

# REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTERS UPDATE

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TPB Technical Committee April 4, 2025



# 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





National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board | Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments



#### VISION STATEMENT

In the 21st Century, the Washington metropolitan region remains a vibrant world capital, with a transportation system that provides efficient movement of people and goods. This system promotes the region's economy and environmental quality, and operates in an attractive and safe setting-it is a system that serves everyone. The system is fiscally sustainable, promotes areas of concentrated growth, manages both demand and capacity, employs the best technology, and joins rail, roadway, bus, air, water, pedestrian and bicycle facilities into a fully interconnected network.

Adopted by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board on October 21, 1998

#### Policy Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

#### Policy Goal

The Washington metropolitan region's transportation system will provide reasonable access at reasonable cost to everyone in the region.

#### Objective:

- A comprehensive range of choices for users of the region's transportation system.
- 2 | Accurate, up-to-date and understandable transportation system information which is available to everyone in real time, and is user-friendly for first-time visitors and residents, regardless of mode of travel or language of the traveler.
- 3 | Fair and reasonable opportunities for access and mobility for persons with special accessibility needs.
- 4 | Convenient bicycle and pedestrian access.

#### Strategies

- 1 | Plan, implement, and maintain a truly integrated, multi-modal regional transportation system.
- 2 | Plan and implement a tourist-friendly system that encourages the use of transit and provides international signage and information.
- 3 | Make the region's transportation facilities safer, more accessible, and less intimidating for pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons with special needs.
- 4 | Plan and implement a uniform fare system for transit and commuter rail.
- 5 Adopt a regional transit planning process and plan, with priority to uniformity, connectivity, equity, cost effectiveness and reasonable fares.

#### Policy Goal 2

The Washington metropolitan region will develop, implement, and maintain an interconnected transportation system that enhances quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region, including a healthy regional core and dynamic regional activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing and services in a walkable environment.

#### Objectives

- 1 | Economically strong regional core.
- 2 | Economically strong regional activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing, services, and recreation in a walkable environment.
- 3 | A web of multi-modal transportation connections which provide convenient access (including improved mobility with reduced reliance on the automobile) between the regional core and regional activity centers, reinforcing existing transportation connections and creating new connections where appropriate.
- 4 Improved internal mobility with reduced reliance on the automobile within the regional core and within regional activity centers.
- 5 | Efficient and safe movement of people, goods, and information, with minimal adverse impacts on residents and the environment.

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### BRING JOBS AND HOUSING CLOSER TOGETHER





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.

#### 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

**o** Improve travel options in and between Activity Centers

This approach works! More choices mean less congestion. - - -





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



• How we get around is changing

Drive Alone ▼ 13%

Take Transit — — — — — ▲ /%
Use Active Travel — — — — ▲ Doubled

Telework — ▲ Tripled

ange in each travel type's share of daily commutes, 2001–2019)

# The National Capital Region Transportation Plan (NCRTP), 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.

#### THE IMPACT



Reduced traffic and emissions from transportation



Expanded travel options and shorter trips



Vibrant communities where people can live, work, and play



Source: TPB

A stronger economy and improved quality of life

Plan Together. Prosper Together.

Presspertation Planning Beard Back local transportation projects that support these efforts.

visualize2045.org Think regionally, act locally.



# 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
- priority growth areas

- traditional towns
- transit hubs
- Proposed in the 1998 Transportation Planning Board's Vision
- 1<sup>st</sup> 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

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

#### Q4 2024 and Q1 2025

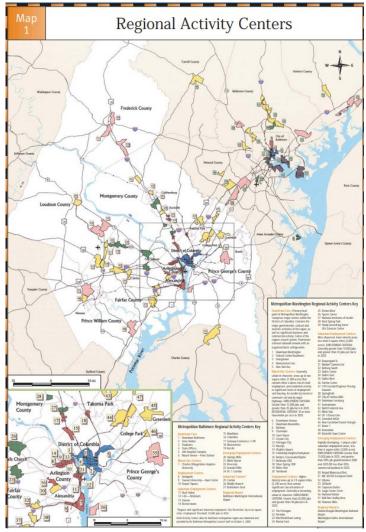
- COG staff transmitted final Round 10.0 RAC selection via GIS data and technical memoranda
- Jurisdiction staff finalizes RAC names and engages local elected officials on update results

