



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

June 2014

Prepared for:
Regional Planning Commission
of Greater Birmingham

Prepared by:

ATKINS
and its team members

Table of Contents

<u>Section and Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1 PART 1: CORRIDOR FRAMEWORK REPORT	1
1 INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 STUDY BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE	2
1.2 STUDY AREA	2
1.3 REPORT FORMAT	5
2 CORRIDOR CONTEXT	6
2.1 PRIOR STUDIES	6
2.2 TRANSPORTATION	22
2.3 DEMOGRAPHICS	50
2.4 LAND USES	88
2.4.1 Residential	88
2.4.2 Commercial, Office, and Retail/Services	89
2.4.3 Industrial	89
2.4.4 Institutional and Schools	89
2.4.5 Parks and Open Space	90
2.4.6 Agricultural	90
2.4.7 Corridor Land Use Profiles	90
2.4.8 Significant Land Use Features and Corridor Stability	95
2.4.9 Natural and Environmental Features	103
2.5 ECONOMIC AND MARKET CONDITIONS	104
2.5.1 Introduction	104
2.5.2 Corridor Context and Development Issues	105
2.5.3 Corridor Overview	106
2.5.4 General Character of the Corridor	107
2.5.5 Socioeconomic Profile	110
2.5.6 Corridor Segments	112
2.5.7 Market and Economic Context	118
3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	124
3.1 APPROACH AND GOALS	124
3.2 STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY LEADER INPUT	127
3.3 FIVE ROUNDS OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH	127

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

List of Figures

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.1	Study Area Map	4
2.1	Map of Downtown ITP Project	6
2.2	2035 RTP Transit Recommendations for the Southwest Corridor	7
2.3	Birmingham Regional Transit System Concept	8
2.4	BJCTA Transit Service Vision	9
2.5	City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan Summary Map	10
2.6	Jefferson County Shades Creek Watershed Plan	12
2.7	City of Bessemer Master Plan	13
2.8	City of Fairfield Master Plan Elements	13
2.9	City of Midfield Retail Center Plan	14
2.10	Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Master Plan (2012)	15
2.11	Location of Proposed Freight Villages	17
2.12	Schematic of the Norfolk Southern Railway McCalla Hub	18
2.13	Congested Roadways in the Birmingham Region - AM Peak Period	20
2.14	Congested Roadways in the Birmingham Region - PM Peak Period	21
2.15	Functional Roadway Classification	22
2.16	Number of Through Lanes	23
2.17	Actual Daily Traffic Volumes in 2005	25
2.18	Projected Daily Traffic Volumes in 2035	26
2.19	Actual Highway Volume-Capacity Ratio in 2005	27
2.20	Projected Highway Volume-Capacity Ratio in 2035	29
2.21	Traffic Patterns on I-20/I-59 in 2035	32
2.22	Traffic Patterns on US 11 in 2035	33
2.23	Corridor Districts	34
2.24	Detailed Patterns of Corridor Trips - 2035	37
2.25	Railroad Freight Density	38
2.26	Railroad Facilities in the Study Corridor	39
2.27	Existing BJCTA Transit Routes	41
2.28	Residence Locations for Transit Users by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)	42
2.29	Daily Transit Ridership Patterns on BJCTA Routes 1, 41, and 45	44
2.30	Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Elements in the Southwest Corridor	45
2.31	Example Trail System Detail Map (Five Points West Area)	45
2.32	Jones Valley Trail Corridor (Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Plan)	46
2.33	Walk Score Map for the Study Corridor	48
2.34	2035 Regional Transportation Plan - Fiscally Constrained Non-motorized Projects	49
2.35	Socio-Economic Districts for Data	51
2.36	Population by Traffic Analysis Zone 2005	55
2.37	Population by Traffic Analysis Zone 2035	56
2.38	Change in Population by Traffic Analysis Zone 2005-2035	57
2.39	Minority Population by Census Tract	58
2.40	Population per Residential Acre 2005	59
2.41	Population per Residential Acre 2035	60

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

List of Figures (Continued)

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
2.42	Population Change by Ethnicity 2000 to 2010	61
2.43	Population Changes by Census Tract 2000 to 2010	62
2.44	Elderly Population by Census Tract	64
2.45	Youth (20-24 years) per Square Mile by Census Tract	65
2.46	Youth (10-19 years) per Square Mile by Census Tract	67
2.47	Households under the Poverty Line by Census Tract	68
2.48	Comparison of Population with Income Below the Poverty Line.....	70
2.49	Zero Car Households by Census Tract 2000	71
2.50	Vehicles per Household by Census Tract 2000.....	72
2.51	Persons Who Ride Public Transportation by Census Tract	74
2.52	Persons Who Walk or Bike to Work by Census Tract	75
2.53	Transit-Supportive Areas	76
2.54	Persons Who Drive Alone to Work by Census Tract.....	78
2.55	Persons Who Carpool by Census Tract	79
2.56	Employment per Non-Residential Acre by TAZ in 2005	81
2.57	Employment per Non-Residential Acre by TAZ in 2035	82
2.58	Examples of Residential Density.....	83
2.59	Existing (2010) Total Persons per Acre – North Section of Study Corridor	84
2.60	Existing (2010) Total Persons Per Acre - Middle Section of Study Corridor	85
2.61	Change in Job Distribution in the Birmingham Region – 2000 to 2010.....	86
2.62	Existing Land Uses – Western Corridor	91
2.63	Existing Land Uses – West Central Corridor	92
2.64	Existing Land Uses – East Central Corridor.....	93
2.65	Existing Land Uses – Eastern Corridor	94
2.66	Significant Land Use Features – Western Corridor.....	95
2.67	Corridor Stability Indicators – Western Corridor.....	96
2.68	Significant Land Use Features – West Central Corridor	97
2.69	Corridor Stability Indicators – West Central Corridor	98
2.70	Significant Land Use Features – East Central Corridor	99
2.71	Corridor Stability Indicators – East Central Corridor	100
2.72	Significant Land Use Features – Eastern Corridor	101
2.73	Corridor Stability Indicators – Eastern Corridor	102
2.74	Tax Delinquent and Vacant Properties within the City of Birmingham	103
2.75	Study Corridor Natural Features.....	104
2.76	Corridor Study Subareas.....	107
2.77	Selected Demographic Characteristics	112

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

List of Tables

<u>Table</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
2.1	Existing Traffic Counts and Traffic Service 2009/2010	30
2.2	Summary of Corridor Trips - 2035	35
2.3	Socio-Economic Data by Corridor District	52
2.4	Population Change by City 2000-2010	63
2.5	Change in Job Distribution in the Study Corridor	87
2.6	Existing Land Use	88
2.7	Demographic Trends Analysis.....	111
2.8	Building Permits Issued 2000-2010	120

PART 1: CORRIDOR FRAMEWORK REPORT

This study is jointly sponsored by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB), the cities within the corridor (Bessemer, Birmingham, Brighton, Fairfield, Midfield, and Lipscomb), the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Jefferson County, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Southwest Corridor Study report is divided into four units for two reasons: first, to group the technical information compiled and developed during the study into individual sections, and second, as a convenience to those who are involved with implementation so they can reference only the portions of the study that relate to their primary interests. The four units or "partss" are organized as follows:

- **Part 1: Corridor Framework Report**
This part provides an introduction to the study, summarizes corridor conditions, presents the vision for the corridor, and recaps the public engagement process that was used to interact with community leaders and the public in formulating recommendations.
- **Part 2: Transit Alternatives Report**
This part addresses the purpose and need for transit improvements, discusses the corridor goals and objectives, defines the transit service alternatives considered and analyzed, and describes the evaluation of transit options leading to the recommended findings.
- **Part 3: Land Use and Economic Development Framework Report**
This part presents the approach to land use and transit station area planning, which considered redevelopment opportunities along the recommended transit service corridor, in the corridor neighbourhoods, and at underutilized industrial parcels. The land use opportunities are coordinated with economic development actions that can be pursued to revitalize the corridor economy.
- **Part 4: Implementation Strategy Report**
Part 4 focuses on an action plan to advance the implementation and deployment of study recommendations for transit service improvements, land use enhancements, and economic corridor activity.

The four parts together comprise the corridor study documentation and are intended to serve as references to guide the approach of putting words into action. This intention is drawn from the interest and commitment sincerely expressed by the corridor's community leaders, the advisory working groups who informed the efforts of the study team, and the many citizens who attended the series of outreach meetings held during the course of the study to inform, listen and engage the public who best understand collectively the challenges and opportunities that define the Southwest Corridor.

This report captures the study work related to the first element – Part 1: Corridor Framework Report.

1. INTRODUCTION

This section of the report provides an orientation to the Southwest Corridor Study - its study area, the study purpose, informative background information, planning context, and report organization.

1.1. STUDY BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The goal of this study was to define an improved transit system that can contribute to the growth of housing, employment, education, retail, industrial, and service opportunities along the corridor. The Southwest Corridor, formerly a thriving retail, industrial, and residential corridor, has seen its vitality decline over the past 30 years. To support the revitalization of the corridor, the study endeavored to identify options for development, redevelopment and improved transit services that would make the northern two-thirds of the corridor more attractive to new housing and businesses along the corridor while serving existing and future markets. The southern part of the corridor is still developing, and offers opportunity to shape land uses to be more transit supportive.

The transit plan component of the study was charged with identifying new alternative transportation choices to connect people to activity centers within the corridor. While the study is focused on identifying the most practical transit service and alignment, it is also charged with exploring ways to leverage the corridor's land use and economic development potential - through transit investment and through other coordinated strategies. The study has devoted significant effort to assess opportunities for reshaping communities and identifying retail, industrial, and residential reinvestment strategies.

"[Through the US 11 Study] we will look at ways to exploit the enormous redevelopment potential; of the corridor . . . using transit."

-- Charles Ball, Executive Director RPCGB

The study considered a range of transit technologies from express bus and bus rapid transit (BRT) services through rail-based transit options. A number of potential alignments for improved transit services also were evaluated. This work included review of the existing and abandoned transportation facilities running through the length of the corridor. The varied character of the study area - from the downtown urban area, older industrial districts, mature residential communities, established suburbs, historic districts such as the Bessemer downtown, and the developing suburban fringe to include the emerging transportation and warehousing district near McCalla - present a diverse palette of urban development to be potentially served by quality transit options.

1.2. STUDY AREA

This study is charged with examining premium transit alternatives as well as land use and economic development along a 22-mile long corridor that extends from downtown Birmingham to the Jefferson/Tuscaloosa County Line. The corridor study boundaries as shown in Figure 1.1 are generally

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

defined as I-20/I-59 to the west, the Jefferson County/ Tuscaloosa County Line south, on the east the Red Mountain ridge from Tannehill State Park on the south northeasterly into the south side of downtown Birmingham, and downtown Birmingham on the east. Through the northern two-thirds of the corridor, the US 11/Bessemer Super Highway corridor lies as the central spine of the corridor. The southern half of the corridor is approximately two miles wide, while the northern half is roughly three miles wide.

The study corridor dates back historically to the founding of Birmingham which occurred at the intersection of two railroads, and from the development of the steel industry due to the presence of iron ore, coal, and limestone in the immediate vicinity. The Red Rock ridge and other sites supported the development of this industry, and led to the growth of communities across the Jones Valley. All the cities in the study corridor were incorporated by 1910 except for Midfield which (incorporated in 1953), which occupies areas between Fairfield and the cities of Brighton and Lipscomb just to the south. The corridor communities evolved as bedroom communities and commerce centers in support of the steel and allied industries in the corridor.

The municipal jurisdictions within the corridor include the following:

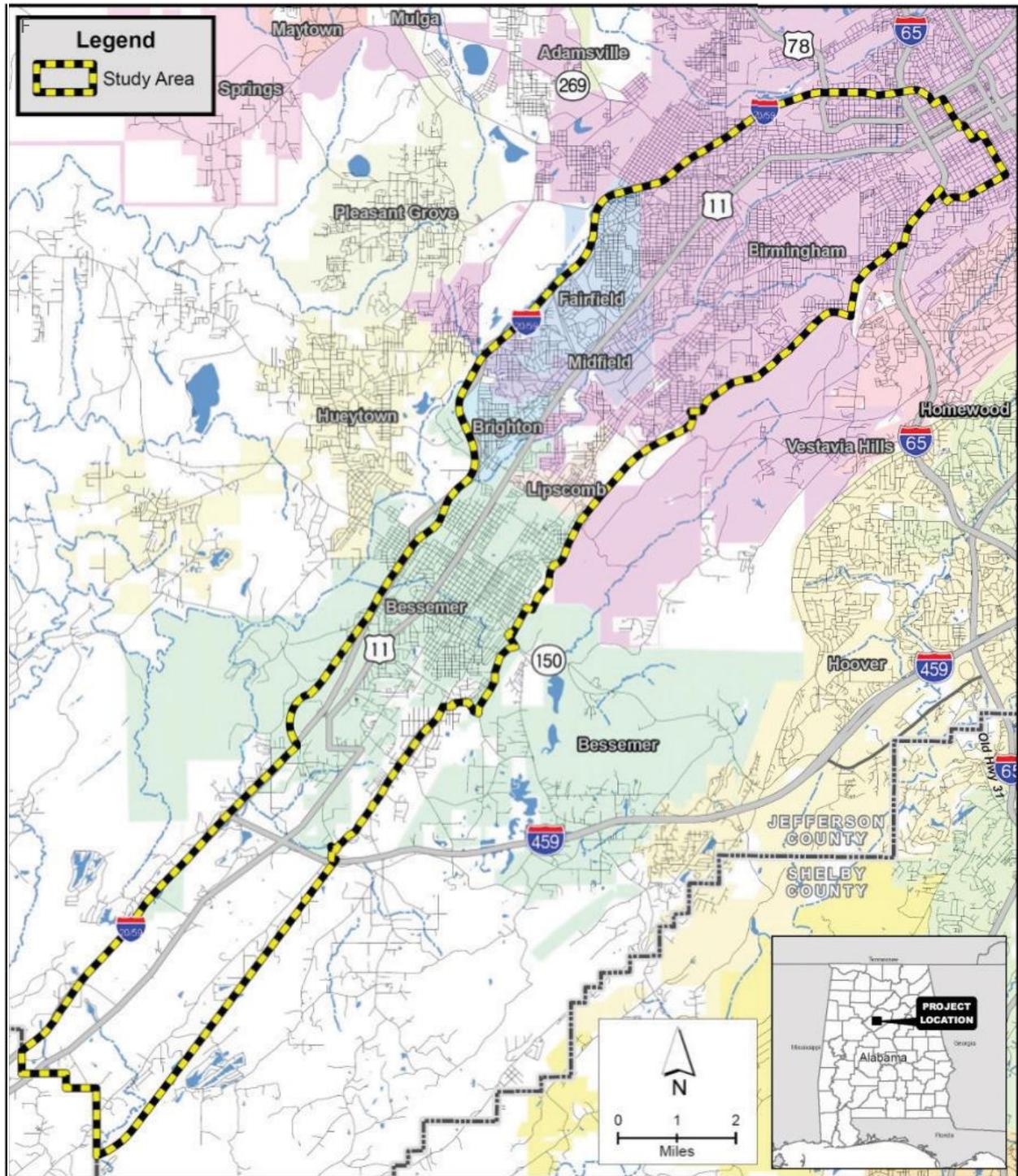
- **City of Birmingham:** The City of Birmingham has a 2012 population of 212,038 persons. Founded in 1871 and emerging in the following decades as the industrial heart of the south, the city's initial growth was based on the mining and steel industries, supported by several rail lines which connected it and its products to the rest of the country. In the century since then, the city has become the hub of educational, medical and financial services for the region.
- **City of Fairfield:** This city was founded in 1910 and its development and fortunes have followed those of the nearby US Steel plant. Fairfield is mostly residential in character, but has within its area the retail corridor on the east side of Aronov Drive which is mostly vacant except for the WalMart store and Western Hills Mall near US 11. Fairfield is also home to Miles College, a growing private college with enrollment of 1,900 students.
- **City of Midfield:** This city was founded in 1953 has an estimated 2012 population of 5,323 persons. The city fills the area between Fairfield and the cities of Brighton and Lipscomb to the south. It is mostly residential with a small downtown area and retail at the intersection of US 11 and Ave. W.
- **City of Brighton:** This small city of 2,945 persons was founded in 1901 and had ties to the Woodward Iron Company where many of its residents originally worked.
- **City of Lipscomb:** This small city of 2,210 persons was founded in 1910, and like Brighton, many of its residents worked for the Woodward Iron Company.
- **City of Bessemer:** Bessemer is home to 27,289 residents and was founded in 1889 as the steel industry expanded in Jones Valley. Bessemer was among the largest Alabama cities in the boom years of the 1890's. Like other corridor cities, Bessemer was linked to the mining and steel industries of the valley. Today, Bessemer is working to retain its historical heritage while growing southward with new development.

Portions of the corridor, mostly lying south of Bessemer, are unincorporated areas within Jefferson County. This corridor geography is presented in Figure 1.1

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 1.1. Study Area Map



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

1.3. Report Format

Besides this introductory section, this report is organized into the following sections:

Section 2.0: CORRIDOR CONTEXT- This section provides a review of relevant previous studies, and presents corridor conditions relating to the transportation system, demographics, land uses, and economic conditions.

Section 3.0: CORRIDOR VISION - This section describes the corridor vision - the view of the potential future for the corridor. This vision is informed by community leaders and the citizens of the corridor, and sets the stage for the consideration of 85 AA Study Corridor.

Section 4.0: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT -This section covers the approach taken for engaging the public during the course of the study, and summarizes how that input was considered in developing strategies for developing transit, land uses and economic development in the Southwest Corridor.

2. CORRIDOR CONTEXT

In this section of the report, a number of recent and relevant studies are summarized for their relevance to this corridor study. This is an important and useful step that facilitates integration of prior recommendations, and allows this study to consider and build on the information and analyses of these other studies and plans, improving the quality of findings and recommendations. This section also presents corridor conditions relating to the transportation system, demographics, land uses, and economic conditions.

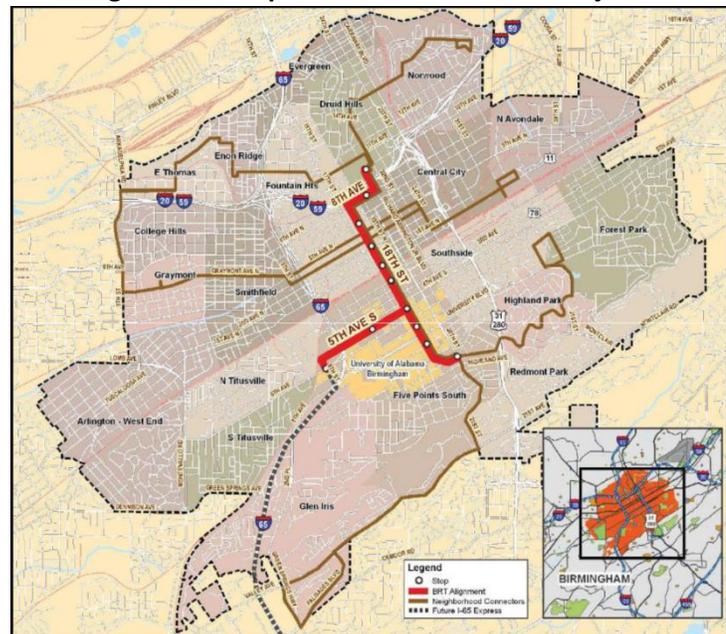
2.1. PRIOR STUDIES

- **Downtown In-Town Partnership Study 2035 (2009)**

This study was conducted to identify the structure of a transit system to serve the downtown Birmingham area. The objective was to determine a transit technology and a route alignment plan to best interconnect key downtown activity centers, and interfaced with existing and planned transit routes. The study process yielded two overlapping routes, both beginning at the convention center complex just north of I-20/I-59 and traversing southward on 18th Street to the University of Alabama - Birmingham (UAB) area. The first route continues south on 18th Street to Five Points South and the second westward to a planned UAB parking facility for employees and students just west of I-65. The original path for this second route was on 6th Avenue South, but would be adjusted one block north to 5th Avenue South due to elements in the UAB campus master plan.

The study identified bus rapid transit (BRT) as the preferred transit technology, serving approximately 12 stations on both routes (Figure 2.1). In addition, the need was identified in the study for a group of neighborhood connector routes connecting the communities surrounding the downtown core directly into the ITP service corridor. For the Southwest Corridor, a route was identified connecting from the Convention Center north terminus westward to the Fountain Heights, Enon Ridge and East Thomas neighborhoods, and then crossing I-20/I-59 southward into the study corridor neighborhood of College Park adjacent to Birmingham Southern University on 8th Street West, turning east on Graymont Avenue through the Graymont and Smithfield neighborhoods and into downtown on the 5th Street North/4th Street North one-way pair. The importance of this regional transit planning decision is that planned corridor transit improvements should interface and actually overlap with the ITP corridor to provide "one seat" transit connections.

Figure 2.1. Map of the Downtown ITP Project



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- **2035 Regional Transportation Plan (2010)**

Prepared by the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization and the RPCGB, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) provides a balanced, financially feasible set of transportation improvements, supported by a number of policies. The proposed improvements identified in the RTP are intended to help alleviate traffic congestion, provide more transportation choices, improve transportation system operations, and meet the region's air quality goals through 2035. Through a continuous public participation process, the RTP identifies goals, objectives, and policies that will serve as a "road map" to achieve the region's vision. The three overarching RTP goals are:

- **Goal 1: Transportation System Sustainability** - Manage, maintain, and enhance the transportation system to ensure efficient, safe, convenient, and economical movement of people and goods.
- **Goal 2: Transportation System Integration and Connectivity** - Develop and maintain a regional transportation system that integrates land use and transportation, improving the traveler's ability to move around the region and provide access to services and opportunities.
- **Goal 3: Community Driven Transportation Planning Process** - Develop an open and transparent transportation planning process that is based on involving the community in the transportation decision-making process, and is built upon locally developed and adopted plans.

Figure 2.2. 2035 RTP Transit Recommendations for the Southwest Corridor



In the Southwest Corridor, the 2035 RTP identified several key transit improvements (Figure 2.2):

- Express transit service on I-20/I-59 from downtown Birmingham to Bessemer,
- Bus Rapid Transit service along US 11 from downtown Birmingham to Academy Drive,
- Community circulator route serving the areas surrounding downtown Bessemer,
- Community connector route along AL 150 from Bessemer to the Galleria Mall to the east, and
- Super Stops at Five Points West and Bessemer.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

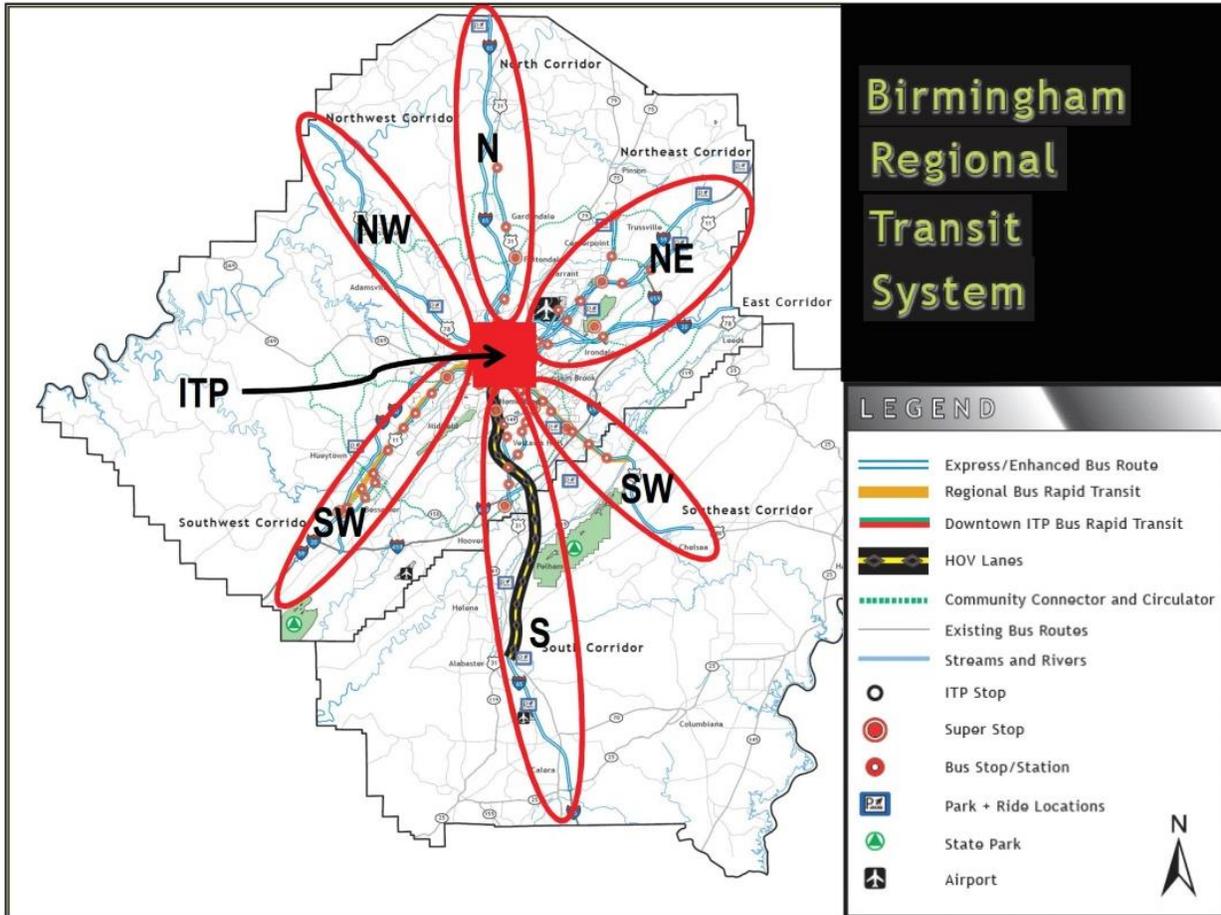
PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

The RPCGB has advanced its 2040 RTP planning process, which will build on the decisions and policies in the 2035 RTP, by incorporating updated data and analyses leading to revised and refined strategies to address the region's future transportation needs.

Birmingham Regional Alternatives Analysis {2004}

This important study developed the initial regional vision for a public transit system (Figure 2.3). This plan identified six radial corridors in which enhanced transit services (express, bus rapid transit, limited

Figure 2.3. Birmingham Regional Transit System Concept



stop) would be provided in conjunction with park-and-ride lots and Super Stops - transit terminals outside of downtown where various routes would interface for the benefit of transit users. The RPCGB has continued to incorporate updated versions of these recommendations in the subsequent long-range RTP updates.

- **BJCTA Comprehensive Transit Development Plan (2008)**

The Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) Transit Development Program is a guide to create a better transit system for Greater Birmingham. The program includes service expansion,

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

operational recommendations, and a capital needs assessment to improve functionality and efficiency of the fleet, facilities, and service over time. BJCTA's vision is to become a seamlessly connected transportation system, offering safe, affordable, reliable, and accessible services that improve mobility, flexibility and choices for all users while supporting the social, economic, and physical health of the region's communities.

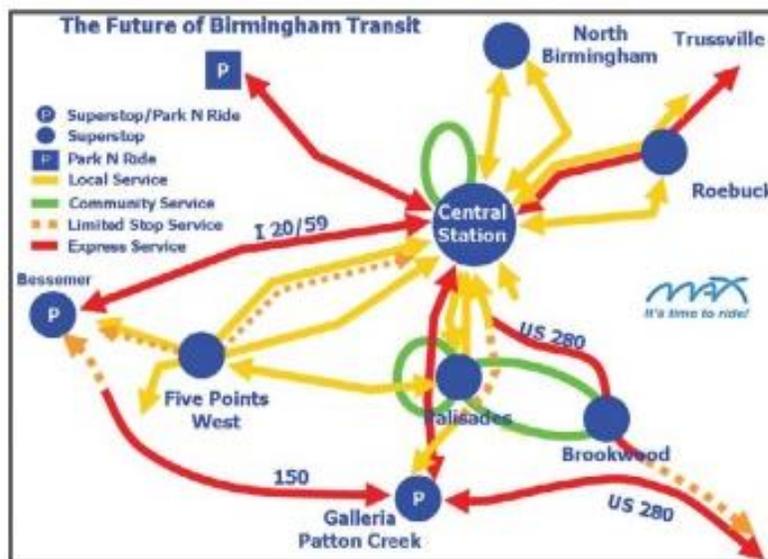
Key elements of this vision include:

- Developing "Superstops" in multiple locations around the region to facilitate travel and transfer opportunities outside of the Central Station,
- Retooling existing bus services to enable travel and transfer opportunities outside of downtown,
- Consolidating and enhancing bus stops, and
- Improving travel times and service reliability.

Implementing this vision will enhance mobility, while encouraging investment around the improved transit system. To date, limited progress has been made on the plan in terms of service revisions, but progress has been made on updating the vehicle fleet and other important actions affecting the quality of current operations.

Figure 2.4. BJCTA Transit Service Vision

This plan was prepared for BJCTA to provide a comprehensive assessment of the transit service. The study included a comparative peer analysis to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the existing transit service and its efficiency measures. There was also a review of the Birmingham transit setting in terms of population, employment and reliance on the transit service. The study identified recommended improvements. Recommendations to routes in the Southwest Corridor included minor route changes or extensions and increased service frequencies.



The plan also outlined a vision for regional transit service (Figure 2.4) that included the introduction of express routes, limited stop services and community circulators, complemented by the development of park- and -ride lots and "Super-Stops", strategically located transit centers were radial and cross town routes would interconnect for passenger convenience. In the Southwest Corridor, a Super Stop was proposed for Five Points West and for downtown Bessemer, an express service proposed for I-20/I-59 from downtown to Bessemer and on AL150 from Bessemer to the Galleria Mall, a park-and-ride lot in Bessemer, and cross-town service from Five Points West eastward to the Palisades Blvd. Super Stop. This study will consider these concepts in developing enhanced transit service within the Southwest Corridor.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- **BJCTA Short Range Transit Plan (2012)**

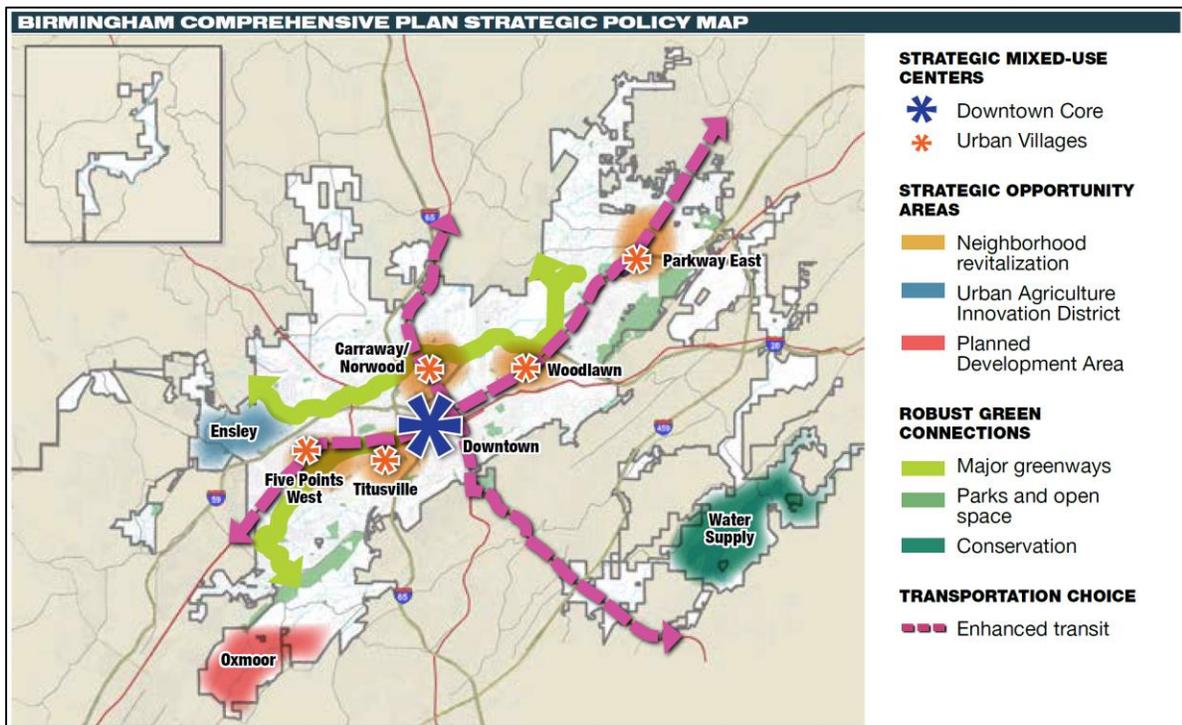
This study commissioned by the BJCTA focused on identifying short-term actions for both transit services (coverage, performance, route structure) and for operations (service standards and practices, internal training and management). While the study recommendations do not have a significant impact on transit services in the study area, there were proposals to increase headways on Route 45 north of Aronov Drive, and to reverse the "tails" on Routes 41 and 45. Since the study was completed BJCTA has instituted a Route 45 express which provides added service north of Aronov Drive, and a Route 1 Express which similarly provides added service, north of 40th St. SW.

