

Accessibility

Walkable, mixed-use communities with housing and transportation choices

Goals



Transit-oriented mixed-use communities emerging in Regional Activity Centers that will capture new employment and household growth.



A transportation system that maximizes community connectivity and walkability, and minimizes ecological harm to the region and world beyond.



A variety of housing types and choices in diverse, vibrant, safe, healthy, and sustainable neighborhoods, affordable to persons at all income levels.



A broad range of public and private transportation choices for our Region which maximizes accessibility and affordability to everyone and minimizes reliance upon single occupancy use of the automobile.



*Tysons Corner, Fairfax County, Virginia
(Tysons Corner Land Use Task Force)*

A More Accessible Region

The future quality of life in the National Capital Region will be based on accessibility. Over the next 40 years the region is expected to grow, adding nearly two million more people. The majority of this growth will be located in emerging and existing Regional Activity Centers scattered throughout the region. These Activity Centers will be home to desirable, compact neighborhoods with parks and mixed-use development, such as shops, workplaces, and other destinations where people live, work and play.

Each Activity Center will be connected by transit such as Metrorail, new light-rail and/or bus-rapid transit, offering a broad range of transportation choices for residents. With additional housing and jobs in Regional Activity Centers more people will have the choice to walk, bike, or take transit to commute and get around their neighborhood. The majority of new housing in these areas will be townhouses, multi-family homes, and single-family homes on small lots. Improved housing choices will create more mixed-income communities. Each Activity Center will have public spaces, including plazas, outdoor markets, and parks that are unique to its local history and culture.

Directing new growth to these Regional Activity Centers will help reduce suburban sprawl and protect the environment. More people and jobs in Activity Centers combined with greater investment of transportation infrastructure and services will create a truly accessible environment. In particular, future investment in transit will link Regional Activity Centers to one another and cut travel times. These planning efforts will reduce money needed to expand major highways, in favor of improvements and programs that would provide alternatives to driving.

Target: Beginning in 2012, capture 75% of the square footage of new commercial construction and 50% of new households in Regional Activity Centers



Jurisdictions will begin to direct more housing and commercial growth towards existing and emerging Regional Activity Centers that can accommodate the needs of new residents and jobs. The majority of this growth will promote transit use by favoring Regional Activity Centers with rail or bus stations, facilitating compact, walkable, bike-and-transit-friendly districts. To achieve this, jurisdictions will need to pursue proactive planning and land-use regulations defining the amount and type of growth appropriate for a specific Activity Center. Examples of these centers are prevalent throughout the region and can be found in some of the most desirable neighborhoods in Old Town Alexandria, Belmont Bay in Prince William County, Frederick, the Arts District in Hyattsville, Leesburg, Reston, Rockville, and Rosslyn. Helping to facilitate growth in Regional Activity Centers, jurisdictions will plan for additional services in these areas, such as hospitals, schools, libraries, and community centers.

Accommodating new growth in these Regional Activity Centers is a trend that is already underway throughout the region and expected to accelerate by mid-century. To achieve a vision of an accessible and sustainable region, future housing will need to maximize use of vacant land in Regional Activity Centers, conserve energy, reduce emissions and be close to jobs, services, schools, shops and transit. Directing new housing in Regional Activity Centers will reduce traffic congestion, increase transit ridership, promote economic development, and provide housing choice, while serving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To achieve this target, new growth policies will be needed at the jurisdictional level to address the anticipated imbalance of population and jobs currently forecasted. Currently a higher proportion of population is forecasted in the outer suburbs while the majority of new jobs will continue to be located in Regional Activity Centers. Continuing this growth pattern without placing more housing in Regional Activity Centers will increase traffic congestion and lead to more auto-dependent lifestyles.



“Activity Centers are the future of the Washington region,” said Frederick Alderman Alan Imhoff. “Concentrating development in these centers will provide a multitude of benefits to the entire region.”