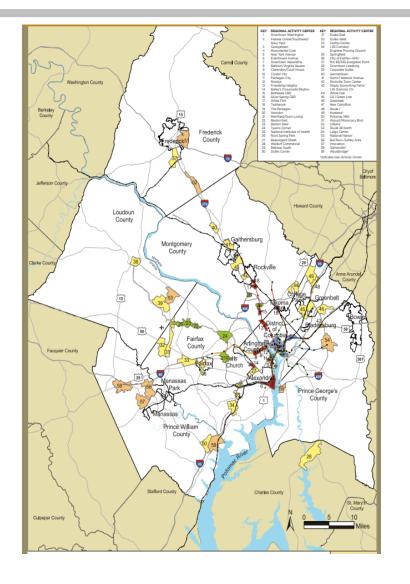
#### March 2025

> PDTAC votes to approve new Round 10.0 RACs



## **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 bae 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).

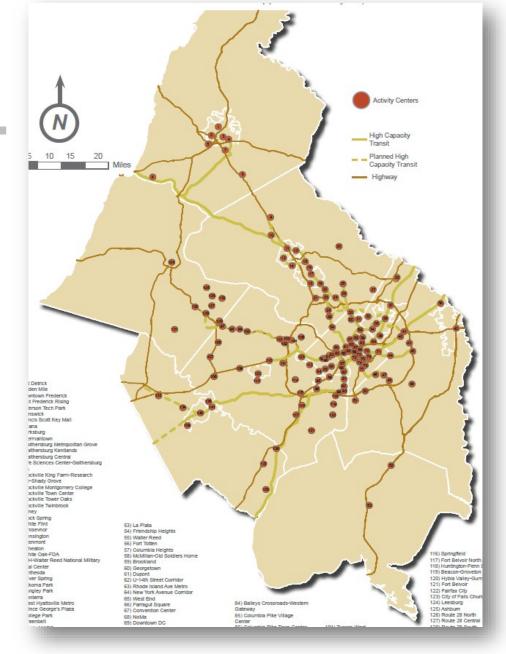


**Housing & Transportation Affordability:** Combined housing and transportation costs do not exceed 45% of regional median income as measured by the H + T Index.



# Round 8.0 Regional Activity Centers Map

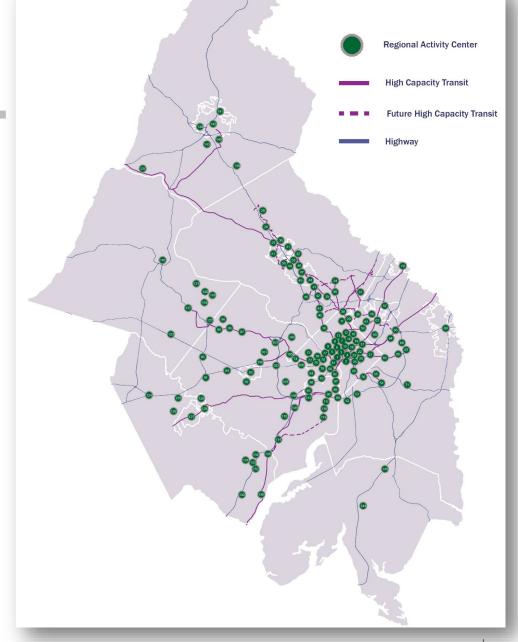
141 Round 8.0 Regional Activity
Centers approved by COG Board on
January 13, 2013





# Round 10.0 Regional Activity Centers Map

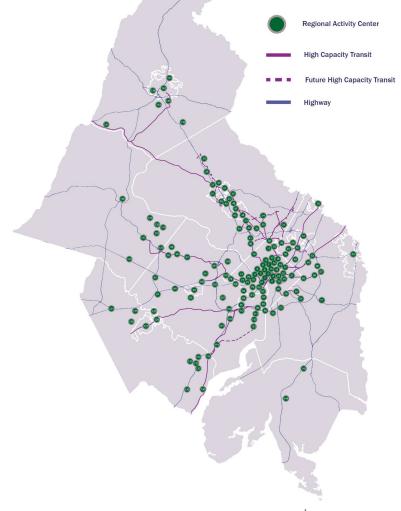
145 Round 10.0 Regional Activity Centers pending approval by the COG Board in May 2025





# **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	<u></u>





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