

Opportunity Analysis Summary

*An Overview of Land Use, Affordable Housing and Travel Markets
for the Triangle's Passenger Rail Corridor*



The Triangle Region is considering a passenger rail investment that initially could connect West Durham, Central Durham, East Durham, the Research Triangle Park, Morrisville, Cary, NC State University, West Raleigh, Central Raleigh, Southeast Raleigh, Garner and Clayton in Johnston County. Later investments might extend service to Orange County on the west and farther into Johnston County on the east. Part of this effort is analyzing opportunities along the corridor: for guiding land use, for creating and preserving affordable housing, for serving travel markets and for influencing economic development.

This summary highlights findings from three reports that examined opportunities along the corridor related to:

- Travel Markets, including the largest and most job-rich activity hubs in the region and along the corridor, where people who work in the corridor live, and the amount of the region's total jobs and low-to-moderate earnings jobs that are located in the corridor.
- Land Use, including the capacity for additional residential, commercial and mixed-use development along the corridor and in station study areas, and forecasts of future job and household growth;
- Affordable Housing, including the location of both legally binding and naturally occurring affordable housing, and publicly owned sites where additional housing could be considered; and

This overview introduces each of the three opportunity analysis reports, lists highlights of each, and concludes with some considerations for possible next steps. The full reports, executive summaries of each and slide presentations are available at www.readyforrailinc.com

Introduction

We don't invest in transit for the sake of transit. We do it to reflect our values and achieve our goals. To connect workers to jobs. To spur economic development. To provide choices to get to places that anchor our communities – universities, medical centers, cultural districts – while keeping our communities livable rather than traffic-choked.

GoTriangle and the Triangle J Council of Governments teamed up to examine opportunities that might be available if we choose to invest in rail passenger service in the spine of the region – opportunities for guiding land use, addressing affordable housing challenges and serving new and growing transit travel markets. Opportunity is not the same thing as benefit. Actions -- by the public, private and civic sectors -- would be needed to transform opportunities into benefits.

Travel Markets -- “Getting There”

The idiom “getting there” means “reaching or attaining one's goal(s); being successful in some endeavor.” To have a successful transit endeavor, it must take people where they want to go, when they want to go – it must allow them to “get there” in a way that is better than their other choices. In technical lingo, it must successfully serve a *travel market*.

Part of the analysis looked at the travel market that can be served by a rail investment and the role of this travel market in the wider region. It focused on:

- The key job hubs in the region and along the corridor
- The key neighborhoods where providing access to jobs, services and opportunities may be especially meaningful
- Current travel that both begins and ends along the rail corridor – the heart of the travel market
- Commuter travel, since the transit service being explored is geared primarily to connecting workers to jobs.

Leading practitioners agree about what makes a good travel market and the key relationship between land use and transit:

- **Author of *Trains, Buses, People*:** “*A good transit corridor is one with high density where multiple centers line up*, perhaps resulting in a bottleneck....A good corridor must be reasonably straight: people do not want to move in “U”s or circles or zig-zags. It is critical when identifying corridors to think about land use, not existing transportation infrastructure.”
- **Author of *Better Buses, Better Cities*:** “I don't think that buses are superior to trains. We need a lot of investment in trains. We need new subway extensions, commuter rail improvements and more light rail. We also need a lot more bus service to complement that. *We need a strong spine of high-capacity transit*, and then we have great arteries and bus lines running to many more neighborhoods than have good service today. It's all connected.”
- **Author of *Walkable City Rules*:** “Transportation systems beget land use patterns. Then land use patterns beget transportation systems. *If they are not addressed together...mobility and quality of life suffer.*”
- **Author of *Human Transit*:** “*Density is still an overwhelming force for determining the possibilities and outcomes of transit*, and we can't begin to make good transit decisions until we understand it.”

Keys to Successful Transit

Practitioners stress the importance of a combination of factors that make up the “user experience” as the key to successful transit.

Trains, Buses, People – An Opiniated Atlas of US and Canadian Transit (2nd edition, 2021)

“To build good public transit, which is transit that is useful to lots of people...we need to talk about what matters—to focus on the quality of service, not the technology that delivers it; to talk about all kinds of transit riders, not just about a narrow target market; to understand that the transit experience depends on buildings and streets and sidewalks as much as it does on stations and trains; and, above all, to talk about getting transit in the right places....It is remarkable how much of the public transit we build in the United States and Canada doesn't go where people want to go or when they want to go there.”

