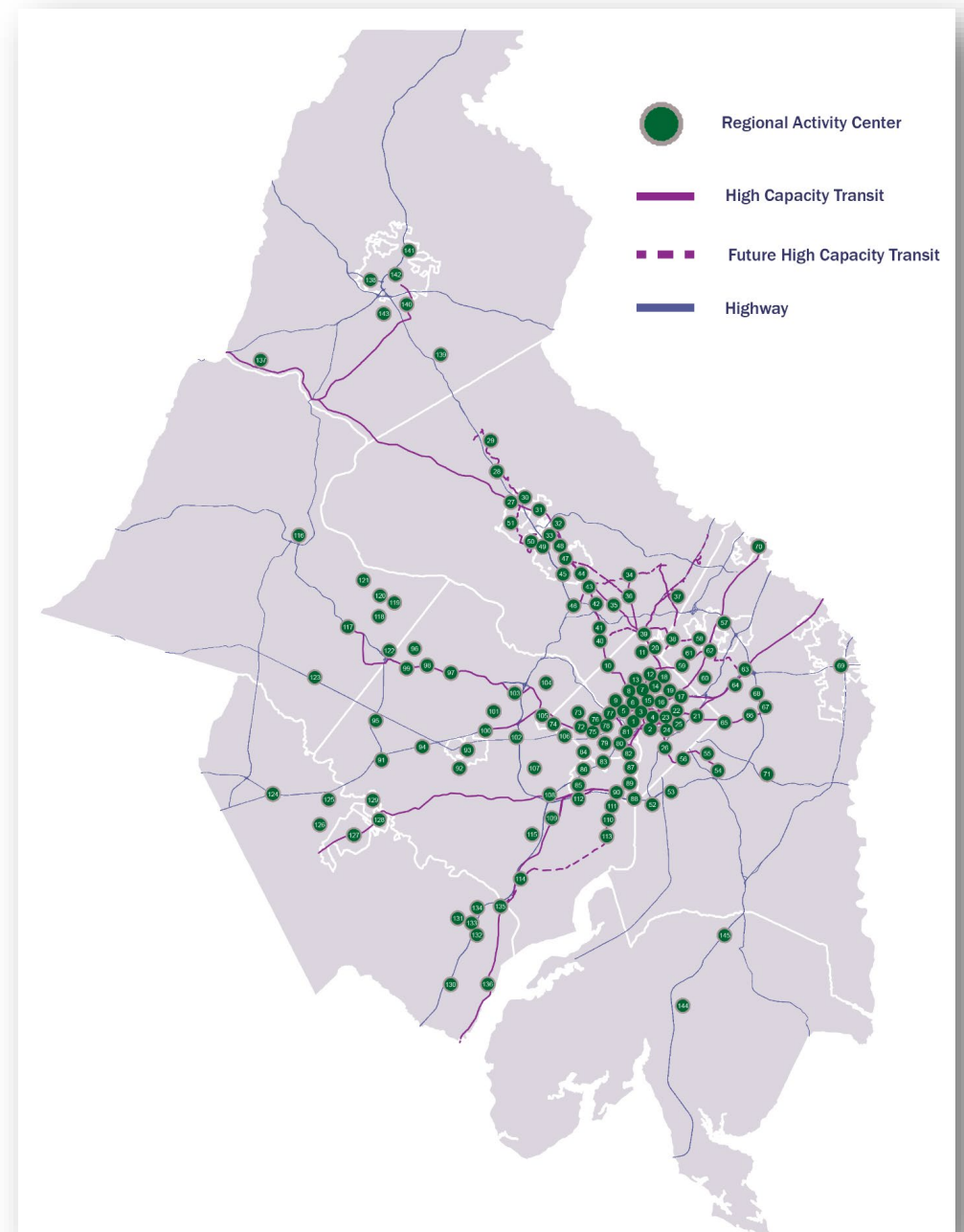
Round 8.0 Regional Activity Centers Map

141 Round 8.0 Regional Activity Centers approved by COG Board on January 13, 2013



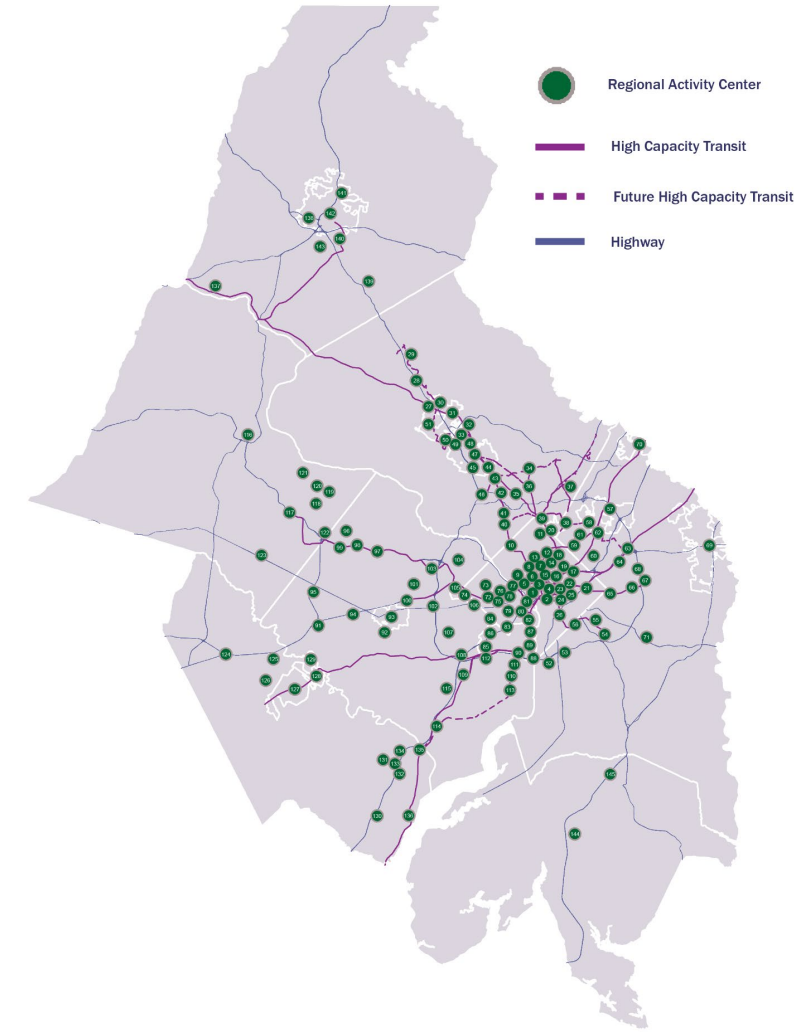
Round 10.0 Regional Activity Centers Map

145 Round 10.0 Regional Activity Centers pending approval by the COG Board in May 2025



Analysis of Round 10.0 Regional Activity Centers

Attribute	Round 8.0 RACs	Round 10.0 RACs	Change
Number of RACs	141	145	2.8%
Total Square Miles	324.6	216.8	-33.6%
RAC mean in Square Miles	2.3	1.5	-34.8%
Total Associated TAZs	896	836	-6.7%
Associated TAZs Square Miles	325	270	-16.9%
Mean TAZ Size in Acres	232	207	-10.8%
2050 High Capacity Transit Stations	248	238	-4.0%
RACs with a HCT	99	99	—



Timothy Canan

TPB Program Director, Planning Data and Research Program

(202) 962-3280

tcanan@mwkog.org

Greg Goodwin

COG Senior Regional Planner

(202) 962-3254

ggoodwin@mwkog.org

mwkog.org/tpb

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 300

Washington, DC 20002



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