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## CHAPTER 2:

# CURRENT AND FUTURE STATE OF THE REGION

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The Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA) encompasses the State of New Mexico’s highest concentration of population and jobs. As of 2016, there were approximately 890,600 people and 403,100 jobs<sup>1</sup>, which represents 43 percent of the state’s population and about 45 percent of its jobs. It also contains New Mexico’s largest city, the City of Albuquerque, and its fastest growing, the City of Rio Rancho. In 2013, Rio Communities became the newest incorporated place. The AMPA is home to several major educational institutions, including the University of New Mexico (UNM), Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), and Albuquerque Public Schools (APS), numerous major hospitals including University of New Mexico Hospital and Presbyterian Hospitals, and other large employers such as Sandia National Laboratories, Intel Corporation, and Kirtland Air Force Base. With a unique mix of urban and natural amenities and vast agricultural and rural rangelands, the AMPA offers a range of settings and lifestyle opportunities for its diverse population.

This chapter provides the regional backdrop for this plan in terms of the population characteristics and the current economic situation. It also highlights some challenges and opportunities facing the region today. Note that much of the data presented herein pertains to the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which represents the four counties of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia. **The MSA is a reliable proxy for the AMPA given that 98 percent of its population and jobs are within the AMPA boundary.**

**Figure 2-1: Sunset over the Sandia Mountain Range**

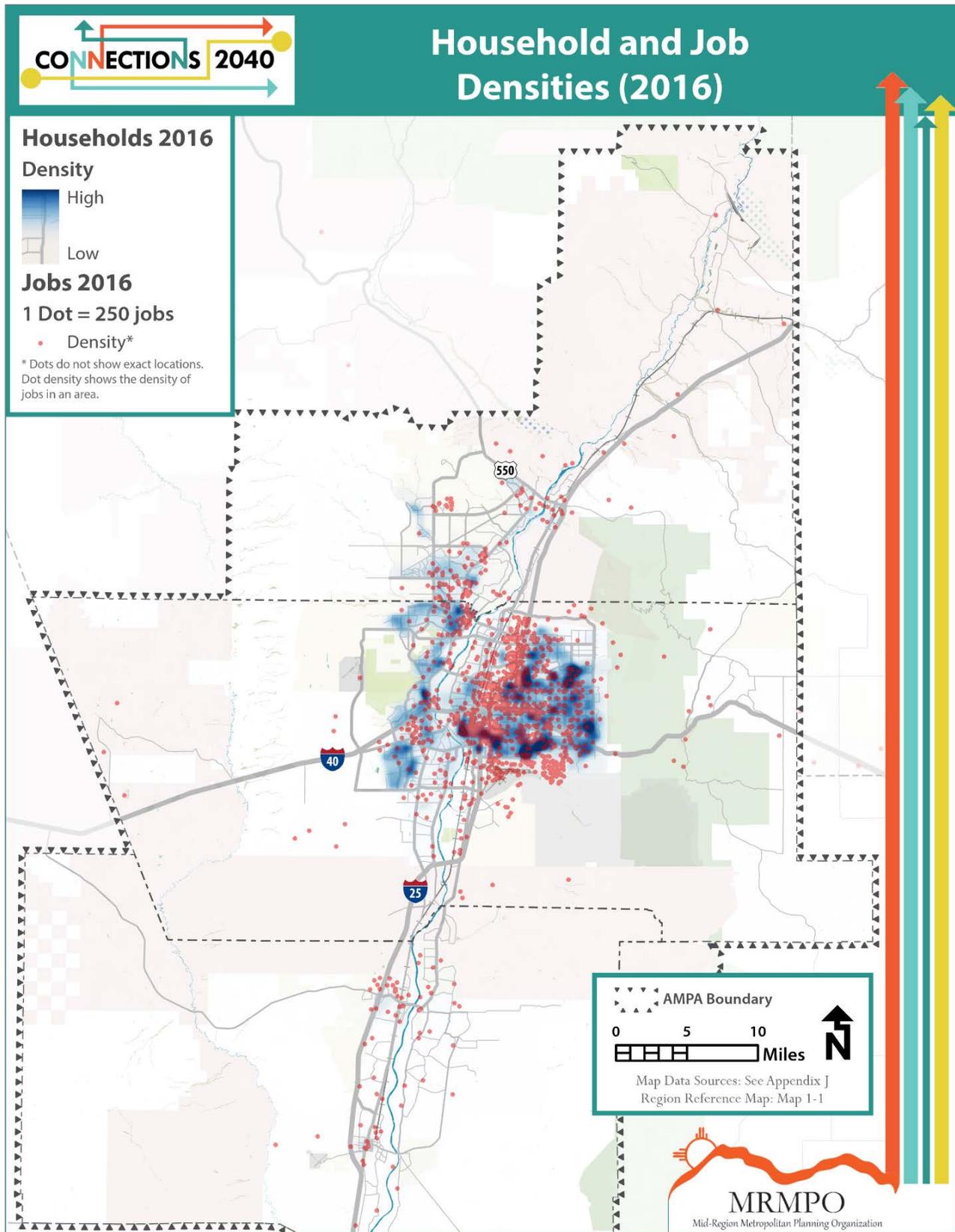


Source: FreeABQimages.com

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<sup>1</sup> MRMPO’s definition of employment includes all jobs covered by unemployment insurance as well as an estimate of agricultural workers, military, and self-employment.

Map 2-1: Household and Job Densities, 2016



## 2.1 Socioeconomic Trends

### a. Regional Shifts

The Great Recession had a deep and long-lasting impact on our region. While the Albuquerque MSA was a bit of a latecomer to the recession, the recovery lagged behind the rest of the country. The MSA began to lose jobs in 2008, and according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, by the end of 2012 the region had lost almost 30,000 jobs, or seven percent of its total employment. While the number of jobs in the MSA has rebounded to pre-recessionary levels, there have been some key shifts that have changed the structure of our economy in some fundamental ways.

#### **Slow Population Growth**

Population growth in the United States is at an all-time low due to fewer births, more deaths, and reduced migration between states. In fact, a fifth of all states experienced population loss between 2016 and 2018. Our region is not an exception to these trends. After three decades of over 20 percent increases in population, the Albuquerque MSA has experienced a dramatic slowdown with the average annual growth rate, hovering just above zero since 2010. New Mexico is the slowest growing state in the Southwestern United States.

**Figure 2-2: AMPA Population and Pace of Growth over Time, 1940 – 2018**

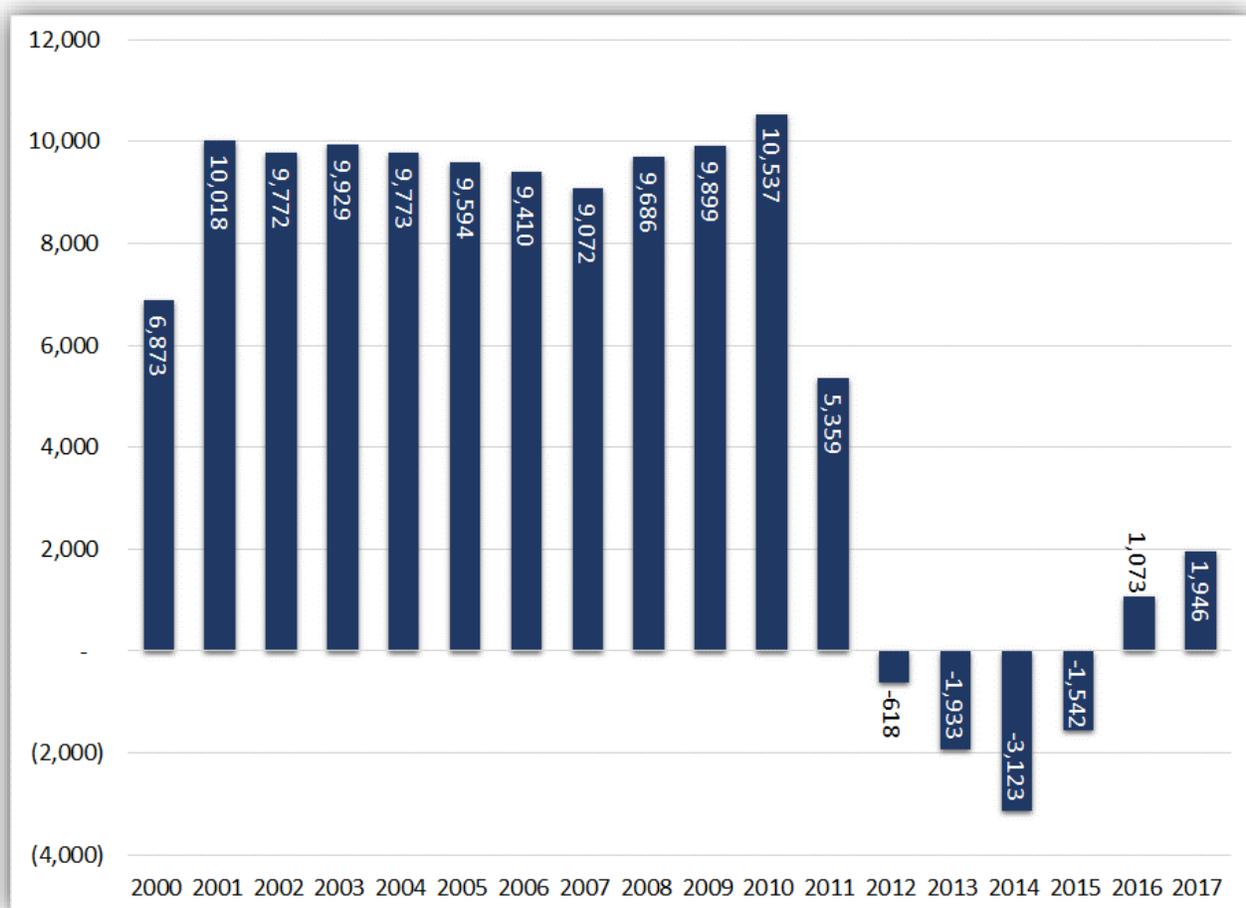


Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census and American Community Survey

## Negative Net Migration

A large reason behind population stagnation in the Albuquerque MSA has been increased out-migration and decreased in-migration on the heels of the recession. Once attractive to people from neighboring states and other parts of New Mexico, this region has typically relied on migration for a large share of its growth for decades. However, beginning in 2012 more people left the area than moved in, many to bordering states such as Colorado, Arizona, and Texas.<sup>2</sup> The most recent data from the US Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program show that the region is back in positive territory in terms of net migration. While this is a good sign, an analysis of state migration data by University of New Mexico's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (UNM-BBER) shows that **the majority of people who left New Mexico were educated adults and their families**. While educated adults moved into the region as well, the data show 40 percent of the *net* population lost to migration held Bachelor's degrees. This represents a leakage of human capital that is likely to have a fundamental impact on our workforce going forward.

**Figure 2-3: Net Migration in the Region, 2000 – 2018**



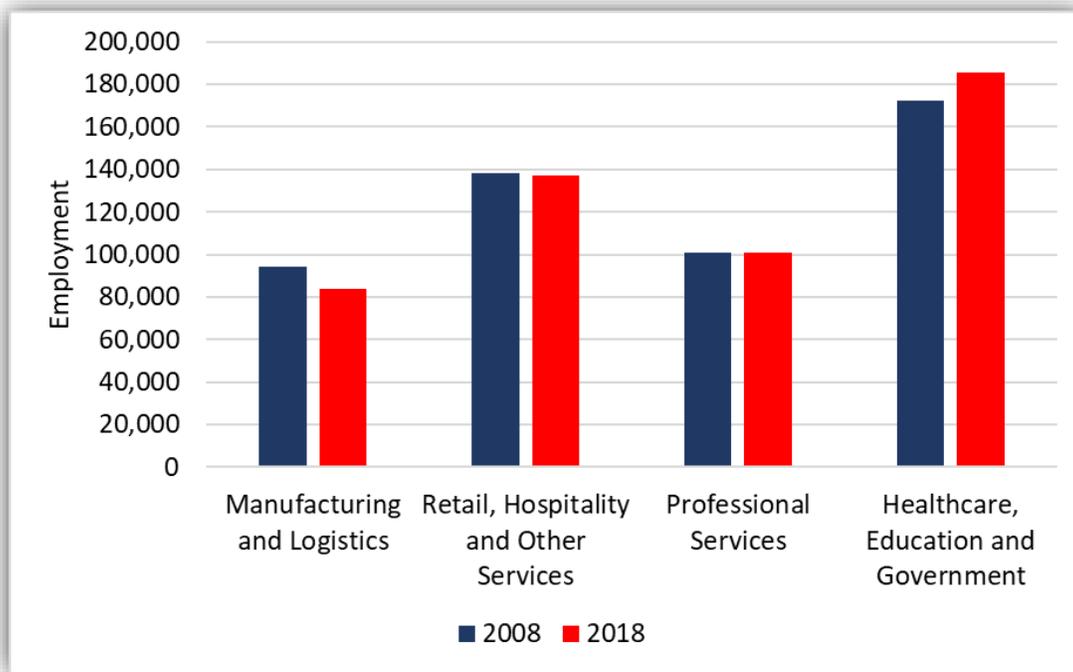
Source: US Census Bureau Population Estimates Program, NM Department of Health, MRCOG

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program, US Census Bureau's Job-Job Flows, Local Employment and Household Dynamics (LEHD).