Better Buses, Better Cities (2019)

“Bus and rail lines across the country attract riders under the same circumstances: when they are fast, frequent, and connect many destinations that can be walked to.”

Land Use – “A Better Place”

Growth is an increase in size – making something bigger. Development is an increase in quality – making something better. Our region’s history, and numerous population and job forecasts, make it clear that we will get bigger – by about another million people over the next generation. In one form or another, we will not be the place we are today. Aligning land use decisions with transit investments is one way to ensure that as we get bigger, we also get better.

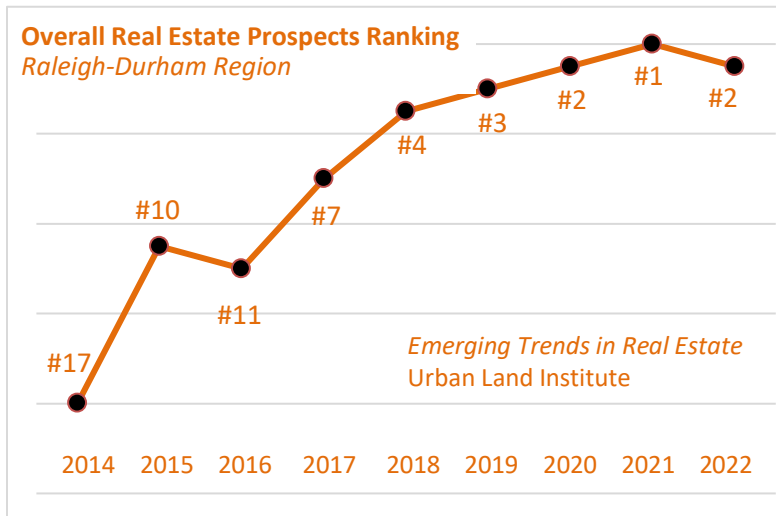
Even with the pandemic, the Research Triangle has been in an enviable position, and developers and investors know it. The region has climbed steadily in the Urban Land Institute’s annual rankings of regions for overall real estate prospects, reaching the #1 ranking for 2021. And in a recent analysis of cities best positioned to recover economically from the pandemic, Raleigh and Durham were two of the cities on the top ten list, and the only ones in the Southeast US.

This private sector confidence is based on our economic fundamentals: a stable employment base at universities, medical centers and state government; a workforce attractive to Science-Technology-Engineering-Math (STEM) employers; costs that are lower than peers in the Northeast or on the West Coast; and quality of life seen as better than peers in other parts of the country. One of the greatest opportunities to leverage these factors – rapid growth, anchor institutions, a STEM economy – is along the planned passenger rail line that connects three universities, three downtowns and the RTP.

The land use-transit relationship is more than a regional economic issue; it is also a pocketbook issue: average transportation costs for households living near transit are 10% lower than for those that live farther away and more

households are seeking to lower their transportation costs by living closer to jobs or transit. Most lower-income households spend about 55-60% of their income for housing and transportation combined; accepted affordability benchmarks suggest this cost should be less than 45%.

Finally, Triangle employers may increasingly need the region’s public transit system to get their employees to work each day; more than 35,000 households in Wake, Durham, Johnston and Orange Counties have no car available. Increased public transit in the region may help attract and retain companies seeking more travel choices for their employees.



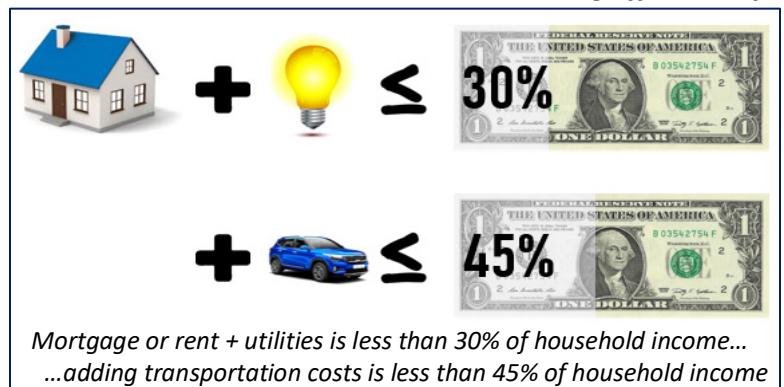
Affordable Housing – “Close to Home”

The idiom “close to home” means “affecting someone in a strong and personal way.” Since housing is typically a household’s largest expense, and transportation the second largest, investing in high quality transit near affordable housing can affect households of modest means in strong and personal ways.