Target: Reduce daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita



Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) measures motor vehicle use and trip length. According to the Transportation Planning Board, the current total VMT per capita has increased over time and is currently nearly 23 miles a day. Roads serve many purposes and are an essential component of a functional regional transportation system, and increased efficiency, capacity, and additional support for maintenance, management, and operations will be needed to accommodate the region's growth and economic vibrancy. The geographic diversity of the region offers residences and businesses opportunities for rural, suburban, and urban locational choices. In many parts of the region, however, a lack of transportation choices for residents has led to a growing number of drivers contributing to congestion, longer commutes, and air pollution. Locating homes, employment centers, schools, and other activities in closer proximity, and expanding transit, telecommuting, bicycling, and walking options can reduce vehicle miles of travel per capita and improve accessibility throughout the region.

By mid-century, residents in the region will make greater use of public transit while getting around their neighborhoods by short automobile trips or walking and biking. Because more everyday needs are accessible by walking, biking or using transit, households will more frequently use car sharing to free themselves of the high cost of automobile ownership. This promotes healthy lifestyles and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Currently about 2.5 million walking trips are made every day in the region and households residing in Regional Activity Centers are able to own fewer vehicles.



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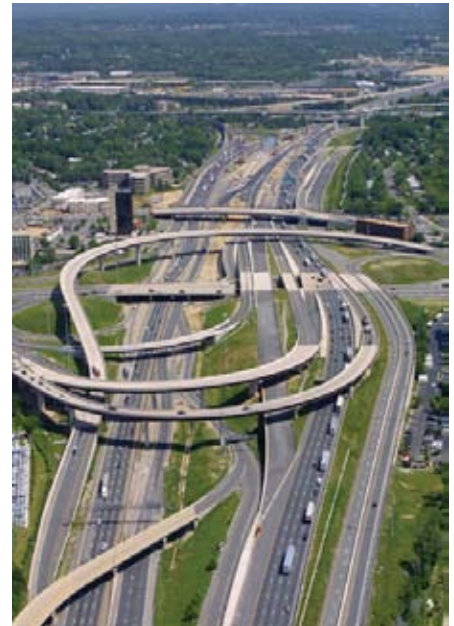
People living in Regional Activity Centers travel 10 fewer miles by automobile per day than those living elsewhere in the region.

COG/TPB Regional Household Travel Survey

Target: The region's transportation system will give priority to management, performance, maintenance, and safety of all transportation modes and facilities



In the past 40 years, the region has constructed a 103 mile Metro system, more than doubled capacity of the Beltway, initiated MARC and VRE commuter rail, rebuilt the Wilson Bridge, and expanded our road system to achieve significant economic growth. Over the next 40 years, the region will protect existing infrastructure investments as well as expand transportation capacity and support for maintenance, management and operations to enhance the region's economic growth and sustainable land use planning. The region's transportation investments are aging and need continued repair and upkeep to ensure future reliability and safety of all users. Older transit and highway systems can be expensive to maintain or rehabilitate. The Transportation Planning Board's current financial analysis indicates that 75 percent of available funding over the coming decades will be needed just to operate and maintain the system already in place. Ensuring that previous transportation investments enhance our economic viability through improved access for people and goods will require identifying secure reliable sources of funding directed toward adequate maintenance, preservation, and rehabilitation.

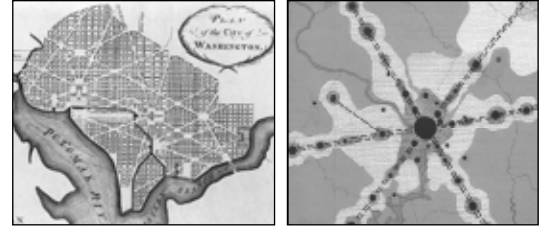


Target: Transportation investments will link Regional Activity Centers



Regional Activity Centers are the economic engines of the region. A majority of the region's jobs are found in these centers, and in the future, they will be home to an even larger concentration of commercial activity and housing. Therefore, additional transportation investments will be needed to facilitate economic activity and improve access to and among the Regional Activity Centers. The region will connect these centers by investing in a multi-modal transportation system that includes transit, roads, pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Public improvements to Regional Activity Centers will make the best use out of limited transportation resources that boost the region's economic viability.

