



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Final September 2020

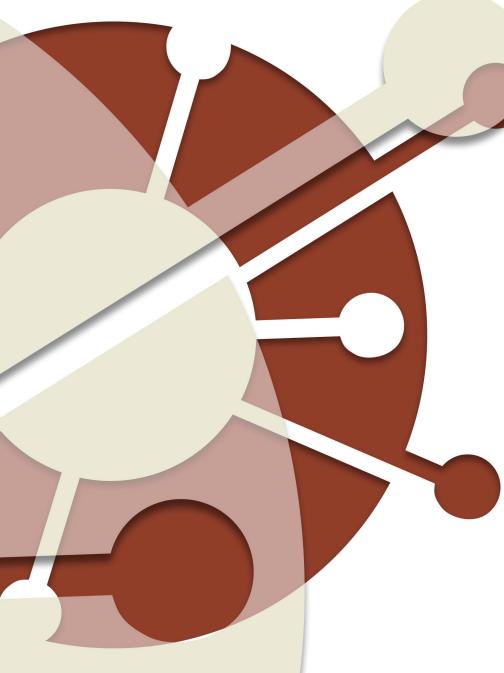


"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will themselves not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die."

> – Daniel Burnham, American Architect and Urban Designer



2800 King Street SE Smyrna, GA 30080 www.smyrnaga.gov





City of Smyrna Transit Analysis and Feasibility Study

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Final September 2020





#### **MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR**

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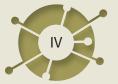
The City of Smyrna is pleased to announce the development and adoption of its first transit vision—*Smyrna Connects*. As a result of this newly-adopted transit vision, the City is now in a much stronger position to advocate for transit improvements that impact our City and influence transit priorities in the region.

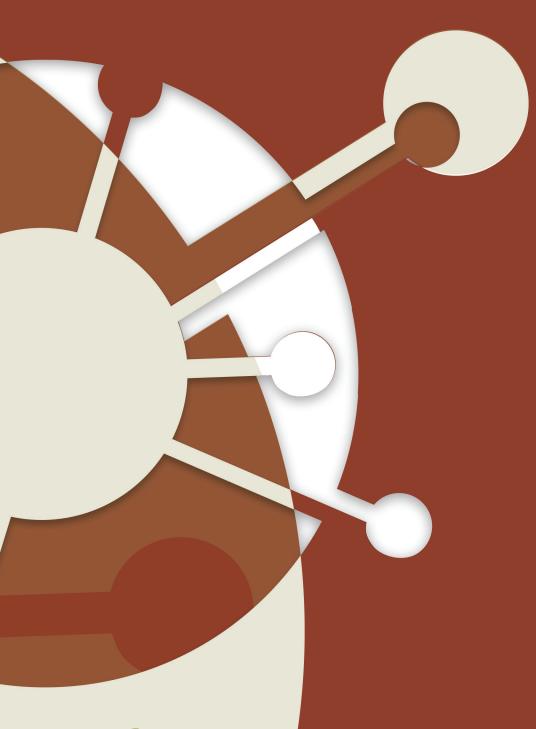
As Mayor of Smyrna, I am committed to working collaboratively with the City Council and our partners throughout the region to advocate for *Smyrna Connects*, which offers opportunities to expand mobility options for citizens and visitors and enhance job access for employees and businesses throughout the region.

Please join us in supporting the Plan of Action that will put us on the path to this transit vision and make Smyrna and adjacent communities an even better place to live, work, and play.









# Mayor and Council

The City of Smyrna is governed by the Mayor and Council members that represent the the city's seven Wards.



Mayor Derek Norton



Glenn Pickens



Ward 2 Austin Wagner



Ward 3 Travis Lindley



ward 4 Charles Welch



Ward 5 Susan Wilkinson



Ward 6 and Mayor Pro Tem Tim Gould



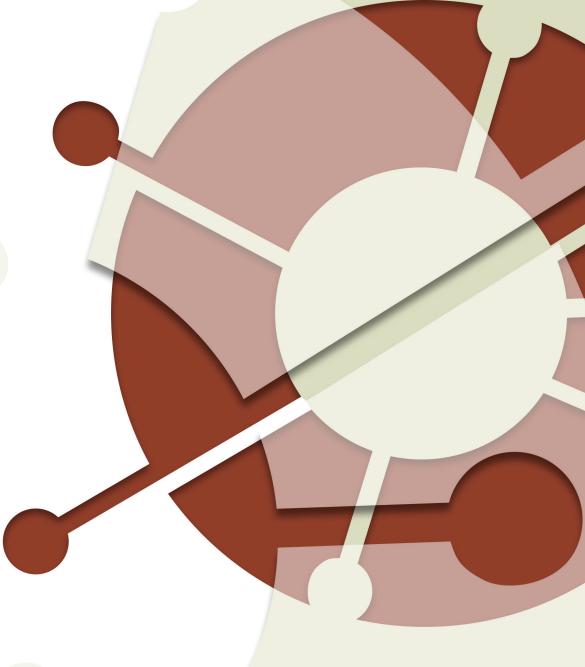
Ward 7 Lewis Wheaton

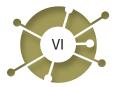




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In this Executive Summary, the City of Smyrna is pleased to present a comprehensive, consensus-driven transit vision for the city and adjacent areas. This vision resulted from the *Smyrna Connects* Transit Analysis and Feasibility Study conducted by the City of Smyrna in collaboration with agency and jurisdiction partners throughout the region. The project was funded by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the City of Smyrna.





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GDQT

CUMBERLAND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

**∧**TL╬

# **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

- 1. Develop a consensus-driven transit vision.
- 2. Reinforce broader objectives of the City of Smyrna:
  - Livable communities & corridors
  - Economic development
  - Growth management
  - Environmental stewardship
  - Traffic mitigation
  - Connected & walkable communities
- 3. Communicate the City's transit vision to Cobb County, the Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL), and other transit partners in the region.