## b. Employment Sectors Performance

The vast majority of the region's jobs are in service industries. The largest sector is healthcare and social assistance (68,800 jobs), followed by retail trade (41,600 jobs), and accommodation and food services (39,200 jobs). Government jobs span multiple employment sectors (including healthcare and education) and are estimated by UNM-BBER at approximately 76,300 jobs in 2018. The manufacturing sector (16,000 jobs) represents 4 percent of the region's jobs. The chart below groups multiple sectors into broad categories in order to demonstrate how they have changed over the past 10 years.

**Figure 2-4: Employment Growth by Industry in the Albuquerque MSA, 2008-2018**



Source: New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

Led by growth in the healthcare industry, which grew by 28 percent over the past decade, service jobs are growing as a share of overall employment. Conversely, there has been a 17 percent decline in manufacturing and logistics jobs over the past ten years. This is a concern because these industries tend to generate wealth and increase regional competitiveness. As the region has rebounded from overall job losses due to the recession, many subsectors of the manufacturing industry have not recovered.

### ***Economic Diversity***

The reduction in manufacturing related employment has spurred action by policy leaders and the private sector. Many opportunities have been identified in niche industries. For example, food manufacturing has flourished in the MSA and serves as an example of how we might build upon specialized areas in the future. Another challenge is a historical reliance on a dominant government sector. Due in part to major regional employers such as Kirtland Air Force Base, Sandia National Laboratories, and the University of New Mexico, government jobs currently represent one in every five jobs. Once seen as a source of stability for the region, systematic reductions in government programs and spending at the federal level over the past several years has rippled throughout the economy.

The devastating impact of federal cutbacks spurred broad recognition of the need to build on the private sector. Positive momentum and a growing list of success stories has mounted behind entrepreneurship, high-technology clusters, film and media, and tourism, to name a few.

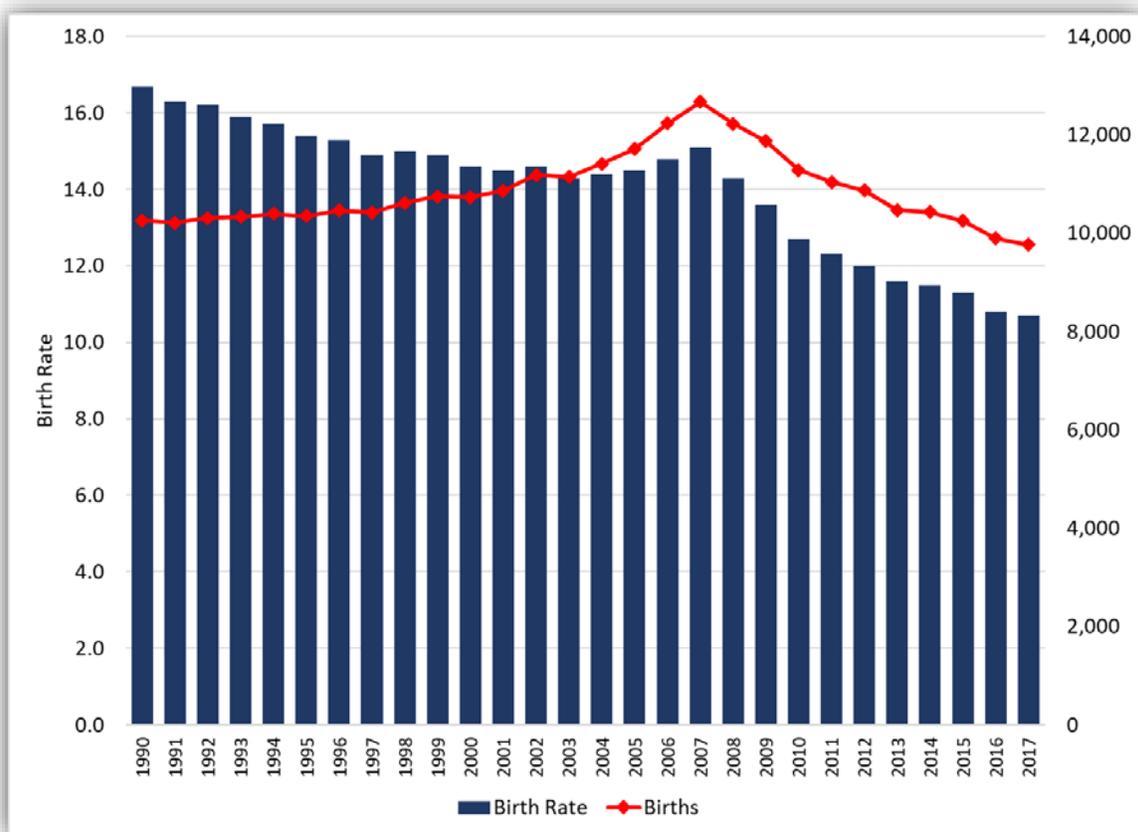
### c. Changing Demographics and Lifestyles

There have been some key structural shifts over the past several years that are attributable to changes in demographics and consumer preferences. Evolving household composition, shifting age dynamics, and changing housing and transportation demands are among them. **These trends are important to understanding travel behavior and anticipating what may lie ahead in the future.**

#### *Declining Household Size*

Both nationally and locally households have been declining in size for decades. While the average household in the region consisted of approximately 3.64 people in 1960, this has dramatically fallen over time, and today the average household size is 2.58.<sup>3</sup> A large contributing factor is an overall reduction in number of children per family, which has decreased as women have taken a prominent place in the workforce and young adults have chosen to pursue higher education prior to starting families. Longitudinal data from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) confirm recent shifts towards delaying marriage and having children later in life than previous generations.

**Figure 2-5: Birth Count and Birth Rate in the Albuquerque MSA, 1990 - 2017**



Source: NM Department of Health

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau Decennial Census

While birth rates have fallen steadily for decades, there was a precipitous drop after 2008, indicating that the struggling economy has further fueled the decision to delay starting a family. Another contributor to declining household sizes is that people are living longer, particularly women, thereby increasing the number of individuals who are living alone. In fact, according to the ACS, in 2017 nearly a third of all households (107,000) in Albuquerque’s MSA were one-person households. As we continue to age as a society, this number is expected to grow considerably.

### ***Aging Population***

Following World War II, the nation experienced a baby boom that lasted approximately 18 years between 1946 and 1964. Today, the children of that generation are between the ages of 54 and 72 and are crossing over between being active members of the workforce to active retirees. Due to that surge in population growth, we are now seeing the share of seniors dramatically rising as a percentage of the overall population. By 2040 the percentage of the population over 65 is expected to be the same as the percentage under 18 (approximately 21 percent).

**Table 2-1: Age Distribution in the Albuquerque MSA, 1990-2040**

Age Group	1990		2017		2040	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Youth (<18)	166,020	27.6%	207,605	22.9%	240,694	21.7%
Working Age (18-64)	373,548	62.0%	561,437	62.0%	633,887	57.2%
Seniors (65+)	63,020	10.5%	136,007	15.0%	234,151	21.1%
Total Population	602,588	100.0%	905,049	100.0%	1,108,733	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census, American Community Survey, University of NM Geospatial Population Studies

This has implications for senior services, such as healthcare, as already evidenced by our growing healthcare industry, and our labor force. A strong workforce will be required to support the needs of a growing number of retirees. However, as the senior population rises in share the working aged population will decline, potentially resulting in a labor shortage in the region.

### ***Impacts on Transportation Patterns***

An aging population will have an impact on travel patterns and transportation needs. In particular, commuting trips in the peak period will form a smaller percentage of daily trips compared to today. There will also likely be changes in traffic patterns as trips are dispersed across the day. Similarly, an aging population may result in a greater reliance on some form of public transit or private services such as Uber or Lyft as some aging residents may no longer be able to drive.

## ***Housing Shifts***

Recent housing data shows that amid a backdrop of declining household sizes and a growing senior population, there are some key shifts occurring in the housing market. One recent shift has been the location of residential development. While the majority of new homes have historically been built west of the Rio Grande, there is a growing share of new dwelling units east of the Rio Grande. The following table and maps compare clusters of new residential units constructed between 2000-2008 and 2008-2016 based on building permits.

### ***Centralized Development***

While considerably fewer residential units were permitted overall following 2008, a larger share of those building permits were issued occurred closer to existing development.

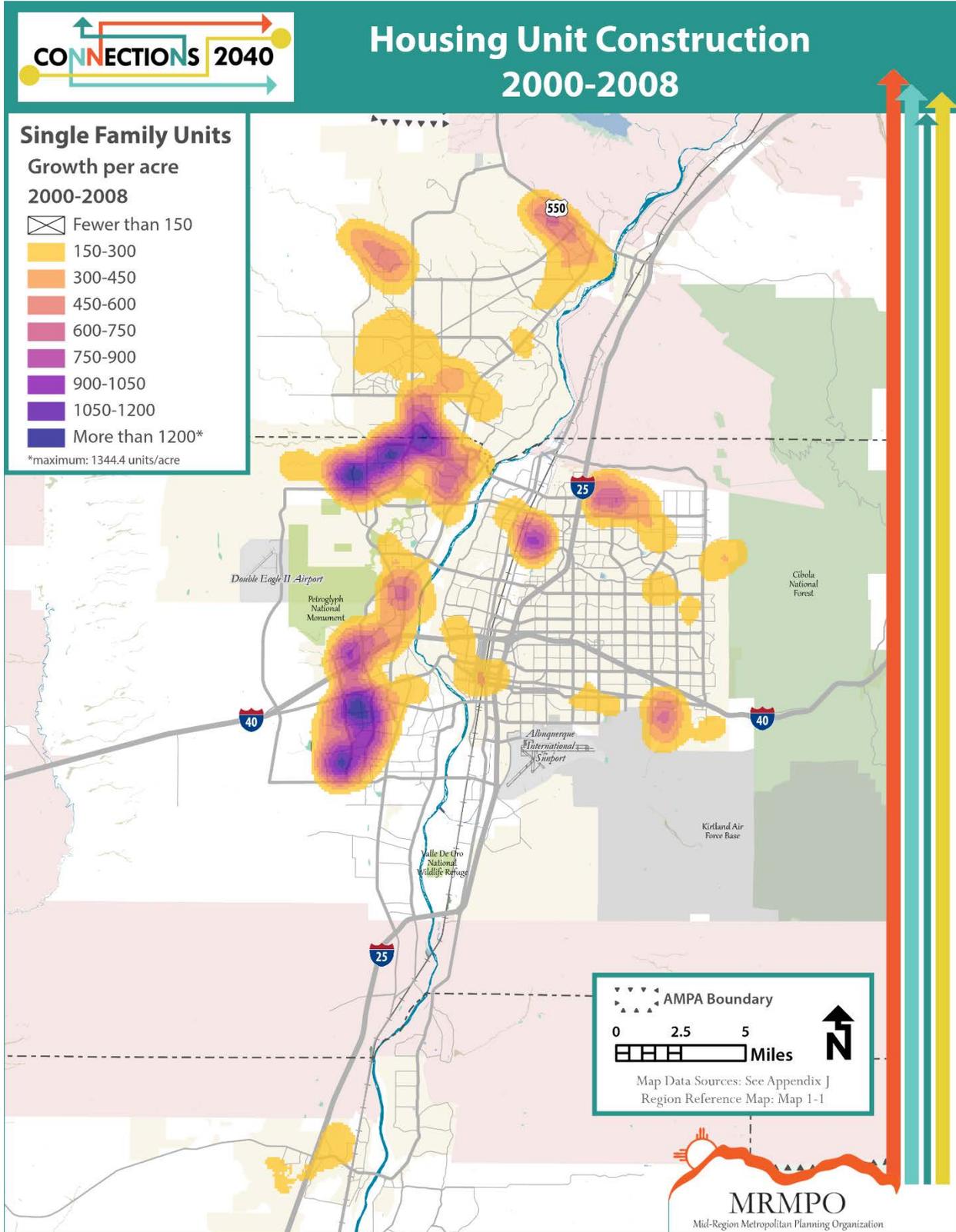
**Table 2-2: New Residential Units Constructed, Pre and Post Recession**

	2000 - 2008		2009 - 2018	
	Number	Share	Number	Share
New Units West of the Rio Grande	41,755	73%	12,387	64%
New Units East of the Rio Grande	15,131	27%	6,969	36%
New Units Total	56,886	73%	19,356	64%

Source: Building Permits issued in Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties by individual jurisdictions