This target will help facilitate future growth in the Regional Activity Centers and better connect the region to world markets. Several of the Regional Activity Centers are adjacent to airports and maintaining convenient access to them for both people and goods will continue to be important in the decades ahead. Building a multi-modal transportation system that connects people and places in the Regional Activity Centers and airports will help create clusters of innovation with improved access to a global marketplace. Improving residents' access to everyday needs will better free our roads to support improved passenger and goods movements between the National Capital Region and other nearby regions in the mid-Atlantic area.



Grid
(18th Century)

Spokes
(20th Century)



Web
(21st Century)

The 18th Century L'Enfant Plan focused on creating a new city of Washington.

The Policy Plan for the Year 2000 (also known as Wedges and Corridors) in the 1960s focused on linking the region's suburbs with the central city.

Future planning must further develop and connect the Regional Activity Centers.

(Polycentric Washington region 'Web' graphic from Dr. Roger Lewis, University of Maryland)

Target: Increase the rate of construction of bike and pedestrian facilities from the Transportation Planning Board's Plan



Present-day decisions to foster alternative modes of transportation in the region will shape a future where more people walk, bike, and use transit. The Transportation Planning Board has recommended increasing the rate of construction of bike and pedestrian facilities included in its long-range plan. In the short term, the majority of progress will be made in urban areas that can accommodate pedestrians and improved infrastructure for cycling and transit.

The region will prioritize walking and biking options by improving pedestrian and bicycle networks, especially in Regional Activity Centers. Planning and street improvements will focus on wide

“A strong partnership between the federal and regional governments can benefit this region in many ways,” said Marcel Acosta, executive director of the National Capital Planning Commission. “It’s important that we collaborate on issues such as multimodal transit and sustainable green building design to help ensure the vitality and well being of our communities.”

sidewalks, street trees, and mixed-use development that will make streets more accessible and create pedestrian-friendly public spaces. Bike stations that offer repairs, lock up, bike sharing and other services will be located near major transit hubs throughout the region. Hundreds of miles of bike lanes will be created across the region to facilitate safe convenient travel. Bike sharing stations located every quarter to half mile will provide healthy transportation options for short neighborhood trips.



Walking & biking account for 9% of all trips in the region.

COG/TPB Regional Household Travel Survey

Target: By 2020, the housing and transportation costs in Regional Activity Centers will not exceed 45 percent of area median income



The cost of housing and transportation associated with the location of one's home provides the true cost of owning and renting a home. Commuters driving long distances and filling up at the pump understand that affordability is no longer understood simply in terms of the mortgage payment. Traditionally, the majority of the region's low cost housing was constructed on the region's fringe where the adage "drive until you qualify" rang true. While some people may save on the cost of housing located far from their jobs, their transportation costs rise considerably. By mid-century, transportation costs will play a more significant role in choosing where to live.

Due to an expected increase in the cost of energy and fuel, local governments can make it easier to reduce transportation expenses through better land-use planning. The cost of housing and transportation is a complete measure of affordability. Dividing housing and transportation costs by the area median income demonstrates the cost burden placed on the average household. Setting a target for Housing + Transportation costs that do not exceed 45 percent of a household's income will enhance the benefits of Regional Activity Centers, by improving the overall desirability and affordability of these communities.



Washington area residents spend about \$36,000 a year, or nearly 47 percent of the median household income, on housing and transportation.

*Urban Land Institute
Beltway Burden Report*

“We need stronger housing policies to support a wider range of housing closer to jobs, with access to affordable, convenient transportation,” said Stewart Schwartz, Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. “Poor access to jobs increases traffic congestion and commuting costs.”