- **City of Birmingham Comprehensive Master Plan (2013)**

This is the City of Birmingham's first full comprehensive plan since 1961 and the first comprehensive plan based on a community outreach process (Figure 2.5). With community consensus behind it, this plan is intended to take the city on a new strategic path for the 21st century, a path that moves it towards a renaissance of city neighborhoods, an improved economy with more jobs and opportunities, and a better quality of life for all.

The City of Birmingham Comprehensive Master Plan was developed through a process of broad public participation by citizens, business owners, and other stakeholders. The planning included citywide forums, workshops in different parts of the city, topical workshops, and open house events. Stakeholders from all walks of life participated through the process and served on the Steering Committee that helped shape the plan.

Figure 2.5. City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan Summary Map



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

The document includes a detailed implementation plan that sets out specific actions to achieve plan goals and its use as a guide in capital improvement planning, work plans, and land use decision making. A Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee of citizens will serve as plan stewards, advising governmental and other partners, and monitoring progress. Partnerships with residents, businesses, medical and educational institutions, and nonprofits are also envisioned as part of implementation strategies. Annual public hearings are proposed to update citizens on plan implementation.

Plan focus areas include urban infrastructure (transportation and transit, streets and circulation, and utilities), communities and neighborhoods (preservation and renewal), green systems (natural resources, parks, trails, sustainability, and green practices), and the economy (sustaining downtown, reinforcing and growing building blocks and base industries). A proactive strategy is proposed to carry the plan and its implementation forward as a living process.

Relative to the Southwest Corridor, the plan acknowledges the strategy is proposed to carry the plan and its implementation forward as a living process importance of the Five Points West district as an anchor node in the city's urban form. It incorporates the elements of improved transit service along US 11, designation of mode-specific streets, application of Complete Streets concepts, and implementation of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley trail system as important components of a well-rounded transportation system that supports community renewal and quality of life. From a land use perspective, both the Five Points West and Titusville communities were identified as significant nodes warranting focus as targets for continuing renewal and redevelopment. The City is pursuing the development of community renewal plans as recommended by the comprehensive plan.

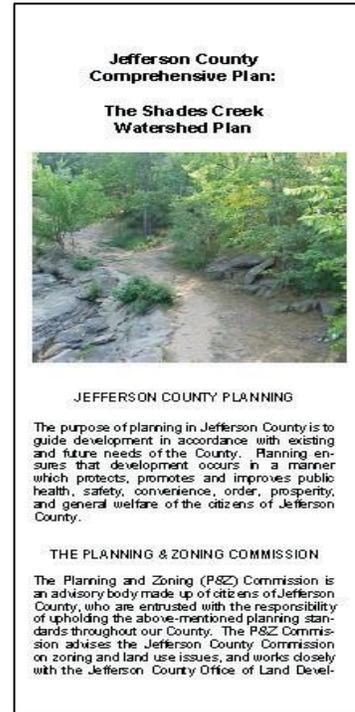
- **Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan - Shades Creek Watershed Master Plan (2008)**

**Figure 2.6. Jefferson County
Shades Creek
Watershed Plan**

The Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Commission developed the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan to guide future development and land preservation in the County. Due to extensive residential development, water quality and quantity impacts a portion of the Shades Creek Watershed and Cahaba River with increased storm water runoff and pollutants.

The Shades Creek Watershed Master Plan (Figure 2.6) addresses future land uses for areas extending from the northwest corner of Jefferson County running northeast through the city of Irondale, specifically focusing on unincorporated areas. The plan establishes a framework for the development of self-sustaining neighborhoods surrounding local businesses and services. Development goals include:

- Allow new neighborhoods and communities to feature different and unique characteristics so as to offer both developers and prospective homeowners a broad range of opportunities.
- Promote the development or redevelopment of neighborhoods and communities into attractive, desirable, and sustainable living environments.
- Provide both horizontal and vertical mixing of appropriately compatible uses within communities and neighborhoods to help reduce local residents' need travel outside their communities for basic household needs.



In addition, the Planning and Zoning Commission identified principles to use when deciding on rezoning that affects property development and use in the unincorporated area of Jefferson County.

- **Titusville North Neighborhood Plan (2012)**

The Titusville North Neighborhood Association, in collaboration with the City of Birmingham, Auburn University Urban Studio, and the RPCGB have developed a plan for the Titusville North neighborhood. This community-driven planning resulted in a framework to guide future development, revitalization, and infrastructure improvements for the community. The plan includes a detailed strategy to classify and redevelop vacant, underutilized, foreclosed, tax-delinquent and other "problem" properties.

- **City of Bessemer Master Plan (2012)**

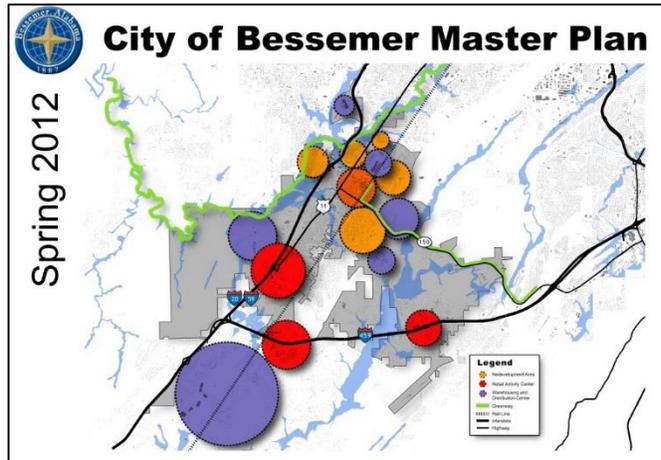
The City of Bessemer has undergone multiple planning initiatives to revitalize the traditional railroad and industrial town. In 2007, graduate architecture students, from the Auburn University Urban Design Studio with support of the Bessemer Downtown Redevelopment Authority, created a revitalization plan (Figure 2.7) for the historic downtown to capitalize on its location and capture the economic benefits of the traffic along Bessemer Super Highway (US 11).

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Subsequently, a city-wide plan developed by the RPCGB addressed neighborhood redevelopment, downtown redevelopment, and manufacturing and distribution redevelopment. For neighborhood redevelopment, the plan developed a detail analysis and strategy for the Pipe Shop neighborhood as a prototype model for application to other neighborhoods in the city that have declined. In the downtown, the plan recommended pursuit of the Auburn University Urban Design Studio which called for an arts district, entertainment district, and a central park and pedestrian friendly circulation system. From a transportation perspective, the study identified gateway and wayfinding needs, and also identified some Bessemer area transit service improvements, which will be considered in this study. RPCGB has submitted a proposal to the City to complete a downtown redevelopment plan and the City is pursuing an APPLE grant to assess the feasibility of a downtown intermodal center.

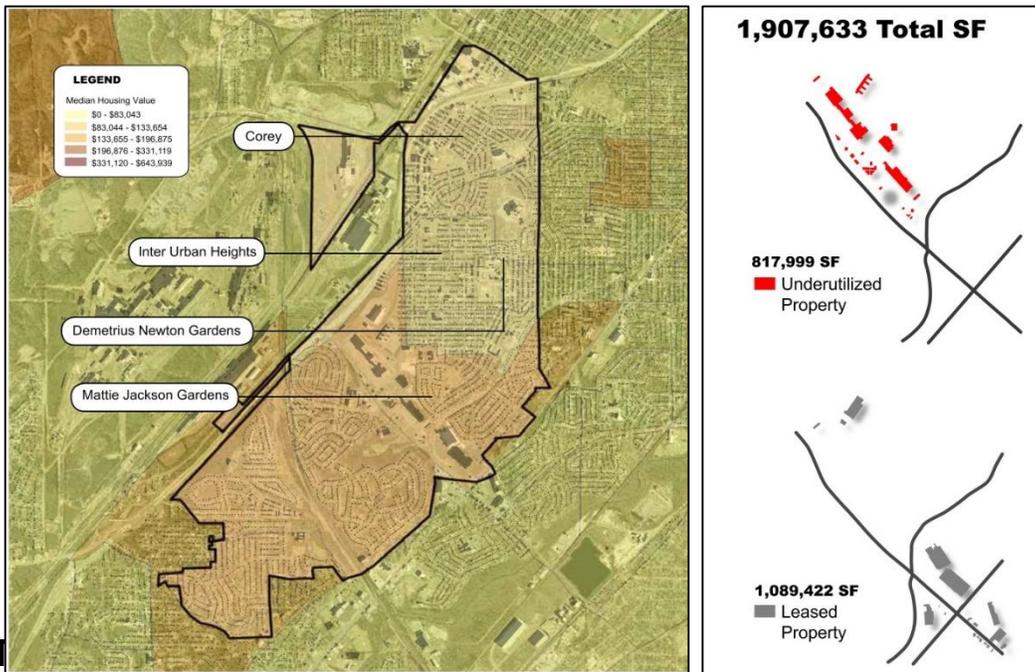
Figure 2.7. City of Bessemer Master Plan



- **City of Fairfield Master Plan (2011)**

Fairfield worked with the RPCGB in a comprehensive planning process to address vacant retail and strip malls as well as its residential neighborhoods (Figure 2.8). Along its once thriving retail corridor, Aronov Drive, retail strip malls and service-related small businesses have declined; these have been targeted for revitalization. Reinvestment in residential neighborhoods, specifically addressing vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties, is also a focus of Fairfield's plan. In addition, this plan will provide a framework for redeveloping districts surrounding Miles College's recently acquired 41-acre expansion.

Figure 2.8. City of Fairfield Master Plan Elements



- **Midfield Planning and Design Initiative (2008)**

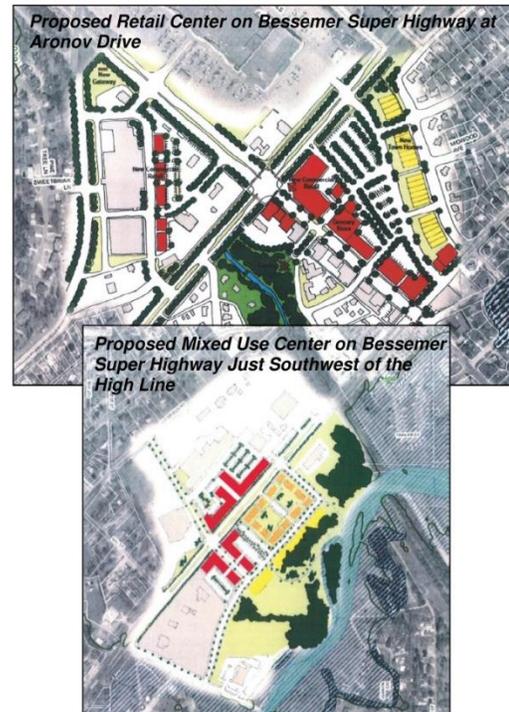
The planning effort undertaken by RPCGB for Midfield conducted a detailed analysis of existing conditions for land uses and demographics. From this foundation the plan identified opportunities to recreate a historic civic center, rejuvenate the commercial "downtown" of the city at US 11 and Aronov Drive/40th Street SW, and develop a mixed use center on US 11 between Etheridge Drive and the historic High Ore Line railroad corridor to be redeveloped as a greenway trail (see Figure 2.9). The concepts for US 11 redevelopment relate directly to this study as proposed transit improvements will focus on the US 11 corridor, and will be considered in the development of transit and land use concepts for the Southwest Corridor study.

- **Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System (2013)**

The Freshwater Land Trust sponsored a comprehensive greenway master plan for the Jefferson County area to connect new green spaces with existing parks and neighborhoods. Through an aggressive acquisition process, the Freshwater Land Trust's mission is to conserve, and connect open spaces and protect rivers and streams while providing recreational opportunities. This plan was developed to serve as a 10-year framework for future development of a greenway network, creating an environment that will transform the community by promoting health and wellness and providing positive impacts for the physical, economic, environmental, and social well-being of the Birmingham region. Since the greenway network extends through Jefferson County, the entire region realize the vision for the design of a system that complements the uniqueness of the neighborhoods and desired connections to activity centers, services, and resources. For the Southwest Corridor, the study recommendations included:

- A trunk greenway corridor extending from downtown Birmingham along an abandoned rail line to Midfield, and then following Valley Creek passing under I-20/I-59 in Bessemer (see Figure 2.10).
- Numerous designated street based trails including all of US 11 from downtown to Academy Drive. Street based trails could take a variety of configurations depending upon street right-of-way and traffic volumes, ranging from shared lanes, in-street bicycle lanes, or shared pedestrian/bicycle facilities to the side of the vehicular lanes. As future transit in this corridor includes much of US 11, this US 11 street trail is an important component of corridor planning.

Figure 2.9. City of Midfield Retail Center Plan



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

In addition, the planned street trails on roadways intersecting US 11 are significant in planning for improved access to future transit stations.

- A proposed greenway on the historic High Ore Line railroad alignment, which also intersects US 11.

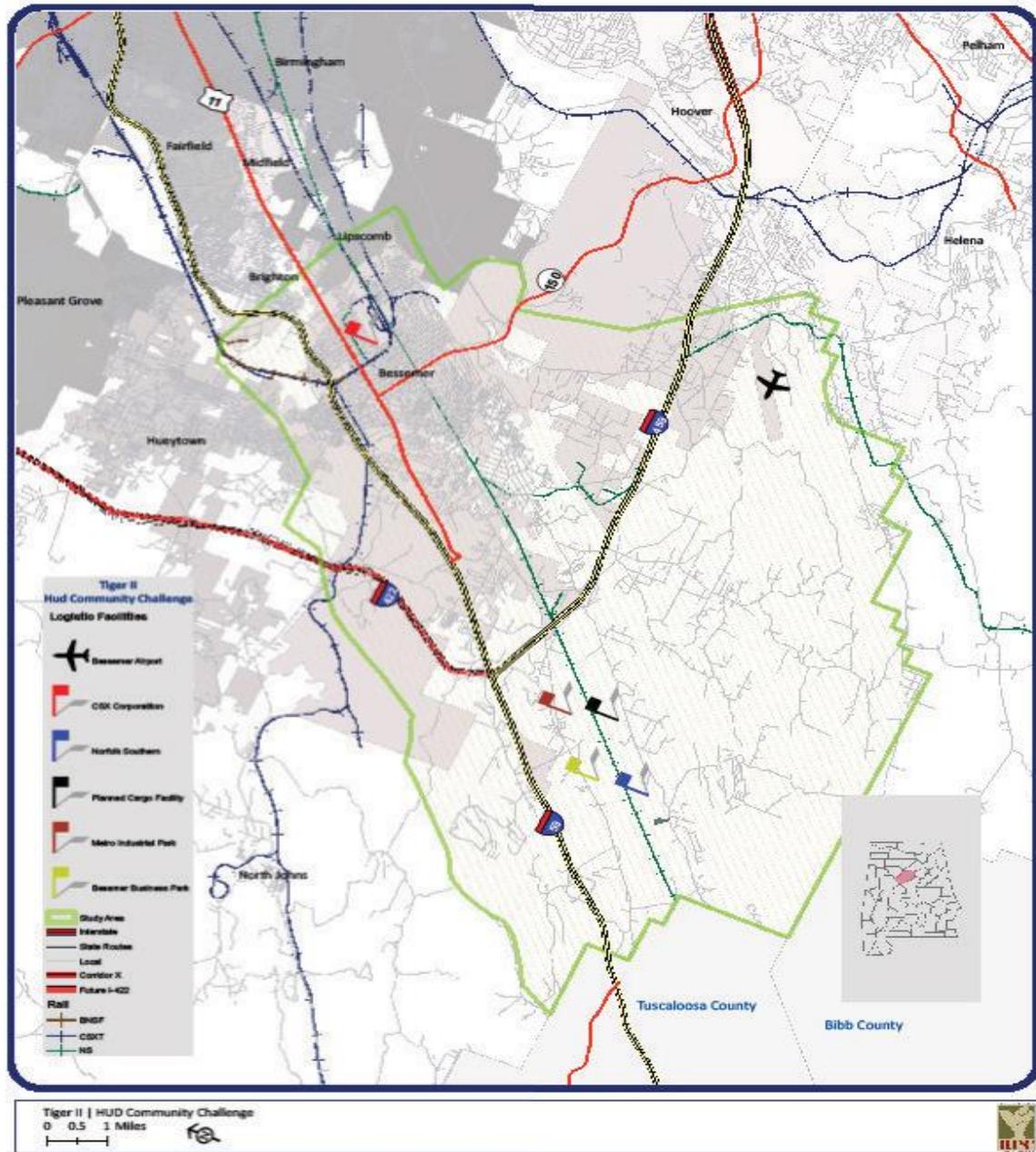
Figure 2.10. Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Master Plan (2012)



- **Freight Village (2010)**

In 2010, the RPCGB submitted a HUD Community Challenge Planning and Department of Transportation TIGER II Planning Grant application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for funding to develop a comprehensive plan around two rail/freight intermodal facilities or freight village. This freight village is located (Figure 2.11) in the southern portion of the southwest corridor study area, with facilities located in the McCalla area and Bessemer's downtown along the I-20/59 travel corridor.

Figure 2.11. Location of Proposed Freight Villages



The comprehensive planning approach incorporated holistic methodology to:

- Identify and evaluate housing, transportation, economic development, land use, environmental, energy, green space, and water infrastructure in the study area.
- Establish appropriate performance goals and measure growth and reinvestment scenarios against those goals.
- Develop strategies for prioritizing projects that facilitate the implementation of the plan.
- Identify responsible parties (public and private) for implementation and funding.

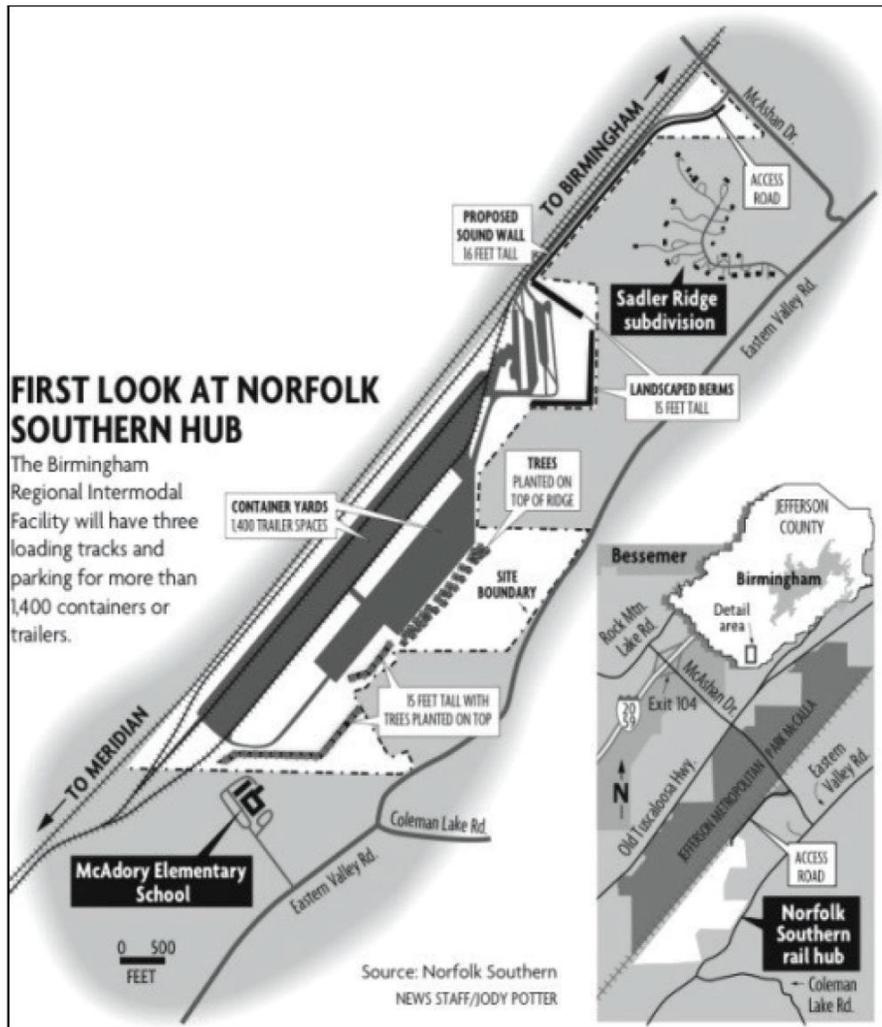
SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- Engage residents and stakeholders early and often in the development of the plan.

Unfortunately, the RPCGB was not awarded the grant. Subsequently, however, the RPCGB, in cooperation with the Norfolk Southern Railway (NSR), submitted a TIGER grant application to support the development of a railroad intermodal center in McCalla as shown in Figure 2.12.

Figure 2.12. Schematic of the Norfolk Southern Railway McCalla Hub



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

This intermodal facility would serve as a rail car logistics center, interfacing with rail intermodal traffic, specifically truck trailers on flat cars, to provide an alternative shipping service along the NSR Crescent Corridor extending between New Orleans on the Gulf Coast and Mid-Atlantic terminals from Virginia to New York. The construction and operation of this center would strengthen the transportation distribution presence in the south end of the Southwest Corridor. It is expected to attract other warehousing and distribution facilities beyond those already in the area. This development could create a reverse commute opportunity for transit, and will improve the economic standing of the corridor and greater Birmingham.

- **Regional Congestion Management Process (2008, 2010, 2012)**

In 2008, the RPCGB completed the Regional Congestion Management Process Report, with updates in 2010 and 2012. Congestion Management Process (CMP) is a process in which a transportation system is periodically monitored for congestion and mitigation strategies are recommended in response to identified deficiencies. The process is required under federal regulations for metropolitan planning areas. The study process first identified those roadway segments to be part of the congestion management network, and then developed a congestion index which is the ratio of the peak hour travel speed to the posted travel speed for roadway segments. Following Figures 2.13 and 2.14 show the regional roadways with congestion in the AM peak and the PM peak, respectively.

In relation to the Southwest Corridor the report found limited areas of congestion. These included areas of localized congestion on I-20/59 eastbound in the AM peak near downtown, on I-20/59 westbound in the AM peak approaching the Bessemer interchange, and on I-459 westbound approaching the I-20/59 interchange in the PM peak. The study recommended strategies to address the congestion in a hierarchy of levels which reflected the degree of intervention and level of cost involved as follows:

- Level 1 - Decrease the need for trip making,
- Level 2 - Increase the use of transit over other modes,
- Level 3 - Increase High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) use,
- Level 4 - Enhance traffic operations on existing roads, and
- Level 5 - Increase roadway capacity with additional infrastructure.

For all the interstate segments in the Southwest Corridor with the localized congestion, the study recommended Level 2 - Transit improvements, Level 4 - HOV lanes and ramp metering, and Level 5 - Additional travel lanes. The only surface roadway identified in the study area with a congestion issue outside of downtown was Gary Avenue/Avenue 1 in Ensley with moderate congestion (level of service D) for which no improvements were considered necessary at the time.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.13. Congested Roadways in the Birmingham Region - AM Peak Period

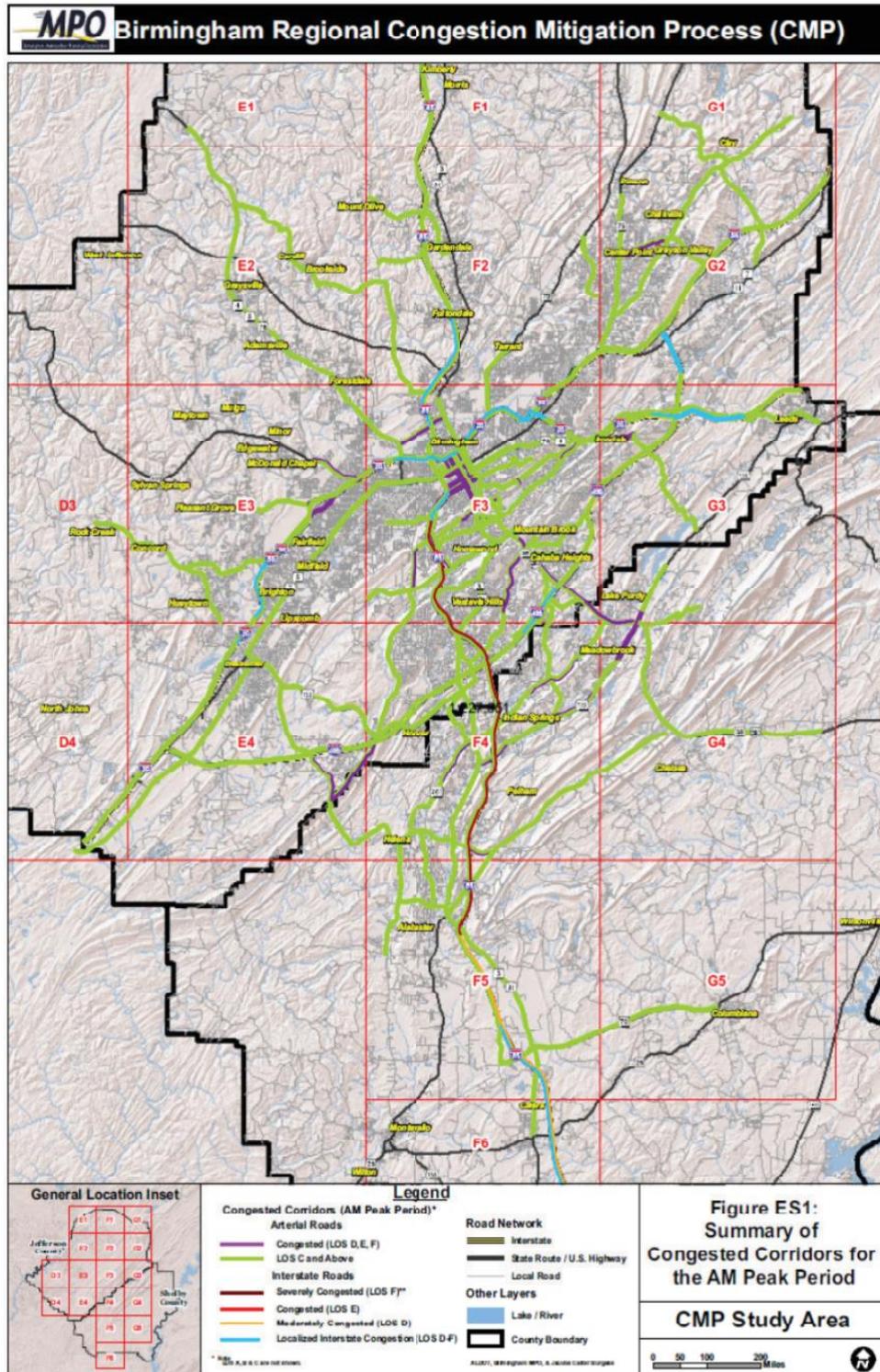
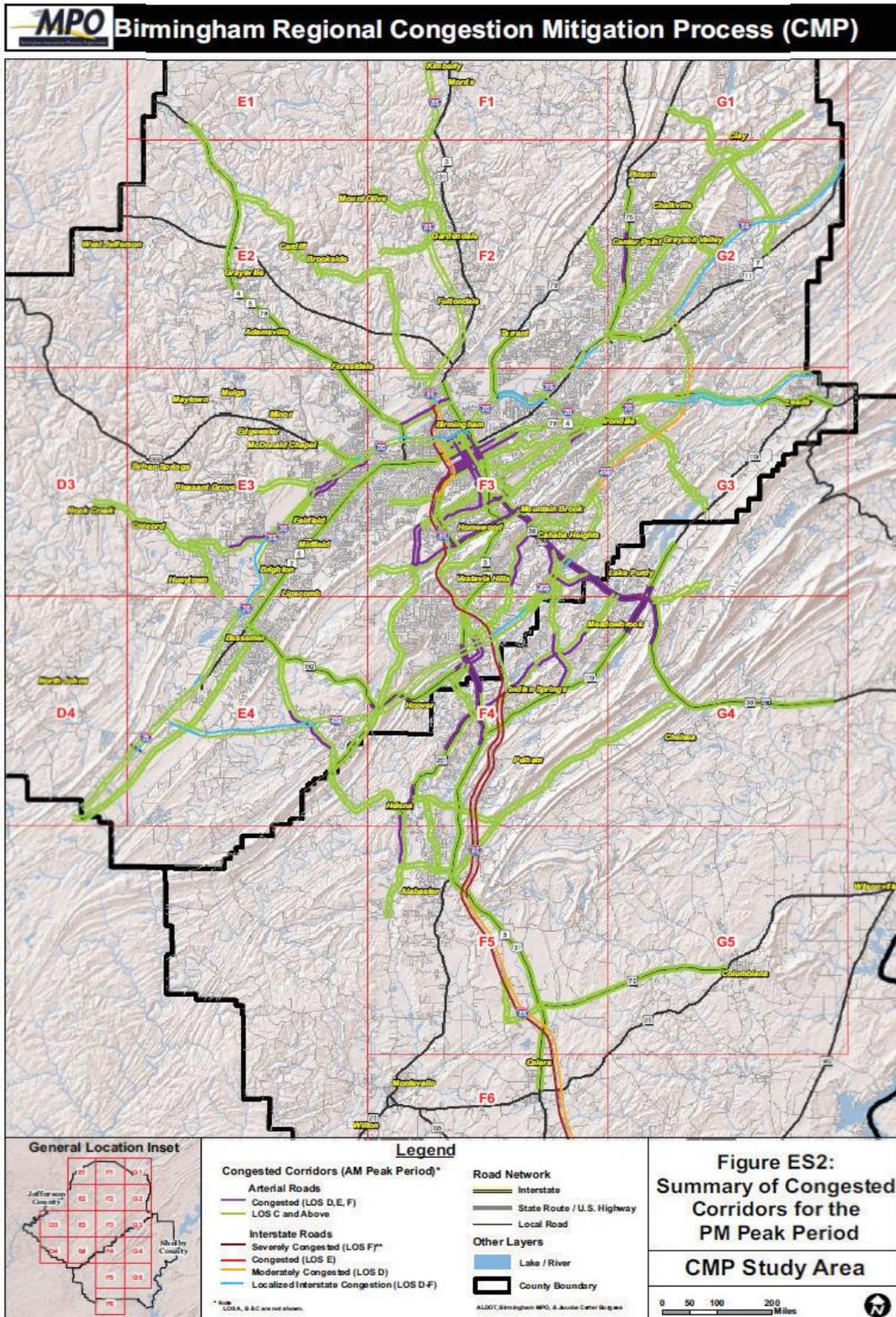


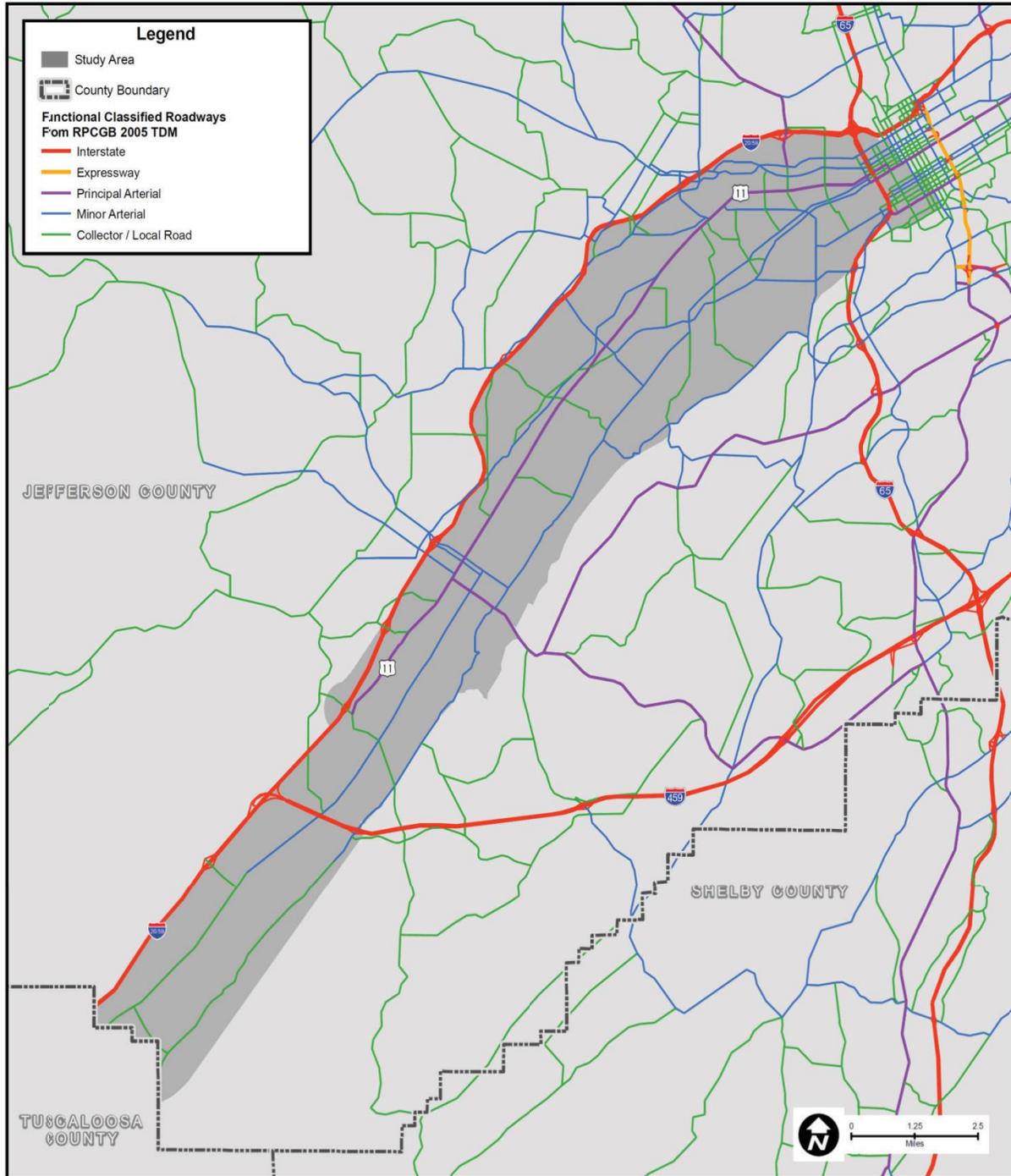
Figure 2.14. Congested Roadways in the Birmingham Region - PM Peak Period



2.2. TRANSPORTATION

This section presents the key aspects of the transportation system within the Southwest Corridor which are important factors in the planning for improved transit services in the corridor. Figures 2.15 and 2.16 show the principal roads in the study corridor by their functional classification and the number of lanes.