City of Smyrna | Smyrna Connects Executive Summary

1

Planning Process



#### through a five-step planning process. These five steps include the following, with public outreach and stakeholder engagement conducted throughout the process:

- 1. Existing and Future Conditions
- 2. Transit Needs & Market Assessment

SMYRNA CONNECTS PLANNING PROCESS

The Smyrna Connects Transit Vision was developed

- 3. Service Improvement Strategies
- 4. Investment Scenarios
- 5. Transit Master Plan





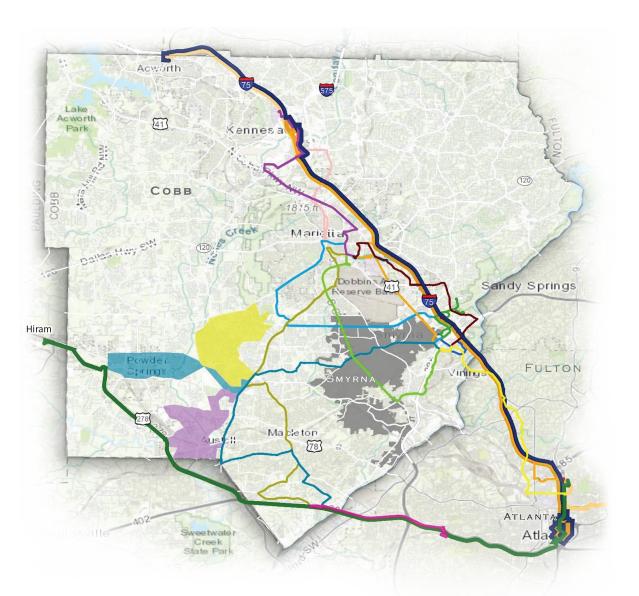


# Existing Transit Services

# **COBB COUNTY**

Existing transit services in Cobb County include CobbLinc local routes, MARTA routes, GRTA routes, and CobbLinc Express routes.

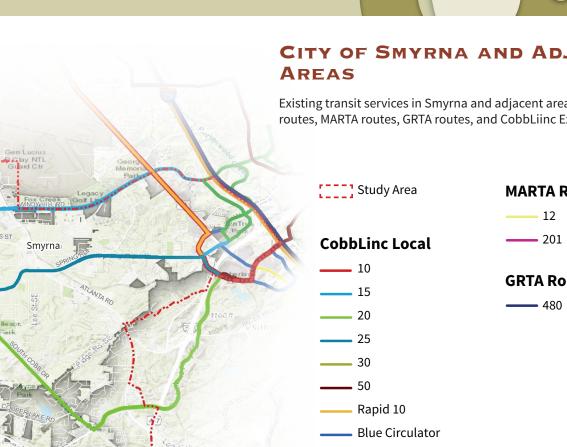
| CobbLinc Local   | CobbLinc Express   |
|------------------|--------------------|
| <b>——</b> 10     | 100                |
| <b>——</b> 15     | 101                |
| 20               | 102                |
| 25               | MARTA Routes       |
| <b>——</b> 30     |                    |
| 40               | 201                |
| <b>—</b> 45      |                    |
| <b>—</b> 50      | <b>GRTA Routes</b> |
| —— Rapid 10      | <b>——</b> 476      |
| Blue Circulator  | 480                |
| Green Circulator |                    |
| Flex 1           |                    |
| Flex 2           |                    |
| Flex 3           |                    |
|                  |                    |





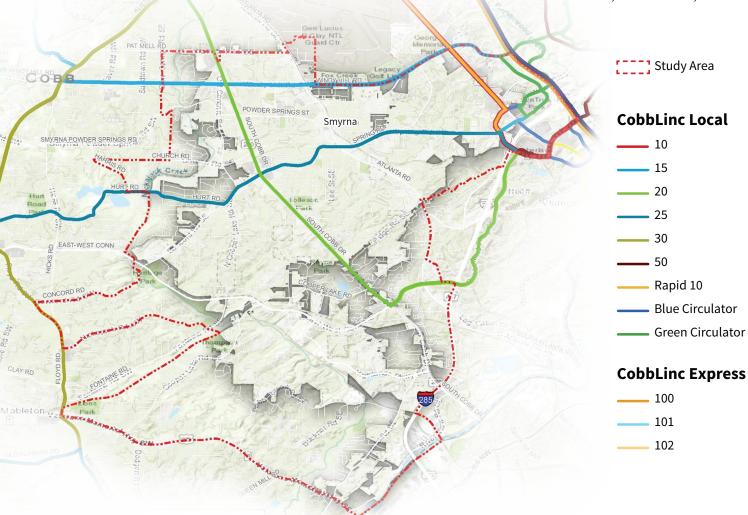


Existing Transit Services



# **CITY OF SMYRNA AND ADJACENT**

Existing transit services in Smyrna and adjacent areas include CobbLinc local routes, MARTA routes, GRTA routes, and CobbLiinc Express routes.