Target: Beginning in 2012, at least 80% of new or preserved affordable units will be located in Regional Activity Centers

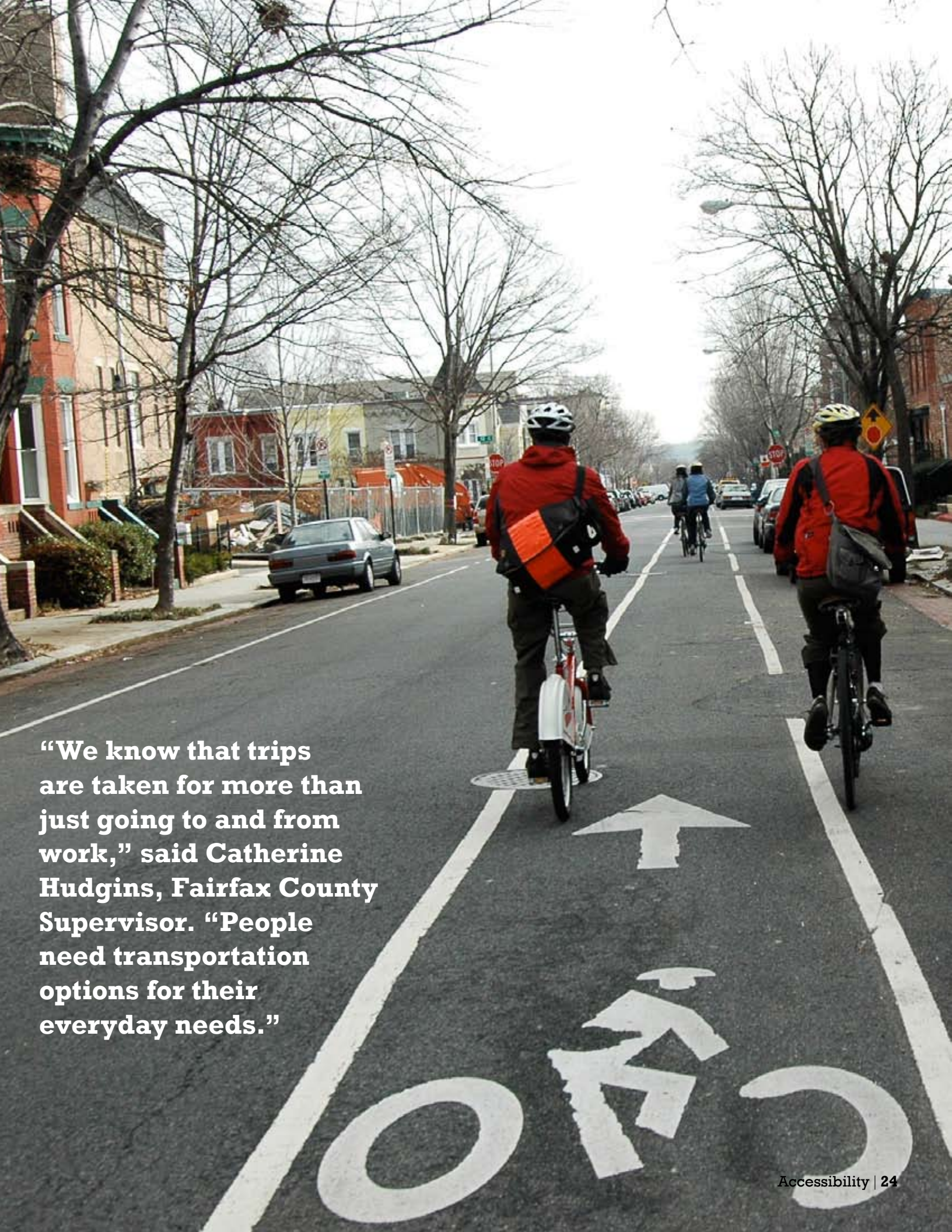


To achieve other accessibility targets, the region will build the majority of new housing in Regional Activity Centers. Housing affordable to a range of incomes and residents at different stages in life will be critical to the success of our regional vision. Locating 80 percent of new affordable housing in Regional Activity Centers with easy access to transit will create mixed-income communities resilient to spikes in the cost of energy through reduced household transportation costs. Prioritizing transit investments by linking Regional Activity Centers has the potential to transform these areas by spurring development, providing neighborhood-serving shops, open space, and jobs that support a jurisdiction's tax base. Examples include the Rosslyn–Ballston corridor in Arlington and the Woodley Park–Shady Grove corridor in Washington, D.C. and Montgomery County, areas where transit-oriented development around the Metrorail stations has proven to create economic engines.