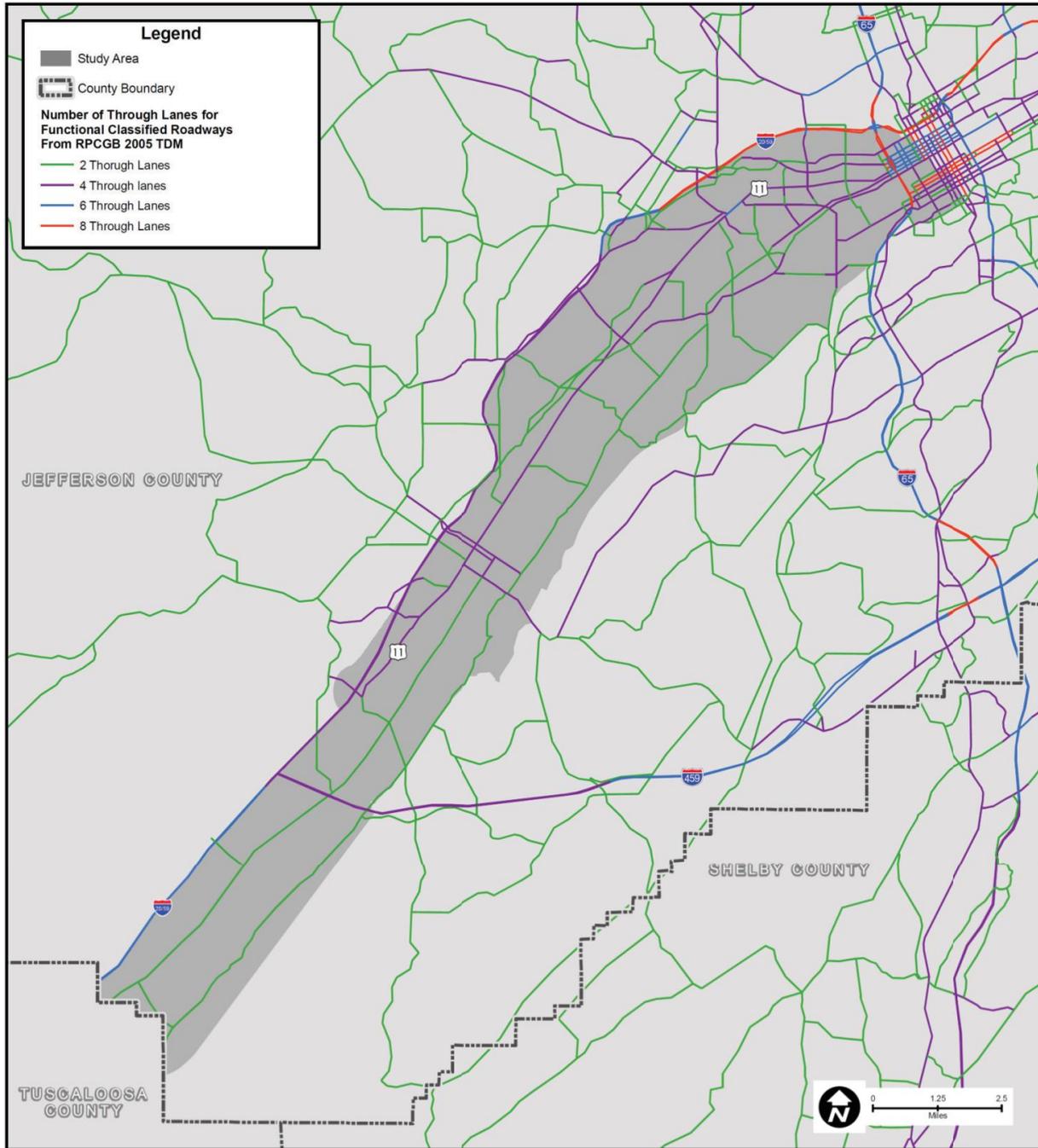
Figure 2.15. Functional Roadway Classification



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.16. Number of Through Lanes



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

There are three interstate highways in the study corridor. I-20/59 forms the west boundary of the study area, extending from the downtown area past McCalla and on to Tuscaloosa. This road has six basic lanes south of I-459, four lanes from I-459 to the Rutledge Drive interchange ramps, and six lanes again from Rutledge Drive to the Avenue I/35th Street Ensley interchange. From there to downtown, there are 8 basic travel lanes and auxiliary lanes. I-459 joins I-20/59 in south Bessemer and continues eastward as a southern beltway for the urban area; I-459 has four travel lanes in the study area. I-65 crosses the study corridor from north to south on the edge of downtown Birmingham at the north end of the corridor; in this area it carries eight basic lanes and some auxiliary lanes.

In the study corridor, only US 11 and State Road 150 are classified as principal arterials. US 11 enters the study corridor on 3rd Avenue North and continues for over 14 miles to the Academy Drive interchange where it joins I-20/59. Throughout its length of the corridor, US 11 has four basic travel lanes. Over most of this length it also has left turn lanes in the median. US 11 in the corridor is also referred to as the Bessemer Super Highway, that originally connected

SR 150 is the other principal arterial with four travel lanes within the corridor, connecting from downtown Bessemer eastward to the Galleria Mall in Hoover. There are several designated minor arterials including Eastern Valley Road, County Road 20, and the 18th Street North and 19th Street North one-way pair in the Bessemer area. In the central area traversing Midfield and Brighton are the Brighton Road/Woodward Road/Huntsville Avenue corridor, and the Vinesville Road/Carline Road/Avenue H/Dr. Martin Luther King Drive corridor; both of these have two travel lanes.

In the northern segment of the corridor, minor arterials include portions of Jefferson Avenue, Pearson Ave. SW, Warrior Road, Donald Road, Ensley Five Points West Avenue, Avenue W, Graymont Avenue, Bush Avenue/8th Ave. West/ Rev. Woods, Jr. Avenue, Lomb Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, and 6th Avenue South. Most of these routes lie within the City of Birmingham and have four travel lanes. There are also several collector roads spread over the study corridor; all of these carry two travel lanes.

Daily traffic volumes for 2005 (Figure 2.17) as derived from the regional travel model show the highest volumes in the corridor on the interstate highways as would be expected. Most of I-20/59 has volumes exceeding 50,000 per day, while I-459 is less than 50,000. US 11 volumes are in the 10,000-20,000 and 20,000-35,000 range, suggesting that the specific counts are near 20,000 on the average. Other roadways with moderate volumes include Aronov Drive, Jefferson Avenue, Woodward Road, SR 150, Eastern Valley Drive, CR 18 and CR 20.

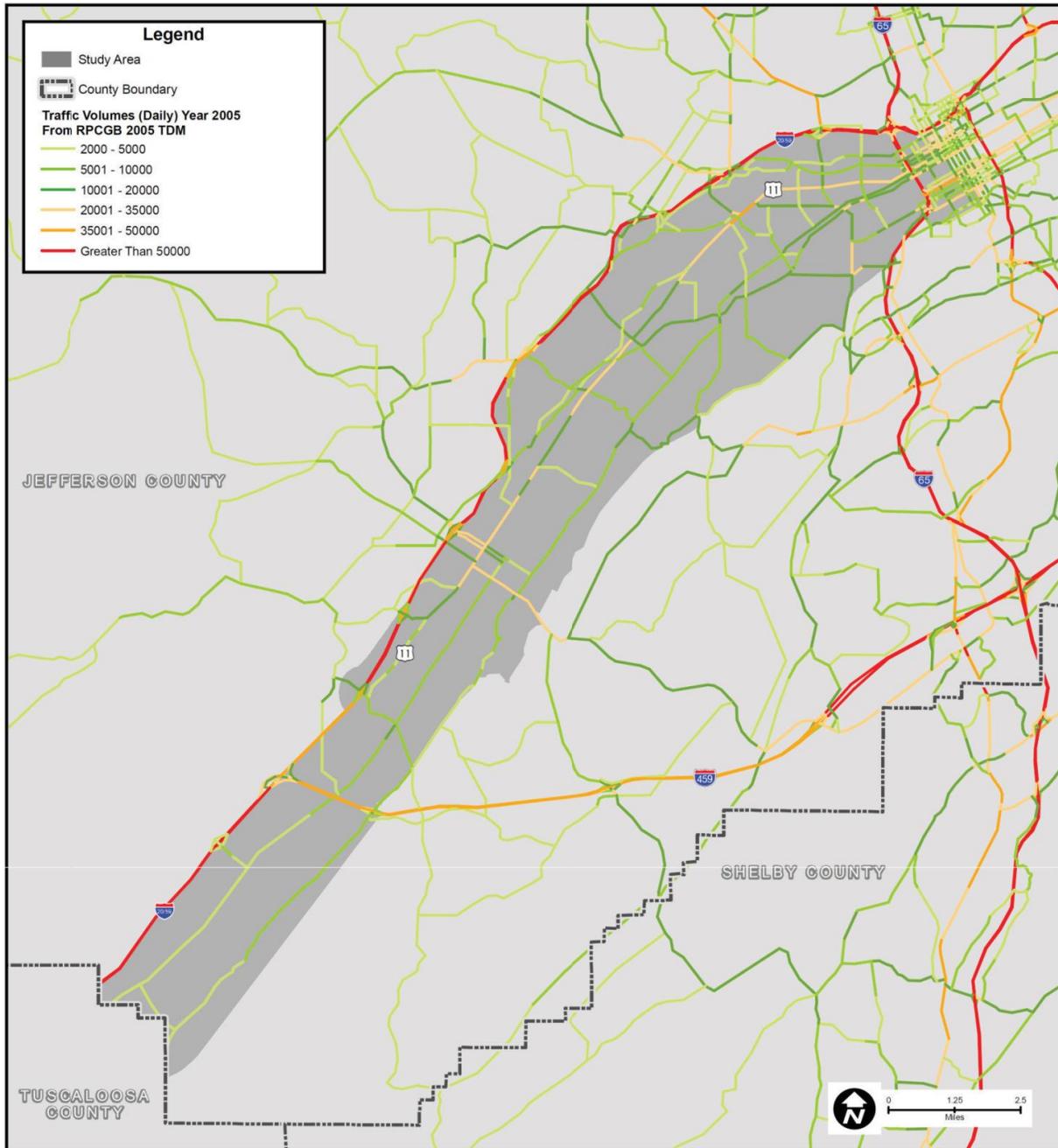
By 2035, the daily volumes on all the interstate roadways are over 50,000 vehicles (Figure 2.18). More segments on US 11 have over 20,000 daily vehicles, Volumes increase somewhat in the south part of the study area due to modest growth, while there are few changes in volume ranges in the middle and north parts of the corridor due to forecasts of gradually declining population and employment in these areas. A few roads such as SR 150 in Bessemer, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive in Birmingham which connect to areas adjacent to the corridor experience an increase in traffic connecting into or across the study corridor.

Figure 2.19 depicts the 2005 traffic level of service (LOS) based on the 2005 traffic volumes in relation to the number of through travel lanes on the corridor roadways. The green band indicates LOS A, B, or C with a volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratio under 0.60. LOS D with a V/C

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

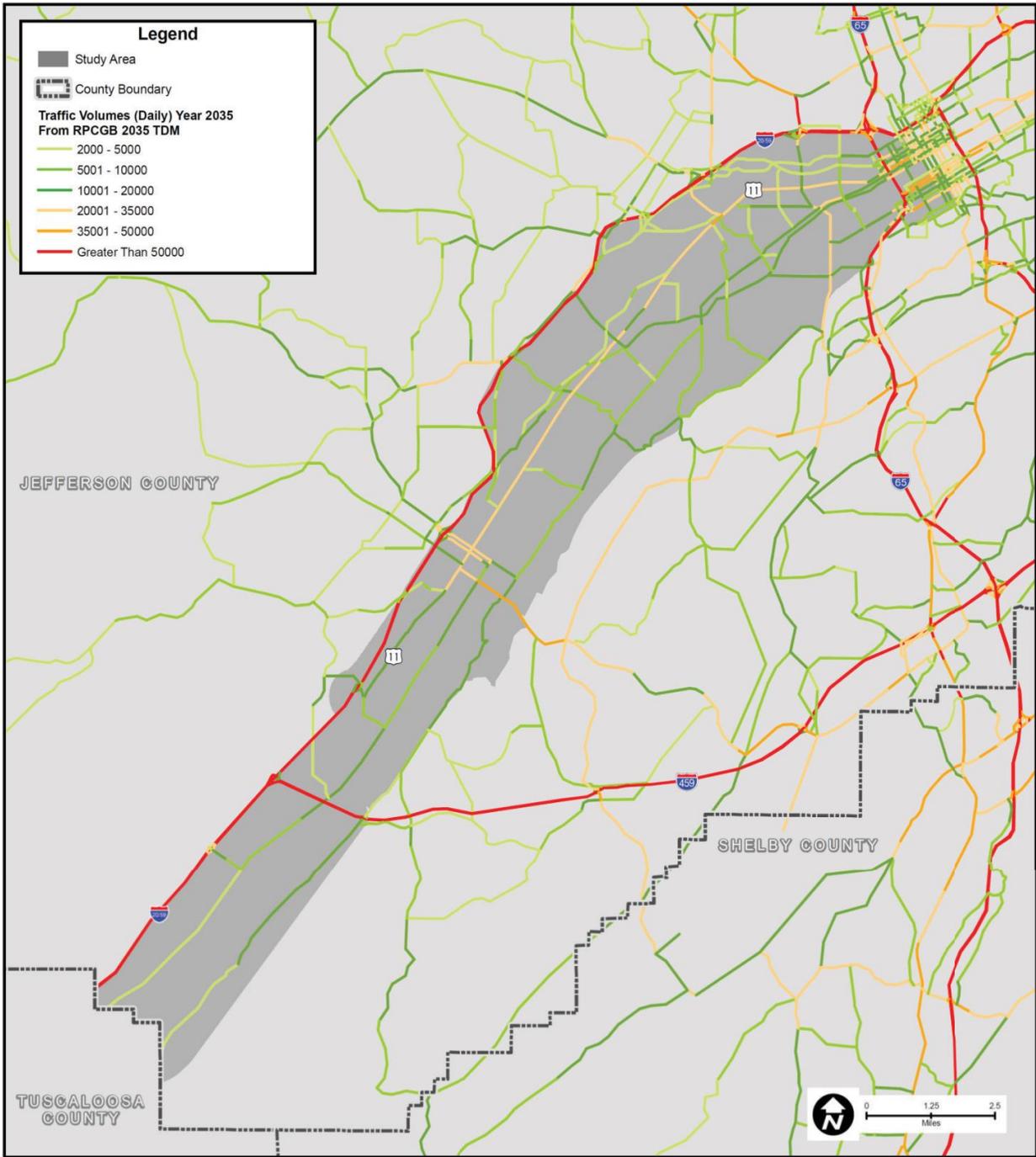
Figure 2.17. Actual Daily Traffic Volumes in 2005



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

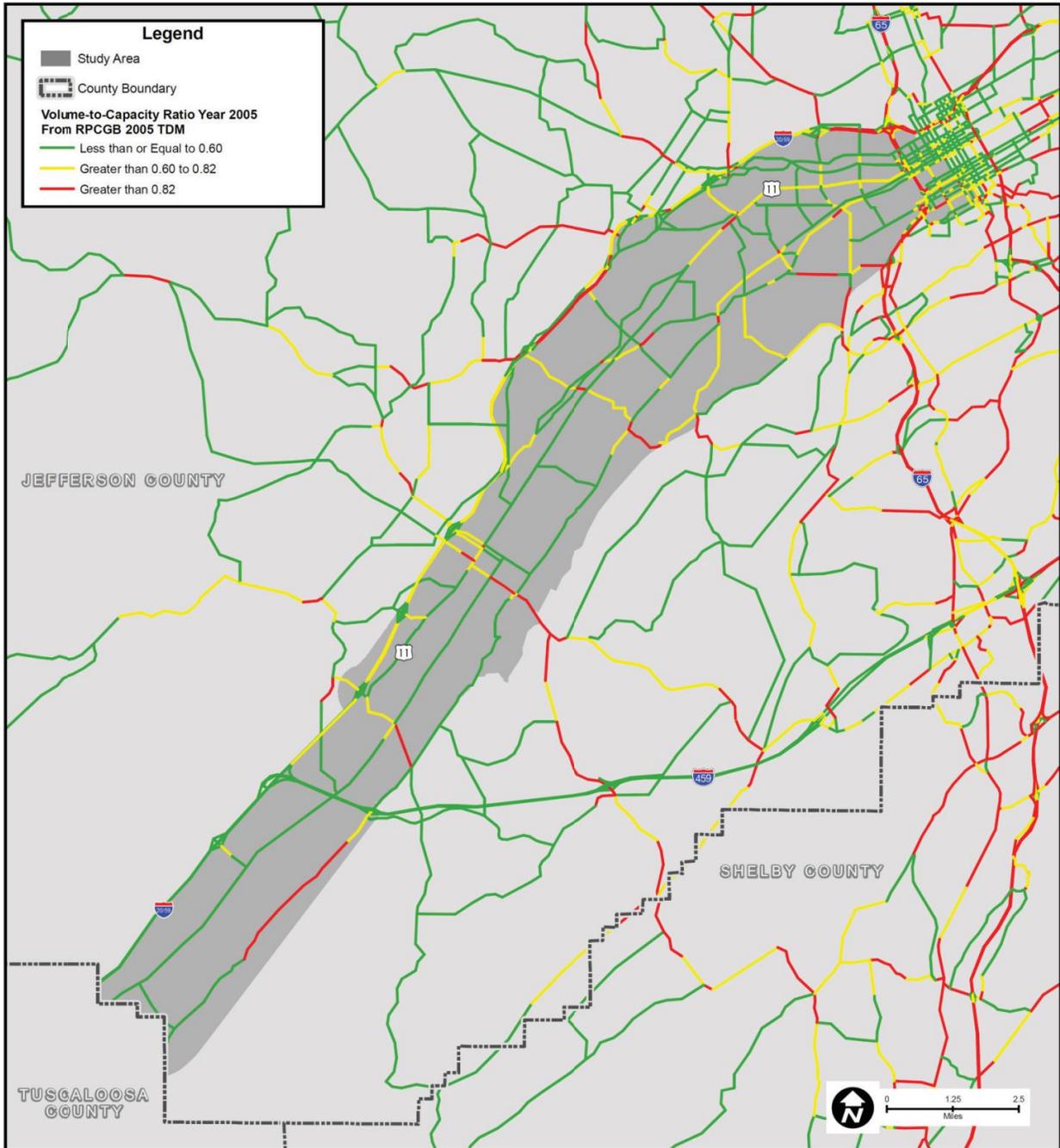
Figure 2.18. Projected Daily Traffic Volumes in 2035



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.19. Actual Highway Volume-Capacity Ratio in 2005



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

ratio between 0.60 and 0.82 with the yellow band indicates acceptable congestion. The red band for a V/C ratio higher than 0.82 for LOS E or F means significant to severe congestion. It is seen that red levels indicating unacceptable LOS are found on segments of I-20/59, SR 150, Eastern Valley Drive, and US 11 in the Five Points West area. However, roadways in the study corridor are relatively uncongested. The lack of congestion is beneficial for fixed route transit services operating on these streets, but does not provide a disincentive to use enhanced transit services in place of travelling by auto.

Figure 2.20 depicts the forecasted 2035 traffic level of service (LOS) on the corridor roadways. It is seen that red levels indicating unacceptable LOS are found on most of the I-20/59 and on I-459. On the surface streets, in the north and middle parts of the corridor, there is limited worsening of traffic service except for a few roads that connect the corridor "over the mountain" to the I-65 corridor to the east. From Bessemer southward, there are several roadway segments with reduced traffic service including Eastern Valley Drive/CR 18, CR-20, and Academy Drive. These trends in traffic LOS are in large measure the result of the forecasted decline in population and employment in the northern and middle sections of the corridor and modest growth in the southern section.

The preceding discussions of traffic LOS are complemented by a tabulation of existing (2009 and 2010) traffic counts and the calculation of traffic service using the Florida DOT traffic service estimation tables. The results are generally consistent with the preceding LOS maps for the study corridor roadways.

Table 2.1 is subdivided into three parts addressing the I-20/59 corridor, the US 11 corridor, and the other streets that cross US 11 in the study corridor. For I-20/59 it is seen that on a daily basis, this major route operates freely without congestion. In the peak hours, there are isolated areas of congestion near Arkadelphia Road where there is considerable truck traffic, and near Valley Drive where the number of lanes on the interstate transitions from six lanes to four lanes.

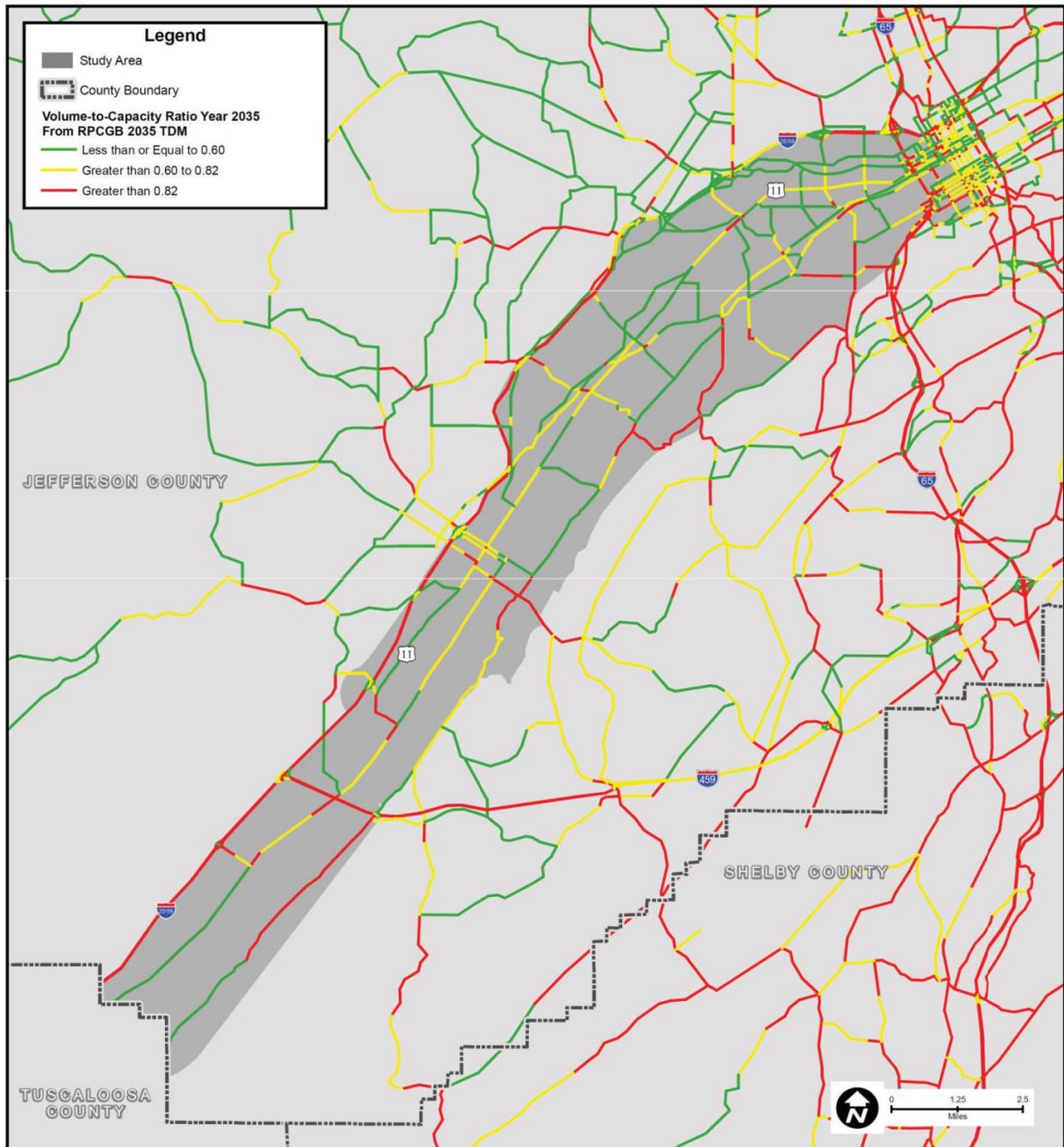
For the US 11 corridor, traffic operations on both a daily basis and in peak hours is generally uncongested, with no locations yielding LOS E or This is consistent with the prior corridor LOS map for 2005, but the peak congestion at Five Points West was due to the lack of a traffic count in that area.

For the streets connecting to the US 11 corridor, there are three locations which congested traffic conditions were identified for both the daily and peak hour conditions. Those are 8th Ave West near Arkadelphia Road, Arkadelphia Road south of Finley Blvd. which is outside of the study area, and Aronov Drive west of US 11. The first two locations are consistent with the previous corridor LOS map. For the Aronov Drive location, peak hour traffic operations were not observed to be consistently at LOS E, which may be the result of an unusual traffic count.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.20. Projected Highway Volume-Capacity Ratio in 2035



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Table 2.1. Existing Traffic Counts and Traffic Service 2009/2010

Existing Level of Service for I-20/59 Within the Southwest Corridor Study Area								
Level of Service For Urbanized Freeways								
Traffic Count ID	Location Description	Number of Lanes	ALDOT ADT (2010)	ADT LOS	ALDOT k Factor	ALDOT D Factor	ALDOT Peak Hour Directional Volume	Peak Hour Directional LOS
117	East of Arkadelphia Road Interchange	8	138,420	D	10%	60%	8,305	E
116	West of Arkadelphia Road Interchange	8	108,630	C	10%	60%	6,518	D
917	East of 20th Street Ensley Interchange	8	98,050	C	11%	60%	6,471	D
114	East of 34th Street Ensley Interchange	8	93,460	C	11%	60%	6,168	D
114A	In-between Interchange Ramps @ Lloyd Noland Pkwy	6	81,950	C	11%	60%	5,409	D
113	East of Valley Road Interchange	6	82,860	C	11%	60%	5,469	D
113A	West of Valley Road Interchange	4	60,250	D	11%	60%	3,977	E
112	West of Allison Bonnett Memorial Drive Interchange	4	50,580	C	11%	60%	3,338	D
111	East of Alabama Adventure Pkwy Interchange	4	47,610	C	11%	60%	3,142	D
110	West of Alabama Adventure Pkwy Interchange	4	44,730	C	11%	60%	2,952	C
109	East of I-459 & I-59/20 Interchange	4	43,390	B	11%	60%	2,864	C
140	I-459 East of I-20/59 Interchange	4	44,390	C	12%	60%	3,196	D
109	West of I-59/20 EB Off-Ramp to I-459 and WB On-Ramp from I-459	6	63,730	B	11%	60%	4,206	C
109A	East of McAshan Road Interchange	6	63,600	B	11%	60%	4,198	C
916	West of McAshan Road Interchange	6	60,590	B	11%	60%	3,999	C

Existing Level of Service for US-11 Within the Southwest Corridor Study Area								
Level of Service For Class II State Signalized Arterials								
Traffic Count ID	Location Description	Number of Lanes	ALDOT ADT (2010)	ADT LOS	ALDOT k Factor	ALDOT D Factor	ALDOT Peak Hour Directional Volume	Peak Hour Directional LOS
5000	West of I-65	4	18,380	C	10%	60%	1,103	C
217A	East of Center Street	4	16,320	C	11%	55%	987	C
215	East of 14th Street	4	18,250	C	11%	55%	1,104	C
213	East of Avenue X	6	24,160	C	10%	55%	1,329	C
210	East of 57th Street	4	16,800	C	11%	55%	1,016	C
207	West of Woodward Road	4	18,540	C	11%	55%	1,122	C
206	East of Jesse Owens Avenue	4	20,130	C	11%	55%	1,218	C
205	East of 32nd Street	4	20,310	C	11%	55%	1,229	C
905	East of 24th Street	4	24,780	C	11%	55%	1,499	D
203	West of 18th Street	4	25,590	D	10%	55%	1,407	D
202	West of 15th Street	4	22,870	C	10%	60%	1,372	D
201	East of West Lake Drive	4	16,790	C	10%	60%	1,007	C
200	Near UAE Medical Center	4	13,450	C	11%	60%	888	C

Existing Level of Service for US-11 Side Roads Within the Southwest Corridor Study Area								
Level of Service For Class III/IV State Signalized Arterials								
Traffic Count ID	Location Description	Number of Lanes	ALDOT ADT (2009 or 2010)	ADT LOS	ALDOT k Factor	ALDOT D Factor	ALDOT Peak Hour Directional Volume	Peak Hour Directional LOS
6203	8th Ave West East of Arkadelphia Road	2	12,840	E	10%	55%	706	E
6160	2nd Avenue North East of Lomb Avenue	4	8,160	C	10%	55%	449	C
6209	Graymont Avenue West of Center Street North	4	9,160	C	10%	55%	504	C
43	Arkadelphia Road South of Finley Boulevard	4	40,310	F	10%	55%	2,217	F
255	Arkadelphia Road North of Bruno Drive	4	20,760	D	10%	55%	1,142	D
255A	Arkadelphia Road South of Graymont Avenue	4	19,430	D	10%	55%	1,069	D
6135	Lomb Avenue East of US-11	4	20,620	D	10%	55%	1,134	D
6233	5-Points West North of US-11	4	11,860	C	10%	55%	652	C
6112	Dr. Martin Luther King Drive West of US-11	2	7,200	D	10%	55%	396	D
8086	Aaron Aronov Drive West of US-11	4	30,260	E	10%	55%	1,664	E
8216	19th Street Downtown Bessemer West of US-11	4	11,440	C	10%	55%	629	C
8231	15th Street Downtown Bessemer West of US-11	4	9,600	C	10%	55%	528	C
8033	Eastern Valley Road South of Sparks Gap Road	2	7,200	D	10%	55%	396	D
912	Highway 150 East of US-11	4	18,350	D	11%	60%	1,211	D

An important part of assessing the potential for improved transit in an urban study corridor is to conduct a market analysis of travel making in the area of interest. By doing this, the overall patterns of trips can be better understood, and those trips which may be captured by an enhanced transit service can be quantified. This analysis complements the review of demographics in this section which also profiles the socioeconomic composition of corridor residents including factors that influence their use of and reliance on transit. As part of the study, the regional travel demand model was used to conduct a detailed analysis of ridership on proposed transit improvements; this model took into account the costs of travel choices, the socioeconomic characteristics of potential riders, the quality of the new transit services, and the origins and destination patterns of potential transit trips to estimate future ridership on the transit project. Nevertheless, a review of overall travel patterns in the study corridor can inform the transit planning process upfront, and result in an improved proposal.

Figure 2.21 is a select-link diagram for traffic in 2035 on I-20/59. The green bands on either side of the red bar show the distribution of the traffic passing through the red bar. It is seen that much of the traffic on the north side of the bar is destined for locations within the region, such as downtown. To the southwest, traffic distributes across the southwest Birmingham region, but much of the traffic is bound for points further away such as Tuscaloosa. It is seen that there is little interconnection of traffic on I-20/59 and US 11. That is to say, the I-20/59 corridor mostly serves a different travel market from US 11. It is noted that these patterns are very similar for those in the year 2005.

Figure 2.22 is a select-link diagram for traffic in 2035 on US 11 at a point just southwest of Aronov Drive. The green bands on either side of the red bar show the distribution of the traffic passing through the red bar. It is seen that much of the traffic on the north side of the bar is destined for locations near downtown Birmingham, with some traffic diverting to I-20/59 and "across the mountain" to the I-65 corridor. South of the red bar, a sustained level of traffic continues to the Bessemer area where it diverges to CR 18 (Eastern Valley Drive), SR 150 and to I-20/59. It is seen that there is little interconnection of traffic on I-20/59 and US 11. As noted before, these patterns are very similar for those in the year 2005.