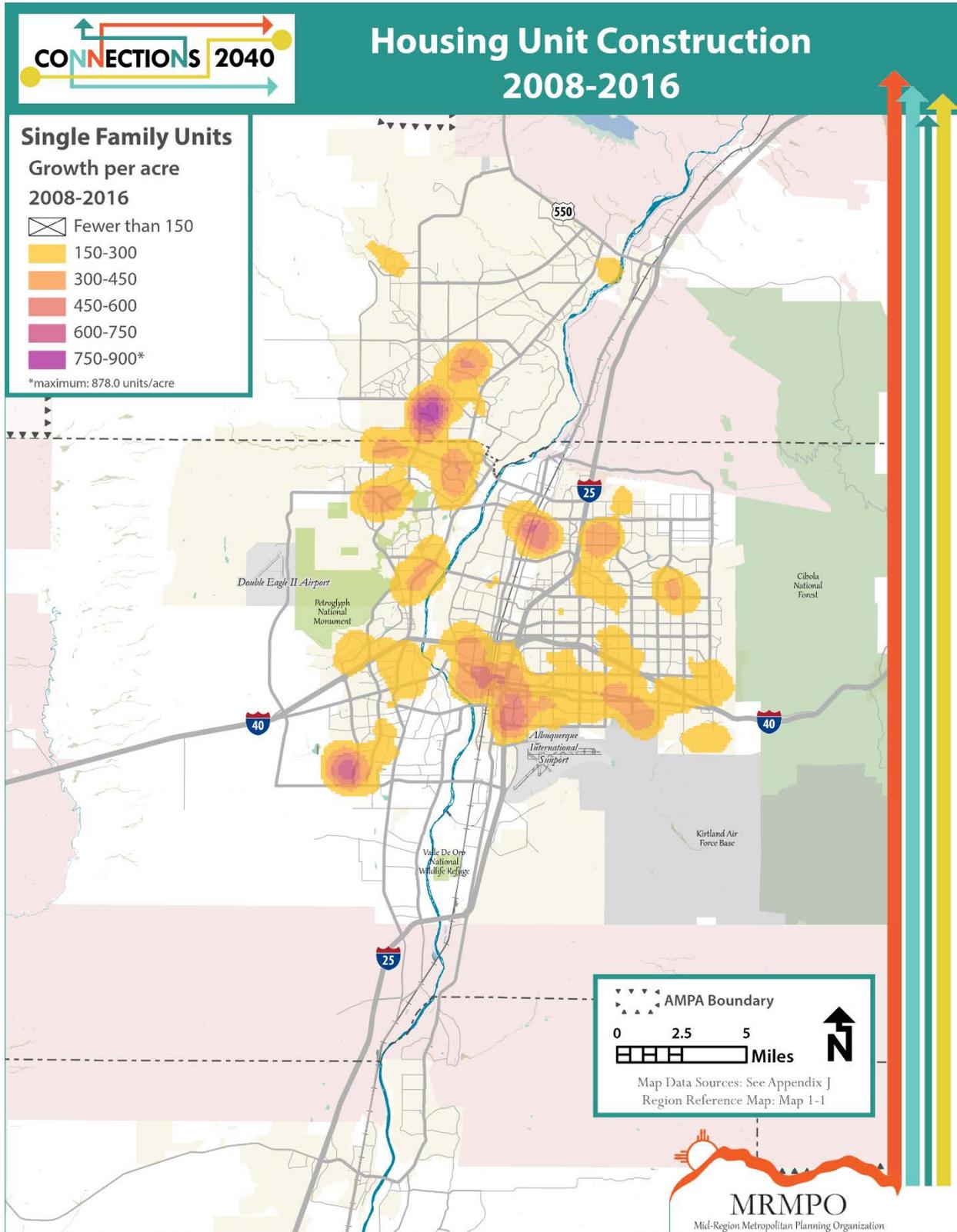
## Map 2-2: Housing Unit Construction, 2000-2008

Source: Building Permits issued by individual jurisdictions. MRCOG



## Map 2-3: Housing Unit Construction, 2008-2016

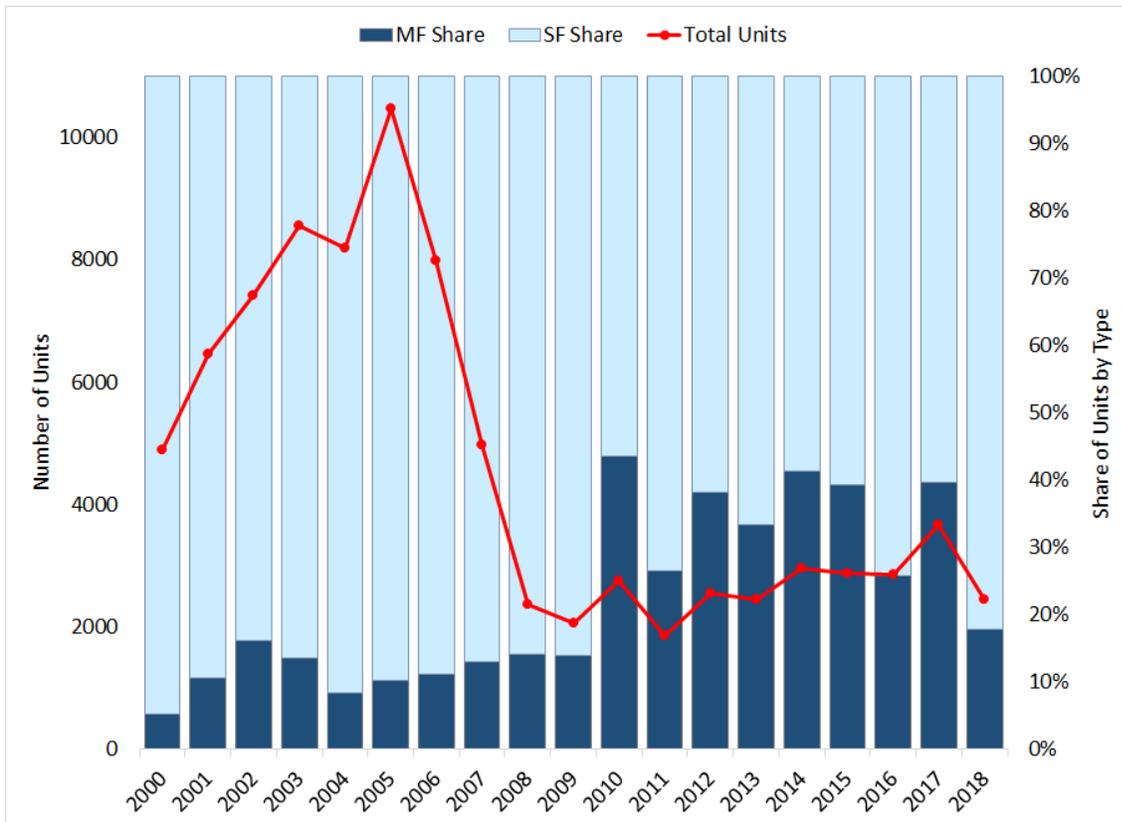
Source: Building Permits issued by individual jurisdictions, MRCOG



## Multi-Family Development

One of the key drivers behind the shift towards more centralized development patterns was an increase in the share of multi-family development. An analysis of building permits collected by jurisdictions within the region shows between 2000 and 2008 multi-family units represented an average of 11 percent of all units. After 2009 multi-family units have averaged approximately 37 percent of all units. This rise in multi-family construction as a share of overall new housing has been sustained over several years suggesting a steady demand for this type of housing.

**Figure 2-6: Housing Construction by Housing Type, 1990-2018**



Source: Building permits issued by individual jurisdictions, MRCOG

### Single Family Activity

Single-family construction has essentially plateaued since its drop following the housing boom in the mid-2000s, meanwhile existing home sales have rebounded to pre-recessionary levels. While these two components of the housing industry generally track closely, this has not been the case in recent years.

**Figure 2-7: Housing Market Activity, 2004 - 2018**



Source: Metrostudy, Greater Albuquerque Area Realtors

Housing experts point to several reasons for suppressed new homebuilding:

- low lot supply due to lack of access to capital
- a shortage of labor due to a competition for skilled workers
- increased costs due to increased building efficiency regulations
- rising costs of building materials due to increased tariffs at the national scale

Homebuilders predict that residential construction activity will experience an uptick in 2020 citing consumer demand and several thousand new housing units poised for delivery as master planned communities come online. Near term plans for new housing developments are part of the assumptions that are incorporated into the 2040 Socioeconomic Forecast.

#### d. Socioeconomic Forecast

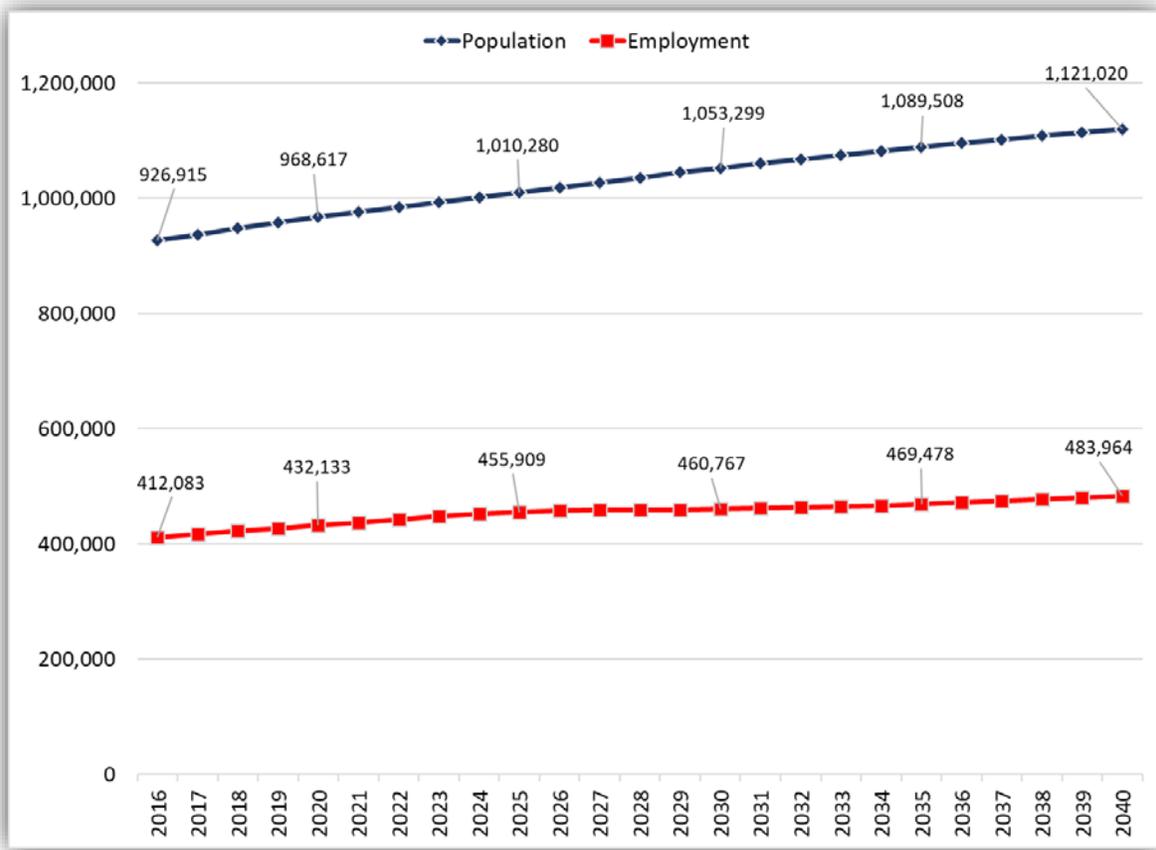
Socioeconomic forecasts are developed for MTPs in order to determine the likely amount and location of future households. With this information, regional leaders can prepare for future travel demand and prioritize transportation infrastructure needs accordingly.

##### *Forecast Methods*

Federal guidelines require forecasts that inform long-range metropolitan transportation plans to be built upon the most current information available regarding both demographic and economic trends. The population forecast always begins with the most recent US Census Data. A new Decennial Census, which reflects a best effort towards a 100 percent count, will be taken in April 2020. The next MTP will be based on that count.

The population forecast for this MTP is based on the 2010 Decennial Census Count, which is then brought up to date by estimating births, deaths and migration, the primary components of population growth. Then, current estimates are extended into a long-range population projection for 2040 by the University of New Mexico's Geospatial Population Studies Group (UNM-GPS) using a demographic cohort-component method. The state demographer provides projections at a state and county level for use by state agencies, including the New Mexico Department of Health. The employment forecast for this MTP began with a short-range employment forecast by sector developed by UNM-BBER. MRMPO extended this forecast out to 2040 using a Regional Economic Model (REMI).

**Figure 2-8: Population and Employment Forecast, 2016-2040**



Source: UNM-GPS, UNM-BBER, MRCOG

### Regional Forecast

According to projections by UNM-GPS, **the MRCOG region is projected to grow by 194,000 people over the next 24 years resulting in a 2040 population of 1.1 million.** This represents an average annual growth rate of 0.8 percent. By contrast, the average annual historical growth rate in the 1990s was approximately 1.6 percent. The reduction in the pace of growth is attributed to slowed migration and a declining birth rate. In addition, the region is projected to gain 72,000 jobs for a total of 484,000 jobs by 2040.

### Sub-Regional Forecast

The sub-regional forecast begins with the overall population and employment totals as described in the section above, which are then distributed throughout the region using a model that forecasts land use. This process is described in detail in Appendix H. The following tables and map depict the expected distribution of future growth by county and throughout the region.<sup>4</sup> They represent MRMPO’s Trend forecast, which is a most likely growth scenario based on current development plans, land use policies, and historical growth trends.

**The region is expected to grow by approximately 67,000 households and 72,000 jobs over the next 24 years.** Led by the City of Rio Rancho, Sandoval County is expected to hold onto its position as the fastest growing county in the region (and the state) by 31 percent. Bernalillo County will see the second fastest household growth at 17 percent. Sandoval will also see the fastest employment growth at 19.8 percent, followed closely behind by Valencia County.