The housing analysis focused on key components of the region’s housing market:

- Existing Legally Binding, Affordability Restricted (LBAR) housing
- Existing Multifamily Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)
- Plans and proposals for additions to the stock of LBAR housing
- Potential Affordable Housing Opportunity Sites along the corridor

What is Housing Affordability?



Understanding how a commuter rail investment serves existing travel markets in the region, and how those markets might change over time, is an important foundation for determining appropriate types and amounts of service to provide and the best number and locations of stations.

This travel market analysis focused on two types of places:

- The “rail corridor,” defined as one mile on either side of the railroad tracks, and
- “Station study areas,” circles with a half-mile radius that represents likely locations for rail stops

The Context

A travel market is just like any other market: it is where an exchange can take place – where supply and demand can meet. Successful transit investments **supply** services that address the things that influence **demand**: it goes where users want, when they want, in ways that are good uses of their time and money, are fast and reliable, give them freedom to change their plans, and respect their safety and comfort.

Rail Corridor Jobs

The four counties in the study region – Johnston, Wake, Durham and Orange were home to 930,000 jobs, pre-COVID. The rail corridor is 4% of the region’s area, but contains 280,000 jobs: 30% of the total. Importantly, about 56,000 workers both live and have their primary job in block groups completely or partly in the corridor, the main market for rail service. Looking only at primary jobs with low and moderate earnings - less than \$40,000 per year – 23% of these jobs in the 4-county region are located in the rail corridor. With major education and training, medical, and entertainment facilities, corridor travel markets are more than just commute trips.

Key Job Hubs

Eight of the region’s top 10 job hubs lie along the rail corridor, including the city centers of Raleigh and Durham, NC State and Duke Universities, and several census block groups in and around the RTP. Most of the key hubs for total jobs are also the top hubs for primary jobs with low and moderate earnings – of the top 10 for total jobs, only two hubs associated with the RTP and one at WakeMed are not also in the top 10 for low and moderate earnings jobs.

Cross-County Travel

Regional transit connections may be especially important in the Triangle. 45% of the workers who live in Wake, Durham, Orange and Johnston Counties are employed by firms outside of the county where they live. The Wake-Durham County flow is especially prominent, with over 96,000 workers living in one county and employed by firms, agencies or institutions in the other.

REINVEST Neighborhoods

REINVEST Neighborhoods are places with the most significant presence of BIPOC residents, lower income households, households without vehicles and legally-binding, affordability restricted (LBAR) housing. The letters in RE-IN-VE-ST represent these four important characteristics: **RE** (race/ethnicity), **IN** (income), **VE** (vehicle availability) and **ST** (status of affordable housing). About 100 of the region’s 767 block groups score high on three or more of the REINVEST metrics. Taken together, all of the REINVEST neighborhoods, shown in yellow and purple on the map, have about twice the percentage of BIPOC residents, twice the proportion of people living below the poverty line, three times the percentage of households without vehicles and four times the percentage of LBAR housing units as the region as a whole. The full report goes into detail on the location and characteristics of these important neighborhoods; many of them are located within or adjacent to the rail corridor, especially near central and southeast Durham, central and southeast Raleigh, and Garner. Almost 70,000 people live in REINVEST Neighborhoods that are completely or partly in the rail corridor.

The Future Travel Market

The analysis focused on work-oriented travel during pre-COVID conditions. Although the future is always uncertain, two things seem likely: i) traditional office work may become more of a “hybrid” model – with people working part of the time in a traditional work environment and part of the time from home or other remote locations; and ii) the region will continue to be fast-growing, with the spine of the region along the rail corridor a magnet for growth. Remote work is less of an option for many lower earning jobs, including many deemed “essential workers” during COVID.

Critical Considerations and Next Steps

There can be a tension between service that is best for the travel markets and the ease of railroad operations, especially where tracks are shared among freight, inter-city passenger and intra-regional passenger rail. Mutually beneficial investments may require systematic, sustained partnerships involving people of good will dedicated to creatively solving problems as they arise. A critical part of collaboration will be ensuring seamless “first mile-last mile” bus and micro-mobility connections that link neighborhoods and business districts to rail stops – every rail trip begins and ends with someone walking from and to a building.