To assist in the analysis of corridor trips, the study corridor was subdivided into five districts as follows (see Figure 2.23):

- District 1: Downtown Birmingham,
- District 2: City of Birmingham Perimeter,
- District 3: Fairfield, Midfield, Brighton and Lipscomb,
- District 4: Bessemer, and
- District 5: McCalla.

There is also a District 6, which is the region covering Jefferson and Shelby Counties, outside of the study corridor districts. The travel demand model trip tables were summarized around the above geography to generate a detailed tabulation of trips in 2035 within and between the various defined areas and by trip purpose. The trip purposes were summarized as home-based work trips, all other trips, and total trips. It is also noted that this tabulation reflects changes between 2005 and 2035 based on projections for population and employment gains and losses across the study corridor as discussed elsewhere. Table 2.2 summarizes the results of this tabulation.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.21. Traffic Patterns on I-20/I-59 in 2035

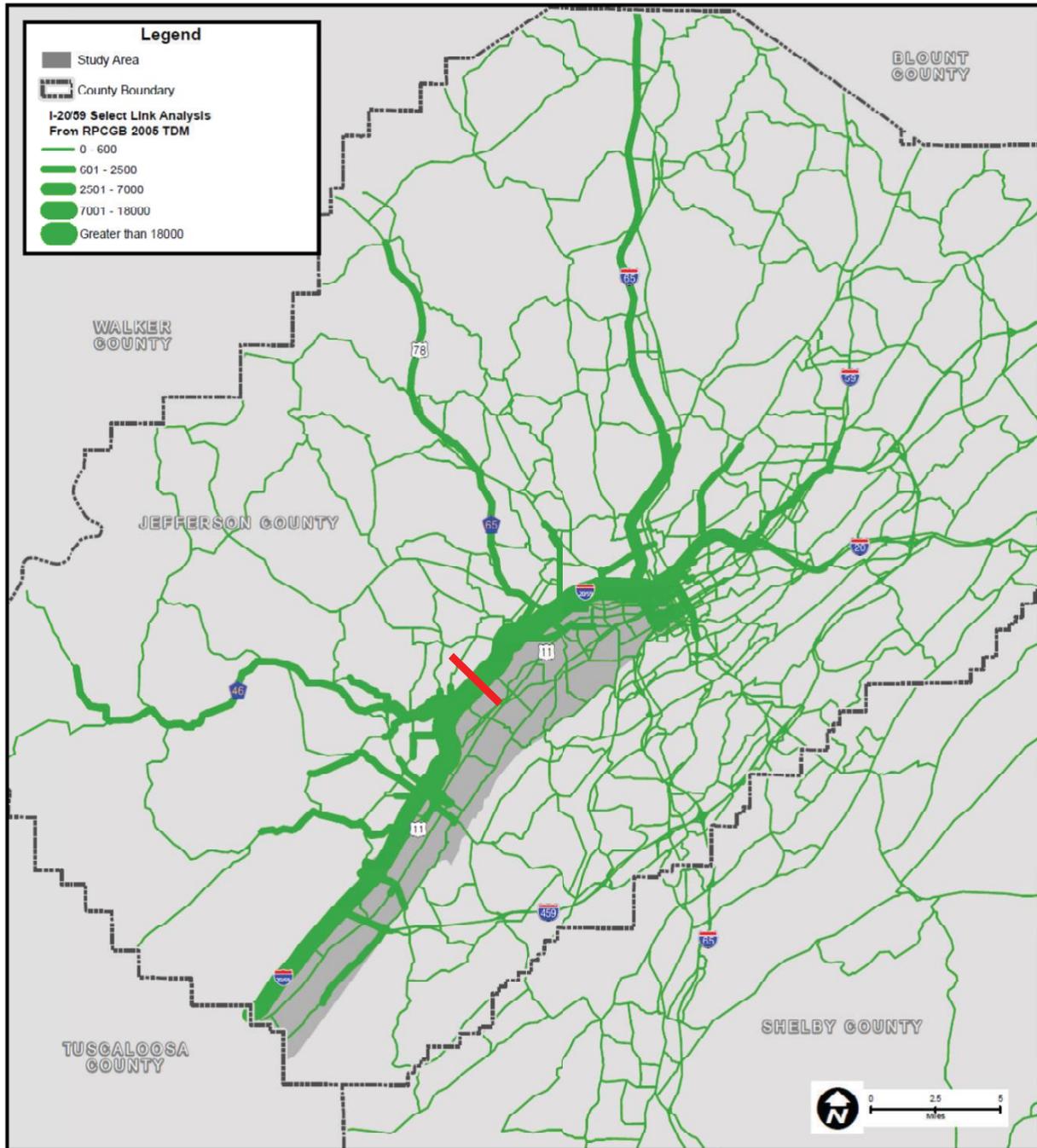


Figure 2.22. Traffic Patterns on US 11 in 2035

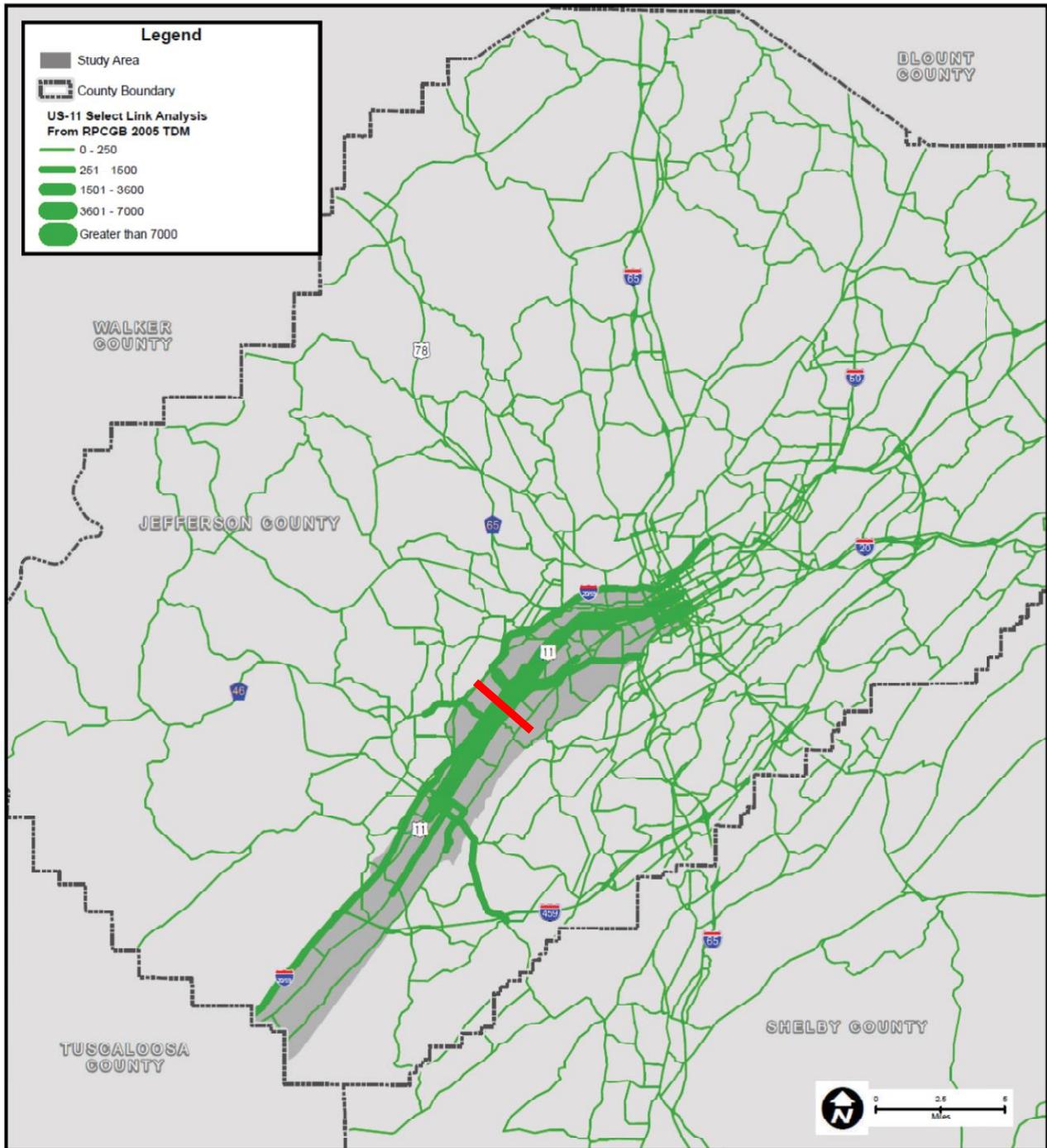


Figure 2.23. Corridor Districts

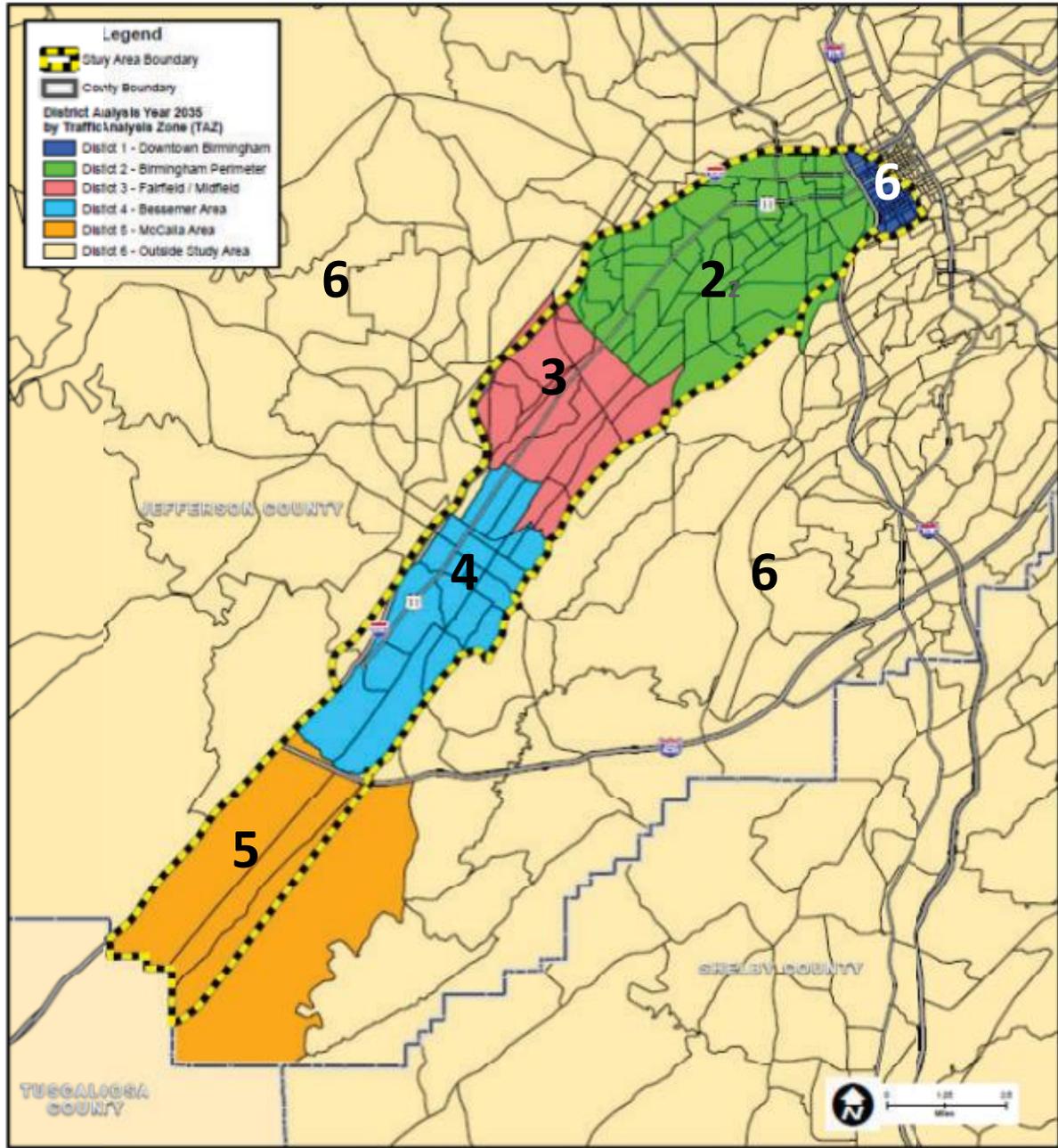


Table 2.2: Summary of Corridor Trips - 2035

	Number of Trips			Percentage of Trips		
	Downtown District Only	Study Corridor Districts Excluding Downtown District	Total	Downtown District Only	Study Corridor Districts Excluding Downtown District	Total
TOTAL REGIONAL TRIPS						
Within Study Corridor Districts	31,700	48,500	80,200	6.6%	10.1%	16.7%
Between Districts Within the Study Corridor	0	22,700	22,700	0.0%	4.7%	4.7%
Between Study Corridor Districts and Areas Outside the Study Corridor	185,900	164,900	350,800	38.8%	34.4%	73.1%
Between Downtown District and Other Study Corridor Districts	0	26,000	26,000	0.0%	5.4%	5.4%
Total	217,600	262,100	479,700	45.4%	54.6%	100.0%
TOTAL STUDY CORRIDOR TRIPS						
Within Study Corridor Districts	31,700	48,500	80,200	24.6%	37.6%	62.2%
Between Districts Within the Study Corridor	0	22,700	22,700	0.0%	17.6%	17.6%
Between Study Corridor Districts and Areas Outside the Study Corridor	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Between Downtown District and Other Study Corridor Districts	0	26,000	26,000	0.0%	20.2%	20.2%
Total	31,700	97,200	128,900	24.6%	75.4%	100.0%

First, observations from this summary table are drawn. Following this review, a more detailed analysis and observations were developed. Key observations include the following:

- Within the study corridor in 2035, there are projected to be 26,000 daily trips between District 1 - Downtown Birmingham and the other four districts defining the study corridor. Trips between downtown and Districts 3, 4 and 5 are more likely to use transit as the trips are longer.
- There are also 48,500 daily trips projected to occur between the four study corridor districts outside of downtown. Some of these trips would be longer, and more susceptible to using transit, such as trips between District 4 - Bessemer and District 2- Birmingham Perimeter.
- There are 27,000 projected daily trips within each of the four study corridor districts outside of downtown. Because these are shorter trips and because most of the trips are not oriented along a potential new transit service corridor, they are not as likely to be captured.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- Trips from any of the districts that seek to transfer downtown to another transit route would also be candidates for the new transit service. There are 164,900 daily trips between the four study corridor districts outside of downtown and the rest of the region, and 350,800 when the downtown area is included.
- While the majority of these trips may lie outside of the core transit system service area, it is nevertheless a large pool of potential trips. Presently, about 37% of current transit users transfer downtown to reach other trip destinations outside of downtown.
- Of all the trips that begin and/or end in the study corridor outside of downtown, about 63% have one trip end outside the study corridor.
- There is projected to be 31,700 daily trips within the downtown district. Some of these trips could use the new transit trip as part of mobility between downtown origins and destinations.
- The daily trips within the study corridor (97,200) amount to 20% of the total of 479,700 trips included in the analysis. As noted, not all of these are equally amenable to capture by a new transit service running the length of the Southwest Corridor, but capture of even 3.5% overall would yield 3,400 daily trips. This figure would rise were downtown transfers to other routes factored in.

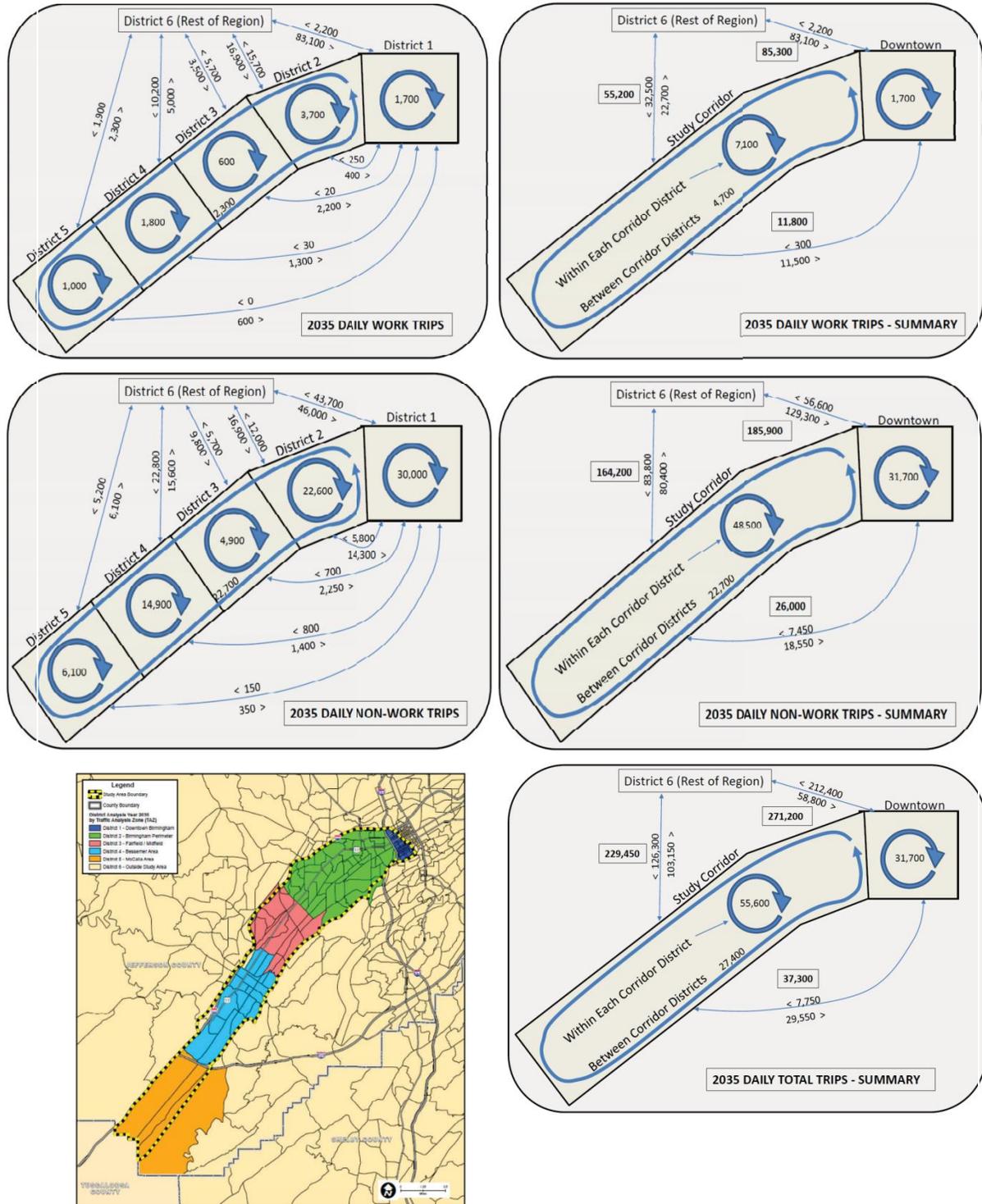
Figure 2.24, the following group of diagrams illustrate the detailed trip patterns in the corridor forecast for 2035 by districts for home-based work, other, and total trips. These observations are drawn:

- For work trips, about 15% of downtown trips originate in the study corridor. About 70% of these are north of Aronov Drive (District 2), and another 15% from District 3. Downtown work trips are fewer as you move southwest down the corridor. Work trips represent a daily repeated pattern of commuting which is a good transit market.
- The work trips to downtown account for about 50% of the 12,000 work trips that occur entirely within the study corridor.
- Based on the data, there is only a modest reverse commute pattern of corridor residents travelling southwest to jobs in the southwestern district of the corridor in the McCalla area. There are only 400 such daily trips compared to 2,300 from the rest of the region, and 1,000 which are generated within the McCalla Area of District 5.
- Work trips which begin and end inside the study corridor amount to about 25,500 daily trips, or about 15% of all daily trips totaling 147,500 which begin and end inside the study corridor.
- There is a larger pool of non-work trips, including 22,700 daily trips between Districts 2 to 5, and 26,000 daily trips between Districts 2 to 5 and the downtown district. There are 48,500 daily trips that occur within each of the respective corridor districts outside of downtown. These are shorter trips; few of these would likely be readily served by new premium transit service.
- In terms of total daily trips, there are 27,400 daily trips forecasted in 2035 between Districts 2 to 5, and 37,300 daily trips between Districts 2 to 5 and downtown, for a total of 64,700 daily trips. As noted before, there are large numbers of other trips from around the region which are oriented to and from downtown activity centers.
- Transit patrons from the Southwest Corridor could access some of these destinations by way of a transfer downtown to other bus routes.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

• **Figure 2.24. Detailed Patterns of Corridor Trips - 2035**



Railroads

The Birmingham region has a rich history in terms of the railroad lines which laced the region, interconnecting iron ore and coal mines with processing plants, and linking the region to nearby cities such as Atlanta, Nashville, Memphis, Jackson (MS), New Orleans, Pensacola (FL), and Montgomery and Tallahassee (FL). These rail lines extended north to Chicago and the Midwest, and to the Atlantic Seaboard as well. Given Birmingham's reputation as the "Pittsburgh of the South" and the industrial heart of the South, the role of railroads in the region's economy of the late 1800's and early 1900's was significant. There was also a network of urban trolley cars operating on rail lines throughout greater Birmingham, including a line running southward from Downtown Birmingham to Bessemer.

As the legacy industries of mining and steel mills of the Southwest corridor declined and the number of other smaller industrial and manufacturing businesses in the corridor dwindled over the mid-1900's, several rail lines fell into disrepair or abandonment. The High Ore Line, which ran from Red Mountain coal and ore mines northwest to the U.S. Steel foundries, was one of these routes, which is now programmed to become an urban trail as part of the large Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System. Rail freight density is shown in Figure 2.25 and the principal rail lines in the study corridor are shown Figure 2.26 and summarized as follows:

Figure 25. Railroad Freight Density



- Norfolk Southern Railway operates a major rail corridor through downtown Birmingham and the Southwest Corridor through the length of the corridor midway between US 11 and Red Mountain. This corridor is part of the railway's Crescent Corridor providing rail service between the Mid-Atlantic Coast and the Gulf Coast. The railway recently developed an intermodal center in the McCalla area intended to intercept truck trailers for shipment by rail. The line is double track through most of the corridor, but is single track in southern Bessemer and beyond to Tuscaloosa. This line carries about 33.8 million gross tons per mile annually. Gross tons include the freight hauled and the railroad equipment. This figure equates to an average daily train count in the range of 15-20 trains depending on several factors.
- The CSX Railroad operates a mainline corridor through downtown Birmingham and the northern part of the corridor; it continues southward to the west of the I-65 corridor. This line carries about 33.8 million gross tons per mile annually, or about 5-9 trains daily. There is a branch line that runs near the Norfolk Southern Railway line and then through downtown Bessemer across I-20/59 and on to Tuscaloosa. CSX Railroad also has another branch line serving US Steel on the west side of I-20/59 outside the study corridor. It also operates a spur line that runs along the Norfolk Southern Railway northward from downtown Bessemer; this line used to continue north to downtown Birmingham, but the middle section has been abandoned and track removed, while the remaining segment closer to downtown Birmingham is still in operation serving a few customers.
- Birmingham Terminal Railway (formerly the Birmingham Southern Railroad) is a short line rail operation owned by Watco and operating over several rail lines serving industrial customers and

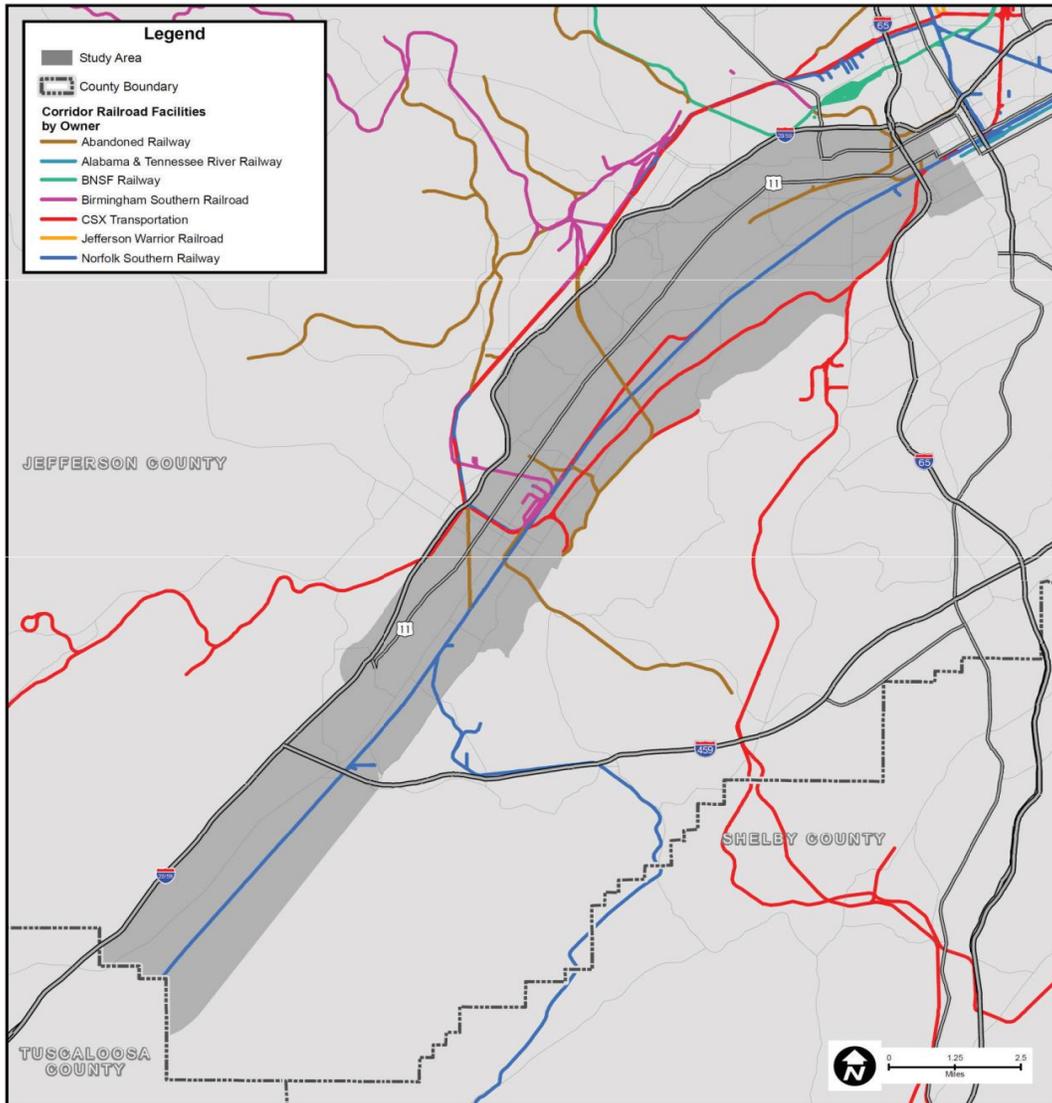
SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

connecting to the Norfolk Southern and CSX railroads. Within the study corridor, its lines lie on the north side of Bessemer.

- The BNSF Railway operates a major corridor and intermodal rail yard which is located northwest of downtown Birmingham outside the study corridor.

Figure 2.26. Railroad Facilities in the Study Corridor



By the early 1900's there was a network of streetcar lines across the Birmingham region including service south to Bessemer, Ensley, and other points in the corridor. By the 1950's these lines were out of service and their tracks were being removed or paved over. The study will consider the potential role of remaining rail corridors in meeting future transit needs. However, the role of these rail lines in serving growing freight movements (Figure 2.27), the fact that their alignments do not connect with major activity centers within the study corridor and are relatively inaccessible to much of the remaining residential development in the corridor, and because there are cost and operation challenges to their use, would likely preclude their use as transit corridors.

Transit Services

Figure 2.27 shows the location of existing BJCTA transit routes in the Southwest Corridor. There are 10 routes radiating from the downtown transit terminal; the routes can be grouped as follows: Routes 1 and 45 both extend to Bessemer; Routes 3, 8, 41, and 48 serve the northern third of the corridor and lie entirely within it; Routes 5, 6, 38 and 96 serve the north end of the corridor but also extend outside the corridor to serve adjacent areas. Total ridership on these routes was about 4,600 daily riders at the time of the 2010 onboard survey.



Figure 2.28 shows the distribution of the home residence of BJCTA riders based on the 2010 transit survey. These patterns echo those of some of the other demographic data presented in this section. The patterns reflect both where there are residential neighborhoods in proximity to existing transit service, and the extent to which those residents make use of transit. The majority of transit users in the corridor reside in the northern third of the corridor north of Aronov Drive/Ave. W which includes parts of Birmingham, Fairfield, and Midfield. There are also clusters in the mid-corridor area of Brighton, Lipscomb, and Midfield, as well in several Bessemer neighborhoods.