## **GRTA Routes**

**City of Smyrna** | *Smyrna Connects Executive Summary* 

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Green Circulator



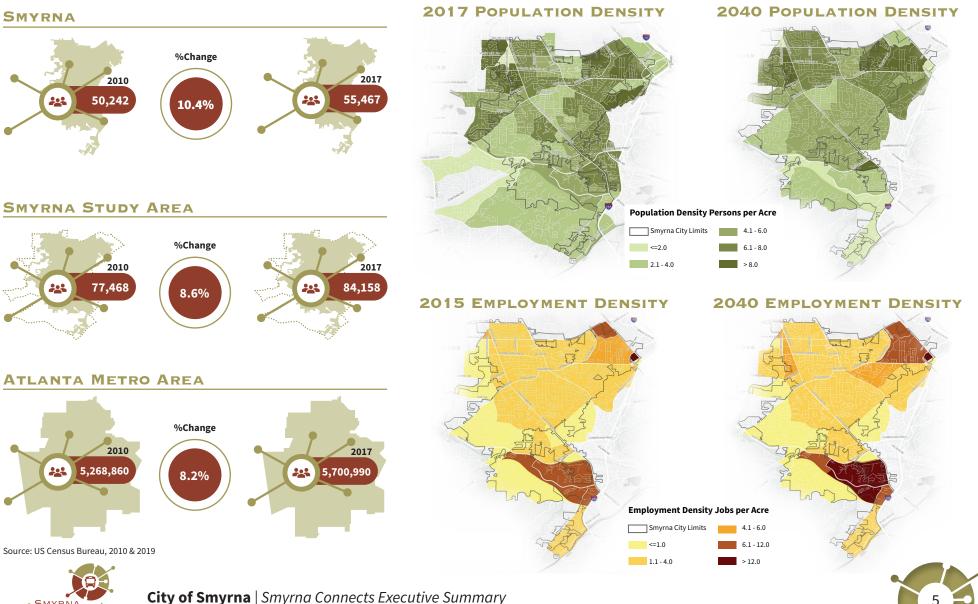


# Population and Employment



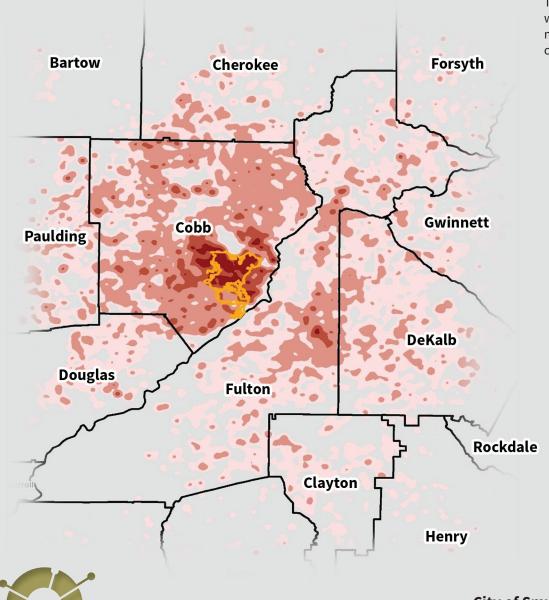
SMYRN

## **POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT DENSITY**



Smyrna Workers





# WHERE SMYRNA WORKERS LIVE

The home locations of workers commuting to Smyrna are concentrated within and adjacent to the City boundary. However, as illustrated in the map, many Smyrna workers live throughout Cobb County, in Atlanta, or in other counties throughout the region.

## Home Locations of Workers Commuting into Smyrna



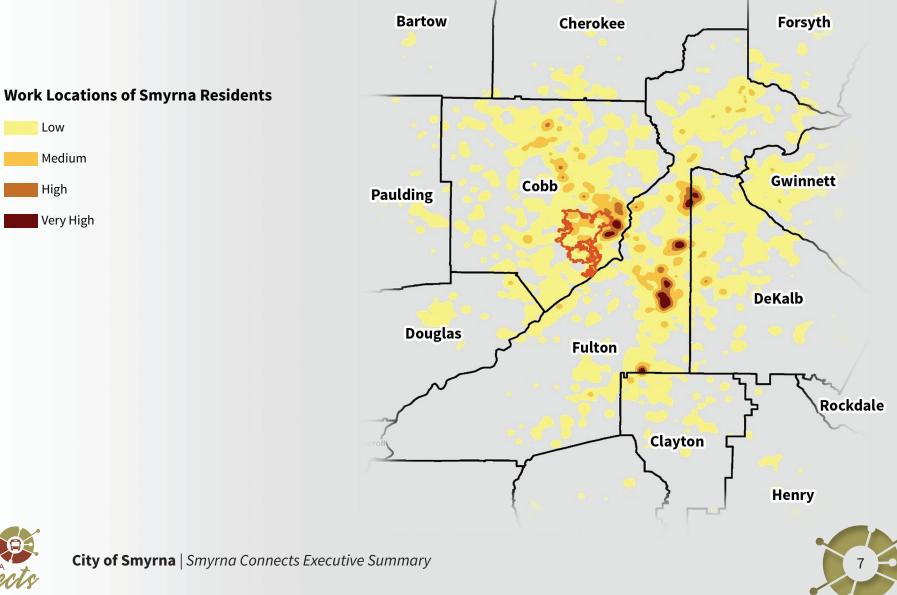




Smyrna Residents

# WHERE SMYRNA RESIDENTS WORK

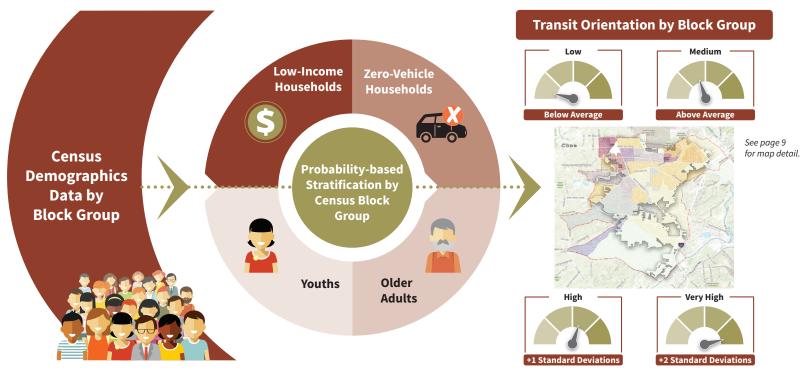
Smyrna residents work in locations throughout the greater Metro Atlanta area but the highest concentration of work locations is in Cumberland, downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Perimeter Center.



Transit Markets

As described and illustrated below and on the following pages, transit markets for Smyrna were evaluated from three perspectives:

- 1. **Traditional rider markets** are population segments that historically have had a higher propensity to use transit or are dependent on public transit for their transportation needs. Traditional transit users typically include older adults, youths, and households that are low-income or have no car.
- 2. **Choice rider markets** are potential riders living in higher-density areas that may choose to use transit as a commuting or transportation alternative. This analysis uses industry-standard density thresholds to identify the areas within the study area that exhibit transit-supportive residential and employee densities today and in the future.
- 3. **Internal travel markets** are Smyrna residents and visitors traveling within the city. Trip tables/matrices from the regional travel model, prepared for forecasting all key modes of travel in the region, were used to identify travel patterns by different population groups.



## **EVALUATING TRADITIONAL TRANSIT MARKETS**

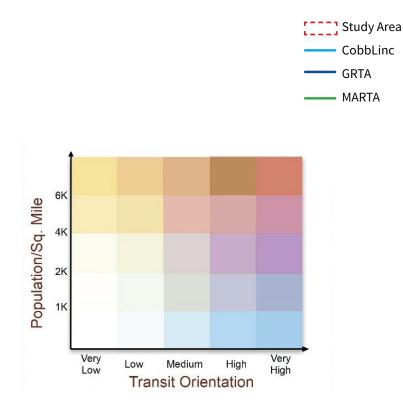






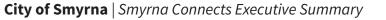
# **TRADITIONAL TRANSIT MARKETS**

Traditional transit markets refer to demographics that have demonstrated a greater likelihood of using transit. The map to the right shows the highest concentration of traditional transit markets in the northern, northwestern, and western areas of Smyrna.