In terms of sheer numbers, Bernalillo County will capture the largest amount of growth, adding 46,600 households and 60,000 jobs. While Bernalillo County holds 75.6 percent of the region’s households, it will capture 69.9 percent of the growth.

**Table 2-3: Forecast Pace of Growth by County**

County	2016 Base		2040 Trend		% Growth	
	Households	Jobs	Households	Jobs	Households	Jobs
Bernalillo	272,540	352,003	319,180	412,176	17.1%	17.1%
Sandoval	50,564	35,852	66,319	42,955	31.2%	19.8%
*Southern Santa Fe	3,959	1,784	4,517	2,109	14.1%	18.2%
Torrance	6,092	4,321	7,053	5,118	15.8%	18.4%
Valencia	27,461	18,123	30,288	21,606	10.3%	19.2%
Total	360,616	412,083	427,357	483,964	18.5%	17.4%

Source: MRCOG, UNM-GPS

\*Only a small part of Santa Fe County is included in the MRCOG region.

<sup>4</sup> Data Analysis Subzones (DASZs) are a unit of geography often used by transportation planners. DASZs are the equivalent of small subareas that are relatively homogeneous in nature, are usually bounded by transportation corridors, and provide a standardized geography for displaying information

As the economic center of the region, Bernalillo County currently contains 85.4 percent of all jobs and will capture about 83.7 percent of new jobs. Meanwhile, surrounding counties are expected to capture a slightly higher percentage of job growth when compared with their existing shares.

**Table 2-4: Forecast Distribution of Growth by County**

County	Existing Distribution		2016 - 2040 Growth		Growth Distribution	
	Households	Jobs	Households	Jobs	Households	Jobs
Bernalillo	75.6%	85.4%	46,640	60,173	69.9%	83.7%
Sandoval	14.0%	8.7%	15,755	7,103	23.6%	9.9%
Southern Santa Fe	1.1%	0.4%	558	325	0.8%	0.5%
Torrance	1.7%	1.0%	961	797	1.4%	1.1%
Valencia	7.6%	4.4%	2,827	3,483	4.2%	4.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	66,741	71,881	100.0%	100.0%

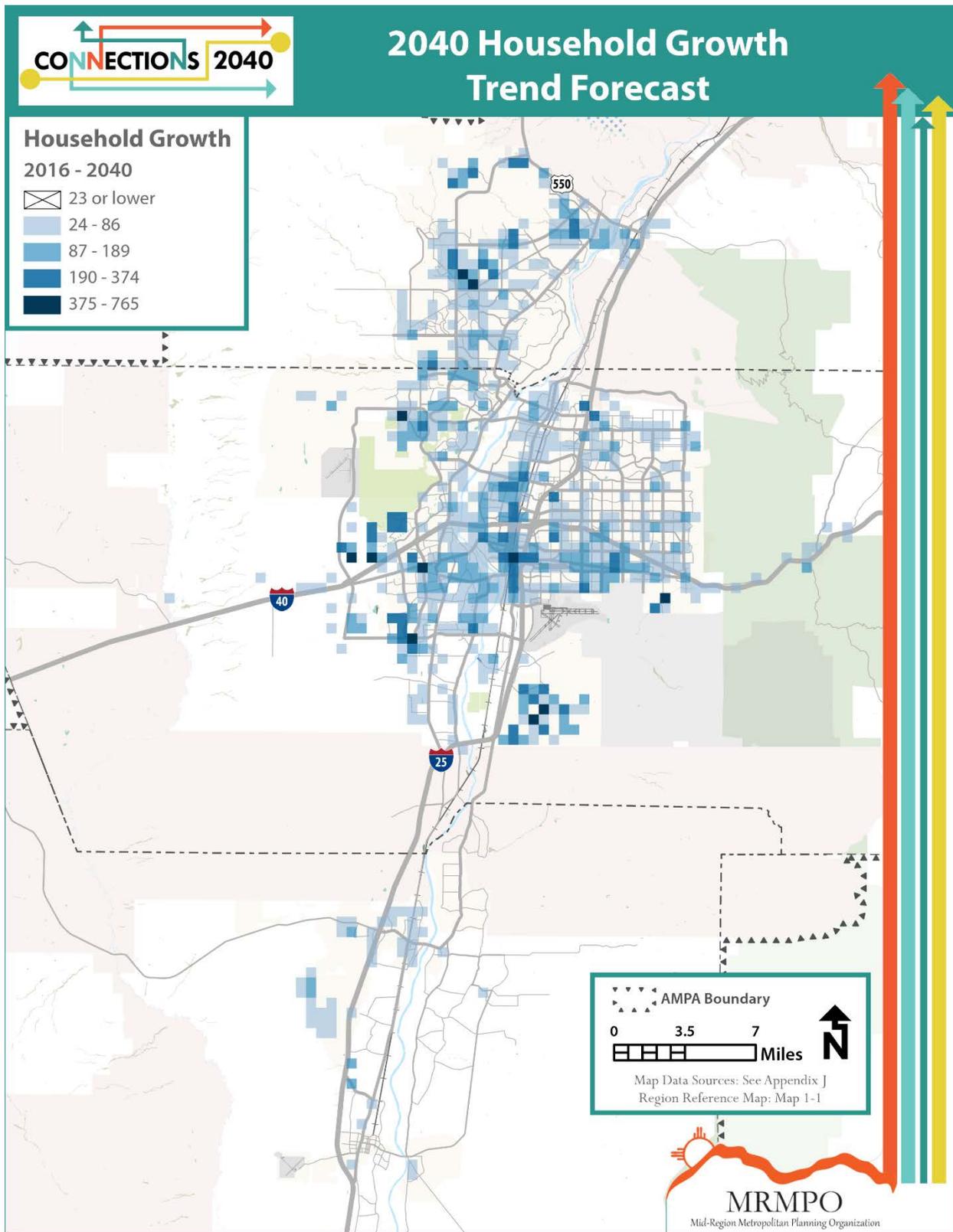
Source: MRCOG, UNM-GPS

The following map shows the forecasted distribution of household and job growth throughout the region. Large master planned communities are expected to capture a great deal of housing growth and attract jobs to new or growing job centers. There will also be a considerable amount of redevelopment in older parts of the region as buildings near the end of their lifecycle, with some increased density in urban areas and conversions from underutilized commercial to a mix of uses. In addition, it is expected that vacant homes in established neighborhoods will begin to fill up and that there will be increased household turnover with the aging of the population, contributing to population growth in areas that may be considered to be built out.

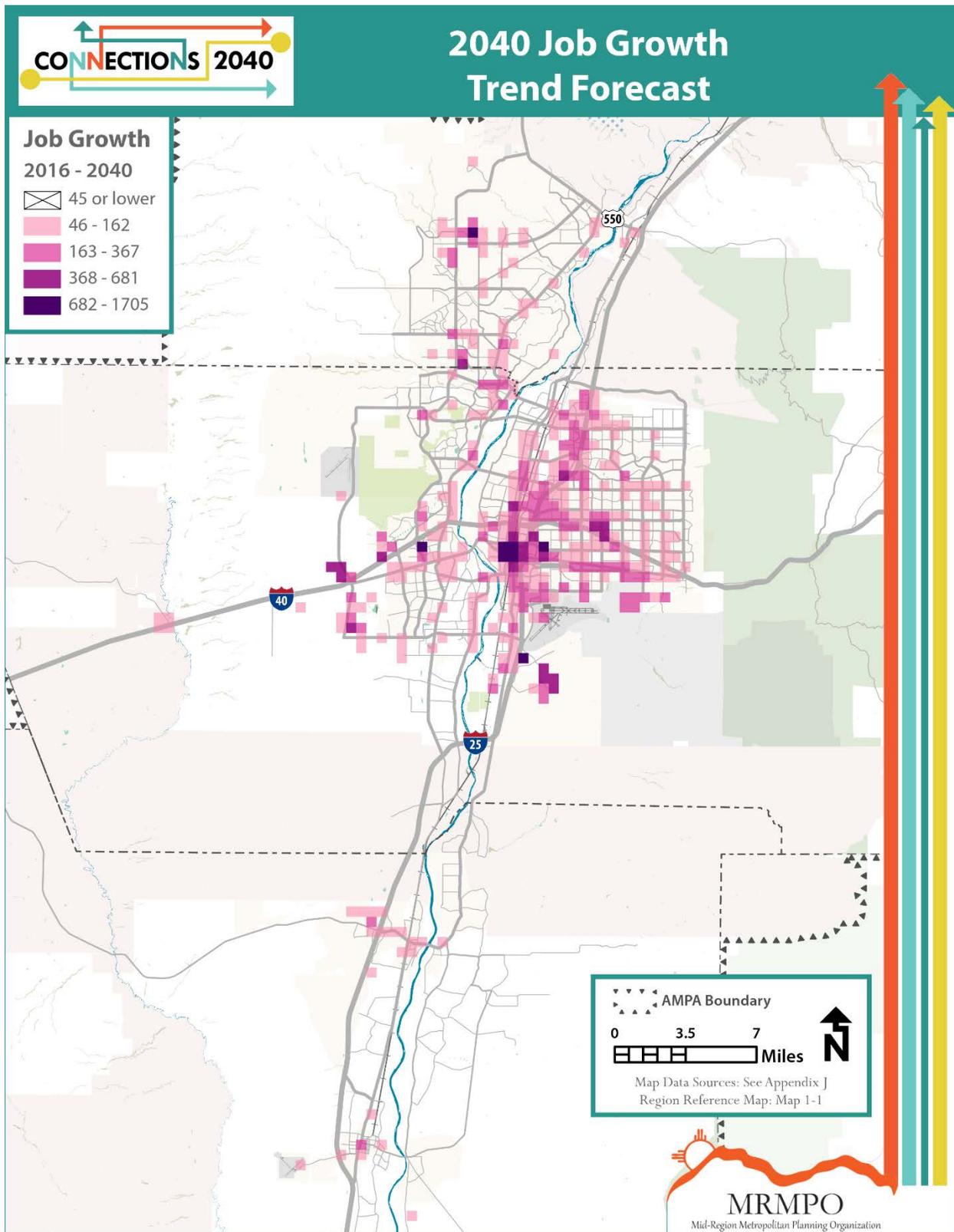
**Figure 2-9: New Housing Construction in the AMPA**



Map 2-4: Household Growth, 2016 - 2040



Map 2-5: Job Growth, 2016 - 2040



## e. How to use the Forecast

The *Connections 2040* socioeconomic forecast is referred to as a Trend Scenario, which is essentially a depiction of how the region will likely grow if it continues to develop in a similar manner as it has in the past under today's regulatory framework. The Trend Scenario is available to the planning and transportation community so that plans may be developed with consideration of how the future may look.

### **Uncertain Future**

The Trend Scenario does not represent a certain future. Rather, it represents a most likely growth scenario based on adopted plans and policies. This is an important distinction, and it is one of the key reasons the MTP is updated every five years.

There are many uncertainties in the region's future, be they related to planning regulation, the economy, the housing market, demographic trends, availability of natural resources, fiscal constraints, or a change in regional priorities. These changing conditions should be part of any discussion that references the Trend Scenario. **When establishing infrastructure priorities and project design, policy leaders and transportation professionals should balance these forecasts with qualitative elements such as community context and planning goals.** Simply put, forecasts should be considered as one factor in the broader picture of how a community wants to establish itself in the future, rather than an inevitability.

### **A Current Base Year**

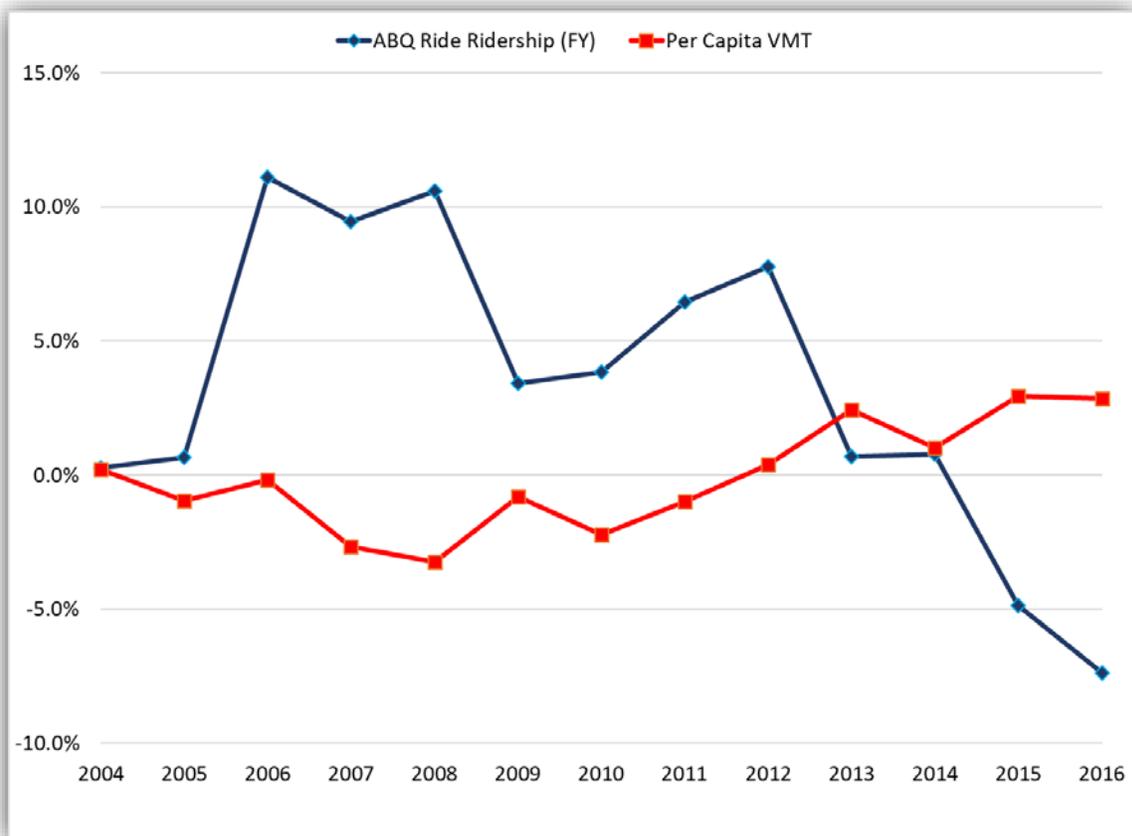
Because the forecasting process is a time-consuming part of MTP development, it begins very early in the process of putting together an MTP. Early data collection for this MTP began in 2017 when the most complete data year was 2016, and as such, 2016 serves as the "base year" for the *Connections 2040*. As the forecast is refined over time it is brought up to date by inserting more recent development activity that has occurred since the base year, in this case between 2016 and 2019. This is achieved by tracking local development review cases and building permits and entering them into the early years of the forecast. This important step ensures that the forecast truly begins with the most current information available and reflects reality when it comes to existing land use and growth patterns.