Figure 2.27. Existing BJCTA Transit Routes

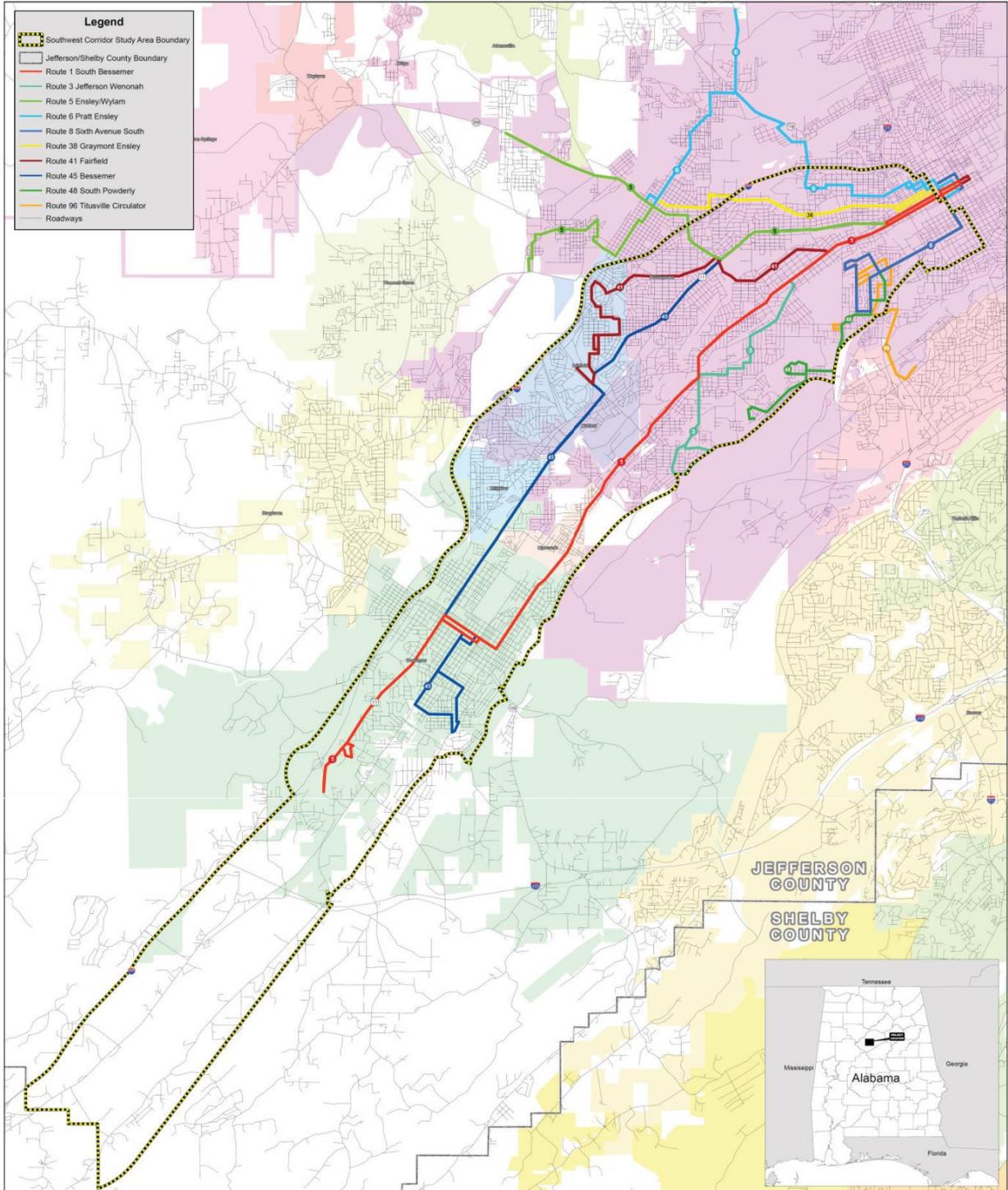
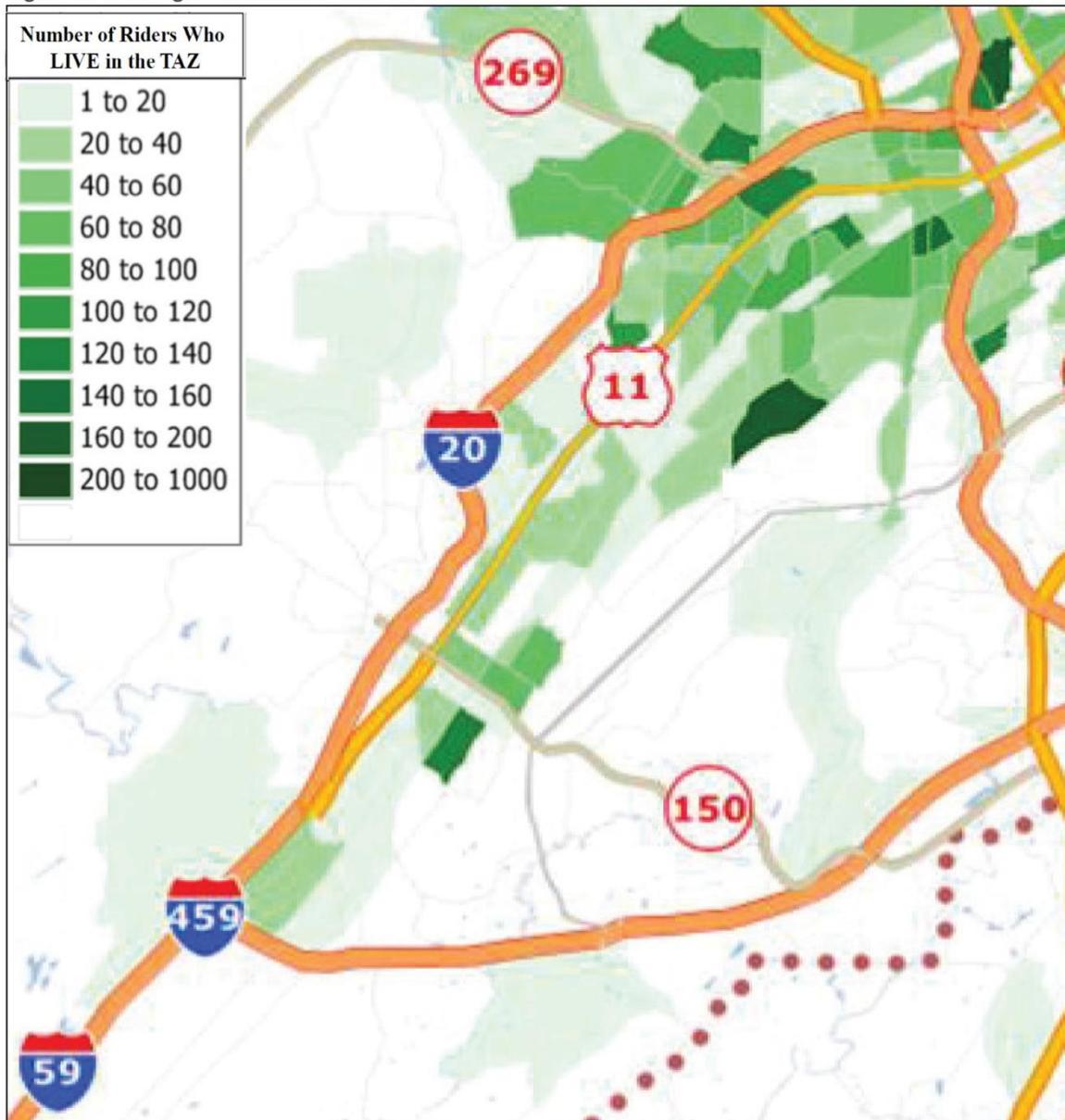


Figure 2.28. Residence Locations for Transit Users by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)



During this study, an onboard survey of transit users was conducted. Part of the survey data recorded were the points of boarding and alighting along each of the transit routes. Figure 2.29 presents data for Routes 1 and 45 which serve the length of the corridor south to the Bessemer area, and Route 41 which traverses through several Birmingham neighborhoods past Five Points West through Ensley and into Fairfield, passing Miles College and ending at the Walmart on Aronov Drive. All three routes have among the highest number of riders in the system. The size of the circles indicates the relative number of total boardings and alightings, with the green portion indicating boardings or "ons", and the blue portion indicating alightings, or "offs". Daily activity is shown for both inbound and outbound directions of routes.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Route 41 extends from downtown along 2nd Avenue SW, Lomb Avenue, Woodlawn Avenue and Avenue W to Five Points South, and from there via Warrior Road and Valley Road through historic downtown Ensley, on several streets in Fairfield past Miles College, to the Walmart on Aronov Drive. This route has fairly even ridership along its length, with alightings dominating outbound and boardings dominating inbound. This pattern shows a downtown ridership with the number of patrons on the buses higher the closer to downtown. The large circles downtown indicates that inbound patrons get off the bus and outbound patrons get on the bus, either due to transfers to and from other routes, or as the point of trip start or finish. The busier ridership areas of the route are several stops near Princeton Baptist Hospital, Five Points West, downtown Ensley and near Aronov Drive.

Route 1 travels along the Jefferson Avenue and County Road 18 corridor and then cuts through downtown Bessemer, turning south onto US 11 to the shopping district at Academy Drive. Ridership is fairly constant along this route except for a portion mid-route. Like Route 41 this route too has a downtown travel orientation. Areas of higher ridership are in the northern quarter of the route, through downtown Bessemer, and the end of the route at Lawson State College- Bessemer Campus and the Academy Drive shopping district.

Route 45 traverses US 11 south to downtown Bessemer except for a deviation along the Vinesville Road/Avenue H/Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive corridor, rejoining US 11 at Aronov Drive. From downtown Bessemer it jogs east to County Road 18 serving southeast Bessemer as far south as south as Joneboro Elementary School at Owen Avenue. Ridership is fairly constant along this route, but with several strong areas including downtown Bessemer, Aronov Drive, and Five Points West. Like Route 41 this route too has a downtown travel orientation.

Bicycle-Pedestrian Facilities

The Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System is the product of a partnership of the Freshwater Land Trust with the Jefferson County Health Action Partnership to develop a greenway and path master plan to promote healthier lifestyle, provide alternative travel modes, and protect the region's waterways. The plan is considered a supplement to the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and will support follow-up efforts by cities and public agencies to identify funding and construct facilities. The plan (Figures 2.30, 2.31 and 2.32) identifies over 200 miles of greenways and paths along six main corridors across the region. More than 600 miles of connector greenways and paths have also been identified beyond the main trunk corridors. Once implemented, the network will serve transportation and recreational needs, encouraging active transportation that leads to enhanced health and quality of life.

Figure 2.29. Daily Transit Ridership Patterns on BJCTA Routes 1, 41 and 45

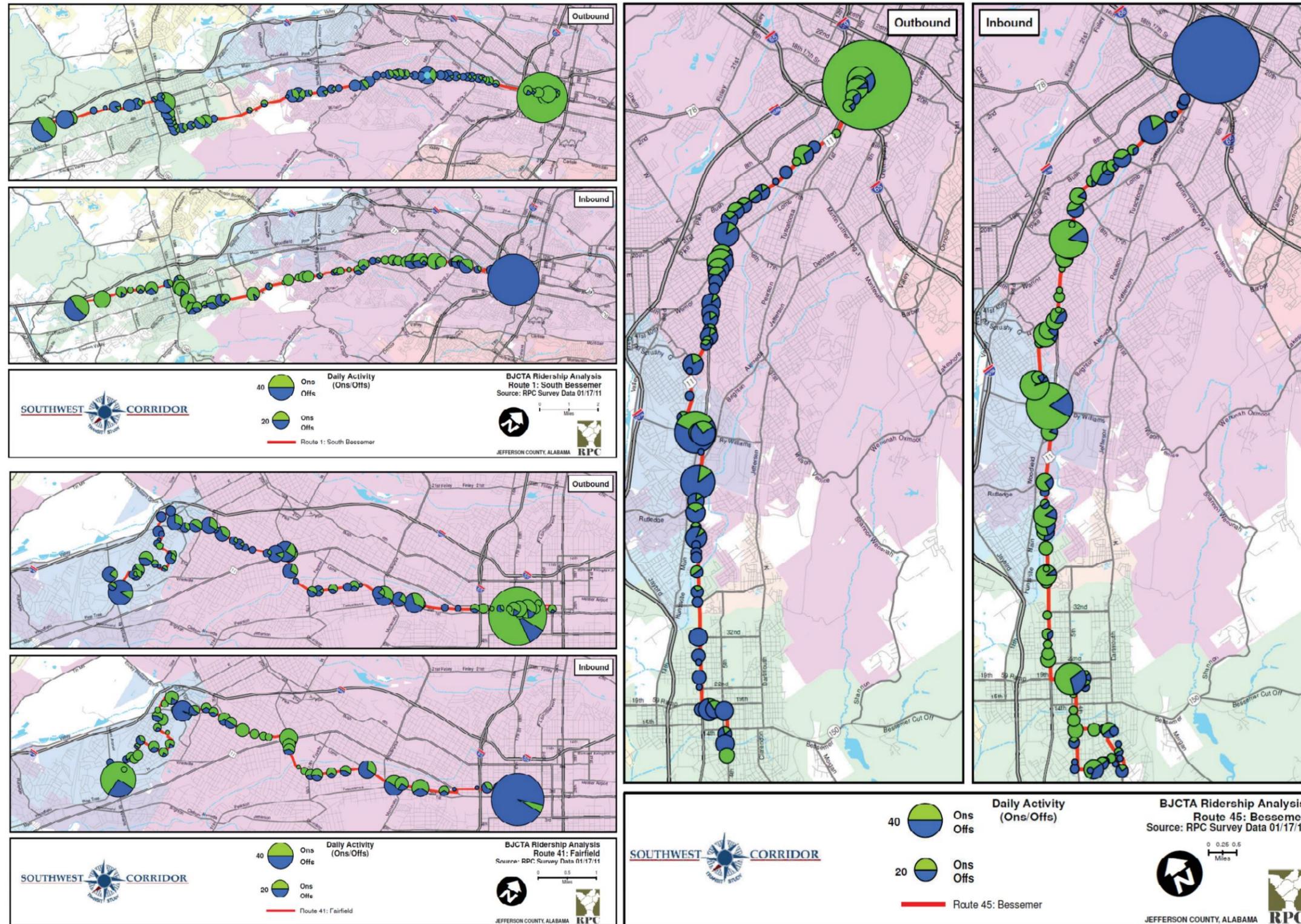


Figure 2.30. Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Elements in the Southwest Corridor

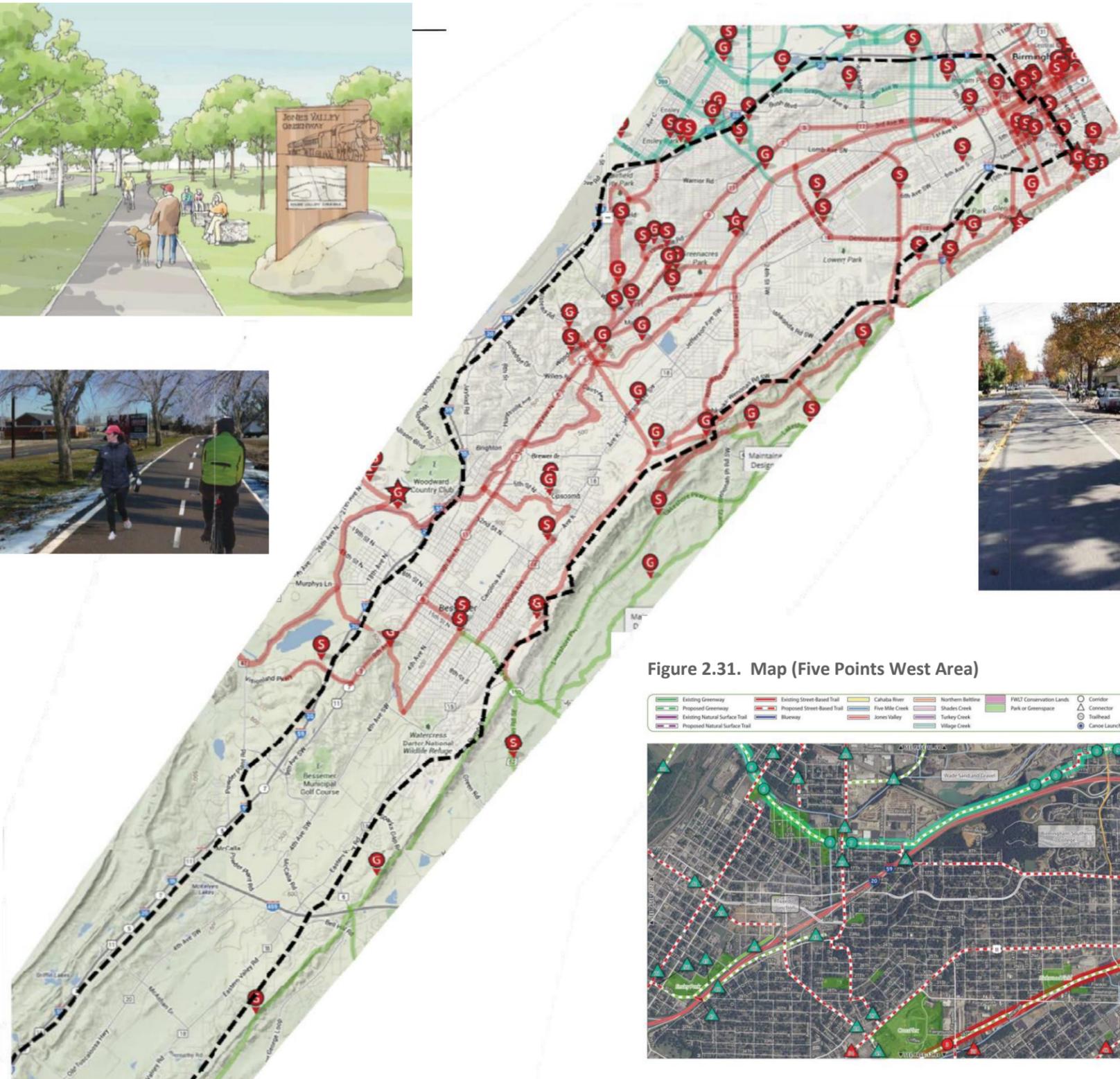
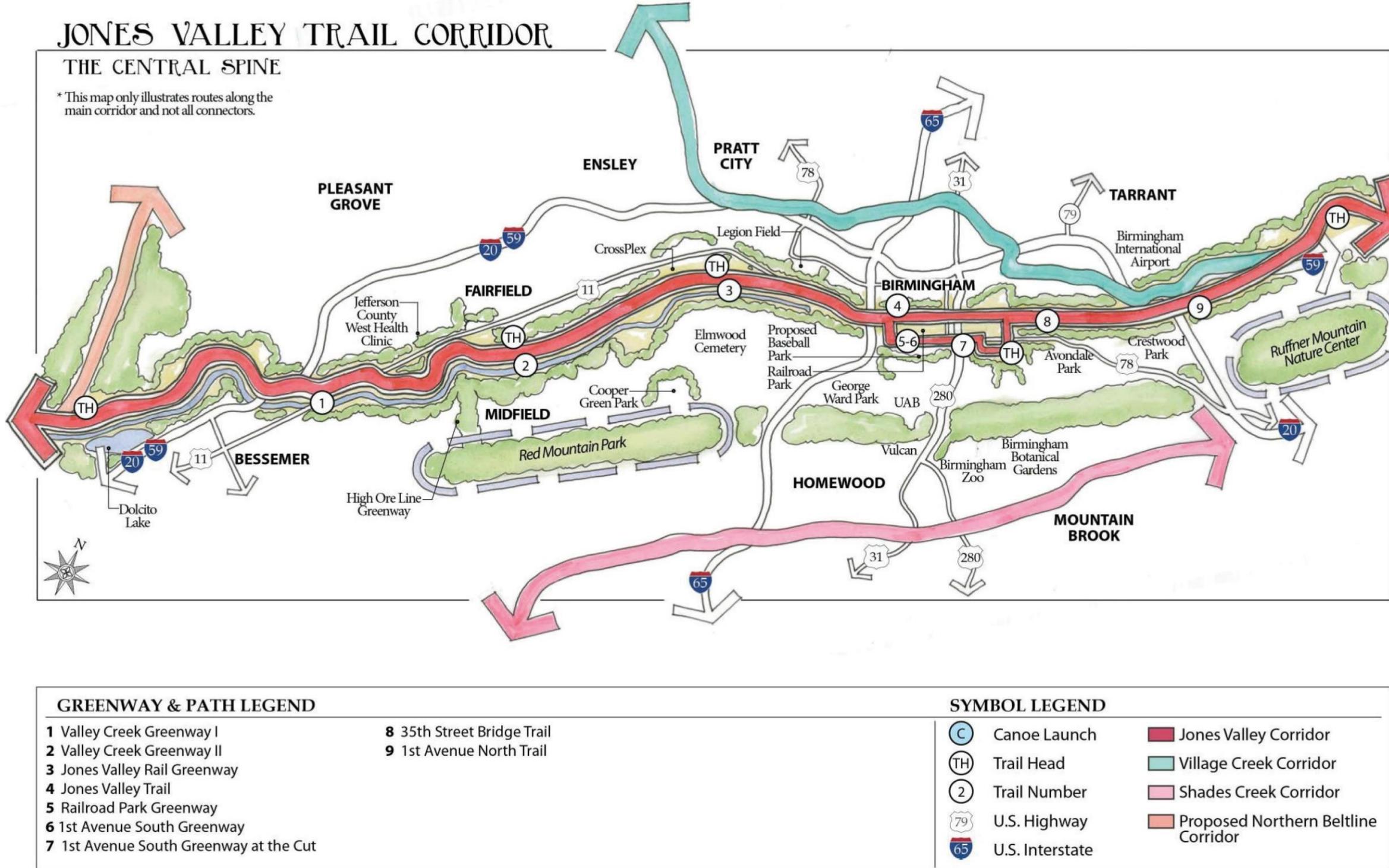


Figure 2.31. Map (Five Points West Area)



Trail Network Maps - 1273 & Maps - 1273

Figure 2.32. Jones Valley Trail Corridor (Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Plan)



The plan was developed through a planning process that was referred to as "Our One Mile", which emphasized the importance of communities working together to conceive the overall network.

Figure 2.32 above shows an example detail of the trail system in the vicinity of the Five Points West area. The other illustration above, Figure 2.33, provides a schematic of the overall Jones Valley Trail Corridor. In addition to the primary Jones Valley Trail Corridor, the plan designates US 11 as a street-based trail, which provides an opportunity for any proposed transit improvements to be coordinated with the trail plan in the vicinity of new transit stations. More information about this plan can be found at: <http://www.redrocktrail.org/>.

The plan is significant because as its components are implemented, they will form a complementary network to existing and future transit facilities, providing enhanced accessibility to transit routes improving connectivity between transit and other land uses. The proposed transit improvements for the Southwest Corridor will be coordinated with the trail plan to maximize their synergy and mutual benefit.

A new measure of the "walkability" of an urban area is a proprietary term call the Walk Score. This indicator of the quality of the urban built environment was originally generated as a research effort but is now contracted to various commercial sites for which it is a useful indicator of value primarily the real estate industry (see www.walkscore.com). The Walk Score is a measure of the proximity of schools, shopping, services and other urban attractions from a given property location, in conjunction with the configuration of the street system which affects access to those attractions. The fewer attractions near a parcel, the lower its walkability. On the access side, an urban grid street pattern helps to optimize access, while a suburban looping, unconnected street pattern inhibits walkability.

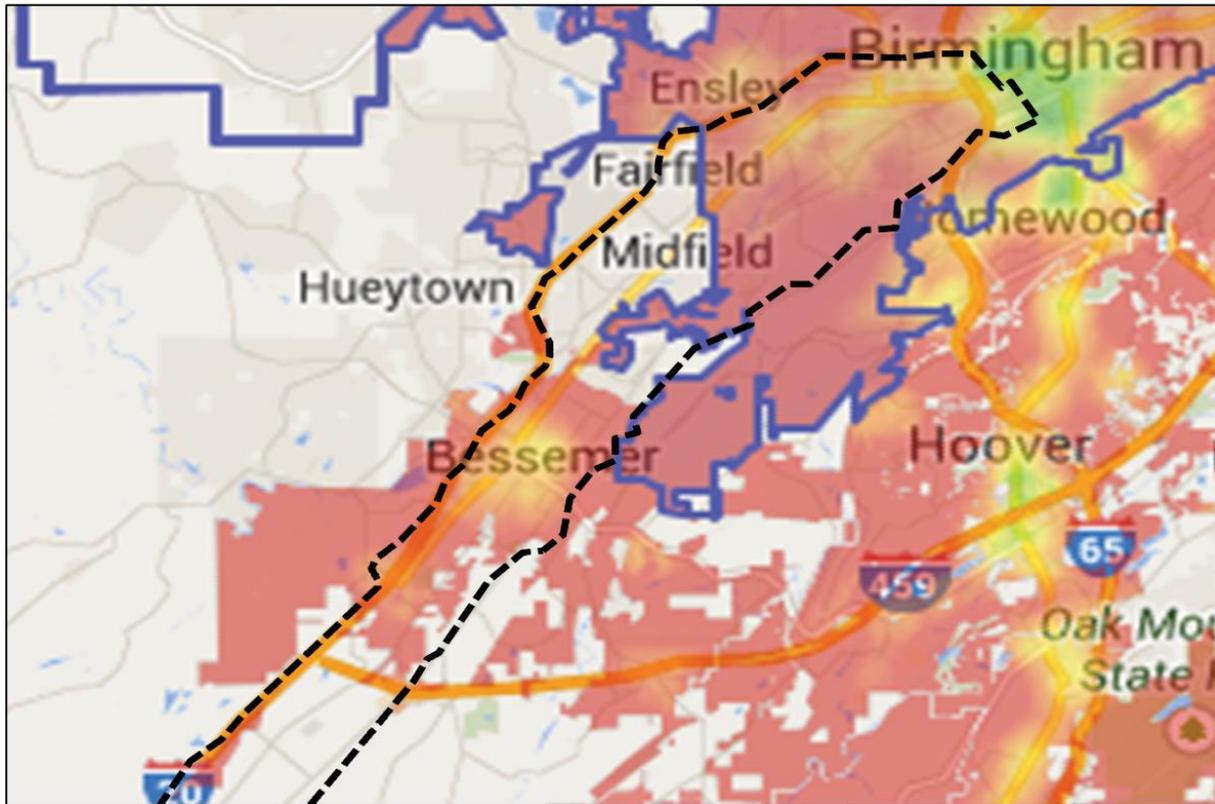
Figure 2.33 is a map for the Birmingham region with the study area highlighted. The lowest walkability is indicated by the red coloration, with increasing walkability shown by orange and then yellow coloration, with the highest walkability being the green coloration. Portions of the corridor in Fairfield, Midfield, Brighton, and Lipscomb as well as unincorporated areas have not been mapped. While a great deal of the corridor has a grid or semi-grid street pattern, the red coloration indicates that desired destinations are limited and not readily accessible by walking. There are yellow midrange areas near downtown Bessemer, along US 11 from the Five Points West area east into downtown Birmingham, which is rated highly. It is expected that the yellow coloration would also occur in the vicinity of Aronov Drive near the Western Hills Mall, the Walmart and the shopping area on the east side of US 11. There are other shopping areas in the study area such as the Academy Drive area, but the land use patterns are such that there are few households within walking distance of these sites.

Walkability in the corridor could be improved most significantly by encouraging a greater amount and diversity of desirable urban destinations and a greater amount of housing density in their vicinity. In this study it is envisioned that quality transit service can be part of the catalyst for that type of outcome.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.33. Walk Score Map for the Study Corridor



Transportation-Jobs Connection

Another useful data analysis is the extent of connections between transit and jobs. The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program has analyzed job and transit linkages in the 100 largest urban areas. For the Birmingham region, the following results were determined:

- 32% is the score of residents reside near a transit stop vs. the 100 metro area average of 69%.
- A score of 24.1 minutes for the average wait for transit service in the peak hour vs. the 100 metro average of 10.1 minutes.
- A score of 23% for job access as the share of all jobs reachable via transit within a 90-minute trip vs. the 100 metro average of 30%.
- A combined access rank of 94th out of the 100 metro areas.
- There is good transit coverage and good job access for lower income workers but the service frequency to this group is lacking.
- The transit service and job access conditions are better within the City of Birmingham compared to the suburbs as about 90% of BJCTA service occurs within the City of Birmingham. Much of the Southwest Corridor has job access within a 90-minute transit trip, but much of the corridor is at the lower end of this spectrum. The reason for this is that generally, BJCTA service headways are about 60 minutes for the entire service day. In response to this concern BJCTA

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

has created 30-minute transit service on Routes 1 and 45 north of the Aronov Drive /40th Street SW covering the northern portion of the study area.

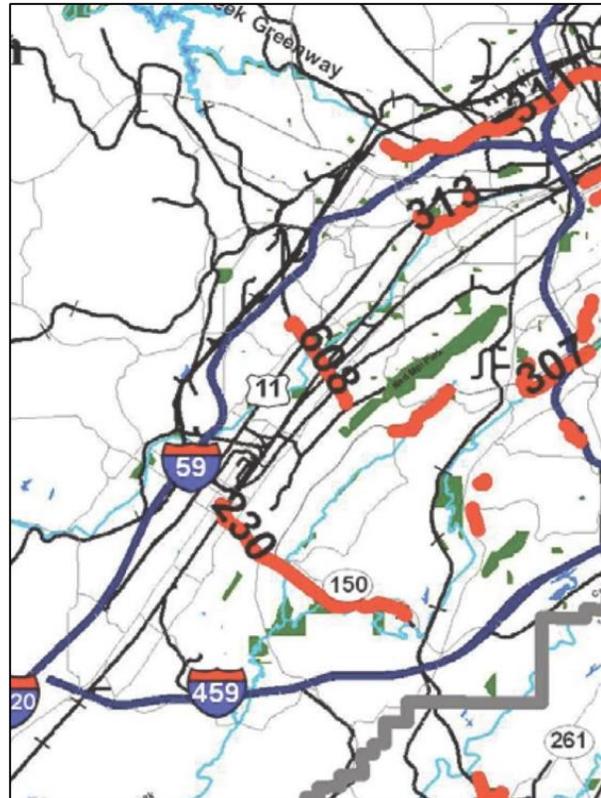
This low-quality connectivity in the study corridor between jobs and worker residences can be resolved by improving the frequency of basic transit service in at least the peak hours, and by introducing premium transit service along the length of the corridor to provide higher speed, lower wait time, longer distance work trip commuting capability that does not presently exist.

The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) included a visionary non-motorized network that compares reasonably well with the extensive regional trail network defined within the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System described on the previous page. It is expected that the 2040 RTP will incorporate the details of the Red Rock plan into the revised long range visionary network. Figure 2.34 shows the three specific non-motorized projects that were in the fiscally constrained 2035 RTP within the study corridor, which are summarized as follows:

- Valley Creek Greenway (#343) (2.0 miles) from 12th Avenue at Rickwood Field to Avenue W near the CrossPlex,
- High Ore Line Rail Trail (#608) (2.0 miles) from Milsead Road in Fairfield to Wenonah Road near Red Mountain, and
- Bessemer Rail Trail (#230) (5.5 miles) from Deburdeleben Park to Parkwood Road.

The transit element of this study will coordinate potential station locations with the proposed transit service corridor to support intermodal connectivity and to take advantage of greenways, trails, and street-based non-motorized routes to enhance access to and from premium transit to the benefit of both modes and their uses.

Figure 2.34: 2035 Regional Transportation Plan - Fiscally Constrained Non-motorized Projects



2.3 DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics for the corridor are closely related to existing and future transit usage. In addition to the intrinsic attractiveness of transit services in terms of the speed and frequency of service, the complexion of the demographics likewise define the propensity of the population to use the transit services. For the study corridor, demographics statistics from the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan for the years of 2005 and 2035 were tabulated for several districts within and outside the study corridor. District 1 is the downtown area, District 2 covers the City of Birmingham Midfield south to Aronov Drive/Avenue W. District 3 extends from within the study area as well as parts of Fairfield and Aronov Drive/Avenue W southward to include Brighton, Lipscomb, and part of Midfield and northern Bessemer. District 4 extends from northern Bessemer to I-459, and District 5 runs from I-459 through McCalla south to the Tuscaloosa County Line. District 6 is defined as the balance of area within Jefferson and Shelby Counties to provide a perspective of comparison for the study corridor (Figure 2.35).

Review of Table 2.3 provides these important observations about the socioeconomic characteristics of the study corridor:

School and University Enrollment

2005 school enrollment of 23,228 in the study corridor is forecast to have a net decline across the study corridor to a total of 22,566 in 2035. However, there is a large decline in District 2, and small to moderate increases in Districts 3, 4, and 5. These changes reflect the outlook for population changes across the corridor.

University enrollment of 33,250 in the study corridor in 2005 is projected to increase to 36,896 in 2035, an increase of 11%. This reflects the attraction of students from outside the study corridor to the educational institutions within the corridor which include the University of Alabama-Birmingham in District 1, and in the districts along the corridor Birmingham Southern University, Miles College, Lawson State Community College campuses in Birmingham and Bessemer, and a few other small private institutions.

Median Income

In 2005, the median household income in the study corridor was \$24,848, compared to \$43,431 for the region, a 43% differential.

Within the corridor districts, the downtown value is the lowest and the District 5 value in the McCalla suburbs is \$47,128, which is nearly double the corridor average.

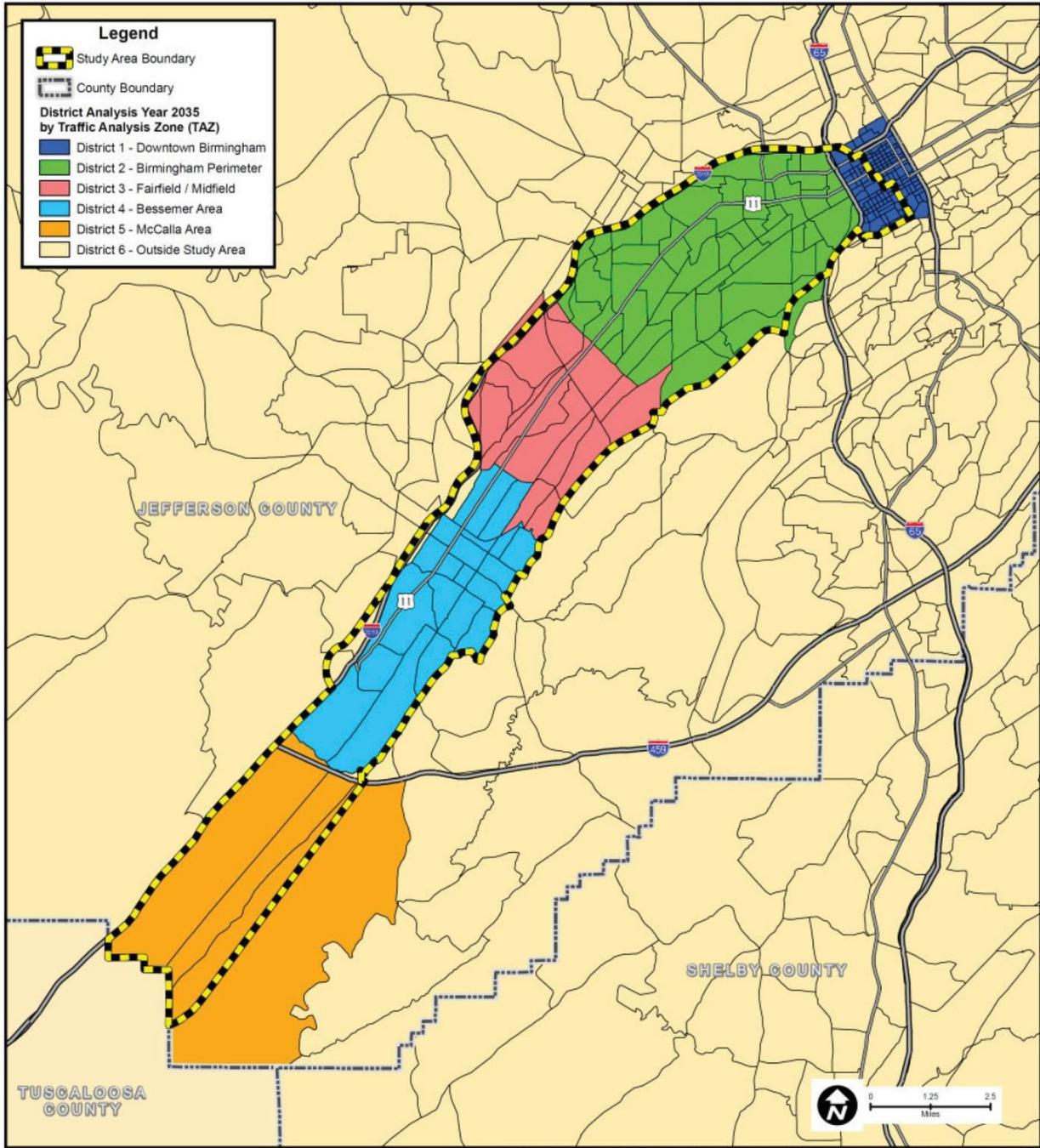
The projected values for 2035 are relatively similar for the districts within the corridor and for the corridor compared to the region.

