

6. Analyzing Our Choices

This section explains what we did to better understand the choices facing our region, develop growth forecasts that reflect market trends and community plans, create and test alternative transportation scenarios, and compare these alternatives to one another and to performance measures that reflect the MPO's adopted goals and objectives.

6.1 Land Use Plans and Policies

Every community in the Triangle develops a comprehensive plan to outline its vision for the future and set policies for how it will guide future development to support that vision. So an important starting point for transportation plans is to understand these plans and reflect them in the future growth forecasts used to analyze transportation choices.

Local planners from communities throughout the region were brought together to translate their community plans into the parameters used by the region's transportation model to generate travel forecasts: households and jobs by industry. (See Section 5.3 for a more detailed explanation of the transportation model).

The land use plans revealed that five regional activity centers, depicted in Figure 6.1.1 are expected to contain large concentrations of employment and/or intense mixes of homes, workplaces, shops, medical centers, higher education institutions, visitor destinations and entertainment venues:

- Central Raleigh, including NC State University;
- Central Durham, including Duke University, North Carolina Central University and the Duke and Veterans Administration medical complexes;
- Central Chapel Hill & Carrboro, including UNC-Chapel Hill and UNC Hospitals;
- The Research Triangle Park and RDU Airport; and
- Central Cary.

Linking these activity centers to one another, and connecting them with communities throughout the region by a variety of travel modes can afford expanded opportunities for people to have choices about where they live, work, learn and play.

In some cases, such as in central Cary, Durham and Chapel Hill & Carrboro, existing plans and the ordinances that implement the plans promote increased development of the activity centers. In Raleigh, a new comprehensive plan is close to completion that will target development in the downtown and in other in-town areas that can serve as mixed use nodes. And the Research Triangle Park is engaged in planning efforts that may lead to more compact, mixed use development in selected locations.

In addition to these activity centers, the review of community plans identified areas of the region that are most environmentally sensitive, including water supply watersheds, and places where existing neighborhoods warrant protection. Understanding the unique roles that different areas and different communities will play in the region as it grows established the framework for forecasting growth and designing transportation choices to serve this growth.