## 2.2 Transportation Trends

### a. Regional Travel Patterns

Toward the end of the last decade vehicle miles traveled (VMT) both nationally and locally were experiencing a ten-year decline, leading national analysts, and regional planners alike, to consider that it may be a trend that was here to stay. In addition to declining vehicle miles, transit ridership had been growing exponentially. However, since 2012 these trends have reversed direction with VMT on the rise once more and transit usage on the decline across most metropolitan areas. **Between 2012 and 2016, VMT in the AMPA increased nearly 12 percent**, which is particularly notable given the fact that both population and jobs grew at a considerably slower pace.

**Figure 2-10: Transit Ridership vs. Vehicle Miles, 2004-2016**



Source: ABQ RIDE, MRCOG Traffic Monitoring Program

Note: While New Mexico Rail Runner Express ridership has declined over the same time, the transit ridership represents only ABQ RIDE for the purpose of year-over-year comparability since rail service was not fully implemented until 2011.

The following table demonstrates that the increase in VMT far outpaced both population and employment growth between 2012 and 2016, while the decline in transit ridership is also out of line with the pace of growth. Chapter 4 provides greater detail regarding the major influences behind these trends.

**Table 2-5: Summary Transportation Statistics, 2012-2016**

Measure	2012	2016	% Growth
Population - AMPA	879,401	890,600	1.3%
Employment - AMPA	388,981	403,133	3.6%
Vehicle Miles Traveled - Total	18,966,203	21,199,359	11.8%
Vehicle Miles Traveled - Per Capita	21.7	23.8	9.7%
Transit Ridership	14,277,115	12,721,269	-10.9%
Passenger Miles Traveled	100,245,174	81,607,901	-18.6%

Source: MRMPO 2016 Socioeconomic Estimates by DASZ, MRMPO Travel Demand Model, RMRTD

### *Ride-Hailing Services*

**It is important to note that the rise in VMT coincides with the rise in the use of ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft, which likely contributed to the increase.** A survey of ride-hailing users across California found that 24 percent of these trips would have been taken by transit, walking, or biking, or not taken at all.<sup>5</sup> In addition, according to a recent study at Arizona State University based on data from the 2017 National Household Travel Survey, it is estimated that ride-hailing trips doubled between 2009 and 2017.<sup>6</sup> While it's impossible to say the extent that ride-hailing has impacted VMT, the likelihood is that it is significant. Local information from a recent MRMPO preference survey showed that 56 percent had used Uber or Lyft within the past year, 1.3 percent of whom used it daily.<sup>7</sup>

### *More Commuters Drive Alone*

An examination of commute to work patterns using Census Journey-to-Work data provides further evidence of increased dependence on the personal vehicle. Between 2012 and 2017, there was a 1.5 percent increase in commuters who drove alone to work (9,200 workers). This increase was primarily at the expense of the carpooling segment, which decreased over the same time period.

**Table 2-6: MSA Commute Mode Share over Time, 2012 and 2017**

Commute Mode	2012		2017	
	Workers	Percent	Workers	Percent
Drove Alone	315,272	79.2%	324,496	80.4%
Carpool	42,068	10.6%	36,551	9.1%
Public Transportation	6,614	1.7%	6,651	1.6%
Bicycle	3,744	0.9%	4,048	1.0%
Walked	7,397	1.9%	7,193	1.8%
Other Means	5,002	1.3%	5,267	1.3%
Worked at Home	18,090	4.5%	19,295	4.8%
Total	398,187	100.0%	403,501	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau Journey to Work

<sup>5</sup> Source: Ride-Hailing's Climate Risks, Steering a Growing Industry toward a Clean Transportation Future. Union of Concerned Scientists. [www.ucsusa.org/resources/ride-hailing-climate-risks](http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/ride-hailing-climate-risks). February 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Source: How ride-hailing is changing urban mobility. Jesse Berst, Smart Cities Council. July 2019.

<sup>7</sup> The MRMPO 2040 MTP Questionnaire does not represent a statistically significant sample.

One possible explanation can be found in the kinds of jobs that have been created during this time. When we consider that the fastest growing sector in the economy is healthcare, followed by construction, food services and accommodations – industries that don’t conform to a typical 8:00 am to 5:00 pm weekday schedule or have changing job site locations – it is likely that the ability to carpool or use other forms of alternative modes has decreased.

**Table 2-7: MSA Top Five Growth Industries**

Employment Industries	2012	2017	Growth
Health Care and Social Assistance	60,371	68,025	7,654
Construction	19,334	23,500	4,166
Accommodation and Food Services	37,669	41,609	3,940
Professional and Technical Services	28,708	30,849	2,141
Finance and Insurance	10,703	12,372	1,669
<i>All Industries</i>	<i>355,089</i>	<i>373,873</i>	<i>18,784</i>

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

### **Transit Riders**

While transit ridership has declined in recent years, there are some interesting exceptions. **There are two age groups where the commute share by transit has increased over time: the 20-24 and 60-64 age groups.** In addition, the Census commuting data show that both the number and share of workers commuting by transit held relatively constant between 2012 and 2017. This suggests that the decline in transit ridership may not be due to the commuting segment of riders, but by those using transit for other trip purposes.

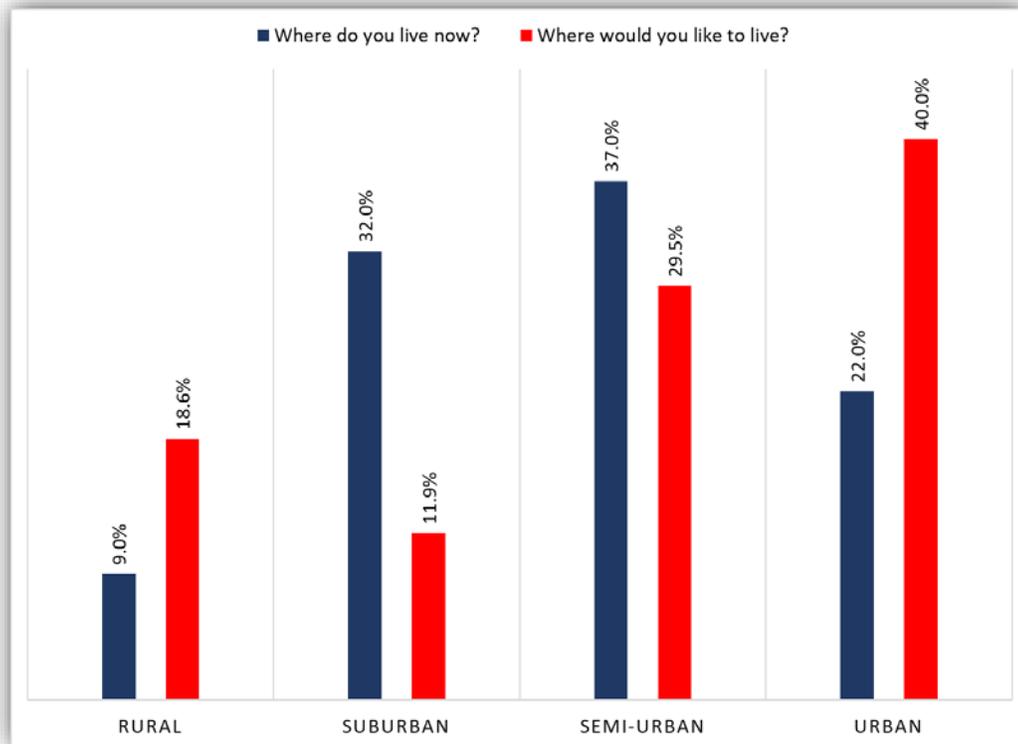
### **b. Consumer Preferences and Concerns**

Between 2018 and 2019, MRMPO distributed a public questionnaire about transportation needs and challenges across the region as part of its general public outreach efforts. Responses were collected through public meetings, broad outreach efforts, and online. There were approximately 700 respondents. The questionnaire responses do not represent a statistically significant survey; rather, it is a summary of information gathered from members of the public who are interested in transportation issues. This public perception questionnaire provides us a means of gaining insight into some of the qualitative motivations of the general public. Several of the questions were identical to those posed in a 2013-2014 survey distributed during the development of the *Futures 2040 MTP* to approximately 1,300 people, allowing a comparison of how opinions have changed over time.

### **Desired Housing Options**

Both questionnaires asked the public the type of area they live in and the type of area they wish to live in, and the findings were strikingly similar both times. **Twice as many people desire to live in an urban environment than already do. The same is true for a smaller share of respondents who desire a rural lifestyle.** Far fewer people desire to live in a suburban area than currently do.

**Figure 2-11: Current vs. Desired Housing Location, 2018**



Source: MRMPPO 2040 Connections Questionnaire, 2018

### **Access to Goods and Services**

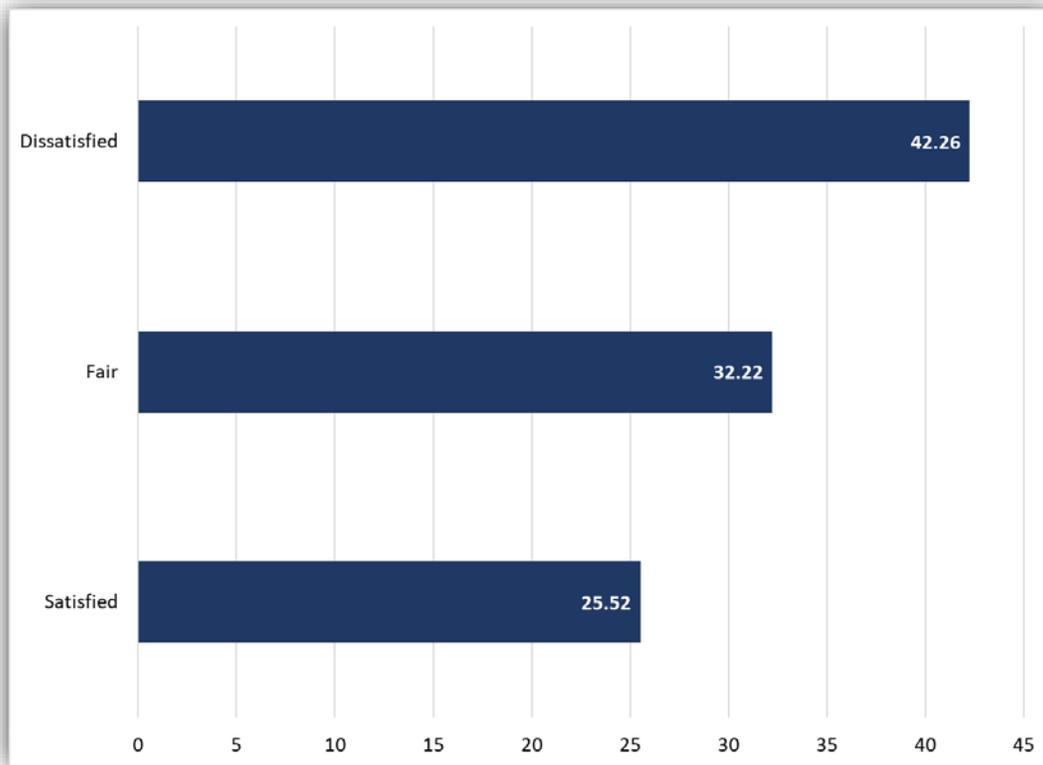
When questionnaire results were analyzed further the data showed that the majority of respondents, across all age groups, showed a preference for urban environments. The write-in comments revealed the desire for easier access to goods and services. National surveys from the Urban Land Institute and the National Association of Realtors have similar findings, that residents and homebuyers across different age groups desire walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with access to jobs and entertainment, even in rural and suburban areas where people enjoy small town centers.<sup>8</sup> The takeaway is not that people are expected to flock to downtown apartments and city centers, but that having access to transit, services, and jobs closer to home is important to people. This is also critical to low-income populations and people who lack dependable travel options. **The costs associated with long work commutes, both in vehicle costs and in travel time, can be substantial particularly for the most vulnerable in our workforce.** The growing distance between where people live and where they buy goods or seek medical care is particularly challenging for seniors and youth.