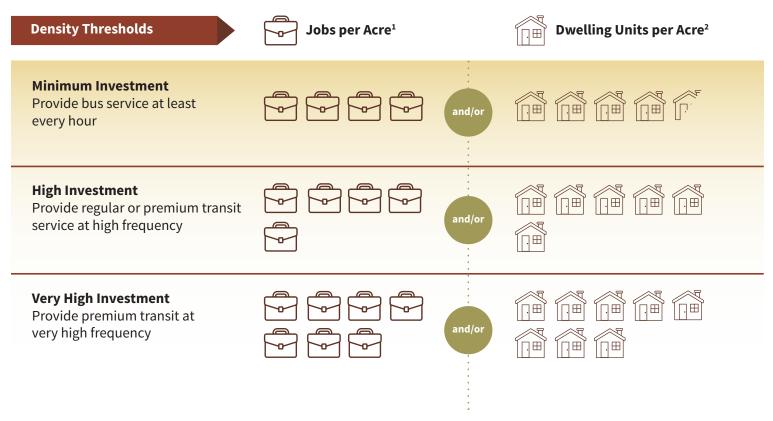


Transit Markets



# **DISCRETIONARY TRANSIT MARKET DENSITY THRESHOLDS**

Discretionary transit markets include residents and workers who have transportation alternatives and choose to use transit. These markets are generally correlated to job and dwelling unit densities, and then industry-standard thresholds can be applied to identify areas for minimum, high, and very high levels of transit investment.



<sup>1</sup>Based on review of research on relationship between transit technology and employment densities.

<sup>2</sup> TRB, National Research Council, TCRP Report 16, Volume 1 (1996), "Transit and Land Use Form," November 2002, MTC Resolution 3434 TOD Policy for Regional Transit Expansion Projects.



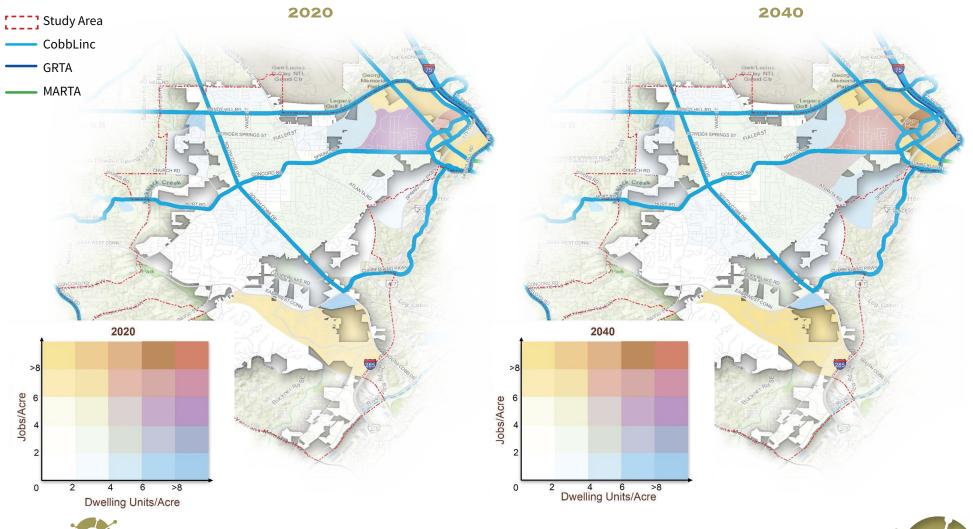




Transit Markets

# **DISCRETIONARY TRANSIT MARKETS**

In 2020 and 2040, the highest concentration of discretionary transit markets are located in northeast Smyrna and the Cumberland area.





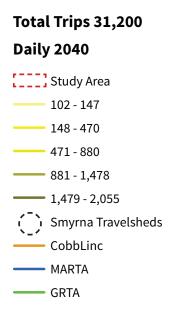


Travel Patterns



This map illustrates the daily travel flows between Smyrna's seven wards, with the greatest travel reflected by the thicker and darker lines on the map.





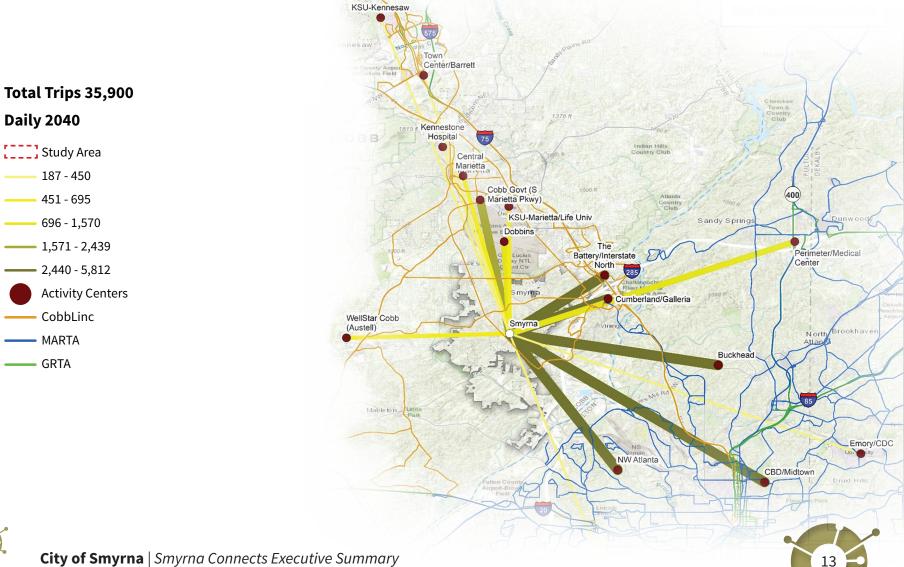




Travel Patterns

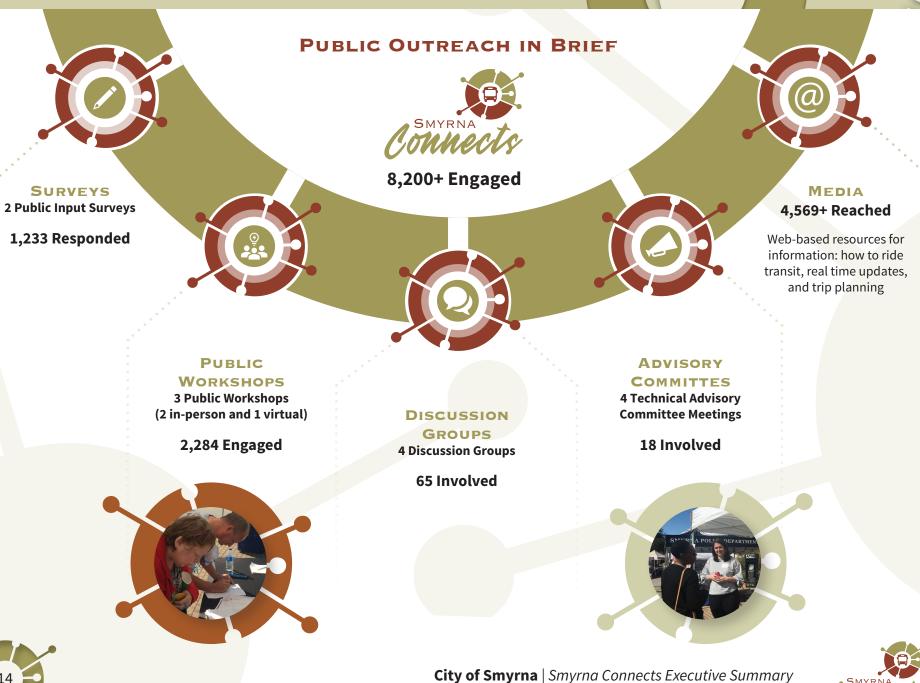
# **DAILY REGIONAL TRAVEL FLOWS (2040)**

This map illustrates the projected 2040 daily regional travel flows between Smyrna and other parts of the region. The greatest travel flows are to Cumberland, Buckhead, Midtown, northwest Atlanta, and Marietta.