These investments have the potential to create very desirable neighborhoods, resulting in increases to the cost of housing and displacing low-and-moderate-income residents further from transit. This is a serious challenge because these residents have the most to gain from better access to transit, jobs and services. Creating a target to pursue the inclusion of affordable housing in Regional Activity Centers will help create mixed-income communities with transit-oriented development. Moving forward, the region must continue to think creatively about solving affordability challenges in the future through strategies that preserve or leverage the market to create new affordable housing.

Regional Activity Centers contain approximately 54 percent of the region's current employment. Bringing affordable housing units to these centers will be critical for meeting our goals.

COG Regional Activity Centers Report



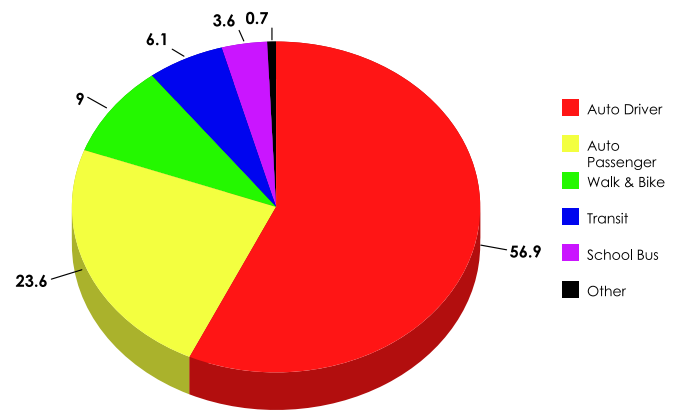
“We know that trips are taken for more than just going to and from work,” said Catherine Hudgins, Fairfax County Supervisor. “People need transportation options for their everyday needs.”

Target: Increase the share of walk, bike, and transit trips



Increasing transportation choices that allow more people to walk, bike and use transit will be a priority for future planning and infrastructure improvements throughout the region. A recent regional Household Travel Survey completed by the Transportation Planning Board shows that most automobile trips are made for personal and social reasons. Currently, only 16 percent of trips in the region are job-related. This demonstrates how people are driving to meet their everyday needs, resulting in congested roads and poor air quality. Better land use planning that increases mixed-use development with retail, restaurants, and services will give residents the opportunity to meet their everyday needs by walking, biking or using public transit. Achieving this target will also promote healthy lifestyles for residents and provide ideal communities for raising families.

Transportation Mode Share in Metropolitan Washington



COG/TPB Regional Household Travel Survey (2008)

Target: All Regional Activity Centers will have transit access



Future Regional Activity Centers will be designated based on their proximity to transit. To provide more housing choices and improve accessibility throughout the region, designated Activity Centers will have transit access through a Metrorail station, light rail station, bus-rapid transit, commuter rail, water ferry, or local bus transit. New or proposed Activity Centers will be identified on a coordinated basis using resources such as the jurisdiction's approved comprehensive plan. The identification of new Regional Activity Centers will help to guide future transportation investments, thus linking these areas to one another by transit.

Accessibility: Indicators

In addition to targets, COG will be monitoring the following indicators to ensure that the region is moving in the right direction toward achieving its goals:

Triennial Aerial Survey of Freeway Congestion

Vehicle Registration per capita

Transit, bicycle and walk share in Regional Activity Centers

Accessibility to jobs within 45 minutes

Street/node ratio for Regional Activity Centers

Accessibility of passengers and cargo to the region's airports

Square feet of mixed-use development