<sup>8</sup> <https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/America-in-2015.pdf>, <https://www.nar.realtor/newsroom/millennials-and-silent-generation-drive-desire-for-walkable-communities-say-realtors>

### **Lack of Travel Options**

Respondents to the MRMPO questionnaire tended to be dissatisfied with the current transportation system. Only one in four people felt that the transportation options met their needs, with a full 42 percent saying that it did not meet their needs. When compared with the previous questionnaire, responses indicate a growing level of dissatisfaction that is strongest among young adults. The questionnaire also provides insight into why people are dissatisfied. Lack of good routes by alternative modes, concern for safety, and excessive travel times are all important factors. Interestingly, respondents reported that there were few significant barriers to vehicle travel, and just one out of four respondents felt congestion was a serious problem.

**Figure 2-12: Satisfaction with the Transportation System, 2018**



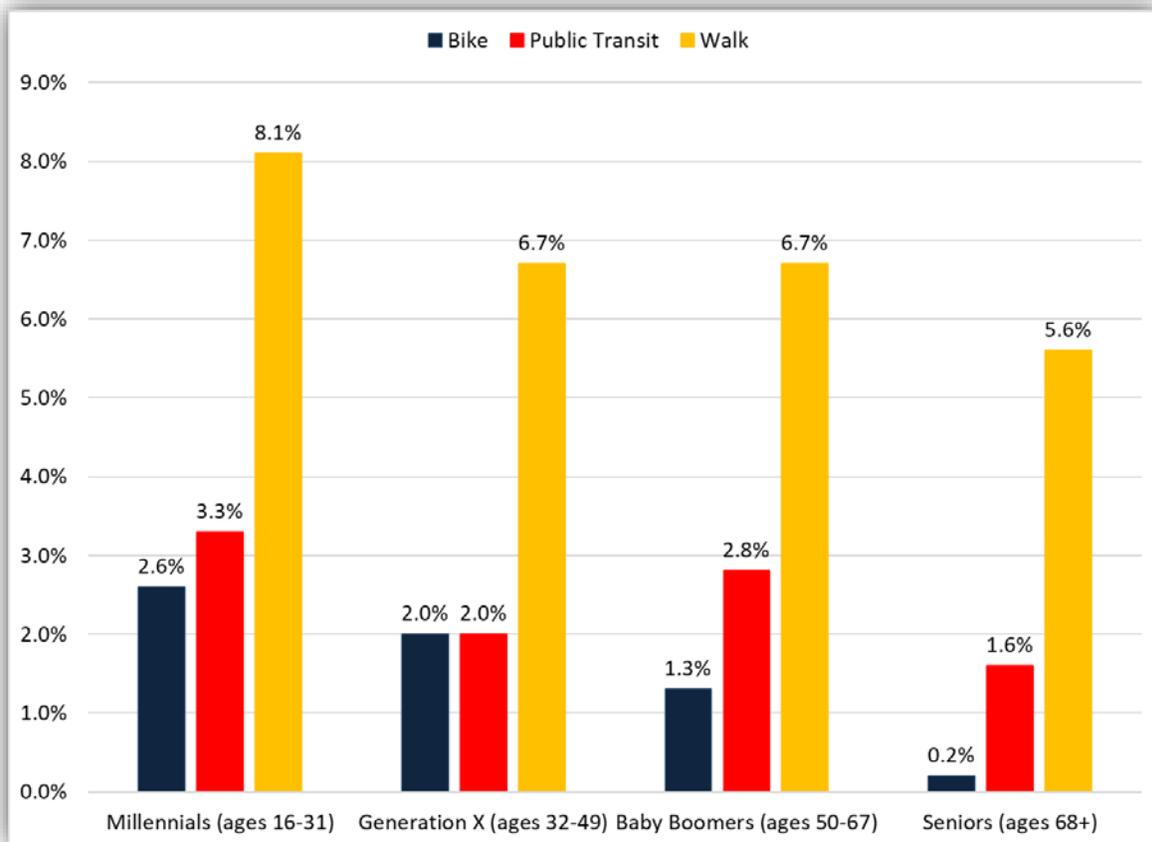
Source: MRMPO 2040 Connections Questionnaire, 2018

### Multimodal Access

MRMPO conducted a Mid-Region Travel Survey from November 2013 to January 2014. Nearly 2,500 households (and more than 5,000 individuals) from across Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia Counties participated in this statistically significant survey. The survey revealed that Bernalillo County residents were most apt to travel using multimodal options due to the increased opportunities to do so. Additionally, young adults were more likely to bike, walk, and take public transit than other age groups. Given that young adults are more likely to use active modes of transportation and are least likely to be satisfied with their transportation choices, investments in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities are well received among this population.

**If we provide more convenient, connected, and safe transportation options, we may find that we have an advantage in attracting and retaining young professionals to the region.**

**Figure 2-13: Bicycle, Transit, and Pedestrian Mode Share by Age, AMPA**



Source: Mid-Region Household Travel Survey, 2014

## 2.3 Regional Opportunities

### a. Local Planning Advances

An important function of a long-range transportation plan is to guide and support local jurisdictions with their land use and transportation policies and plans. While the MTP can be considered a general roadmap, the policies and plans of local jurisdictions are the actual avenues that take us to where we want to go. There have been several local efforts that embody many of the concepts that were put forth in the previous long-range plan, the *Futures 2040 MTP*, which continue to be supported with this update, the *Connections 2040 MTP*.

#### **High Frequency Transit**

The City of Albuquerque has pioneered the region's first BRT system along the Central Avenue corridor, paid primarily with funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). While the start date suffered several delays due to a series of challenges, service began November 30, 2019. There is evidence of significant private investment along the corridor with developers citing ART service as a key factor. A second premium service line along the University Avenue corridor, connecting the Albuquerque Sunport with sports stadiums and educational and health facilities, is in the planning stages. These efforts are supported by the MTP through the recommendation for high frequency transit, such as Bus Rapid Transit, in order to increase transit mode share, promote efficient and equitable people movement, reduce congestion, and support active place-making.

**Figure 2-14: City of Albuquerque Rapid Transit Bus (ART)**



#### **Mixed-Use Zoning**

The City of Albuquerque has recently passed a new Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO), which represents a massive overhaul of its previously complex system of land use regulations and zoning. The IDO integrates numerous plans and ordinances into one document. As part of this effort, the City created a new category of zoning called Mixed-Use Zones, which were formerly commercial zones. These zones will also allow housing in new development and in redevelopment along key transportation corridors and will increase the proximity of housing to transit, jobs, and services. It is an important step towards changing the Euclidian zoning strategy of separating jobs and commerce from residences. These efforts are supported by the MTP through recommending and encouraging a compact mix of uses in key locations, and the adoption of mixed-use zoning in appropriate areas.

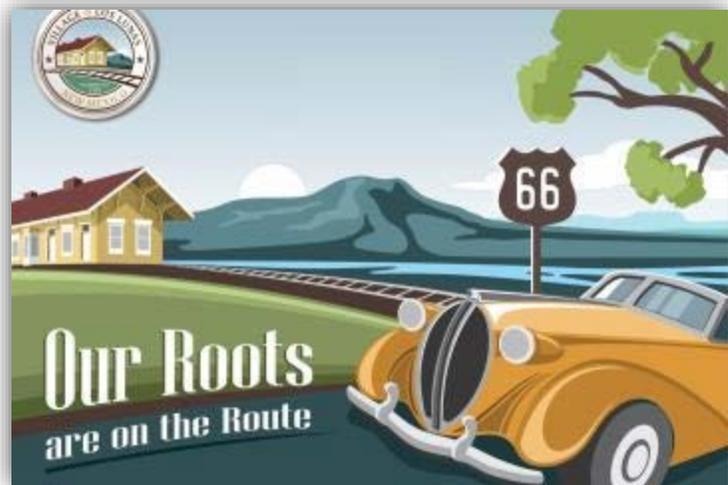
### ***Diverse Activity Centers***

The City of Rio Rancho adopted the Unit 10 Specific Area Plan in 2016, which highlights the need for diverse housing types, jobs, and shopping and a well-designed transportation system that encourages complete street design, walkable neighborhoods, and a high level of connectivity. The plan also emphasizes the desire to improve the balance of housing and jobs in order to lessen traffic congestion and the need for workers to commute out of the City to their jobs. In addition, the Los Diamantes master plan, located within Unit 10, is zoned to accommodate higher density housing and a business park, providing an opportunity to create a new mixed-use activity center. These efforts are supported through MTP recommendations that growth in large undeveloped areas should be master planned to include well-connected streets, a range of densities, and a balance of housing and jobs.

### ***Place-making and Historic Preservation***

Through funding received from a National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant, the Village of Los Lunas has worked in collaboration with the UNM School of Architecture and Planning to develop plans for an upcoming Los Lunas Route 66 Museum and Visitor Center. In spring of 2019, students and professors in the UNM Community and Regional Planning Capstone Studio worked directly with staff from the Village of Los Lunas to develop a site plan and programming structure for the upcoming museum, including recommendations for highlighting the historic pre-1937 Route 66 corridor. Historic preservation students documented the condition of buildings on the site to determine the remediation needed to use them for the museum. An architecture studio in fall of 2019 further developed the design of the buildings and the museum programming. The Village has been in the early planning stages for the Route 66 Museum since early 2015 and envisions an active museum and event center on our historic Route 66 corridor. These efforts are supported through the MTP recommendation of the use of creative partnerships to encourage development in key locations.

**Figure 2-15: Los Lunas Route 66 Efforts**



### ***Connected Transportation Investments***

In 2019, Bernalillo County adopted the Sunport Commerce Center Design Overlay Zone and the Sunport Commerce Center Transportation Plan. The Design Overlay helps to encourage new economic activity that is attractive and will enhance the overall identity of the area. The Transportation Plan identifies a multi-modal network that connects the Commerce Center to the region and enhances access within the plan area. Together, these two plans are strategically integrated with new major transportation investments, existing rail connections, and access to the airport, in order to promote a variety of transportation options for commuting and goods and freight movement. These efforts are supported through MTP recommendations that key economic development projects be linked with transportation investments.

## Targeting Economic Investments

MRCOG's 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) presents a five-year plan for economic growth and highlights strategies that will move the region towards a more resilient economy. The CEDS development convened regional economic development leaders to identify focus areas that will elevate our region and maximize our return on investment. There are several key job clusters identified for growth, including Film / Arts & Entertainment, Agriculture and Value-Added Foods, Tourism / Outdoor Recreation, and Science and Technology, to name a few.

The Film / Arts & Entertainment sector has catapulted the region onto the radar of national industry leaders with the announcement of Albuquerque as a Netflix production hub, promising 1,000 new jobs and \$1 billion in production over 10 years. Several additional production announcements include Sony Pictures, Warner Brothers, and NBC Universal. Agricultural and Value-Added Foods (foods that have had a change in the physical state or form of the product) is another growth area in the region with average annual growth of six percent over the past five years. The region's Science and Technology Sector, which has a concentration of jobs as a proportion of the total economy that is 10 times that of the nation, is expected to grow even more with expansion announcements at both Intel and Sandia National Laboratories amounting to over 2,000 new jobs in the region.

## Transportation and Logistics Assets

MRCOG's *Transportation and Logistics Hub Study* (the Hub Study) presents opportunities for the region to leverage its transportation infrastructure and workforce development to build a robust manufacturing and technology economy. The Hub Study identifies several regional assets that can be further leveraged to support economic growth. Importantly, the region benefits from ample access to cross-country infrastructure (air, highway, and rail) that facilitates connections to major markets. In addition, the metropolitan area has a competitive advantage in the area of industrial land availability. Between Bernalillo and Valencia Counties, there are dozens of vacant or under-utilized industrially zoned near rail, highway, and air transportation. One such site is the location of a new Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway intermodal facility under construction in the Village of Los Lunas. This project is an example of how local partnerships can work to facilitate freight movement and economic opportunities in the region. The study recommends that local governments catalyze development through creating a "certified ready" industrial site program that would expedite development in desired locations while simultaneously achieving public goals such as balancing jobs and housing and supporting employment centers.

Figure 2-16: CEDS Plan



## b. Transportation Enhancements

Leaders in the transportation profession agree that when it comes to mobility, the future is all about choice. Whether it is general auto, ride-hailing, automated vehicles, public transit, bus rapid transit, commuter rail, bike-sharing, electric scooters, or walking, transportation options are continuing to expand and fill in the gaps to connect people with their destinations. Evolving transportation technology and the supportive infrastructure that it requires is challenging cities and regions to plan ahead and adapt quickly during this time of rapid change.