# Public Outreach





Public Outreach



- Local/adjacent areas quickly connected
- Regional connections to north and shouth
- High-frequency transit
- Attractive transit technologies such as rail, BRT
- Right mix of transit services
- Small-area internal connectors with smaller buses
- Better infrastructure
- Enhanced marketing





**LEARNING FROM STAKEHOLDERS** 





Transit Opportunities

## TRANSIT OPPORTUNITY FRAMEWORK

Prior to the development of needs, a framework was used to identify the transit opportunities in Smyrna and to support the incremental development of a transit vision for the city. The framework is based on the functions that various transit services and technologies serve in relation to the mobility and accessibility needs of the community and how these services and technologies come together in a vision to connect Smyrna internally and with the region.

The framework shown on the following page depicts an inverse relationship between mobility and accessibility—as a transit technology provides increased mobility, it inherently provides less accessibility, and vice versa.

- Mobility Providing high-speed and reliable travel between major activity centers and destinations; the focus is to get from one place to another as quickly as possible and typically is characterized by longer trips.
- Accessibility Providing access to and circulation within higher-density places that are characterized by diverse land uses; the focus is to provide convenient connections to land uses and typically is characterized by shorter trips and circulation within activity centers.

The framework for *Smyrna Connects* defines five levels of transit opportunity, each derived from a different mix of mobility and accessibility.

#### **TRANSIT OPPORTUNITY LEVELS**

#### Level 1

Service/technology gaps are characterized by the need for very low mobility and very high accessibility/ circulation. This may include areas or corridors with low population and/or employment density but very high traditional rider market density. Modes considered for meeting these needs include **community circulators** and **trolley/streetcar service** that serve at low frequencies. Some level of **shared-ride options** may also be included.

#### Level 2

Service/technology gaps are characterized by the need for low mobility and high accessibility. This may include areas or corridors with low population and/or employment density and high traditional rider market density. Additional modes, such as **local fixed-route bus**, are expected to meet the needs of this opportunity level.

#### Level 3

Service/technology gaps are characterized by the need for a balance of mobility and accessibility. This may include areas or corridors with medium population and/or employment density and medium traditional rider market density. This also may include regional destinations with a high number of commute trips. At this opportunity level, **express buses** may be added as well as **enhanced shared-ride options**.

#### Level 4

Service/technology gaps are characterized by the need for high mobility and low accessibility. This may include areas or corridors with high population and/or employment density and low traditional rider market density. This may also include regional destinations with a very high number of commute trips. Addition of premium transit such as **bus rapid transit (BRT)** (in mixed traffic or exclusive lane) and **light rail** may be considered at this level of transit opportunity.

#### Level 5

Service/technology gaps are characterized by the need for very high mobility and very low accessibility. This may include areas or corridors with high population and/or employment density and low traditional rider market density. In addition, this may include regional locations with the highest number of commute trips. Exclusive-lane BRT and high-capacity premium transit such as **commuter rail, heavy rail, or high-speed rail** may be considered at this level of transit opportunity.



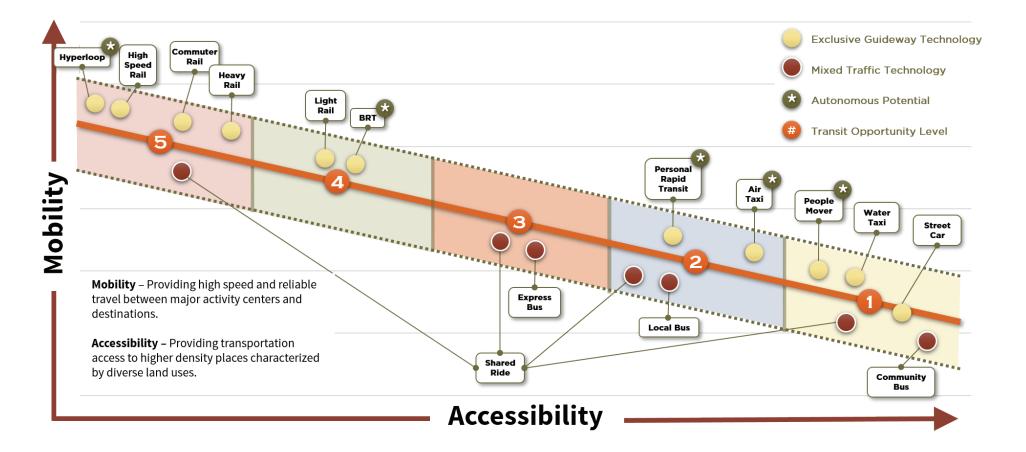




Transit Opportunities

## TRANSIT OPPORTUNITY FRAMEWORK: MOBILITY VS. ACCESSIBILITY AND FIVE LEVELS OF OPPORTUNITY

The framework illustrated below depicts an inverse relationship between mobility and accessibility—as a transit technology provides increased mobility, it inherently provides less accessibility, and vice versa.