The lower value across most of the corridor implies a greater reliance on other means of travel besides the automobile, including transit, walking, bicycling and ridesharing. The size of the differential emphasizes the importance of quality transit to corridor residents for critical and reliable access to jobs, education, and other important personal service needs (medical, social service, shopping, etc.).

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.35: Socio-Economic Districts for Data



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Table 2.3: Socio-Economic Data by Corridor District

2005 Socio-Economic Data By Corridor District

District	Total Households		Population		Non-Retail Employment		Retail Employment		School Enrollment		University Enrollment		Weighted Median Income	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	% Diff.
District 1 - Downtown Birmingham	3,255	6%	6,039	5%	50,422	58%	4,139	36%	1,386	6%	26,080	78%	\$12,875.08	-48%
District 2 - Birmingham Perimeter	33,531	57%	74,483	56%	20,265	23%	3,945	34%	12,013	52%	3,349	10%	\$24,427.29	-2%
District 3 - Fairfield/Midfield	10,049	17%	23,607	18%	4,109	5%	614	5%	3,912	17%	2,362	7%	\$26,995.63	9%
District 4 - Bessemer Area	10,122	17%	22,608	17%	10,273	12%	2,499	22%	3,930	17%	1,459	4%	\$23,672.13	-5%
District 5 - McCalla Area	2,139	4%	5,762	4%	1,465	2%	382	3%	1,987	9%	0	0%	\$45,144.90	82%
Corridor Subtotal (Districts 1-5)	59,096	16%	132,499	16%	86,534	22%	11,579	14%	23,228	19%	33,250	60%	\$24,848.27	-43%
District 6 - Area Outside Corridor	307,082	84%	698,248	84%	312,732	78%	70,187	86%	98,952	81%	22,092	40%	\$47,247.28	8%
Region (Jefferson & Shelby Counties)	366,178	100%	830,747	100%	399,266	100%	81,766	100%	122,180	100%	55,342	100%	\$43,632.39	n/a

2035 Socio-Economic Data By Corridor District

District	Total Households		Population		Non-Retail Employment		Retail Employment		School Enrollment		University Enrollment		Weighted Median Income	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	% Diff.
District 1 - Downtown Birmingham	6,148	11%	11,280	10%	73,598	67%	7,487	51%	1,297	6%	28,940	78%	\$14,571.82	-41%
District 2 - Birmingham Perimeter	27,561	51%	57,805	51%	18,875	17%	3,395	23%	10,659	47%	3,716	10%	\$23,830.43	-3%
District 3 - Fairfield/Midfield	8,603	16%	18,496	16%	3,827	4%	570	4%	4,003	18%	2,621	7%	\$26,213.49	7%
District 4 - Bessemer Area	8,854	16%	18,627	16%	10,574	10%	2,462	17%	4,388	19%	1,619	4%	\$23,783.69	-3%
District 5 - McCalla Area	3,153	6%	7,874	7%	2,436	2%	734	5%	2,219	10%	0	0%	\$47,128.22	92%
Corridor Subtotal (Districts 1-5)	54,319	12%	114,082	12%	109,310	20%	14,648	11%	22,566	15%	36,896	59%	\$24,504.67	-46%
District 6 - Area Outside Corridor	397,933	88%	875,861	88%	436,558	80%	116,558	89%	132,338	85%	25,679	41%	\$48,288.14	6%
Region (Jefferson & Shelby Counties)	452,252	100%	989,943	100%	545,868	100%	131,206	100%	154,904	100%	62,575	100%	\$45,431.56	n/a

Difference between 2005 & 2035 Socio-Economic Data By District

District	Total Households		Population		Non-Retail Employment		Retail Employment		School Enrollment		University Enrollment		Weighted Median Income	
	Difference	% Dev.	Difference	% Diff.	Difference	% Diff.	Difference	% Diff.	Difference	% Diff.	Difference	% Diff.	Difference	% Diff.
District 1 - Downtown Birmingham	2,893	89%	5,241	87%	23,176	46%	3,348	81%	-89	-6%	2,860	11%	\$1,696.74	13%
District 2 - Birmingham Perimeter	-5,970	-18%	-16,678	-22%	-1,390	-7%	-550	-14%	-1,354	-11%	367	11%	-\$596.86	-2%
District 3 - Fairfield/Midfield	-1,446	-14%	-5,111	-22%	-282	-7%	-44	-7%	91	2%	259	11%	-\$782.14	-3%
District 4 - Bessemer Area	-1,268	-13%	-3,981	-18%	301	3%	-37	-1%	458	12%	160	11%	\$111.56	0%
District 5 - McCalla Area	1,014	47%	2,112	37%	971	66%	352	92%	232	12%	0	0%	\$1,983.32	4%
Corridor Subtotal (Districts 1-5)	-4,777	-8%	-18,417	-14%	22,776	26%	3,069	27%	-662	-3%	3,646	11%	-\$343.60	-1%
District 6 - Area Outside Corridor	90,851	30%	177,613	25%	123,826	40%	46,371	66%	33,386	34%	3,587	16%	\$1,040.86	2%
Region (Jefferson & Shelby Counties)	86,074	24%	159,196	19%	146,602	37%	49,440	60%	32,724	27%	7,233	13%	\$1,799.16	4%

Households and Population

- There is an average of 2.1 persons per household across the study area, ranging from a rate of 1.85 in the downtown to 2.7 in District 5. The average rate outside the study corridor is 2.27 persons per household. The slightly lower rate than the region is indicative of the number of households with elderly, usually without children present and often with only one resident.
- Based on RPCGB forecasts to 2035, the study corridor is projected to lose 18,417 persons. This reflects small gains in Districts 1 and 5 and a combined loss of 25,570 persons in Districts 2, 3 and 4. This continued and gradual population loss continues an established trend which began when core industrial employers in the corridor reduced or ceased operations.
- While the region outside the study corridor is projected to gain 25% in population by 2035, Districts 2, 3 and 4 in the study corridor will lose 18 to 22% over this time. The corridor's share of regional population and households is projected to decline from 16% to 12%.

In 2005, total non-retail employment in the study corridor was 86,534, including the downtown area, and 36,112 excluding downtown, which accounts for 58% of the total. Retail employment was 4,139 in 2005, of which 36% was in downtown. Total employment for the corridor in 2005 was 98,113, with 43,552 excluding downtown, which accounted for 56% of the total.

In 2035, total non-retail employment in the study corridor is forecasted to be 109,310, including the downtown area, and 35,712 excluding downtown, which accounts for 67% of the total. Retail employment is forecast to be 14,648 in 2035, of which 51% is in downtown. Total employment for the corridor in 2035 is 123,958, with 42,873 excluding downtown, which accounts for 65% of the total.

Over the 2005-2035 period, total jobs in the corridor are projected to increase from 98,113 to 123,958, or by 26.3%. Most of this increase is projected in the downtown area. Districts 2 and 3 show a decline in jobs in the range of 7%, while District 4 (Bessemer) shows a small gain of 2%. District 5 which includes the warehousing and distribution centers near McCalla is projected to grow from 1,847 jobs to 3,170 jobs, an increase of 1,323 jobs or 72%.

The decline in employment in the middle of the study corridor continues a trend established decades ago as legacy industrial employers reduced or ceased their operations. The strength of downtown employment today and its robust growth in the future provides a substitute for jobs lost in the central corridor. Access to these new jobs downtown as well as in the McCalla area will require improved transit that is more convenient for users and more reliable to the benefit of employees and employers both.

Summary

The previous discussion highlights several distinctive characteristics and trends which are significant influences on the mobility needs of corridor residents and in providing quality access to corridor employment, educational, shopping, medical, and shopping resources. These factors include the following:

Downtown Birmingham is an important destination because of its employment concentration. The shortage of jobs in the corridor relative to the rest of the region means that many corridor residents must commute greater distances for employment, including the downtown area.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

The average income of corridor households is well below the regional average, which means these households place an increased reliance on transit and other non-auto travel means to accomplish basic mobility needs.

The continued gradual decline in population and households that is forecast across the middle and northern reaches of the corridor is an unfortunate pattern which complicates the efficient provision of public services, undermines neighborhood stability, and contributes to the economic decline of the corridor with the loss of retail and other personal services outlets. This study will look for opportunities to leverage transit investments and other strategies to provide stable anchors along the corridor around which community renewal initiatives may be generated.

The following figures provide additional information on corridor socioeconomic conditions and their implications to the goals of this study.

Figure 2.36 shows the 2005 distribution of population across the study corridor by traffic analysis zone. Many zones have 0-1,500 persons, but there are also many with 1,501-3,000 persons, and two which have 3,001-4,500 persons. While zone sizes do vary, the distribution generally shows higher population density in the northern section of the study corridor.

Figure 2.36: Population by Traffic Analysis Zone 2005

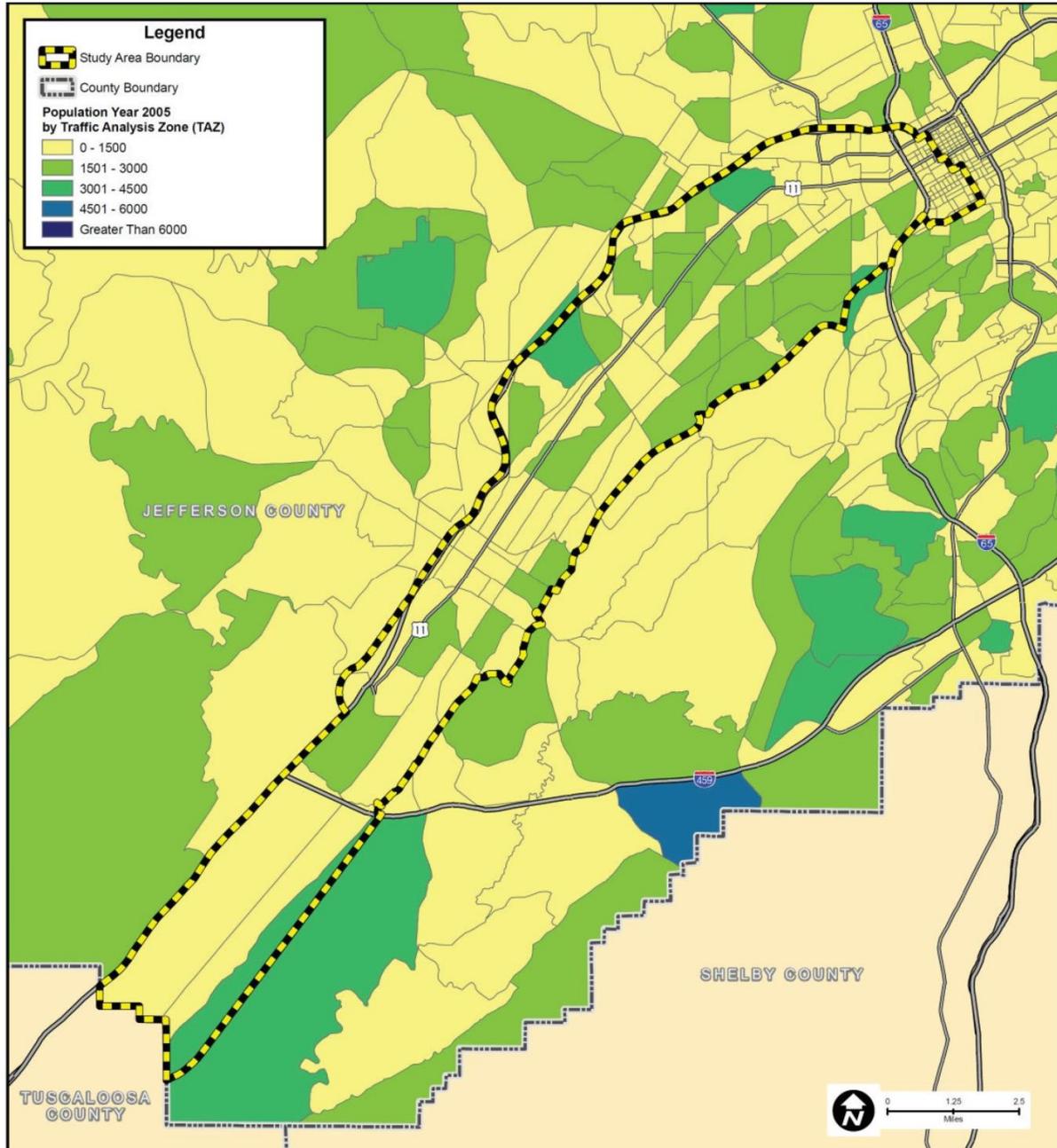


Figure 2.37 shows the 2035 projected distribution of population across the study corridor by traffic analysis zone. Many zones have 0-1,500 persons, but there are fewer with 1,501-3,000 persons, and only one which has 3,001-4,500 persons. This is indicative of the gradual loss of population in the corridor north of downtown Bessemer and the gradual increase of population south of downtown Bessemer.

Figure 2.37: Population by Traffic Analysis Zone 2035

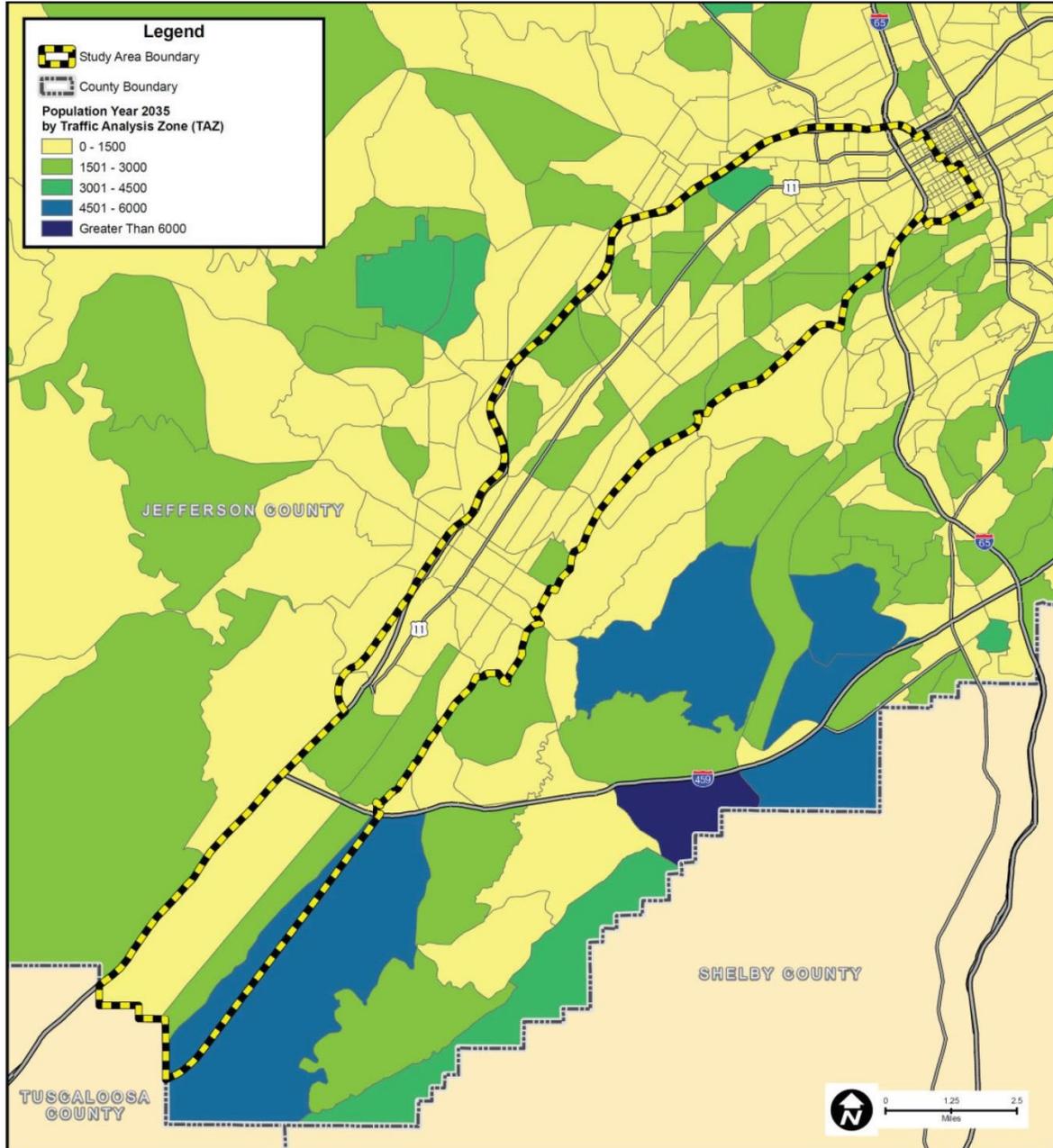


Figure 2.38 shows the change in population as projected over the 2005-2035 time frame. Slight population losses are expected over the northern and middle sections of the corridor, with the exception of four zones. Gradually increasing population is seen in the southern section of the corridor with the exception of the large zone along I-20/59 which is devoted to mostly non-residential warehousing and distribution land uses.

Figure 2.38: Change in Population by Traffic Analysis Zone 2005-2035

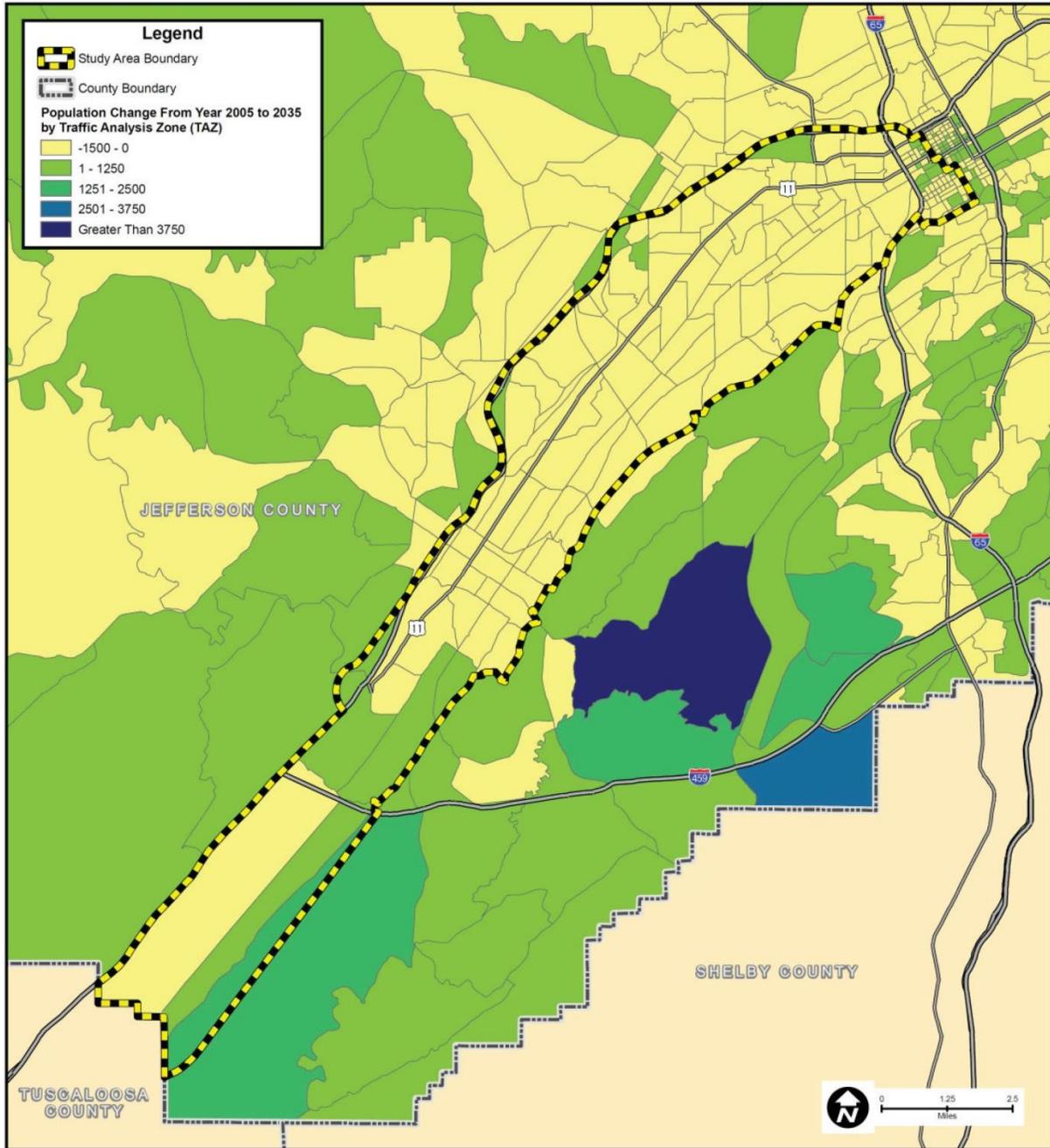


Figure 2.39 illustrates the distribution of minority persons by census tract. It is seen that minority population is distributed across the entire corridor with concentrations in the northern half of the corridor in the Cities of Lipscomb, Fairfield, and Birmingham. Coupled with Census data and the charts to the right, the Black ethnicity accounts for the majority of the minority population in the study corridor.

Figure 2.39: Minority Population by Census Tract

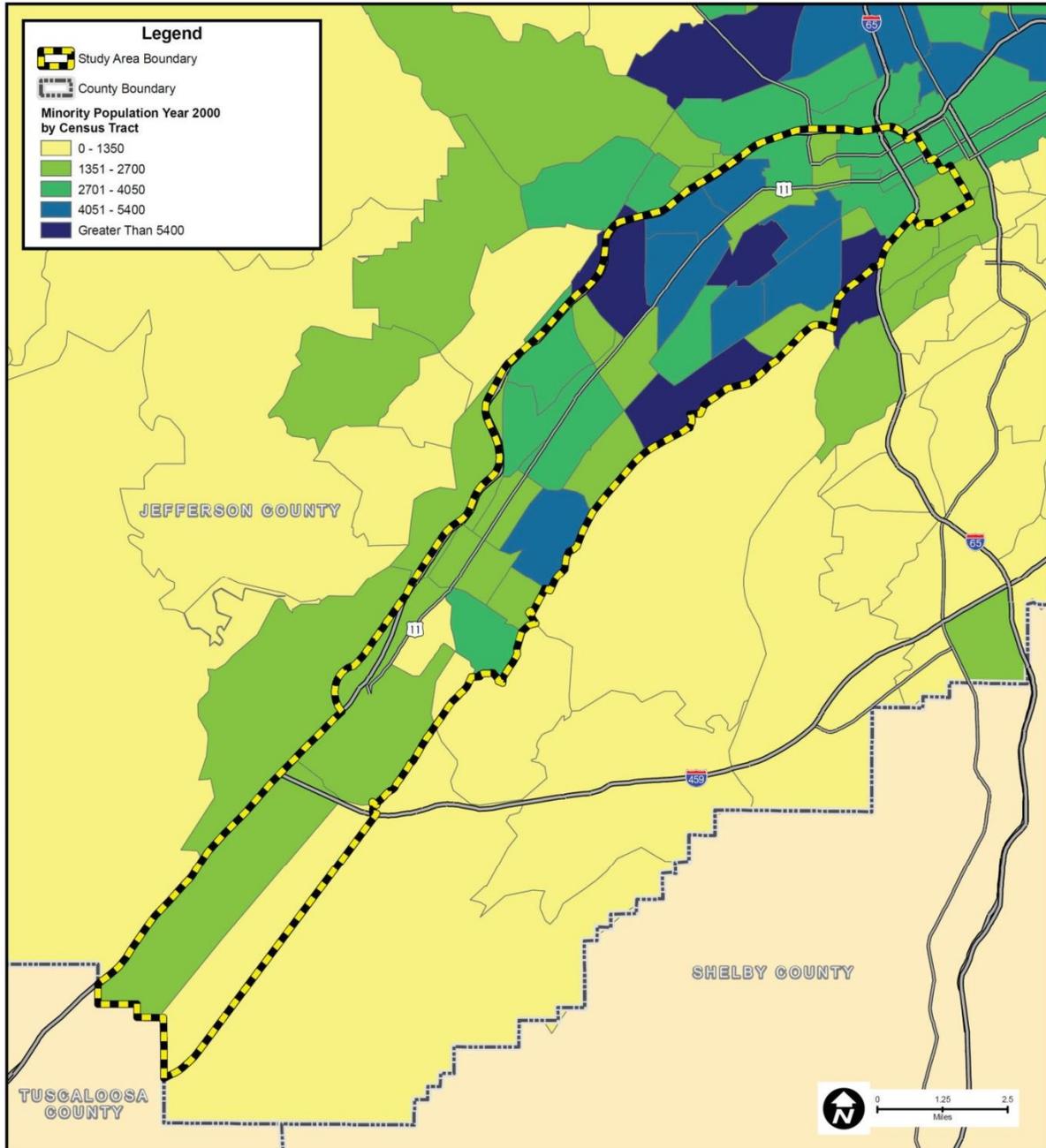


Figure 2.40 illustrates the 2005 density of population per residential acre for each traffic analysis zone. It is seen that there are areas of high density in the northern part of the corridor mostly within the City of Birmingham, and also in the areas north and west of downtown Bessemer. Such residential density is indicative of smaller dwellings on smaller lots, the presence of multifamily housing, or a combination of the two. Other regional data shows that the study corridor has among the highest residential density in the greater Birmingham region. Such density is supportive of transit services and along with other demographic indicators shows that these areas are also reliant on transit services.

Figure 2.40: Population per Residential Acre 2005

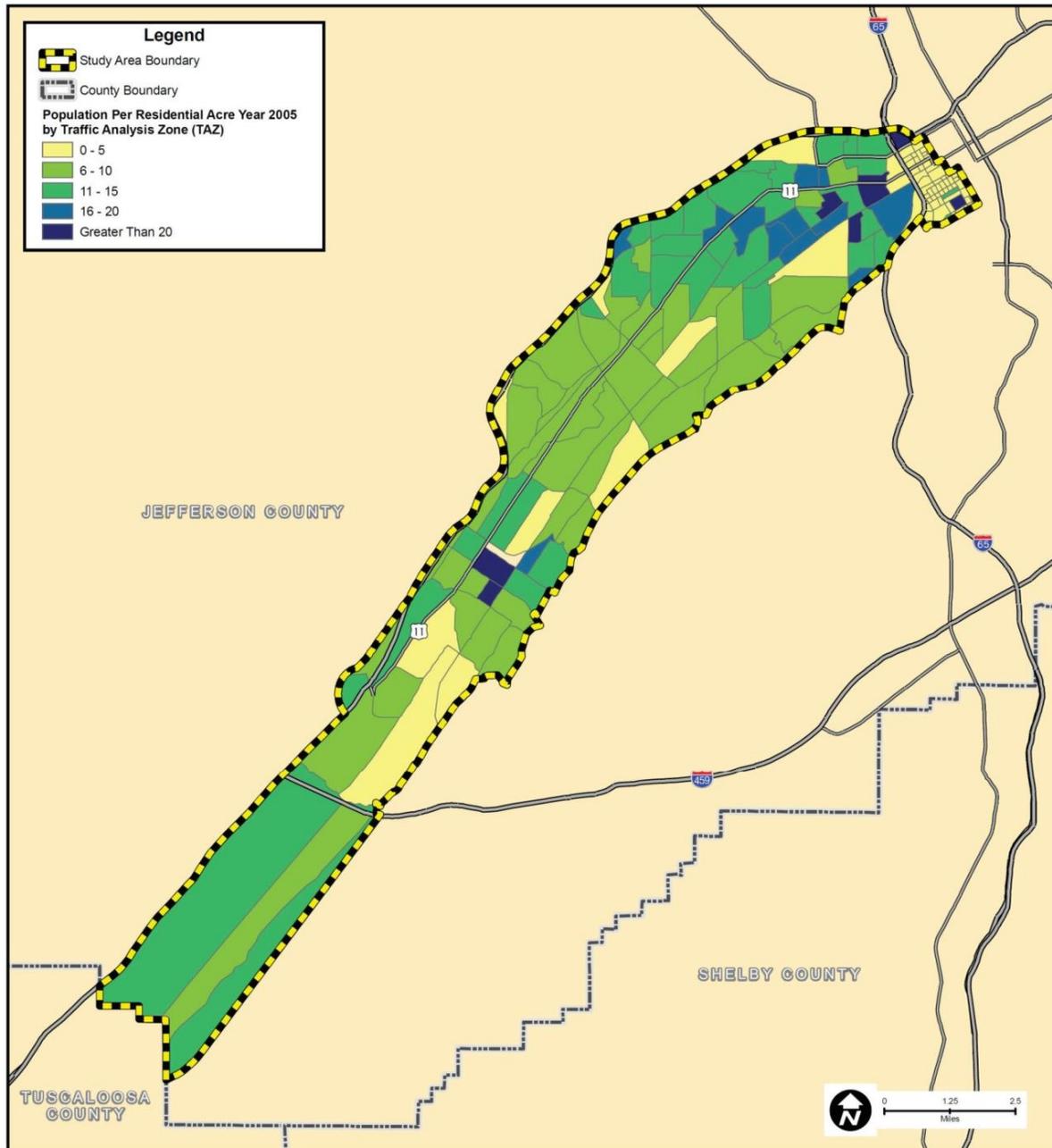
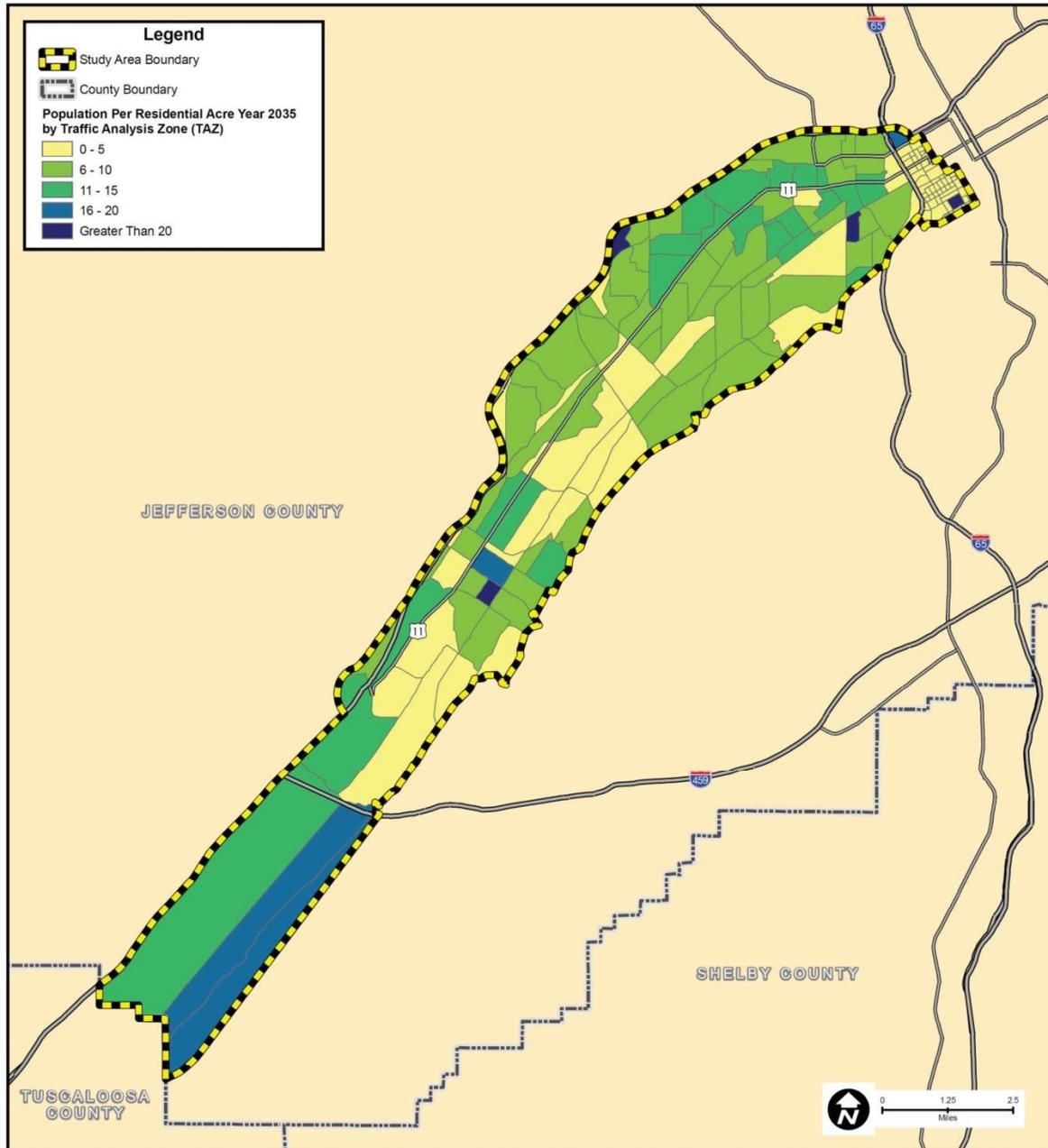


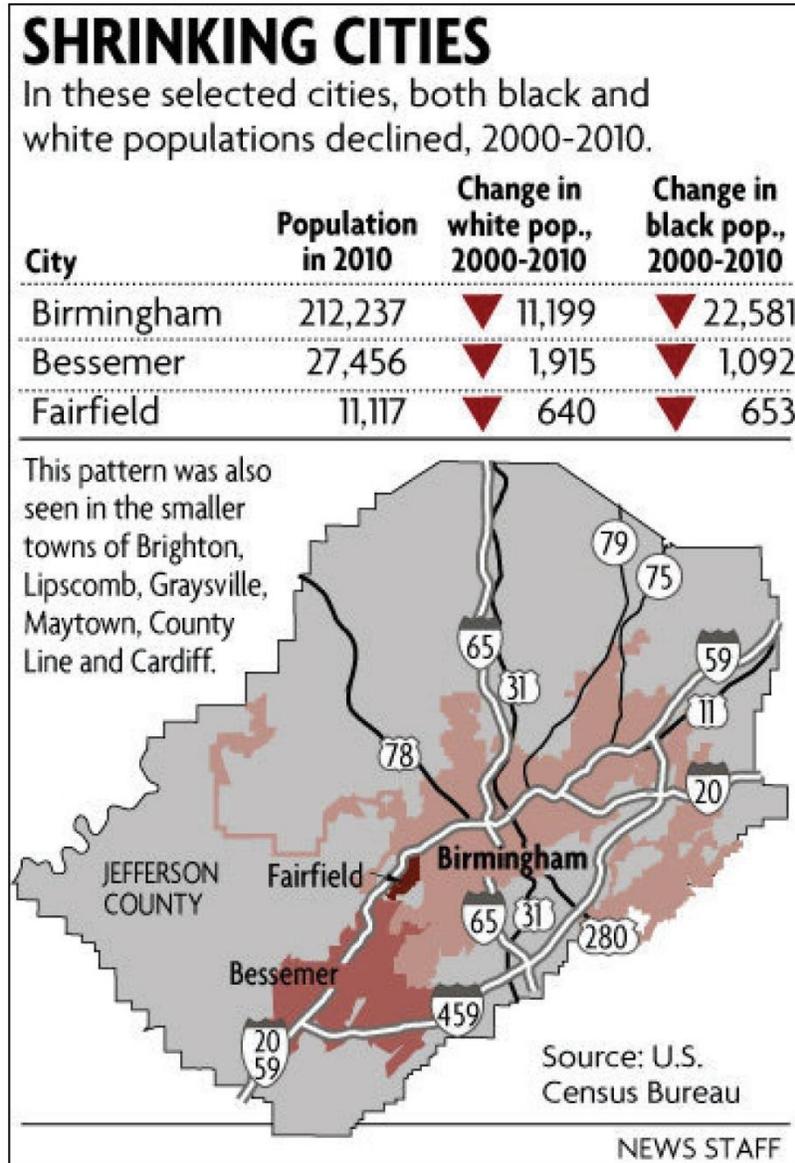
Figure 2.41 illustrates the 2035 density of population per residential acre for each traffic analysis zone. As for the raw population data, it is seen that there is a decline in density across the northern half of the corridor that density is more stable around the older areas of Bessemer, and that population density increases with future development in the suburban south part of the corridor.