### ***Autonomous Vehicles***

Perhaps most revolutionary of these options is autonomous or ‘driverless’ vehicles. While there is no clear agreement as to exactly when, it is certain that in the coming years fully automated cars and trucks that drive us, instead of us driving them, will become a reality. The potential benefits from automation include improved mobility, faster movement of goods, fewer crashes, and better accessibility for those who can’t drive. But equally possible are job losses due to automation, more congestion, increased emissions, sprawl, and economic inequity. There are some important steps we can take in order to avoid some of the potential negative consequences of autonomous vehicles:

- 1) Create an economic development strategy that supports the development and testing of smart auto systems including electric vehicle components, connected infrastructure, and other emerging transportation technologies.
- 2) Encourage the use of shared or pooled rides to reduce the number of trips and increase affordability.
- 3) Maximize regulatory and economic incentives that encourage compact mixed-use development and creative reuse of space including parking areas to reduce trip length and auto dependency.
- 4) Adopt policy surrounding autonomous transportation systems that includes provisions to ensure equitable access to economically and physically disadvantaged populations.
- 5) Establish proactive roadway maintenance and right-of-way acquisition procedures that conform to emerging technology needs.

As of 2018, twenty-nine states have enacted legislation related to autonomous vehicles. While the New Mexico state legislature has not yet acted on legislation, it has committed to addressing the emerging need for transportation policy in this area by establishing a committee of key stakeholders to investigate autonomous vehicle regulation.

### ***Connected Vehicle Technology***

Connected Vehicle (CV) technology is another advancement in transportation that is already being used in vehicles today. CV technology enables vehicles to communicate with other vehicles and infrastructure and detect pedestrians to improve transportation safety and efficiency. This technology has the benefit of responding instantaneously to changes in roadway conditions. Some examples of CV technology include signals that convey the posted speed limit, sensors that alert vehicles to potential incidents, and vehicle platooning where vehicles sync their travel together like train cars.

Connected technology exists today and has already shown great results in improved safety and driver-experience, however; realizing the full benefits of this technology will depend on how widely integrated it is into the overall transportation fleet. Additionally, it is essential that we adapt and maintain our current transportation infrastructure for this type of technology in order for it to be successful in the future.

### ***Bike Share and Scooters***

Bike share and electric scooters represent two mobility options that are relatively new to the transportation market and are available in key locations such as Albuquerque’s downtown and Nob Hill. Through an app on a smartphone, users are able to find and rent bikes or scooters instead of needing a car to travel between destinations. These options can be particularly efficient for short distances and within downtown and activity centers. Publicly available bikes and scooters reduce the need for parking, do not compromise our air quality, and supplement transit trips by providing that last-mile connection to a passenger’s destination. In addition to their practical use, bike share and scooters also promote physical activity and provide a fun way to get around. While scooters are relatively new (compared to the bike share program in Albuquerque), the bike share program has been a great success and continues to expand to accommodate increased demand.

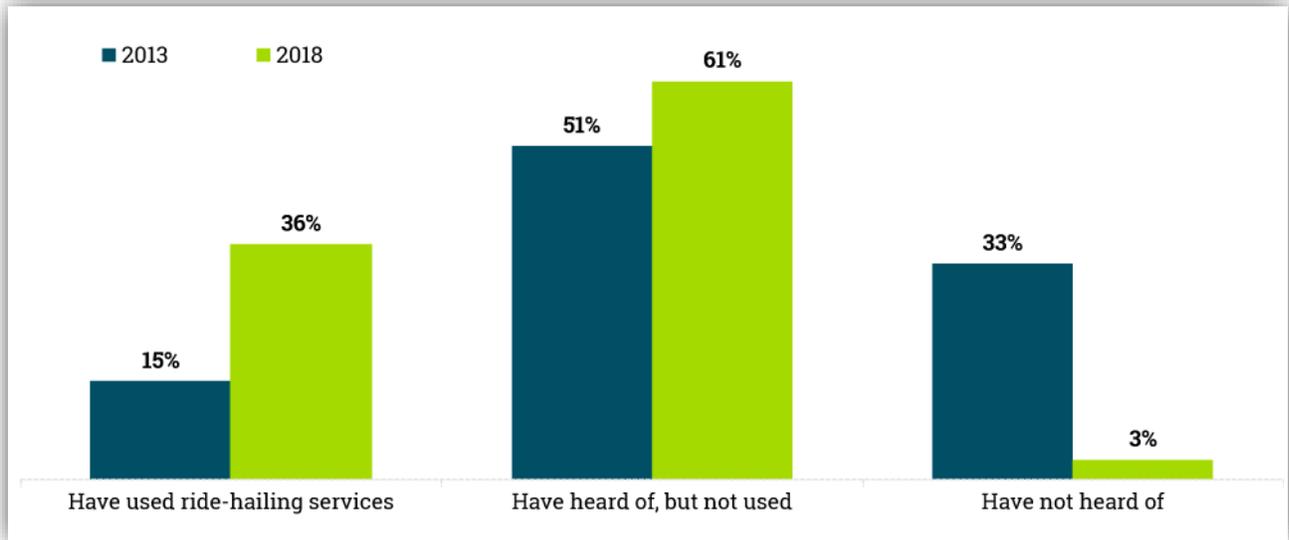
**Figure 2-17: Pace Bike Share Station near the University of New Mexico**



## Ride-Hailing Services

Ride-hailing refers to the on-demand transportation services that link drivers with passengers that need a ride. Using a smart phone app, passengers needing a ride can hail nearby drivers who are compensated for their services by Transportation Network Companies (TNCs).

**Figure 2-18: Pew Research Center Adult Ride-Hailing Services Use, 2019**



The transaction is quick and easy for the technically equipped, yet out of reach to others. This disparity raises equity issues, and a study in the San Francisco area of riders showed that the lowest income households were underrepresented among users of ride-hailing services.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, TNCs such as Uber and Lyft tend to operate in major cities, while more remote suburban and rural residents continue to rely on their personal vehicle to get around. Another concern related to ride-hailing is the potential to add vehicle miles to our roadways, particularly when the passenger may have otherwise chosen to take public transit, walk, or ride their bike, modes that serve to remove vehicles from the transportation network. In addition, drivers of ride hailing services often operate without passengers as they circulate areas awaiting passengers to be hailed, or are in-between trips after drop off and before the next pickup. Nonetheless, ride-hailing services have disrupted traditional transportation providers with a relatively (and at least for now) cost-effective and easy alternative to other means of travel. When combined with ridesharing (passengers share their ride with other passengers for a lower fare), there is the potential to increase affordability and combine multiple vehicle trips into one. Some transit agencies are starting to partner with TNCs with agreements that provide last mile connections in support of a larger regional transit system. Policymakers in many cities have used various tools to prioritize high-occupancy vehicles and encourage ridesharing. This could be a beneficial future direction for New Mexico.

<sup>9</sup> Shared Mobility Current Practices and Guiding Principles, FHWA, US Department of Transportation, 2016

## 2.4 Regional Challenges

### a. Limited Funding

While our region's infrastructure needs continue to mount, our sources of transportation funding have become more limited and increasingly unpredictable. There is pressure at the federal level for states to financially shoulder a higher share of their transportation needs. This very much highlights the fiscally constrained nature of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan as there is simply not enough money to fund all the transportation projects being proposed. Because of this situation it becomes more and more important for Connections 2040 to emphasize that:

**Transportation projects listed in the MTP should fill a critical gap in the regional transportation system to ensure the greatest return on investment of public dollars.**

#### *National and State Level*

At the national level, Congress has not passed an increase in the gas tax since 1993; meanwhile, inflation has risen by approximately 70 percent during this time. **The gas tax is the most immediate way to fund infrastructure improvements.** The current transportation bill, the FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation) was passed in 2015. The FAST Act authorizes modest annual increases in transportation spending that are further diminished by a growing population, a growing inventory of needs, and rising construction costs. The FAST Act expires in 2020, and members of Congress are currently working on drafting a new surface transportation bill.

As with the national situation, at the state level, New Mexico policy leaders have not raised the tax on gasoline since 1993. **At 18.88 cents per gallon, the New Mexico gas tax remains one of the lowest in the nation.** As the fifth largest state in the nation, New Mexico has a considerable inventory of roadways that require maintenance, including many facilities in the Albuquerque metropolitan area in both urban and rural areas. The lack of a major increase in infrastructure funding by the federal government, and the lack of a reliable and sufficient transportation revenue stream from state and local governments, does not abate our public responsibility for ensuring reliable and safe infrastructure for all residents. It does mean, however, that we must be more strategic about how these limited funds are spent.

Raising gas taxes could help local governments fund transportation projects but is certainly not a silver bullet. Increasing fuel efficiency, and improvements in vehicle technology have created less dependence on gasoline as a fuel source. A larger share of vehicles and buses on our roadways are powered by electricity, natural gas, and other alternative fuel sources, and this is expected to continue in the future. There are options for creating new funding streams such as mileage-based user-fees, but these ideas are still very much in their infancy phases and raise concerns about privacy and equity among other things.

#### *Lifecycle Costs*

It has become increasingly apparent that we must be more financially prudent when considering new infrastructure projects. **With every roadway expansion project, miles are added to our regional inventory; miles that need to be maintained over time.** The financial responsibility for new roadway maintenance generally defers to the local jurisdiction. Continuously adding to the roadway inventory places a strain on municipal budgets. Therefore, when new transportation infrastructure projects are proposed, the "lifecycle costs" must be taken into consideration; that is, the one-time capital costs of the project plus all recurring costs that are expected throughout a project's life. This complete picture of project costs is a more accurate and informative figure when weighing project costs against a growing list of transportation needs.

The Metropolitan Transportation Board recognizes the need to maintain existing infrastructure first. This is a key objective of the mobility goal from the *Futures 2040 MTP* and has been carried forward to *Connections 2040*. One example of the Board's commitment to this objective is the addition of critical bridge maintenance to the MTP project list.

## **b. Building a River Crossing**

Anyone who commutes over the Rio Grande during peak hour traffic has probably asked the question, "When will we get a new bridge?" The answer is, beyond what is already programmed<sup>10</sup>, not within the lifetime of the MTP. There are significant challenges that are posed with the prospect of building a new river crossing. These challenges are highlighted below along with some alternatives to address the congestion problem on existing river crossings.

### ***Location and Right-of-Way Acquisition***

Much of the land alongside the river has been developed, making right-of-way acquisition expensive and likely to require the demolition of both commercial and residential buildings. Any location that would require traversing tribal lands would require approval from tribal governments that have sovereign rights regarding the control and use of their land. Any other location would require significant right-of-way and private property acquisition.

### ***Environmental Reviews and Air Quality***

Construction of a new bridge and roadway connections require an environmental review of a project. When a project impacts parkland or open space, special effort must be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. While building a crossing through open space or an environmentally sensitive area is not insurmountable, several mitigation measures and conditions would likely be required and add to a project's cost.

Besides direct impacts due to the construction of a project, an air quality impact analysis would also be required. Any project building general traffic lanes would increase vehicle emissions along the route. The Albuquerque metro area was in nonattainment/limited maintenance for carbon monoxide (CO) from 1996 to 2016. Currently, the region is borderline for ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) conformity with levels at the limit of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) levels.

### ***Fiscal Constraints***

While a project cost estimate has not been developed for a new river crossing (and associated ancillary projects), based on the costs of related elements of other major projects, a very rough figure of at least \$100 million is reasonable for design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction. Per federal law the MTP must be fiscally constrained, meaning the cumulative total of all project costs proposed in the plan cannot exceed the total of all estimated revenues. Funding any large-scale project with core federal program funds would require removing an equal amount of other project proposals.

Considering the total federal highway funding currently provided to the AMPA in any given year is approximately \$65 million (which is also needed for rehabilitation, resurfacing, and repair of the existing infrastructure), relying on the core federal funding program to fund a bridge project is not practical.

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<sup>10</sup> The Village of Los Lunas will build a new river crossing parallel with Morris Road to alleviate high volumes on its only east/west thoroughfare, New Mexico State Road 6. This project has been planned for well over two decades and is finally nearing construction. US 550 is programmed for a widening project that includes new lanes across the river.

Even relying on state or local funding would require a significant commitment of financial resources to fund a project of this scale. In addition, given the need to provide future rehabilitation projects for our current roadways and bridges, safety improvements and other needs, the impact of doing so would jeopardize the integrity of our existing infrastructure.

### *Local Funding Match*

All projects programmed in the MTP must be sponsored by a member agency. Currently, no agency can easily sponsor such a project, given the fiscal responsibilities, including having to provide the required federal matching funds (usually 20 percent of the project), at a time when funding for transportation is only minimally increasing. At the time of development of this MTP, there are no agencies that can financially take on such a project during the timeframe of the plan.

### *Ancillary Projects*

Ancillary projects needed to mitigate future choke points associated with the new crossing would add significant costs. A new bridge would require upgrades to roads leading to the bridge, and intersection improvements on connections both "upstream" and "downstream" of the bridge roadway's access points. In addition, existing roadways leading to the bridge would experience significant increase in traffic, especially any east-west street the bridge ties into, changing the character of affected neighborhoods and possibly generating neighborhood opposition.

### **Considering Alternatives**

The growing congestion on our river crossings and the major roads that lead to them, particularly during peak commute times, is a source of frustration particularly for residents who live and work on separate sides of the Rio Grande. Given the impracticality of another river crossing within the planning horizon, planners and policymakers are pursuing alternative ways to mitigate congestion and improve access to jobs and services. Alternative strategies must be viable and effective in addressing this critical issue.