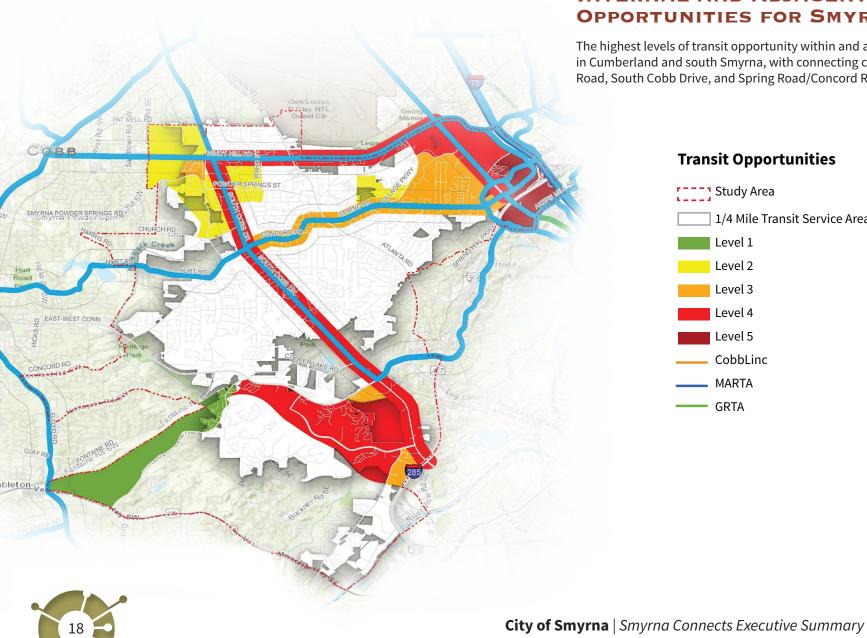






Transit Opportunities

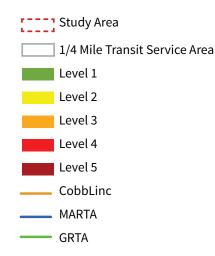




# **INTERNAL AND ADJACENT TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMYRNA**

The highest levels of transit opportunity within and adjacent to Smyrna are in Cumberland and south Smyrna, with connecting corridors along Windy Hill Road, South Cobb Drive, and Spring Road/Concord Road.

## **Transit Opportunities**



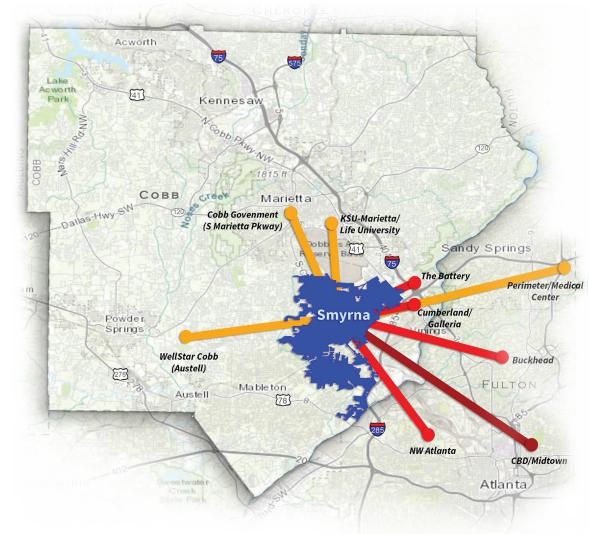




Transit Opportunities

# **REGIONAL TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES** FOR SMYRNA

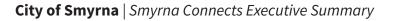
The highest levels of regional transit opportunity include connections to Midtown, northwest Atlanta, Buckhead, and The Battery/Cumberland. This is followed by Perimeter Center, KSU-Marietta/Life University, Cobb Government, and Wellstar Cobb.



# 19

#### **Regional Transit Opportunities**





Transit Strategies

# FACTORS GUIDING DEVELOPMENT OF SMYRNA CONNECTS STRATEGIES



#### **PHASING OF TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS**

Short-Term (1–2 years)

Recommended are strategies that include enhancements to existing transit services provided by CobbLinc, new services, and any infrastructure and policy improvements that are higher priority, easier to implement, and/or lower-cost or cost-neutral in nature to facilitate implementation in the more immediate future by the end of 2022. Recommended are strategies that are either not as immediate in terms of priority or the needs are sufficiently extensive and costly to require some level of additional planning and time to implement. These strategies may make sense over the next

2–8 years, from 2023 through

2029.

Mid-Term

(3-7 years)

Recommended strategies include mobility needs that may require greater financial commitments, changes in existing policies or operational philosophy over a greater period of time, or new premium services that may require longer implementation times, so phasing must occur in the latter half of a 20-year plan timeframe, from 2030 to 2040.

Long-Term

(8-20 years)







# Transit Strategies

# **SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES**

The short-term transit strategies include a frequency improvement to an existing bus route on Spring Road/Concord Road (from 60-minute to 30-minute service), new Microtransit service in three zones, a transit marketing campaign, and enhancements to existing bus stops in Smyrna.

#### **Existing Services**

- Cumberland Transfer Center CobbLinc
- MARTA

#### Short-Term (1-2 years)

CobbLinc Route 25 (every 30 minutes)
Smyrna West Microtransit
Smyrna East Microtransit
Smyrna South Microtransit

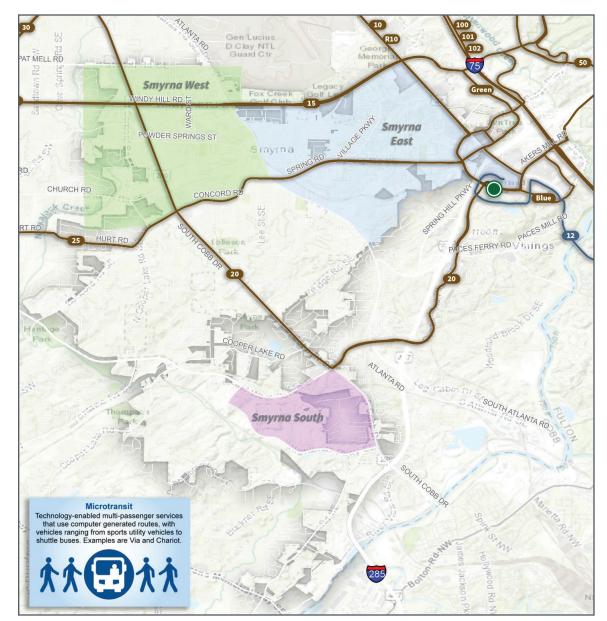
#### **OTHER SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES**



Launch transit marketing campaign



Evaluate transit infrastructure in the city

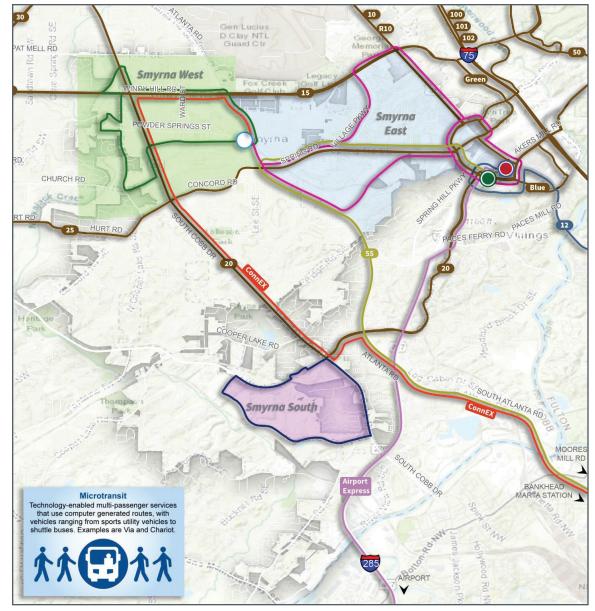






Transit Strategies





# **MID-TERM STRATEGIES**

In addition to assuming implementation of short-term transit strategies, the mid-term transit strategies include circulator routes in west, east, and south Smyrna; express bus connections to Atlanta and the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport; two new local bus routes; a new downtown Smyrna transfer center; and the relocation of the Cumberland Transfer Center.