The Symbols on This Map

- The railroad corridor: 1 mile on each side of the tracks where service is planned
- Initial Station Study Areas: ½ mile radius circles around stops being analyzed
- Places that measure as key job hubs
- Places that measure as REINVEST neighborhoods
- Places that measure as both key job hubs and REINVEST neighborhoods

Understanding how a commuter rail investment aligns with current and planned land use in the region, and the capacity for added growth, is an important foundation for determining appropriate types and amounts of service to provide and optimal locations of stations.

This land use analysis focused on two types of places:

- The “rail corridor,” defined as one mile on either side of the railroad tracks, and
- “Station study areas,” circles with a half-mile radius that represents likely locations for rail stops

The Context

The 2020 Census counted 1.8 million people in Wake, Durham, Orange and Johnston Counties, and the latest pre-COVID data estimated over 900,000 jobs. The 4-county region is projected to add a million residents and 800,000 jobs between 2020 and 2050. Accommodating even a portion of these future residents and jobs within the corridor could significantly influence travel. With anchors like the downtowns of Raleigh, Durham, and Cary; the Research Triangle Park; and NC State University, NC Central University and Duke University and Medical Center, the corridor can be a locus for future growth.

Existing Development and Estimated Corridor Capacity

In 2020, there were 290,000 jobs and 90,000 households in the rail corridor. Local governments and anchor institutions – through plans and standards, establish “capacities” for the amount of future growth in different places. Tools such as form-based codes make these capacities approximate, not absolute, but based on the “Opportunity Places” land use in the region’s 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, we have room for 700,000 more jobs and 210,000 more housing units in the rail corridor.

Rail Corridor Jobs and Housing Forecasts

The region’s Transportation Plan forecasts that the corridor will add 370,000 jobs and 100,000 households between 2020 and 2050, and that the station areas within the corridor will have 3.5 times as many households as today and more than 2.5 times as many jobs. Between 2020 and 2050, the corridor may accommodate over 40% of the region’s job growth and a quarter of the region’s household growth on just 4% of the land. The analysis identified 2,200 planned new affordable housing units in the corridor and at least 25 publicly-owned sites in the corridor on which it seems feasible to build about 2,500 units. Even with this forecasted growth, there will still be significant capacity for additional job and household growth in the corridor beyond 2050.

Real Estate Market Assessment

HR&A assessed the real estate market in the corridor for multi-family, office, retail and industrial/lab space. The analysis indicated that added development above the projections used in the Metropolitan Transportation Plans is likely market-possible, especially for urban apartments and condos.

Opportunities for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development

Given the region’s forecast growth, a clear vision for how the region grows is essential. The vision embodied in the 2050 Transportation Plan is built on a foundation of walkable, bikeable neighborhoods with a rich mix of housing and jobs – a pattern called “Transit-Oriented Development” (TOD). *Equitable* TOD, or eTOD, means taking deliberate, meaningful actions to ensure that TOD includes residents and businesses that reflect the region’s diversity. We have models for eTOD, both within the region – such as the *EngageDurham* process and Raleigh’s Equitable TOD for Bus Rapid Transit – and in peer regions in the US. TOD efforts often define types of stations based on the characteristics of the neighborhoods where they are located. The map on this page shows one way to define stations, based largely on the mix of parcel place types. Stations shown include both 15 initial areas, plus two locations (dashed circles) that the affordable housing and travel analyses indicated could make the project stronger. A key tenet of eTOD is that determining what station areas actually become occurs through meaningful engagement. Communities that do the hard work to create equitable development in station areas and along connecting transit lines will reward their residents with fast, reliable access to some of the largest job centers in the region.

Anchor Institution Development

Four large anchor institutions are located within the corridor: NC State University, Duke University and Health System, NC Central University and the Research Triangle Park. Seven of the initial 15 stations serve Anchor Institution activities. Anchor Institutions are mission-driven organizations, and understanding how these missions align with station area development potential will be crucial. Seamless institution-supported connections to stations will be important to best serve places like Duke’s Central Campus, NC State’s Centennial Campus, NCCU and the RTP’s new HUB development.