### *Peak Hour Spreading*

An option that does not require any additional infrastructure involves a simple shift in travel start-time made by travelers. Nearly every roadway has a "peak hour" of travel where demand is highest and roadway capacity is approached or met; however, if travelers (with support from their employers) can shift their start times earlier or later (sometimes by as little as 15 minutes), they can avoid the congested times associated with the busy peak hour. When used in combination with technological advances that provide real-time travel conditions, as well as other ride sharing strategies, these strategies could achieve similar impacts (and cost much less) than building an additional bridge crossing.

### Jobs and Housing Balance

Achieving a balance between jobs and housing both east and west of the river could be an effective strategy towards alleviating the river crossing dilemma. A healthy balance is considered to be 1.2 jobs for every home.<sup>11</sup>

The metro area’s jobs-to-housing ratio (calculated as the number of jobs divided by homes) stands at 1.07 today, meaning that there is just over one job for every household. This ratio has been declining since 2000 as housing growth has outpaced job growth.

While the AMPA has a relatively healthy jobs-to-housing ratio, when we zoom in on the ratio west of the Rio Grande it stands at 0.56. In other words, there is approximately one job for every two homes on the AMPA’s westside. In contrast, major employment centers such as Kirtland Air Force Base, UNM, downtown Albuquerque and the Journal Center produces a jobs-to-housing ratio east of the Rio Grande of 1.42, or almost three jobs for every two homes on the eastside.

**Table 2-8: Jobs-to-Housing Balance East and West of the Rio Grande**

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
<b>AMPA</b>					
<b>Jobs-Housing Ratio</b>	1.30	1.22	1.17	1.06	1.07
Housing	294,050	321,979	352,732	366,231	377,348
Jobs	382,746	393,880	412,803	388,981	403,133
<b>Eastside</b>					
<b>Jobs-Housing Ratio</b>	1.60	1.51	1.50	1.39	1.42
Housing	199,242	209,484	215,080	219,694	223,422
Jobs	319,099	317,060	323,496	306,296	317,489
<b>Westside</b>					
<b>Jobs-Housing Ratio</b>	0.67	0.68	0.65	0.56	0.56
Housing	94,808	112,495	137,652	146,537	153,926
Jobs	63,647	76,820	89,307	82,685	85,644

Source: MRMPO Socioeconomic Estimates by DASZ, US Census Bureau, Metrostudy, Building Permits, InfoUSA Employment database, and NM Department of Workforce Solutions.

Behind efforts to improve the westside’s jobs-to-housing ratio is the idea that more jobs west of the river will fuel new opportunities for Westside residents to work and shop close to home. While job creation west of the Rio Grande doesn’t mean that everyone is going to change their jobs to work closer to home, it does increase the likelihood that residents can get to their destinations without having to sit in traffic. Unfortunately, while the Westside has seen considerable job growth since 2000, these gains have been offset by new housing construction which has had the consequence of reducing the overall jobs-to-housing ratio.

<sup>11</sup> There are approximately 1.2 workers per household in the entire Albuquerque MSA. As such, 1.2 is a reasonable target when gauging a healthy job-to-housing ratio (the number of jobs per housing unit) with the rationale that there should be at least one job for every person in a household.

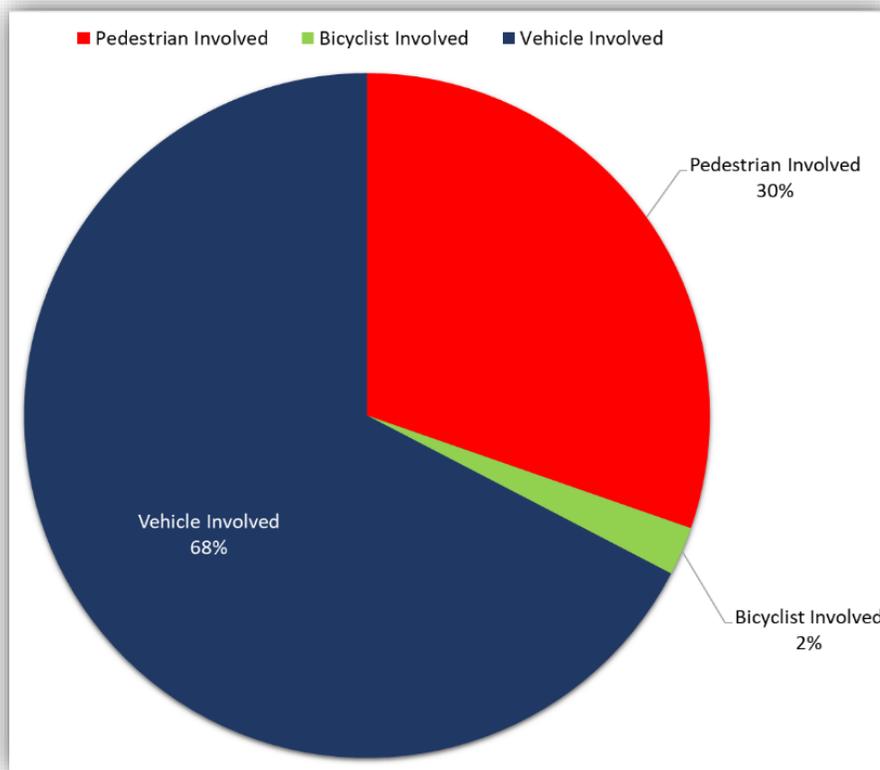
### Transit Mode Share

The MTB has adopted a mode share goal to shift a portion of trips away from single-occupancy-vehicle (SOV) travel to transit to reduce the number of vehicles crossing the river. A full, regular-size bus serves the equivalent of approximately 34 vehicles;<sup>12</sup> therefore, a shift to transit has the positive effect of carrying more travelers within the same roadway space as a single lane of automobile traffic. The construction of the Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) project, which involves using dedicated bus lanes is a major step toward this goal. An ART bus is a double length bus, providing even more capacity, and ART services is more competitive since it includes a dedicated lane to bypass general traffic. The ART service, along with future scheduled improvements to the existing Rapid Ride Blue Line and existing ABQ RIDE bus routes have the potential to help alleviate congestion.

### c. Roadway Safety

Our region struggles with the issue of roadway safety. New Mexico ranks number one in the nation for pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 population. A large portion of these fatalities happen in our region. Between 2013 and 2017, 450 people were killed in traffic crashes in the AMPA and 45,810 people were injured. **A particularly alarming statistic is that 30 percent of the fatal crashes in our region involve pedestrians.**

**Figure 2-19: Fatal Crashes in the AMPA by Mode, 2013 - 2017**



Source: New Mexico Department of Transportation, Traffic Safety Bureau

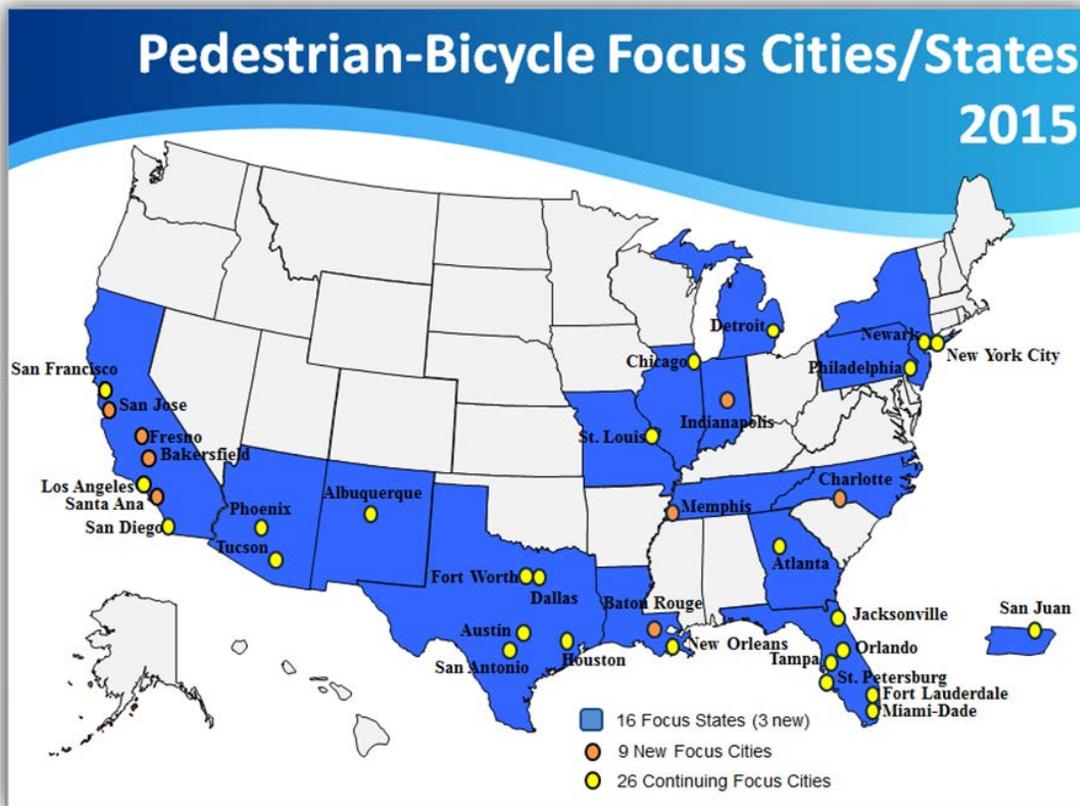
<sup>12</sup> [https://www.codot.gov/programs/commuterchoices/documents/trandir\\_transit.pdf](https://www.codot.gov/programs/commuterchoices/documents/trandir_transit.pdf) A 40-foot coach bus usually holds about 42 ambulatory passengers when two wheelchair tiedowns are provided. Using an average occupancy of 1.2 people per vehicle, that equates to the equivalent of 33.6 vehicles.

Pedestrians and bicyclists are our most vulnerable roadway users and by making our roadways safer for them, we can reduce crash related fatalities and injuries for every mode of travel and increase mobility options for all roadway users. The reality is that we all walk for some part of our trip and improving safety for people walking benefits us all. Safety issues are beginning to attract more attention from policy makers both nationally and locally. Congress established safety as the first performance goal listed out of seven in the Federal-aid Highway Program established in the passing of the FAST Act. Federal legislation requires that the planning process include consideration of the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users. The FHWA stresses the importance of developing data-driven systemic approaches and technologies to analyze safety issues and consider safety needs early, and throughout, the project development process.

**Roadway Crashes are a Public Health Crisis**

Safety must be elevated to a higher priority in our transportation planning and engineering processes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **traffic crashes are the leading cause of unintentional death in the United States for the age group four through 34.** Traffic crashes also result in economic losses due to medical costs and police resources, and through the death or serious injury of productive workers. In 2014, the CDC estimated the annual cost of medical care and productivity losses at over \$99 billion dollars for motor vehicle-related injuries and \$41 billion for crash-related deaths.

**Figure 2-20: FHWA Focus Cities and States**



Source: [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/ped\\_focus/focus\\_cities\\_states2015.cfm](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_focus/focus_cities_states2015.cfm). Updated July 2019.

Both the Albuquerque metropolitan area and the state of New Mexico stand out when it comes to certain types of fatalities and high crash rates (currently considered a public health crisis). Because of this, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) identified New Mexico and Albuquerque as a *Focus State and City*, respectively, and provides technical assistance in our region to address high pedestrian and bicycle fatalities. This program has several categories of concern including pedestrian, intersection, and roadway departure crashes. The FHWA provided assistance in the form of Road Safety Audits along West Central (including the intersection of Central and Coors Boulevard), the intersection of San Mateo and Central, and plans to conduct another on a stretch of Louisiana Boulevard in 2020. These Road Safety Audits help bring attention to traffic safety and identify potential interventions to improve safety in these areas.

### ***What is MRMPO Doing to Address Safety in Our Region?***

MRMPO recognizes the seriousness of this problem in our region and is devoting resources toward understanding and addressing the issue. MRMPO developed and adopted the *Regional Safety Action Plan (RTSAP)* as a follow up to the last MTP. The RTSAP identifies dangerous roadways in the region and offers proven safety countermeasures that could be used to improve safety at those locations. One tool that was created as a part of the RTSAP, is the High Fatality and Injury Network (HFIN). The HFIN analyzes the last five years of available crash data and identifies the most dangerous segments of roadway and intersections in the region. Once locations with high fatal and injury crashes are identified, they are prioritized to receive federal funding for projects that will implement proven safety countermeasures.

### ***What are MRMPO Member Agencies Doing to Address Safety in Our Region?***

In 2019 the City of Albuquerque committed to develop a Vision Zero Action Plan. The plan will set out a course towards eliminating traffic deaths in the city of Albuquerque. These concepts are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, the New Mexico Department of Transportation is participating in the Everyday Counts (EDC), Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP) program because the pedestrian fatality rate in New Mexico as a whole continues to trend upward. The New Mexico Department of Transportation recognizes the problem and is working on a statewide pedestrian safety plan to identify and implement strategies to address the problem. The plan will come up with specific goals and a timeline for achieving those goals.

Additionally, the Bernalillo County Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Action Plan was written in response to an increasing number of pedestrian crashes in New Mexico. This plan explicitly states that pedestrian and bicyclist facilities are an integral and vital part of our transportation system, and that when planning for these facilities the primary goal is to ensure safety for all travelers of all ages and abilities. The goals identified in the plan, in addition to safety as the primary goal, include:

- Provide a choice in transportation to work, school, and shopping for all ages and abilities.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities by encouraging residents to exercise daily.
- Reduce energy use and improvement air quality.