#### **Existing Services**

Cumberland Transfer Center CobbLinc — MARTA Short-Term (1-2 years) CobbLinc Route 25 (every 30 minutes) Smyrna West MOD Microtransit Smyrna East MOD Microtransit Smyrna South MOD Microtransit Mid-Term (3–7 years) Smyrna East Circulator Smyrna South Circulator Smyrna West Circulator Smyrna ConnEX CobbLinc Airport Express\* CobbLinc Route 55\* Downtown Super Stop **Relocated Cumberland Tranfer Center** 

\*CobbLinc Forward Mid-Range Recommendations

SMYRNA Counects



Transit Strategies

#### **OTHER MID-TERM STRATEGIES**



# Deploy Transit Signal Priority/Queue Jumps at selected Intersections

- Already in County/ATL plans for Cobb
- At intersections that are most optimal for supporting premium transit



#### Designate a City Transit Coordinator

- Existing staff or new position
- Organizes transit in the city
- Coordinates with regional agencies/ stakeholders
- Will be the single point of contact on transit and related matters
- A "seat at the table" when growth and land use discussions occur in the city



#### Update CobbLinc Transit App

- Coordinate with CobbLinc to update current app with new transit services added in the city
- Link with microtransit app or use one single app for all transit in city



#### Conduct Transit Marketing Campaign – Phase II

- Build on Phase I efforts
- City-wide marketing/awareness campaign prior to implementing mid-term improvements



#### **Improve Transit Infrastructure**

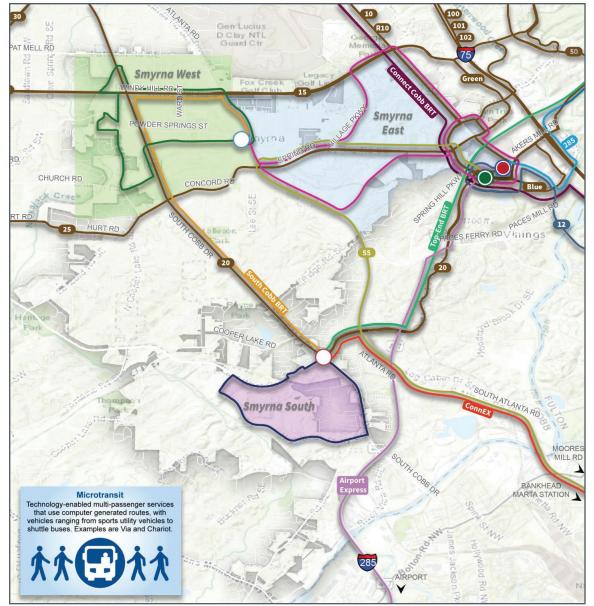
- Establish a downtown transfer station
- Relocate Cumberland Transfer Center
- Improve bus stop infrastructure/ amenities/ accessibility





# Transit Strategies





# LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

In addition to assuming implementation of the short- and mid-term transit strategies, the long-term transit strategies include three Bus Rapid Transit projects (South Cobb Drive, CobbConnect on Cobb Parkway, and I-285 Top End), one new local bus route, and a South Smyrna Transfer Center.









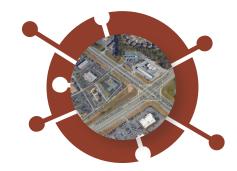
Transit Strategies

#### **OTHER LONG-TERM STRATEGIES**



#### South Cobb Drive Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

- Transit Signal Priority/queue jumps at applicable intersections
- 12 branded curbside stations
- Off-board fare collection, real-time passenger information, WiFi, information kiosks, etc.



#### South Smyrna Transfer Station

- At South Cobb Drive and East-West Connector
- Connects Smyrna ConnEx, South Cobb BRT, Extended I-285 top-end BRT, and Smyrna South Circulator
- BRT Station/transit mini hub with smaller footprint



# Transportation Network Company-Based After-Hour Rides Program

- Voucher-based subsidized ride program
- Expands availability of transit options 24/7 in the city











Investment Scenarios

As a municipality within Cobb County, the City of Smyrna is in a unique position to influence future transit service in the community without having the responsibility for funding and operating the services. With this reality in mind, three investment scenarios were prepared that represent different levels of progress in the implementation of the 2040 transit vision for Smyrna:

- **Small-Impact Scenario** This scenario assumes smaller transit investments, with an emphasis on improvements to existing services and implementation of new services that focus largely on population segments with the greatest transportation needs.
- **Moderate-Impact Scenario** This scenario assumes a more moderate level of transit investment, including the implementation of transit improvements included in the short- and mid-term recommendations of the *Smyrna Connects* vision.
- **High-Impact Scenario** This scenario assumes the most significant transit investments and builds upon the Moderate-Impact Scenario by including the implementation of transit improvements included in the long-term recommendation of the *Smyrna Connects* vision.

The table to the right summarizes the assumed transit investments for each of the scenarios and are consistent with the short-term, mid-term, and longterm strategies developed in support of the transit vision.