Figure 2.41: Population per Residential Acre 2035



To help illustrate the demographic changes in the corridor over the 2000-2010 timeframe, summaries of census data are shown on this as reported in the Birmingham News in 2011 (Figure 2.42). The first figure below shows population losses in these corridor cities by ethnicity. It is noted that these patterns were also observed in Brighton and Lipscomb, also cities in the corridor. The trend of population loss across much of Birmingham started in the 1960's and has continued unabated.

Figure 2.42: Population Change by Ethnicity 2000 to 2010



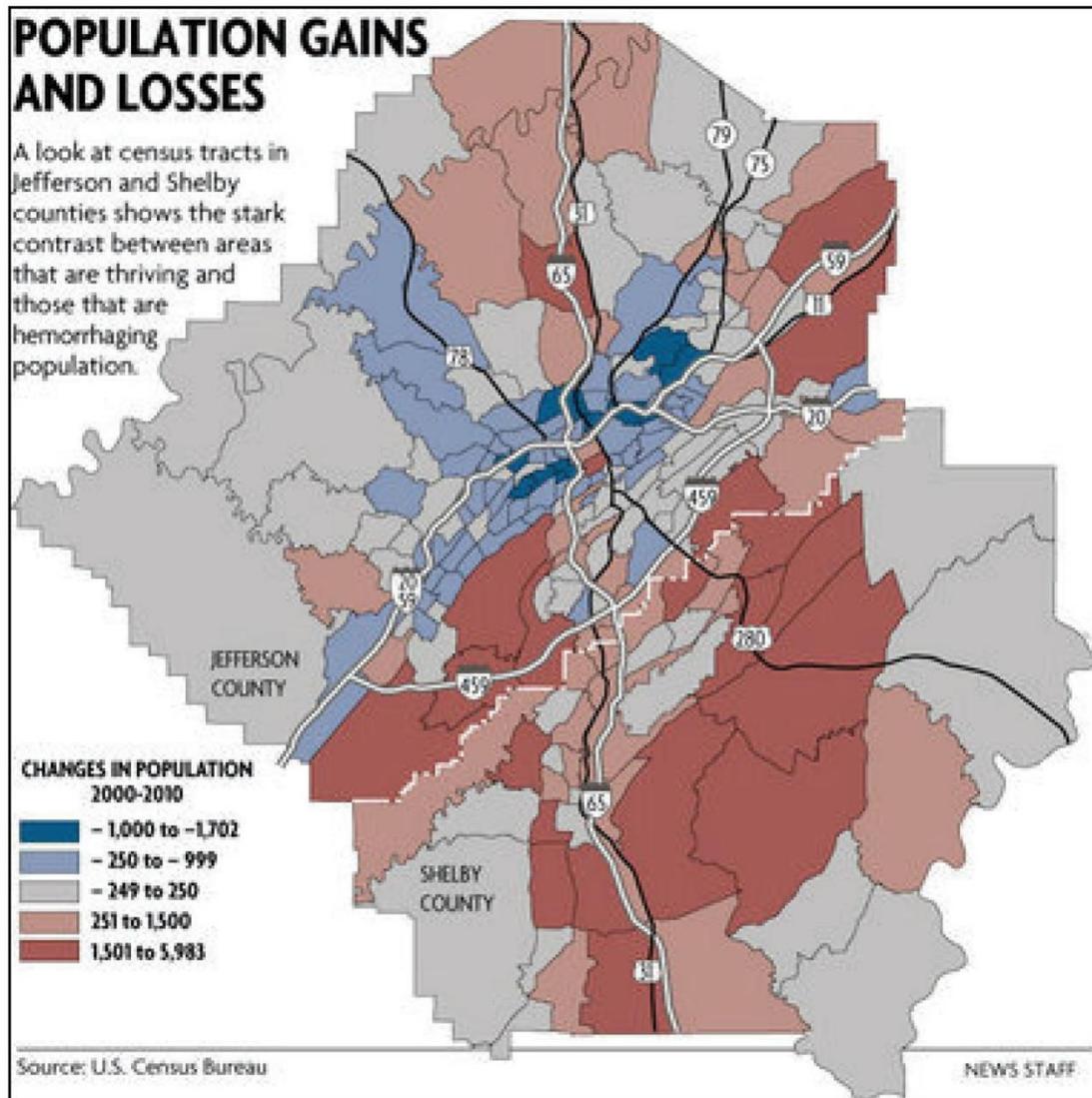
Source: Birmingham News,, February 27, 2011, "U.S. Census: Birmingham population down by 30,000, but downtown and UAB areas see gains".

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.43 summarizes gains and losses within the Birmingham region in population by census tract. It is seen that across the study corridor, there were population losses in many tracts within the corridor, seven tracts with small losses or gains, and one tract with a more sizable gain in southeast Bessemer. The overall trend of population loss north of Bessemer and small gains south of Bessemer has persisted for a number of years and is project to continue out to the year 2035.

Figure 2.43: Population Changes by Census Tract 2000 to 2010



Source: Birmingham News,, February 27, 2011, “U.S. Census: Birmingham population down by 30,000, but downtown and UAB areas see gains”.

Table 2.4 shows that all the incorporated cities in the corridor including Birmingham, Bessemer, Fairfield, Brighton, Lipscomb, and Midfield all lost population over the 2000-2010 timeframe, at rates ranging from losses of 4.6% to 19.1%. While only a portion of Birmingham is in the study corridor, the prior figure shows that there were population losses in the portion of the corridor within the City of Birmingham. There is an established trend of outmigration from the study corridor, while other areas of the region are showing growth.

Table 2.4: Population Change by City 2000 to 2010

JEFFERSON AND SHELBY CITIES			JEFFERSON AND SHELBY CITIES		
City	2010 Population	% change from 2000	City	2010 Population	% change from 2000
Adamsville	4,522	▼ -8.9%	Kimberly	2,711	▲ 50.5%
Alabaster	30,352	▲ 34.2%	Leeds	11,773	▲ 12.6%
Bessemer	27,456	▼ -7.5%	Lipscomb	2,210	▼ -10.1%
Birmingham	212,237	▼ -12.6%	Maytown	385	▼ -11.5%
Brighton	2,945	▼ -19.1%	Midfield	5,365	▼ -4.6%
Brookside	1,363	▼ -2.2%	Montevallo	6,323	▲ 31.0%
Calera	11,620	▲ 268.0%	Morris	1,859	▲ 1.8%
Cardiff	55	▼ -32.9%	Mt. Brook	20,413	▼ -0.9%
Center Point	16,921	n/a*	Mulga	836	▼ -14.1%
Chelsea	10,183	▲ 245.3%	North Johns	145	▲ 2.1%
Clay	9,708	n/a*	Pelham	21,352	▲ 48.6%
Columbiana	4,197	▲ 26.6%	Pinson	7,163	n/a*
County Line	258	▲ 0.4%	Pleasant Grove	10,110	▲ 1.3%
Fairfield	11,117	▼ -10.2%	Sylvan Springs	1,542	▲ 5.3%
Fultondale	8,380	▲ 27.1%	Tarrant	6,397	▼ -8.9%
Gardendale	13,893	▲ 19.5%	Trafford	646	▲ 23.5%
Graysville	2,165	▼ -7.6%	Trussville	19,933	▲ 54.2%
Harpersville	1,637	▲ 1.0%	Vestavia Hills	34,033	▲ 39.0%
Helena	16,793	▲ 63.1%	Vincent	1,988	▲ 7.3%
Homewood	25,167	▲ 0.5%	Warrior	3,176	▲ 0.2%
Hoover	81,619	▲ 30.1%	West Jefferson	338	▼ -1.7%
Hueytown	16,105	▲ 4.8%	Westover	1,275	n/a*
Indian Spr. Vil.	2,363	▲ 6.2%	Wilsonville	1,827	▲ 17.8%
Irondale	12,349	▲ 25.8%	Wilton	687	▲ 18.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau * Cities unincorporated in 2000

Source: Birmingham News, February 27, 2011; U.S. Census: Birmingham population down by 30,000, but downtown and UAB areas see gains.

Figure 2.44 shows the distribution of the elderly 65 years of age and older across the corridor. It is seen that the elderly are present across the entire corridor with a few concentrations near Bessemer, and the northern part of the corridor including Fairfield. The elderly typically drive less due to physical condition and income, and place greater reliance on other means of mobility including transit service.

Figure 2.44: Elderly Population by Census Tract

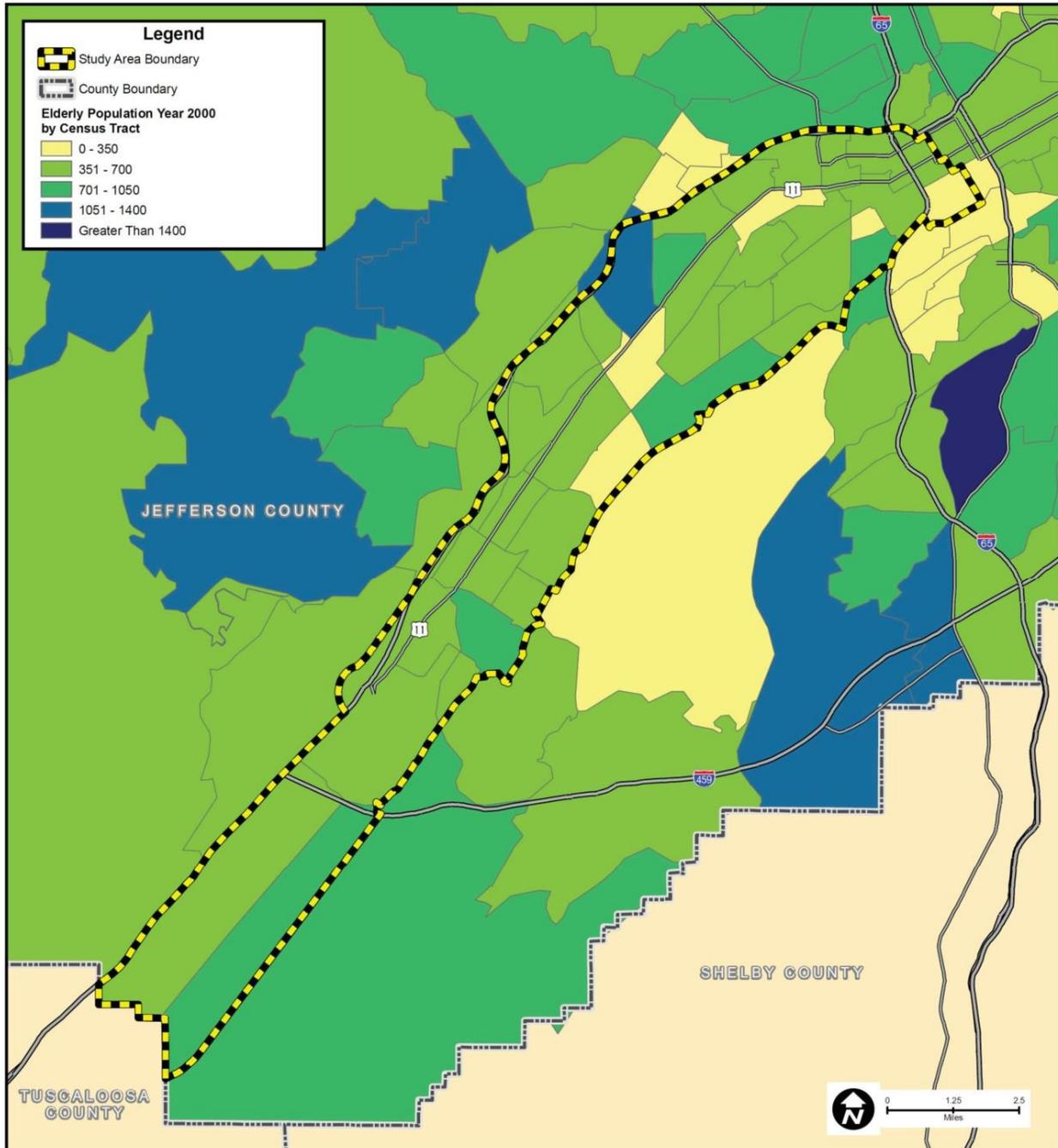


Figure 2.45 illustrates the distribution of the population aged 20-24 by census tract. This population segment is distributed across the entire corridor with slightly higher concentrations in census tracts within the City of Birmingham which have slightly higher population densities. Persons of this age tend not to have significant access to automobiles and thus tend to be more reliant on transit and other means of transportation such as walking, biking, or carpooling.

Figure 2.45: Youth (20-24 years) per Square Mile by Census Tract

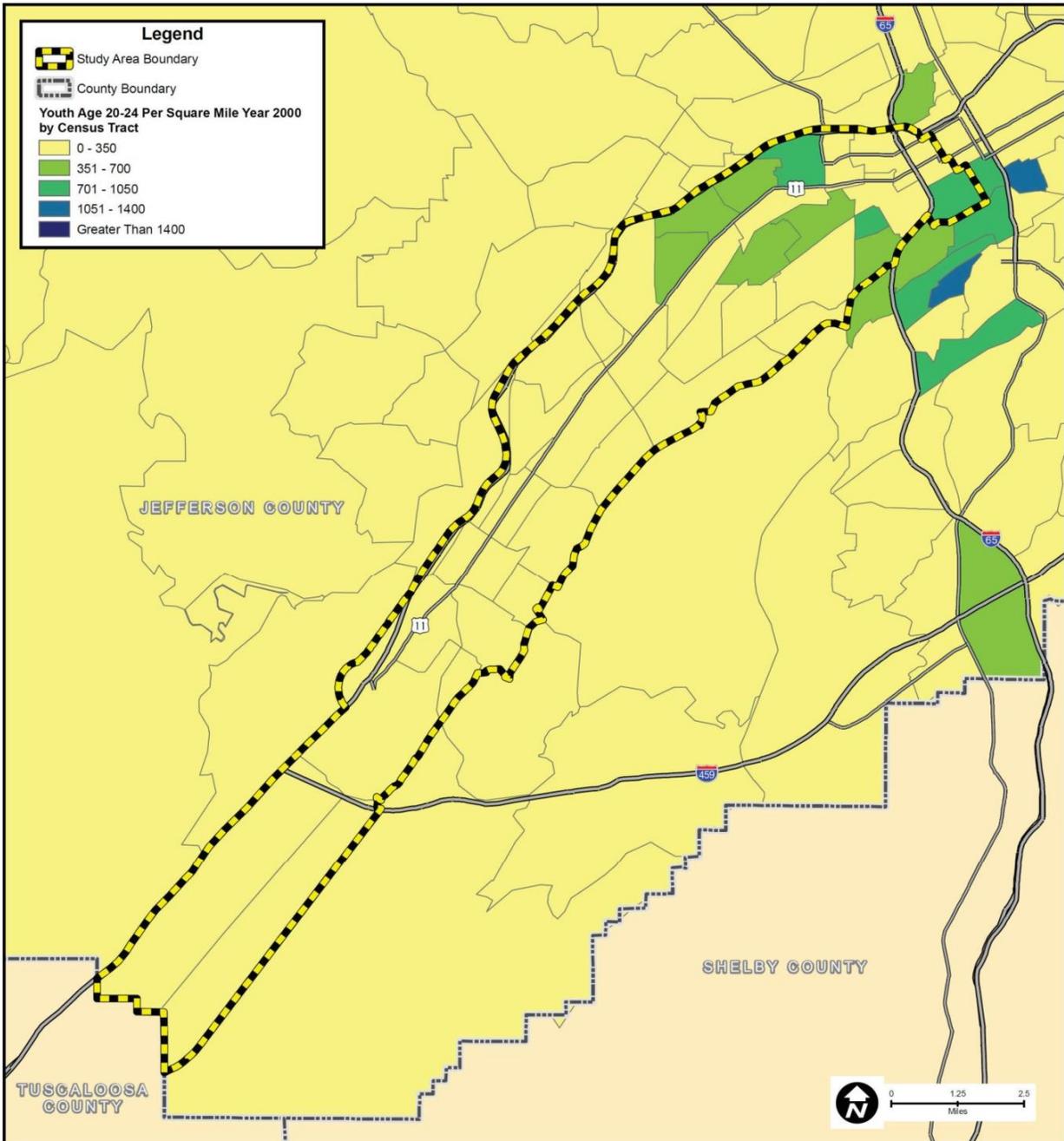


Figure 2.46 illustrates the distribution of the population aged 10-19 by census tract. This population segment is distributed across the entire corridor with slightly higher concentrations in census tracts extending from the City of Bessemer northward to the City of Birmingham, owing in part to the higher population densities moving north within the corridor. Persons of this age group for the most part do not drive, and as for the slightly older age group are much more reliant on transit and other means of transportation such as walking, biking, or carpooling.

Figure 2.46: Youth (10-19 years) per Square Mile by Census Tract

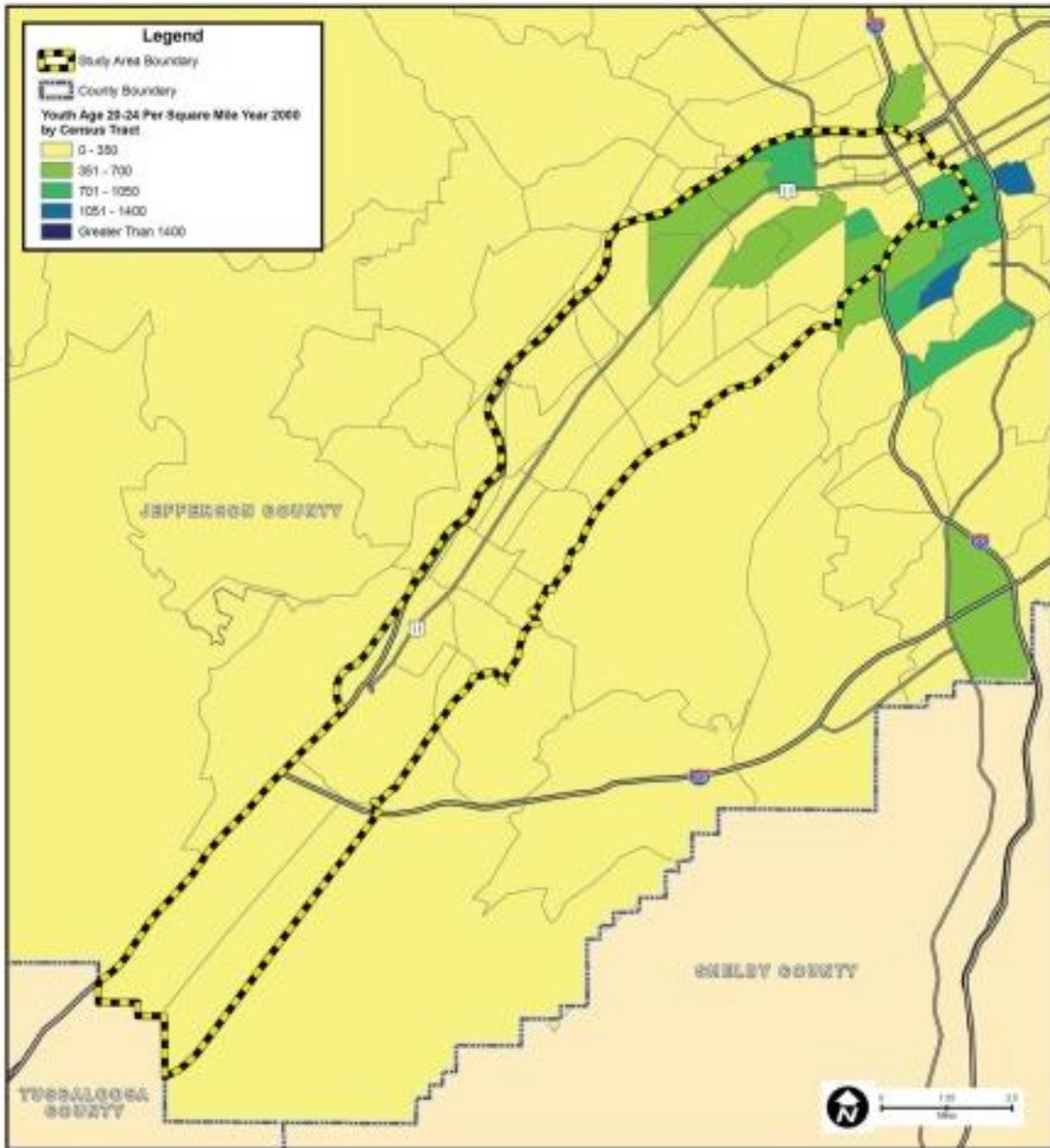
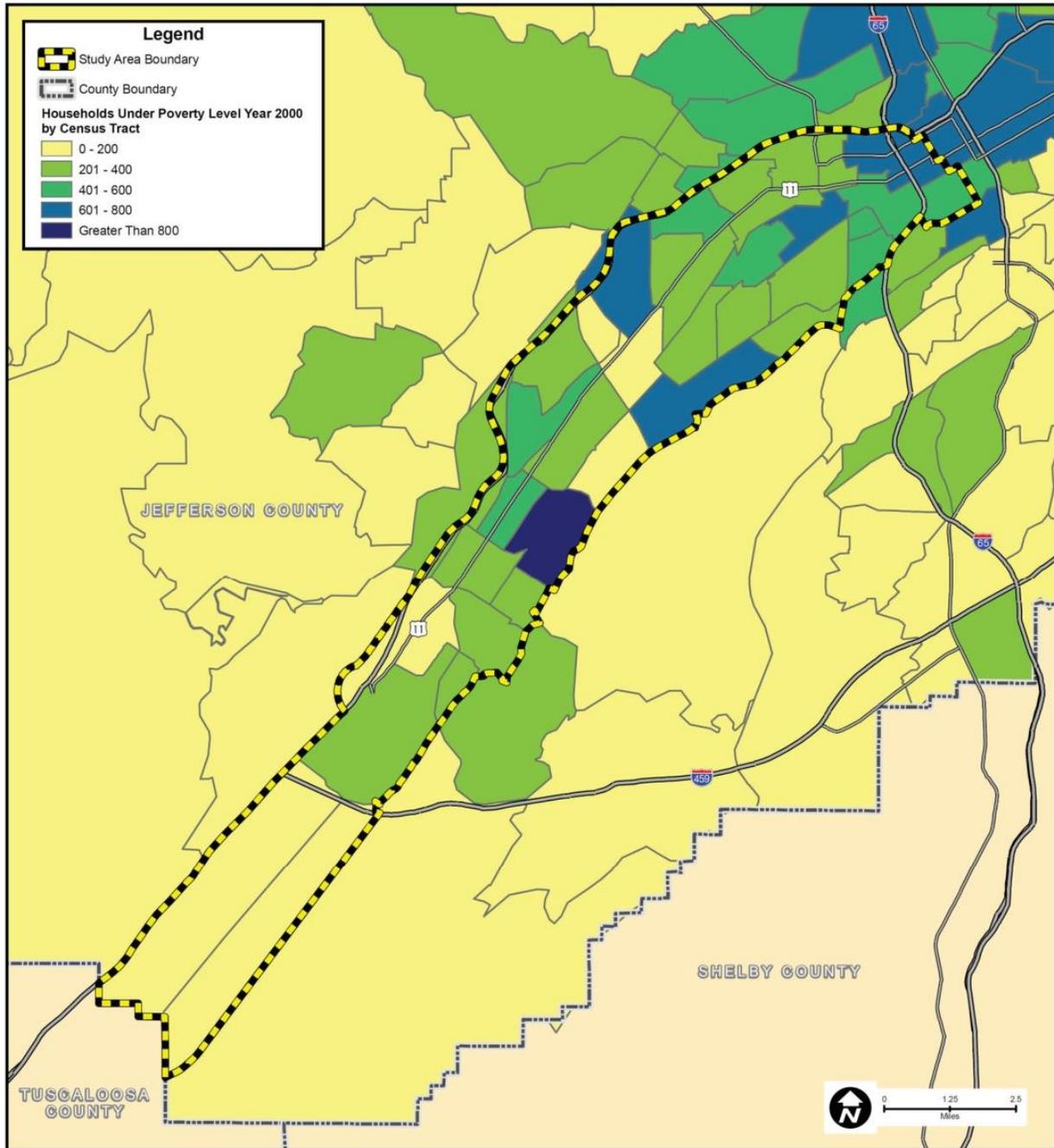


Figure 2.47 shows the distribution of the households under the poverty level by census tract. The distribution of households under the poverty level occurs across the corridor but is more pronounced between downtown Birmingham and I-459, with concentrations in Lipscomb, Brighton, and parts of

Midfield, Fairfield and Birmingham. These households are especially reliant on public transit for basic mobility to access work, shopping, education, and social services.

Figure 2.47: Households under the Poverty Line by Census Tract



The Census Bureau uses a set of monetary income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the applicable poverty threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official

poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).

The two graphics in Figure 2.48 showing of the distribution of persons with income below the poverty line by ethnicity for 1980 compared to 2010 provides a long-term comparison of the changes in the number or persons and in the ethnicity of persons over time. Several observations can be drawn from these images:

- The number of persons under the poverty line has tended to diminish in the Brighton/Lipscomb/Bessemer area and increase in the Midfield/Fairfield/Birmingham areas of the corridor. To the south, there has been a loss in population over the 30 years which accounts for the reduction in affected persons.
- In the north part of the corridor, there has also been a gradual loss in population, but there is a larger share of affected persons under the poverty line.
- Over the 30 years, it is seen that by ethnicity there is a larger share of Black persons affected, and fewer Whites, as persons in those households have died or moved out of the corridor. 2010 also show the emergence of some Hispanic persons under the poverty line in the middle section of the corridor.
- The distribution of persons with income below the poverty line is more widespread across the corridor, the total number of such households has increased, and a larger share of them are Black in ethnicity.
- Lower income levels definitely affect personal mobility, and place more reliance on the use of public transportation to make all kinds of trips outside of the household.

Figure 2.48: Comparison of Population with Income Below the Poverty Line

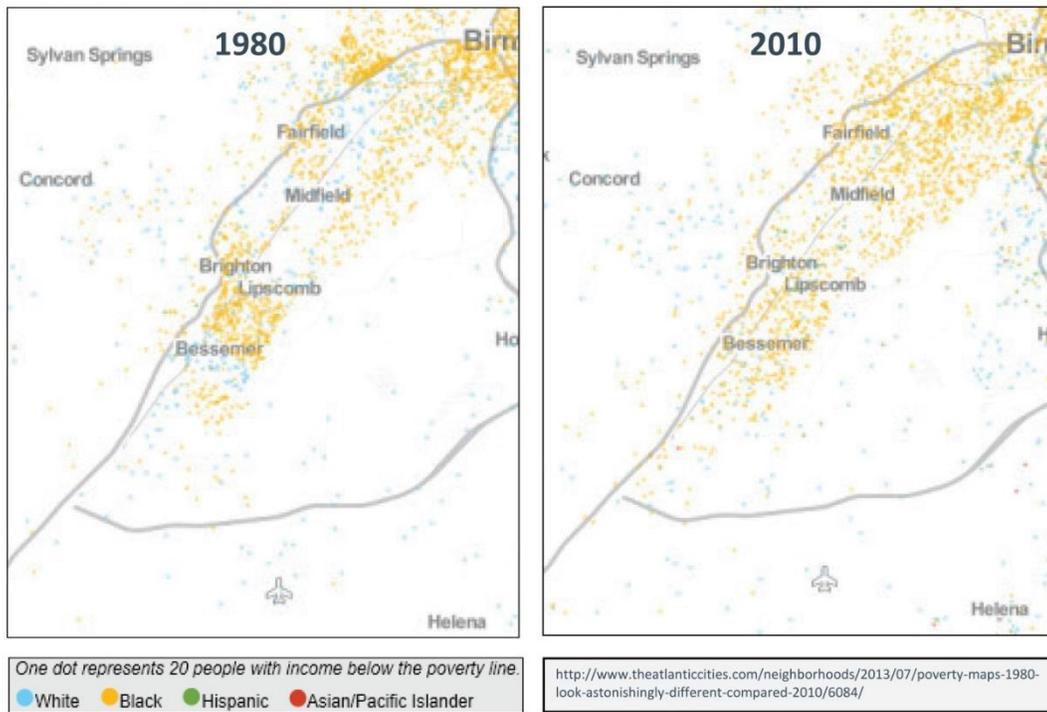


Figure 2.49 shows the distribution of the households with no automobiles available. It is seen that there are concentrations of zero-car households in the middle and northern sections of the corridor. As for other demographic measures, this statistic is directly linked to the need for quality transit service, as households without auto access are reliant on other options to accomplish basic mobility needs.