Critical Considerations and Next Steps

Rail is a long-term investment. Creating equitable Transit Oriented Development will take sustained deliberate effort including clear goals, supportive land use policies, coordination with anchors and financial mechanisms to support affordable housing providers. The federal Joint Development program provides opportunities to leverage federal funds for such things as affordable housing and community services at rail stations. Absent a strong policy tool-kit, displacement is a genuine risk. There is publicly owned land on which affordable housing can occur, but project design, financing and management can be complex and involve public funding. Sustained public and institutional leadership can be key to ensure staff have the direction, resources and time to pursue opportunities.

The Symbols on This Map

- The railroad corridor – 1 mile on each side of the tracks where service is planned
- Station Study Areas: ½ mile radius circles around stops. Station types:
 - Metro Center
 - Anchor Institution Center
 - Town Center
 - Mixed Use Neighborhood Center
 - Job Center
- 2020 key job hubs - Travel Markets Report

Note: The map shows potential station areas, including those with dashed circles from the housing analysis and 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Aligning commuter rail investments with affordable housing decisions can provide residents in both permanently protected and naturally occurring affordable housing fast, reliable access to jobs, education and important community services. But it will likely take a sustained, collaborative effort to do so.

This housing analysis focused on two types of places:

- The “rail corridor,” defined as one mile on either side of the railroad tracks, and
- “Station study areas,” circles with a half-mile radius around a point that represents a likely location for a stop

The Big Picture

Housing is usually a household’s largest expense. Transportation is typically second. So addressing housing and transit together is a pocketbook issue for households, a workforce access issue for employers, and an equity issue for communities. A good rule of thumb is that if a household can limit its combined housing, utility and transportation costs to 45% of its income, it has money left for life’s other necessities.

Legally-Binding Affordability-Restricted (LBAR) Housing

There are 6,200 units of LBAR housing in the corridor, 27% of all the LBAR units in Wake, Durham and Johnston Counties. Durham especially has a concentration of LBAR units in the corridor -- 37% of the county’s total. LBAR means the housing is for those who meet income thresholds, and is a critical component of housing for people with incomes well below the Area Median Income (AMI). About 1,700 LBAR units are within the initial 15 station study areas. In addition to the existing units, at least another 1,000 units of LBAR housing are planned in the station study areas alone.

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)

There are about 22,000 market-rate apartments within the rail corridor that are affordable to households making 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI), the rule-of-thumb used to define the upper end of the affordable housing range. NOAH units are more prevalent than LBAR units, especially in Johnston County, but they are also more at risk, as their rents are set based on market conditions. Working to preserve existing NOAH units, and to remove barriers to increasing its supply, can be cost-effective strategies.

Opportunity Sites for Additional Affordable Housing

In a fast-growing region like the Triangle, we can’t just rely on the affordable housing we have today, but will need to preserve and create affordable housing to serve the place we will become. An initial examination of publicly owned land within the rail corridor indicates that around 1,500 acres of land controlled by the public sector might be suitable for additional affordable housing. In certain cases, a special federal process called “Joint Development,” might help offset some of the costs of building new affordable housing at rail stations.

How the Corridor’s Affordable Housing Stacks Up in the Competition for Federal Funds

The rail project will require federal funding and part of the criteria for federal support is the amount of legally binding affordable housing near rail stations. The project would score well based on existing LBAR housing, earning a Medium-High rating. With future LBAR projects, this rating could increase, especially if communities use some of their opportunity sites to add housing.

Opportunity Segments Along the Corridor

The analysis looked at areas along the corridor that had existing affordable housing, but where stations were far away – these areas are called Opportunity Segments. Two places may warrant more attention for station consideration, shown as red circles on the map. The first is near Morrisville Parkway, where there are large numbers of NOAH units; likely towards the upper end of the 80% AMI measure. The second is around downtown Clayton.

Critical Considerations and Next Steps

Housing and transit can seem like different worlds: different agencies, different funding sources, different rules, different expertise, different perspectives. Successful alignment of housing decisions and transit investments may require systematic, sustained partnerships involving creative people of good will. And a critical part of the collaboration should be ensuring seamless “first mile-last mile” bus and micro-mobility connections that can link neighborhoods and business districts to rail stops – for every unit of LBAR housing in a station area, there are about three more in the first mile-last mile corridor.