| Smyrna Connects Strategies                                | Additional Planning<br>Required* | Small-Impact<br>Scenario | Moderate-Impact<br>Scenario | High-Impact<br>Scenario |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Increase service frequency to 30 min on Route 25          | Service planning                 | <b>X</b>                 |                             | X                       |
| Implement microtransit in 3 zones (Mobility on Demand)    | Feasibility study**              | <b>X</b>                 |                             | X                       |
| Launch Phase I of transit marketing campaign              | Marketing campaign               | <b>X</b>                 |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Evaluate/improve existing bus stop infrastructure in city | Bus stop assessment              | <b>X</b>                 | <b>X</b>                    | <b>X</b>                |
| Implement 3 city circulators                              | Feasibility study**              |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Implement Downtown Smyrna–Atlanta Express                 | Service planning                 |                          | <b>X</b>                    | <b>X</b>                |
| Implement CobbLinc Route 55                               | Service planning                 |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Implement CobbLinc Airport Express (Route AX)             | Service planning                 |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Reduce microtransit services to first/last mile service   | Service planning                 |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Deploy TSP/queue jumps at selected intersections          | Cobb County/CobbLinc             |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Update current transit app                                | Cobb County/CobbLinc             |                          | <b>X</b>                    | <b>X</b>                |
| Improve bus stop infrastructure in city                   | Bus stop assessment              |                          | <b>X</b>                    |                         |
| Establish Downtown Transfer Station                       | Feasibility study**              |                          |                             |                         |
| Relocate Cumberland Transfer Center to Akers Mill Rd      | Cobb County/CobbLinc             |                          | <b>X</b>                    | <b>X</b>                |
| Designate City Transit Coordinator                        | City decision                    |                          | <b>X</b>                    | <b>X</b>                |
| Launch Phase II of transit marketing campaign             | Marketing campaign               |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Implement South Cobb Dr BRT                               | Feasibility study**              |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Extend I-285 top-end BRT to S Cobb Dr                     | Feasibility study**              |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Connect Cobb BRT  | Cobb County/CobbLinc             |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Implement Smyrna-Atlanta Express                          | Service planning                 |                          |                             |                         |
| 15-min frequency on selected Smyrna circulators           | Service planning                 |                          |                             | <b>Ö</b>                |
| Implement CobbLinc Express Route 285                      | Service planning                 |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Establish South Smyrna Transfer Station                   | Feasibility study**              |                          |                             | ×.                      |
| TNC-based after-hour rides program                        | City decision                    |                          |                             | <b>X</b>                |
| Estimated 20-yr Investment Cost                           |                                  | \$66 M                   | \$269 M                     | \$1,717 M               |

\*Additional planning requirements that may be necessary to implement improvements.

\*\*Feasibility study – depending on scale of investment and requirements from potential funding partners, feasibility studies should be conducted at least 6–24 months prior to planning and preliminary design stage of project.



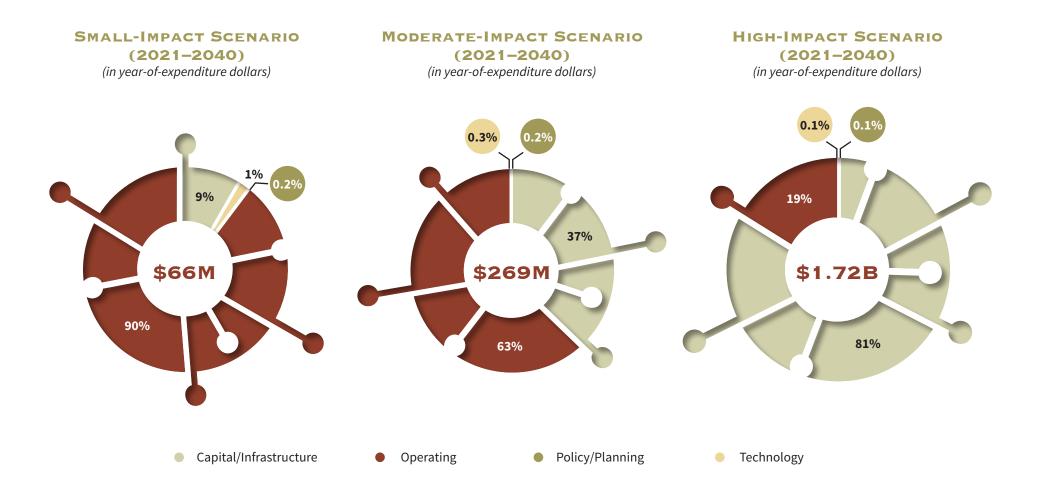




Investment Scenarios

## **OPERATING AND CAPITAL COSTS**

The total 20-year operating and capital/other costs for the strategies developed and included in each of the three investment scenarios identified for the *Smyrna Connects* Transit Analysis and Feasibility Study are summarized below.









The goal of this collaborative planning effort is to develop an implementable 20-year transit vision for the City of Smyrna that is tailored primarily to the needs of the city and its immediate region and communicate that transit vision to Cobb County and the ATL for consideration in future transit investment priorities. Three investment scenarios were identified and evaluated that represent different levels of progress in the implementation of the 20-year transit vision for Smyrna. The next step is identifying the need for coordination and where and when that coordination should occur so the vision can be communicated as appropriate.

Specific **key action items** to successfully put plan communication and implementation in motion include the following:



Coordinate with the ATL and Cobb **County** on project priorities to ensure that *Smyrna Connects* feasibility studies and projects are communicated and considered by ATL Regional Transit Plan (ARTP) and Cobb Forward plans in a timely manner.



**Designate a City Transit Coordinator** to advocate for transit services within the city and regionally. This role can be assigned to an existing City staff person and is crucial for ensuring timely and effective coordination

and communication of the City's plan and other regional planning efforts, especially from Cobb County and the ATI.



#### Establish a Smyrna Transit Citizen

Advisory Committee comprising transit advocates and stakeholders to advocate for establishing a better transit network for the city and its immediate region and to advise the Mayor and City Council on mobility strategies and policies from a citizens perspective.





**Coordinate with CobbLinc** regarding the Smyrna Connects transit vision. Many improvement strategies are consistent with CobbLinc's mid-range service recommendations, but it will be important to coordinate with CobbLinc to discuss opportunities for advancing the feasibility studies and recommendations of Smyrna Connects.



#### Identify potential funding opportunities/grants and apply

for funding. An initial task for the City Transit Coordinator will be to explore private and public funding opportunities so city-specific strategies such as microtransit can be implemented. The Transit Coordinator could pursue partnerships to explore the study, funding, and implementation of projects in the Smyrna Connects plan.

Secure funding for feasibility studies and pursue implementation of the

resulting projects. *Smyrna Connects* identifies the need for numerous feasibility studies prior to any project advancing to final planning, design, and implementation. Opportunities to fund these studies will need to be explored with Cobb County, ARC, ATL, GDOT, and other partners throughout the region.



The strategic location of Smyrna in the northwest Atlanta region makes implementing *Smyrna Connects* a key element of the regional transit network. Based on regional collaboration and unique regional demographics and socioeconomic diversity, implementation of Smyrna *Connects* can promote transit as a truly viable option locally and in the region.

With its location, diversity, and strong community support for transit, Smyrna is well-positioned to collaborate with Cobb County, the ATL, and partners throughout the region and pursue the incremental implementation of the Smvrna Connects transit vision.









with support from VHB and Sycamore Consulting





Thank you to the *Smyrna Connects* Technical Advisory Committee members for their review and support throughout the development of this Transit Analysis and Feasibility Study.

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