The Symbols on This Map

The railroad corridor: 1 mile on each side of the tracks where service is planned

Initial Station Study Areas: ½ mile radius circles around stops being analyzed

Planned LBAR Units

Existing LBAR Units

of Units

◦ 1 - 10

○ 11 - 50

○ 51 - 100

○ 101 - 150

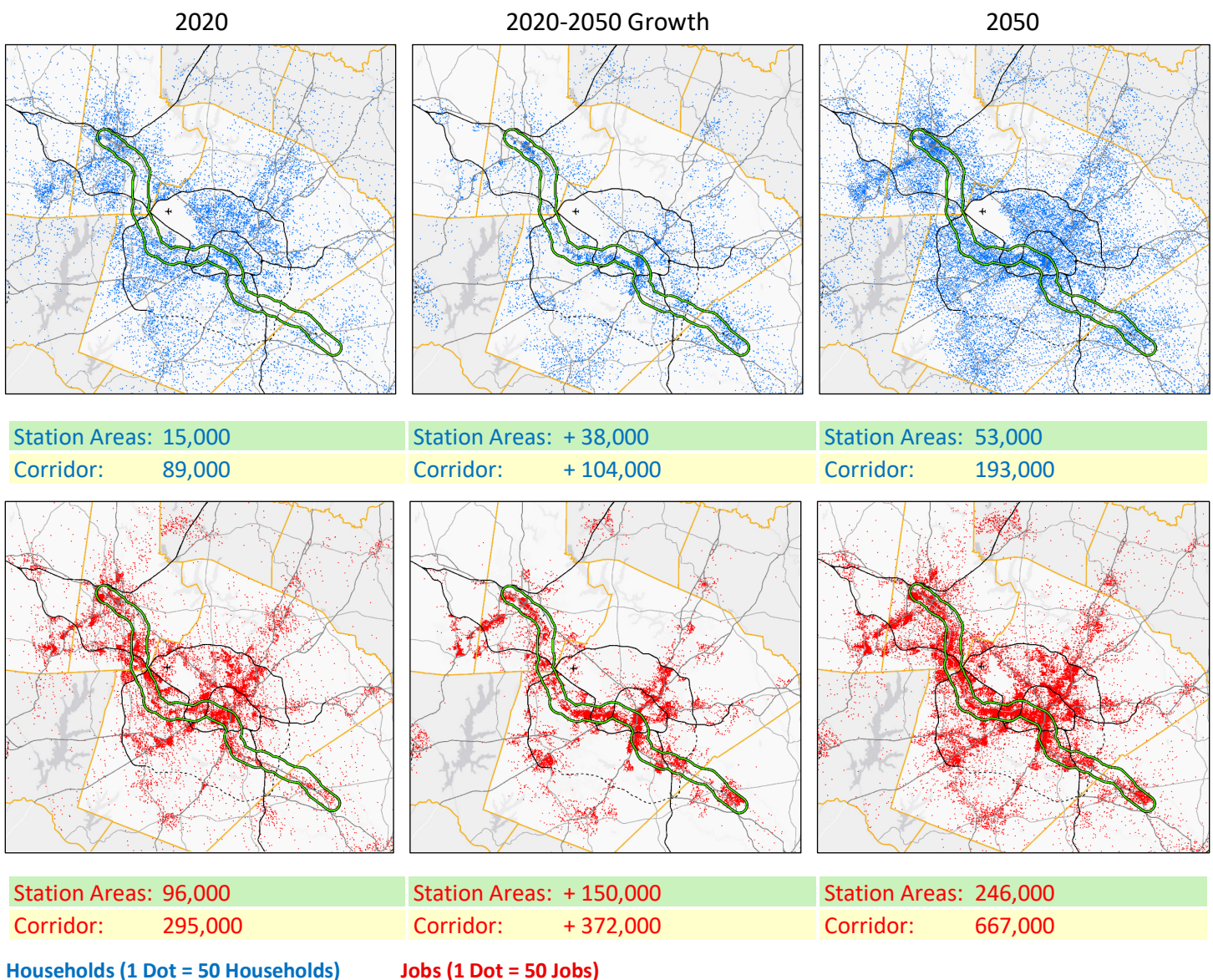
○ 151 or more

Key Indicators and Considerations

Each Opportunity Analysis Report -- on land use, on travel markets and on affordable housing -- contains a variety of maps, charts and tables. Much of the data is being placed on-line to allow closer looks at parts of the rail corridor. This section of the summary highlights a key indicator from each report, along with important considerations for each analysis topic. Each analysis looked at the four-county region (Durham, Johnston, Orange and Wake), the rail corridor -- defined as one mile on each side of the railroad tracks, and 17 station areas -- defined as a ½ mile radius circle around a station location.

Land Use

The maps and tables below show household (in **blue**) and job (in **red**) change over time in the region based on the most recent growth forecasts. From left to right, the maps show the region in 2020, the amount of added growth anticipated over the next 30 years, and the resulting total in 2050. The tables below the maps show the totals for households and jobs in the 17 station study areas and for the rail corridor as a whole (shown in green on the maps).



The land use forecasts show that households will continue to both fill in and spread out throughout the region, that jobs seek to locate along major transportation corridors -- including the rail corridor, and that both station areas and the corridor as a whole (including the station areas) are anticipated to experience significant growth.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing, and especially affordable rental housing, is facing steep challenges in metro areas, and the Triangle is no exception. The analysis looked at both legally-binding, affordability-restricted (LBAR) housing and multifamily Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH). NOAH housing is affordable due to its age, condition and location, and the analysis calculated this affordability for three representative households: ones making 30%, 60% and 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The left side of the table below shows the number of LBAR units in the station areas and the corridor as a whole, and the percentage of all the LBAR units in each county that are within the corridor. The right side of the table shows the number of NOAH units affordable at the upper end of the affordability range (80% of AMI). NOAH unit counts can change abruptly as both median incomes and rents change, and as new apartments are built.

County	LBAR Units in Station Areas	LBAR Units in Corridor	% of County LBAR Units in Corridor	NOAH Units in Corridor (80% AMI)	Total NOAH Units in County (80% AMI)	% of NOAH Units in Corridor (80% AMI)
Durham	801	2,758	37% (of 7,425)	5,648	30,607	19%
Johnston	104	202	8% (of 2,446)	976	2,188	45%
Wake	743	3,321	25% (of 13,211)	15,420	88,591	17%
TOTAL	1,648	6,281	27% (of 23,082)	22,044	121,386	18%

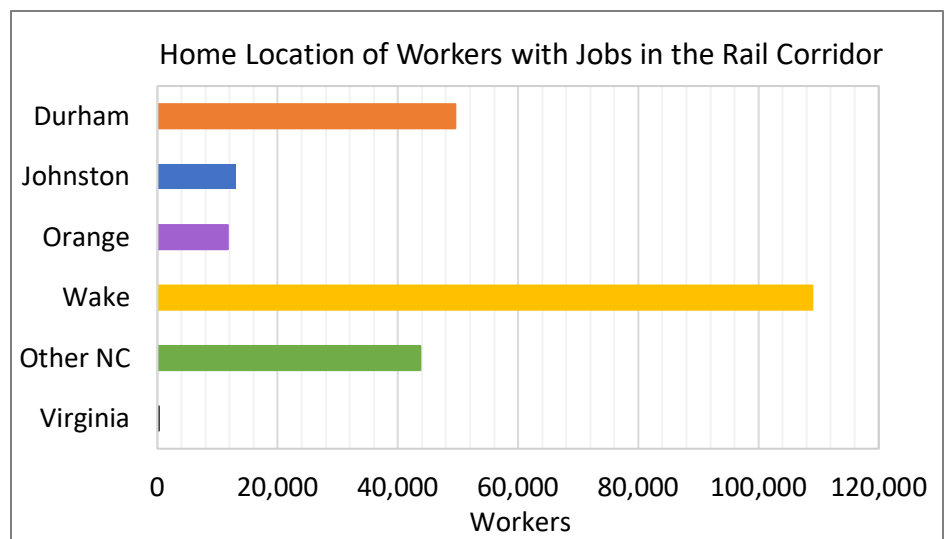
LBAR housing is one of the factors the USDOT uses to determine whether to help fund transit projects. Based on current affordable housing in station areas, the rail project would score a “Medium High” on this measure.

Travel Markets

Travel markets are both critically important – they are the basis for who might use a transit line – and complex: they differ by trip purpose (work, shopping, health care, etc.) and even for the work trip – the focus of this analysis – can yield different results depending on whether we look at total jobs or the primary job for those with multiple jobs. Additional complexity is added when trying to link where workers live to where they work, as different sources define jobs differently. Transit travel markets are also influenced by travel costs, travel times and changing technology.

Recognizing these limitations, it is clear that the corridor is a substantial work-related travel market. And although not a part of the analysis, the existence of universities, large medical centers and retail and entertain districts along the corridor indicate it can be important for more than just work-related travel. The chart shows the home county for people who have primary jobs within the rail corridor, indicating that large numbers of workers in Wake and Durham County work in the corridor, but also that about 70,000 residents of Johnston County, Orange County and other areas of North Carolina head to the corridor for their main job.

The travel market analysis looked at travel pre-Covid. Whether or to what degree travel patterns may change remains uncertain but will be captured as travel data is updated annually. The rapid growth of the region described in the land use analysis will also influence both the amount and distribution of future work travel.



Critical Considerations & Next Steps

Communities in the Triangle Region do not have deep pockets relative to larger and more prosperous regions that are investing significant amounts of public money to address land use, economic development and affordable housing needs along transit investments. And they are often hampered by state restrictions from applying innovative tools used successfully elsewhere to guide and leverage private sector decisions. In the passenger rail corridor itself, land use actions by major anchor institutions – universities and medical centers – can significantly influence success. In order to be most successful, leaders of good will likely need to collaborate voluntarily to do their part.

Success, in a word, will involve “Partnerships.” Sustained, systematic partnerships can lead to meaningful results.

The Opportunity Analysis can inform decisions about economic development, land use and affordable housing strategies. For strategies to achieve their full potential, partnerships between interdisciplinary stakeholders can be created where they do not yet exist, and nurtured and strengthened where they do.

Two initial partnerships – one already existing and the other with a precedent in the region – might serve as cornerstones for collaboration:

- *The Triangle Housing Practitioners Group* – Consisting of stakeholders from the public, private and civic sectors with direct responsibility to fund, build, manage or regulate affordable housing, the practitioners group was created in 2017 and is convened by the Triangle J COG to examine techniques, learn about emerging issues, and share effective practices.
- *A Land Use-Housing-Transit Partnership* that can bring together expertise from different “silos” for a laser-like focus on the inter-related decisions that communities make on land use regulation, transit investment, and housing programs. A similar group was created by Triangle J COG to look at passenger rail, bus rapid transit, and frequent bus service corridors in the Wake Transit Plan. Using this precedent to create a regional group and sustaining it over time could lead to productive collaboration.

These two partnerships can support efforts not just in the passenger rail corridor, but along other public transit investments planned in the region.

In addition to partnerships, other actions might support an effective framework for pursuing strategies to align economic development, land use and affordable housing with transit investments; examples include:

1. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting. Land use and housing conditions change constantly and sometimes rapidly. Tracking and reporting change can provide a common foundation to prepare for and react to change.
2. Periodic Development & Transit Investment Summits. Building on the work of the partnerships and the monitoring and evaluation effort, periodic summits can showcase what communities along major transit investment corridors are doing to meet their economic development, land use and affordable housing goals and introduce fresh ideas from people in the Triangle and experts from peer regions. A summit or similar event can be a way to partner with organizations with similar interests, such as the Urban Land Institute, and engage regional stakeholders.

The reports are descriptive, relying on analysis and examples to indicate what is possible, not prescriptive, meaning they do not recommend what communities and their partners should do. But to turn opportunity into achievement, local governments may want to consider actions such as these to achieve their goals.

What If ...

If partnerships are crucial to implementing strategies, what can help strengthen partnerships?

Partnerships need to be more than people sitting around a table discussing issues. Five pillars could provide a foundation:

- Compelling Vision. What if we crafted a clear vision for regional transit and housing investments?
- Commitment. What if we created an “A Place For All” Resolution that communities could sign on to strengthen the connective tissue of regional partnerships?
- Recognition. What if we created a “Part Of The Solution” recognition program that rewards developers and communities that go the extra mile to implement the vision?
- Policy Advancement. What if we worked with the state to allow tried-and-true land use and affordable housing tools in carefully designated Transit-Oriented Development zones?
- Innovation. What if we created a Land Use-Transit-Housing Strategy Lab that brought together university, developer and community expertise to explore and test innovative approaches?
- eTOD. What if we partnered with communities, financial experts, and housing and transit authorities to advocate for state policies that better support eTOD and joint development?