Figure 2.49: Zero Car Households by Census Tract 2000

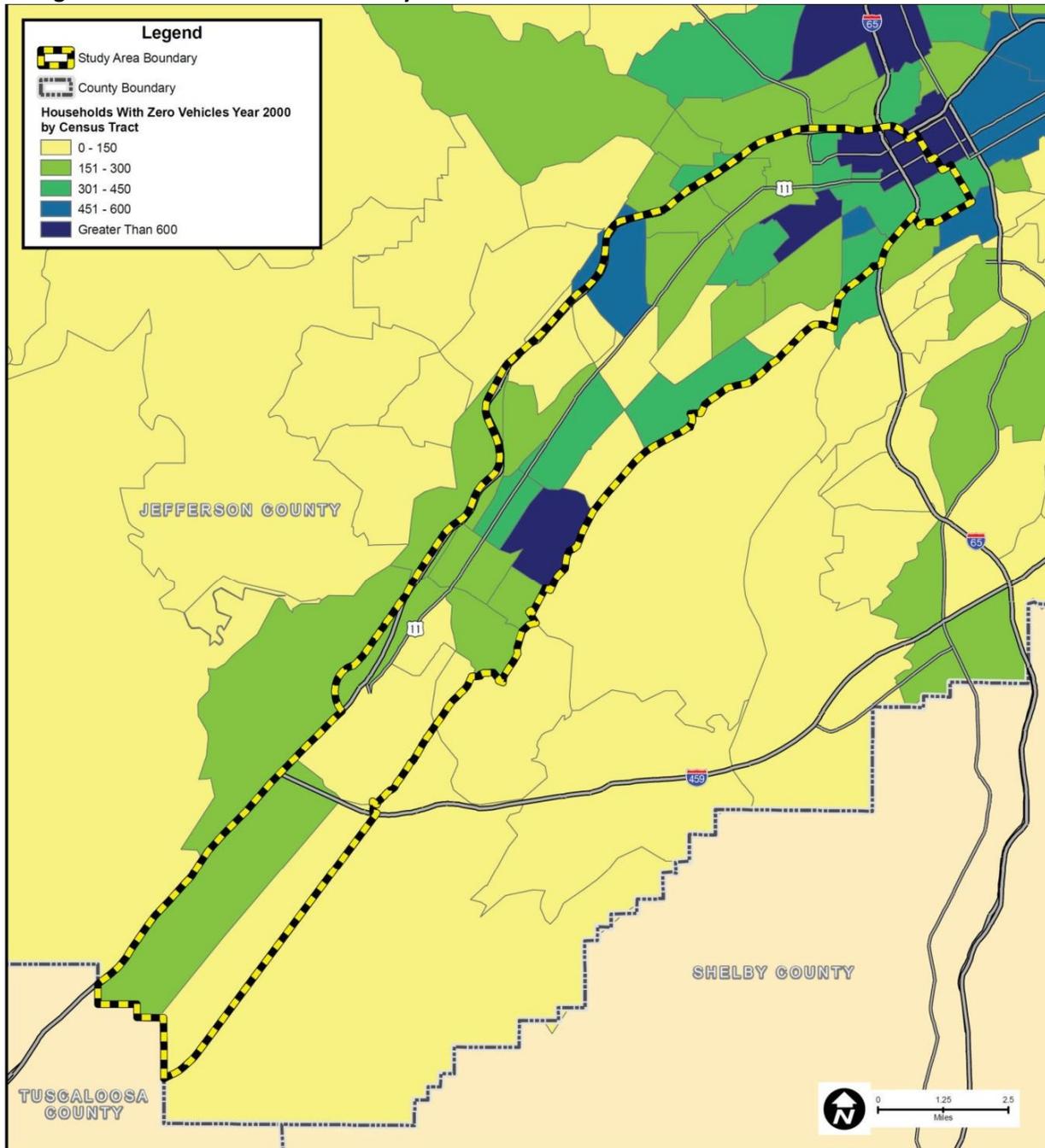
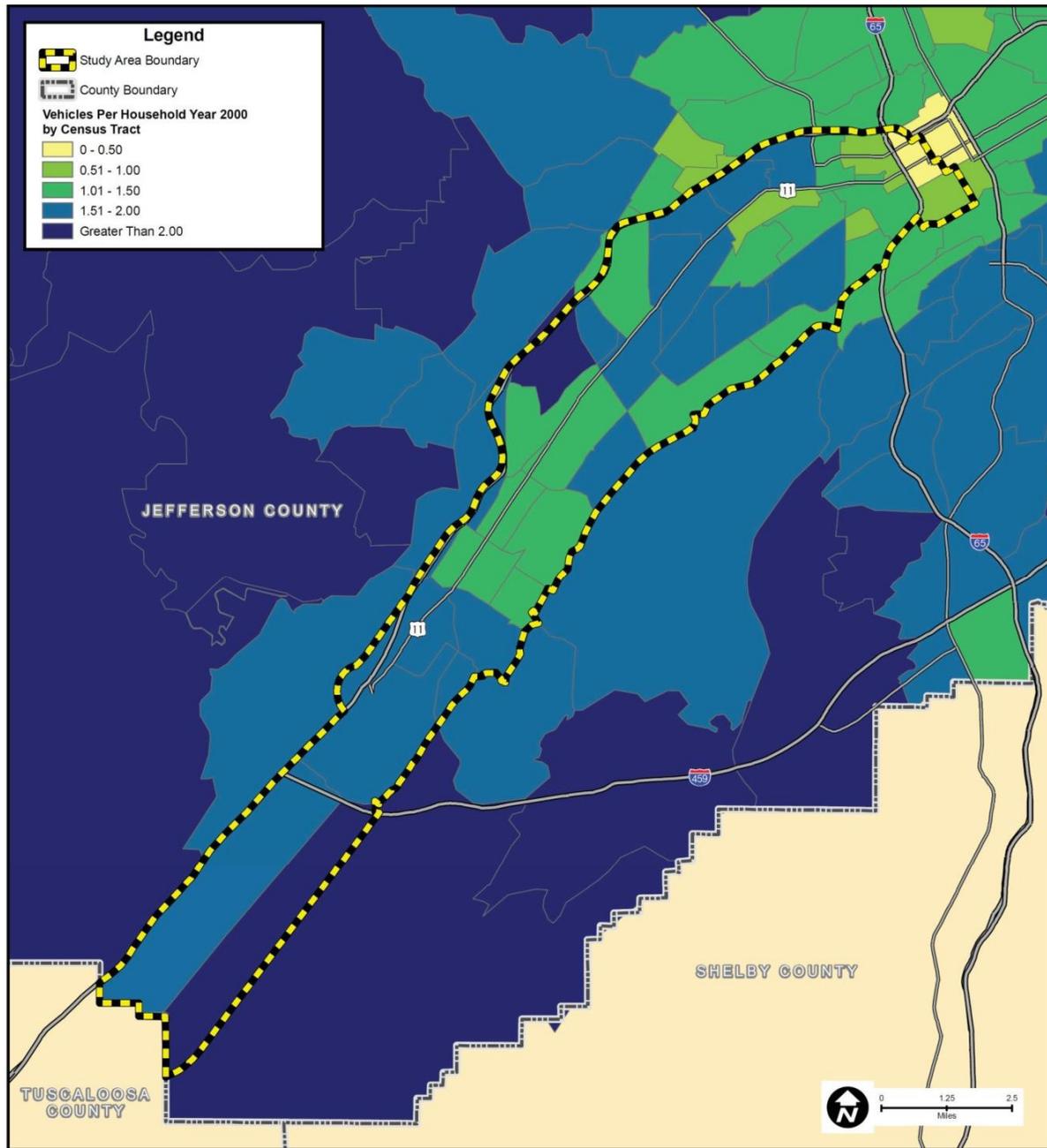


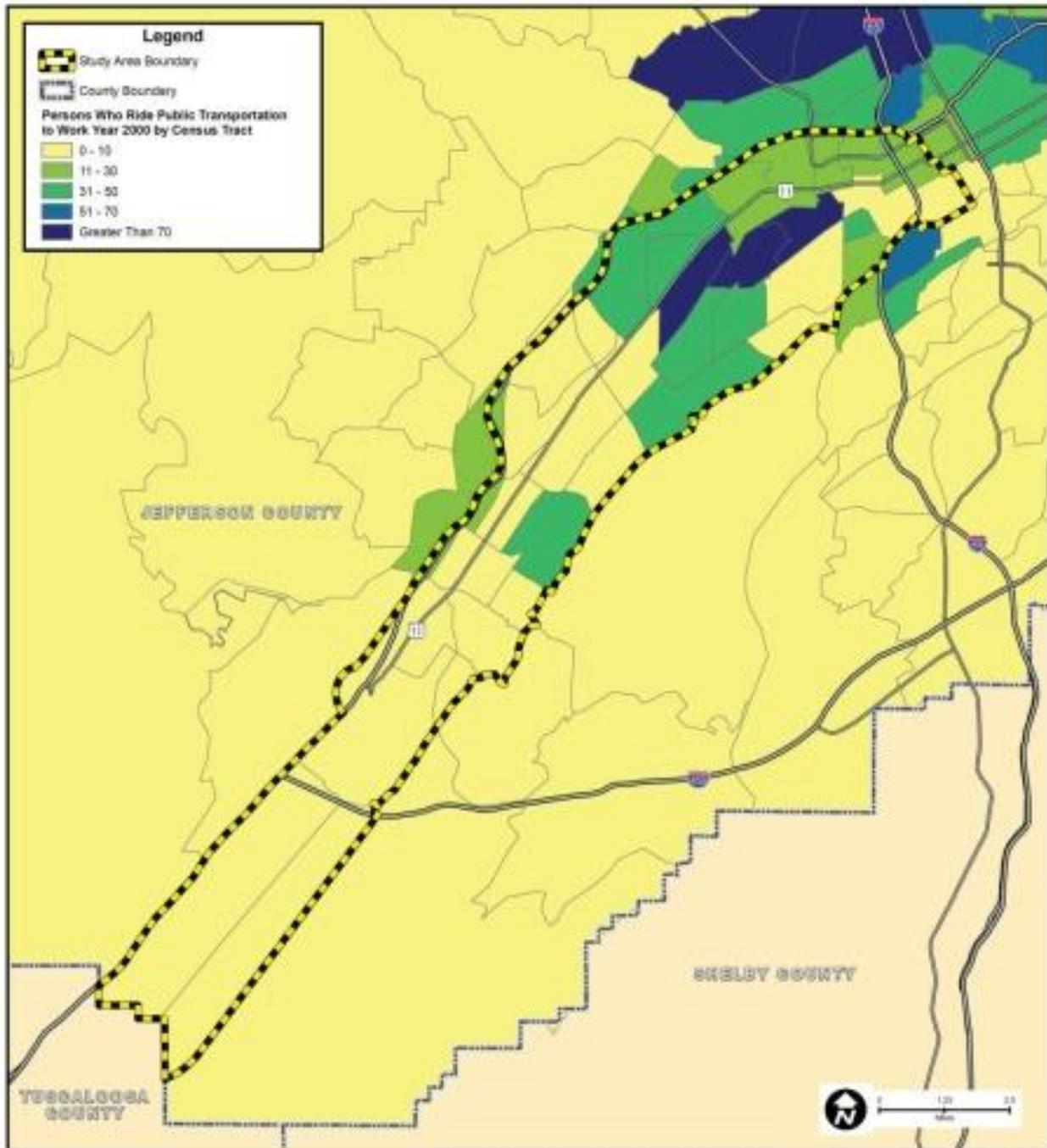
Figure 2.50 reinforces the zero-car household data, but showing the average household vehicle ownership by census tract. It is seen that those areas of lower auto ownership by household tend to also have more zero-car households. Much of the corridor has auto ownership between 1/2 to 1 1/2 cars per household, which means that household mobility is more limited for residents of the household for various trips such as work or school, placing more reliance by some households on transit service to fill their mobility gap.

Figure 2.50: Vehicles per Household by Census Tract 2000



Persons who ride public transportation to work are concentrated in the northern half of the study corridor (Figure 2.51). There are concentrations of transit uses in Lipscomb and other areas along County Road 18/Jefferson Avenue SW which runs parallel between US 11 and Red Mountain, and much of southwestern Birmingham where population densities are greater. The existing BJCTA routes which serve these area exhibit higher ridership densities.

Figure 2.51: Persons Who Ride Public Transportation by Census Tract



Persons who ride bikes or walk to work, or who work from home are spread out across the corridor, with a concentration in the Fairfield area (Figure 2.52). It is likely that in these areas the number of persons is just above the 100-person threshold. The transit system planning should consider those who might bicycle to the transit line and use the bus bicycle racks for a multimodal trip. In addition, nearly all

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

transit patrons walk to and from their bus stop and providing safe, paved access is also an important consideration. The proposed improvements under the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System will complement both bicycle and pedestrian mobility as they are implemented.

Figure 2.52: Persons Who Walk or Bike to Work by Census Tract

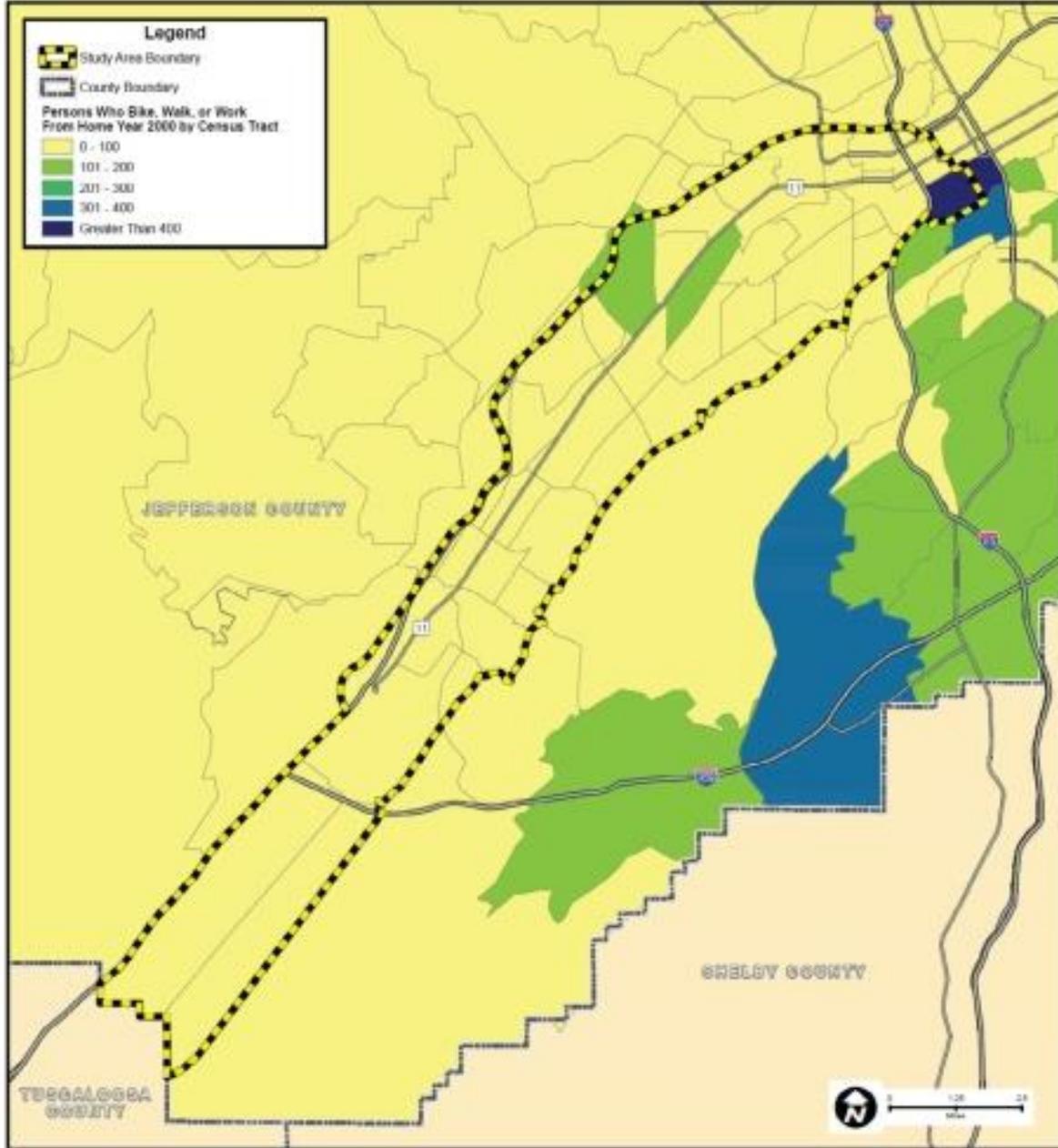


Figure 2.53 from the 2008 Comprehensive Transit Development Plan portrays concentrations of transit supportive areas based on residential density of more than 3 persons per gross acre and/or employment

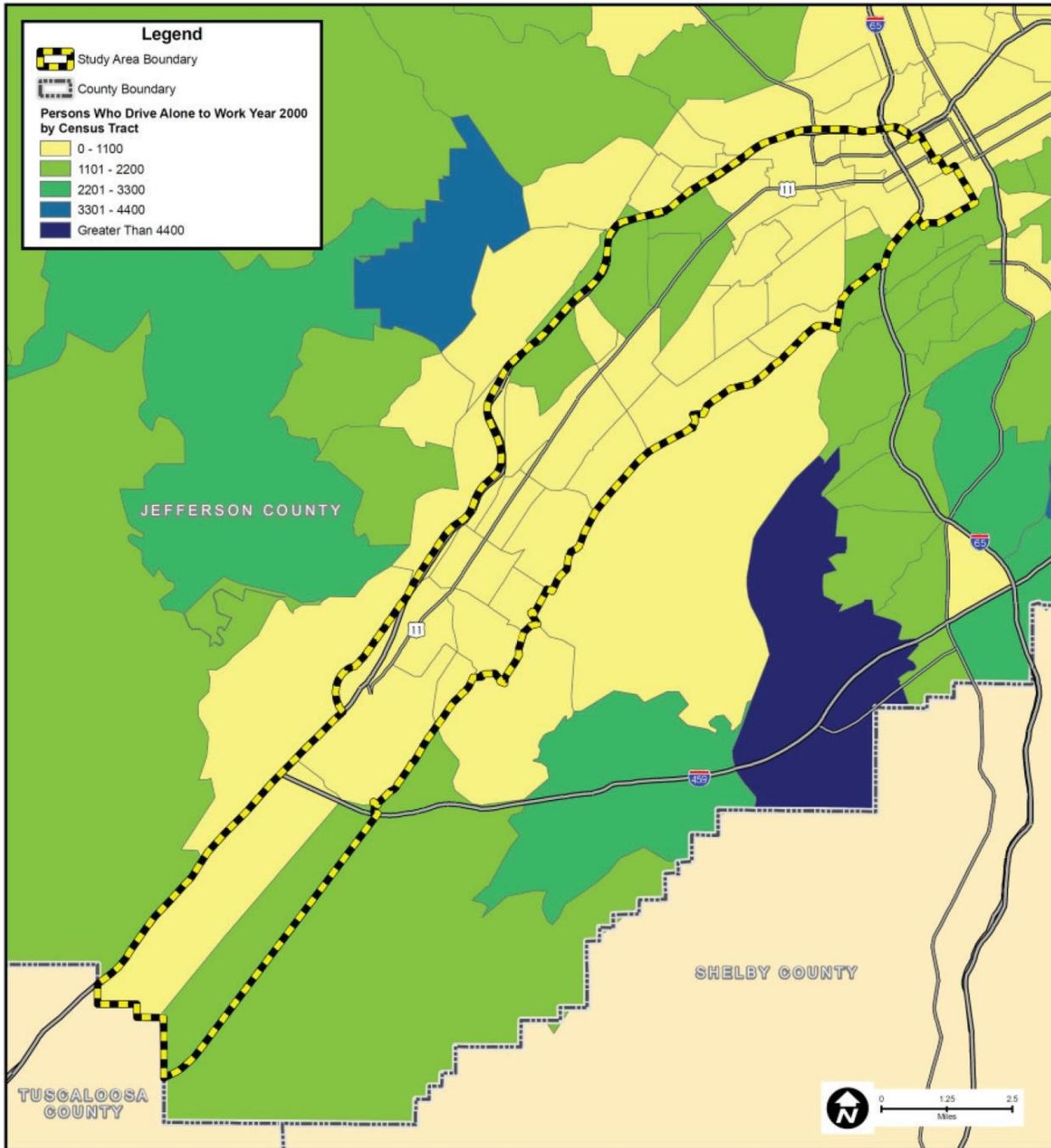
density of 4 jobs per gross acre. It is seen that part of Bessemer and the northern third of the study corridor are the most supportive of the existing BJCTA transit routes using these factors.

Figure 2.53: Transit Supportive Areas



The number of persons who drive alone to work is related to household income levels which affect auto ownership levels (Figure 2.54). It is seen that higher concentrations of those who drive to work alone are found in the southwestern areas of the City of Birmingham and the adjacent City of Fairfield, mostly to the north of US 11; the newer suburbs at the south end of the corridor also show a higher frequency of driving alone to work.

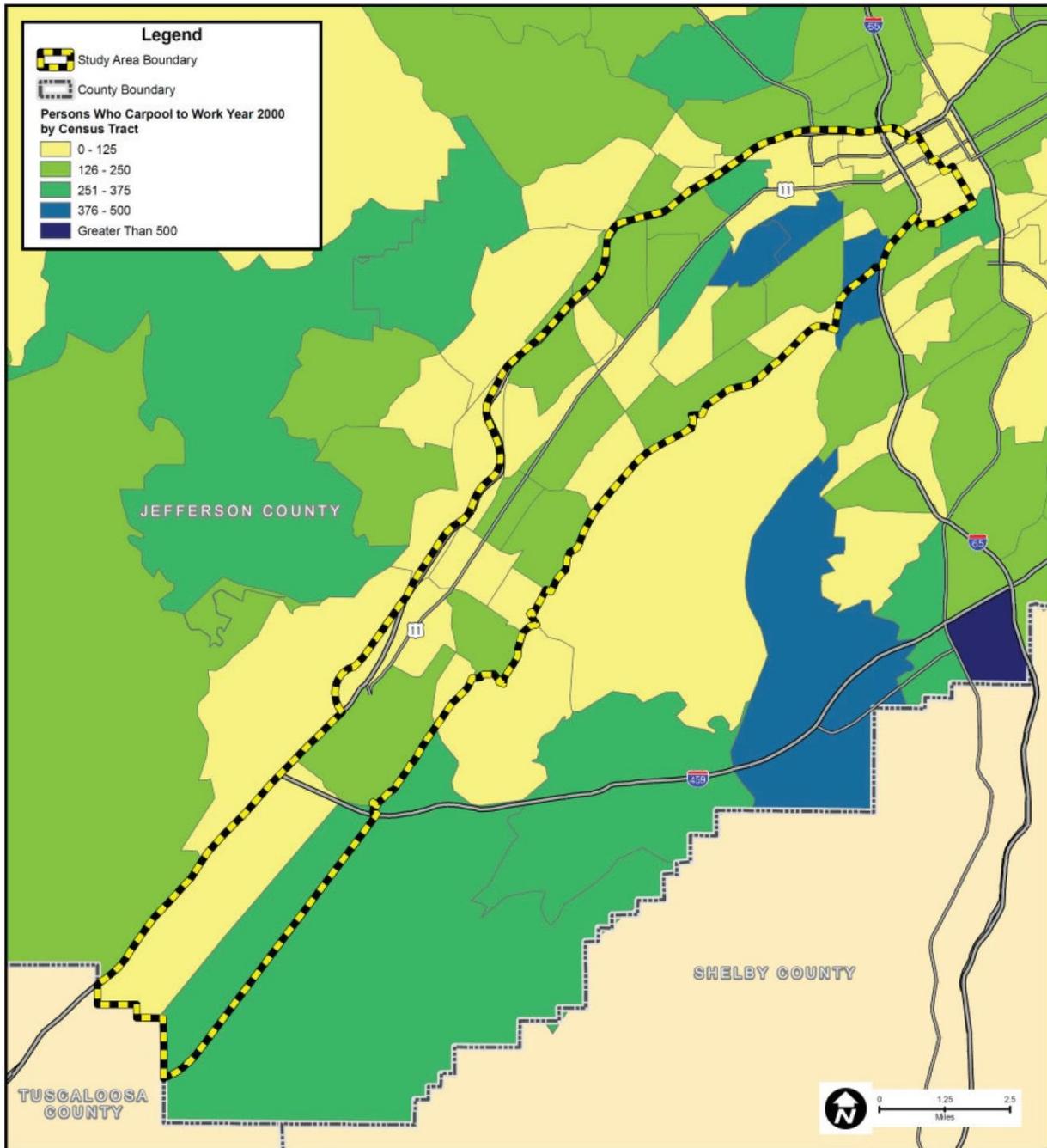
Figure 2.54: Persons Who Drive Alone to Work by Census Tract



The number of persons who carpool to work is also related to household income levels which affect auto ownership levels (Figure 2.55). Lower income households tend to own fewer vehicles and carpool more as a result. It is seen that there are higher concentrations of those who carpool to work are found across the entire corridor. This is indicative of the generally lower household income levels in the study

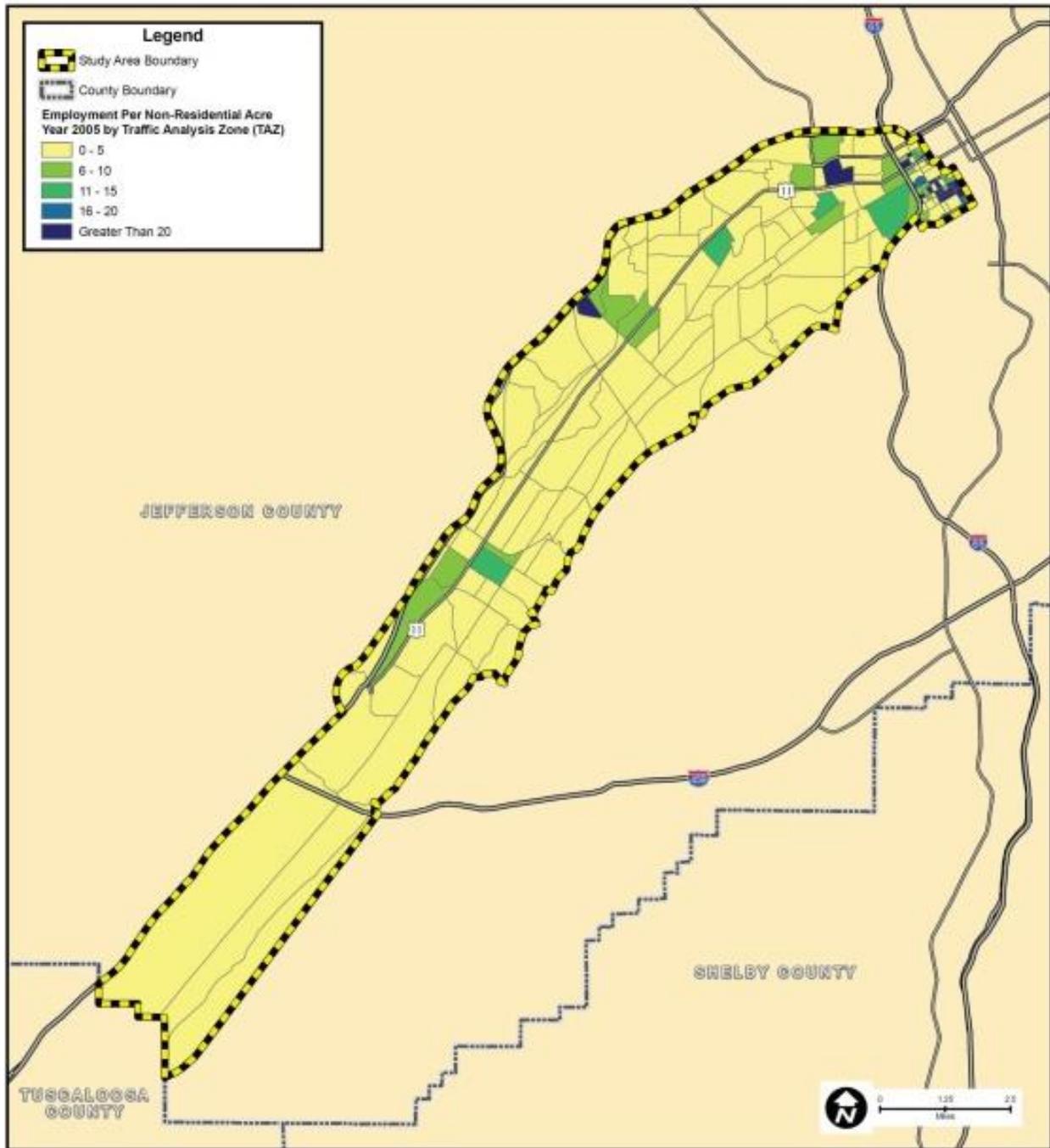
area compared to other parts of the region. This situation also explains the higher reliance on public transit in the study corridor.

Figure 2.55: Persons Who Carpool by Census Tract



The density of employment in 2005 (Figure 2.56), when residential lands uses are removed from the calculation, is fairly even across the study corridor with a value of less than 5 employees per acre. There are concentrations of employment in the Bessemer area, along Aronov Drive in the middle of the corridor, and in zones in the northern reaches of the corridor, including the Princeton Baptist Hospital and other zones near the downtown core. It is important for transit services to provide linkages to jobs across the corridor.

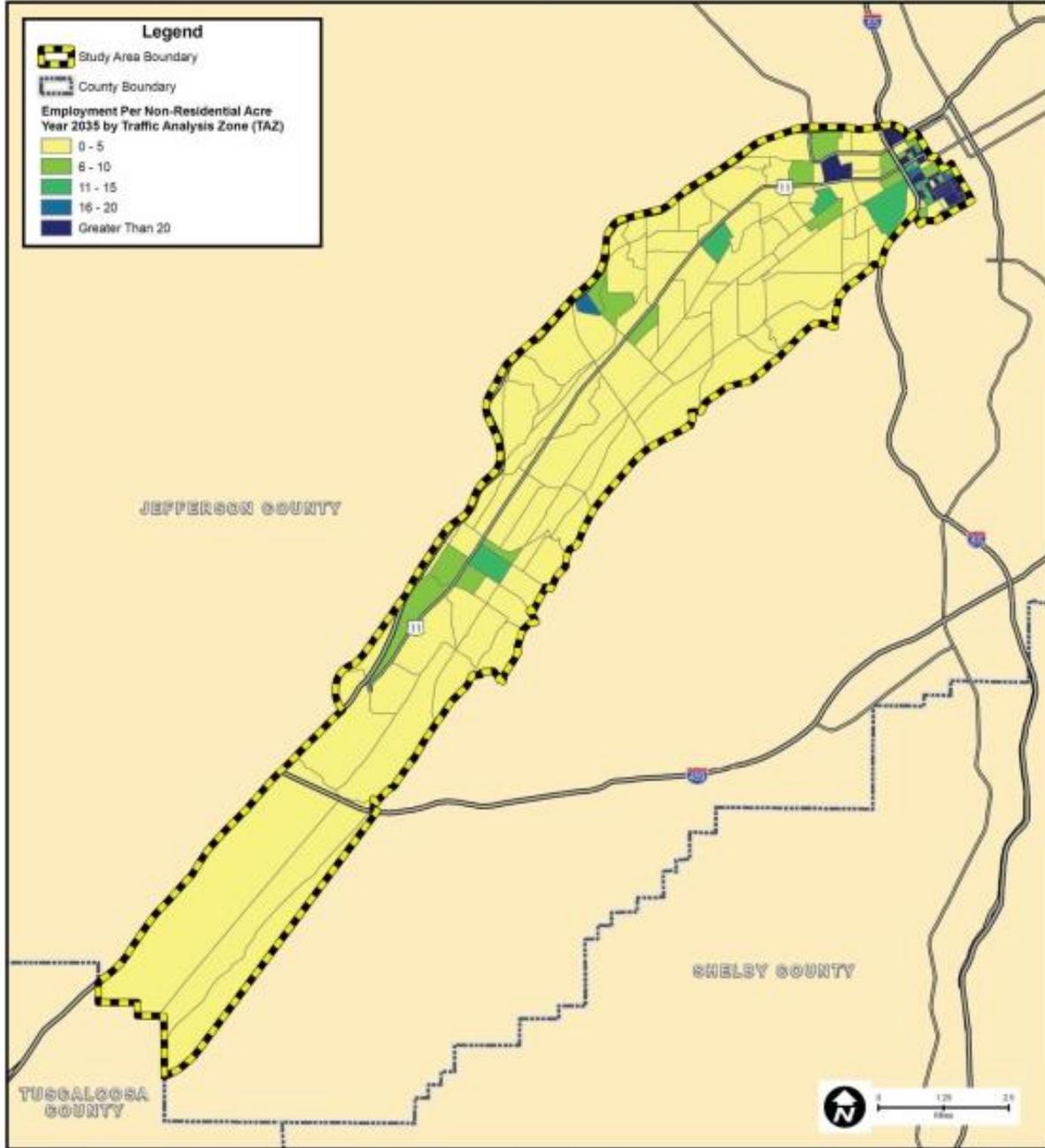
Figure 2.56: Employment per Non-Residential Acre by TAZ in 2005



In 2035, the density of employment (Figure 2.57), remains mostly unchanged from the existing conditions. Demographic forecasts for the corridor indicate a gradual decline in jobs across much of the corridor except for the areas south of Bessemer. The concentrations of employment remain as shown for 2005. The gains in employment at the south end of the corridor in the McCalla area around the industrial parks and the Norfolk Southern Railway intermodal terminal do not show up as concentrations

as those jobs are spread across large warehousing and distribution facilities. The configuration of improved transit should attempt to serve as many employment centers as possible; the growth in jobs to the south creates a reverse-commute opportunity for transit.

Figure 2.57: Employment per Non-Residential Acre by TAZ in 2035



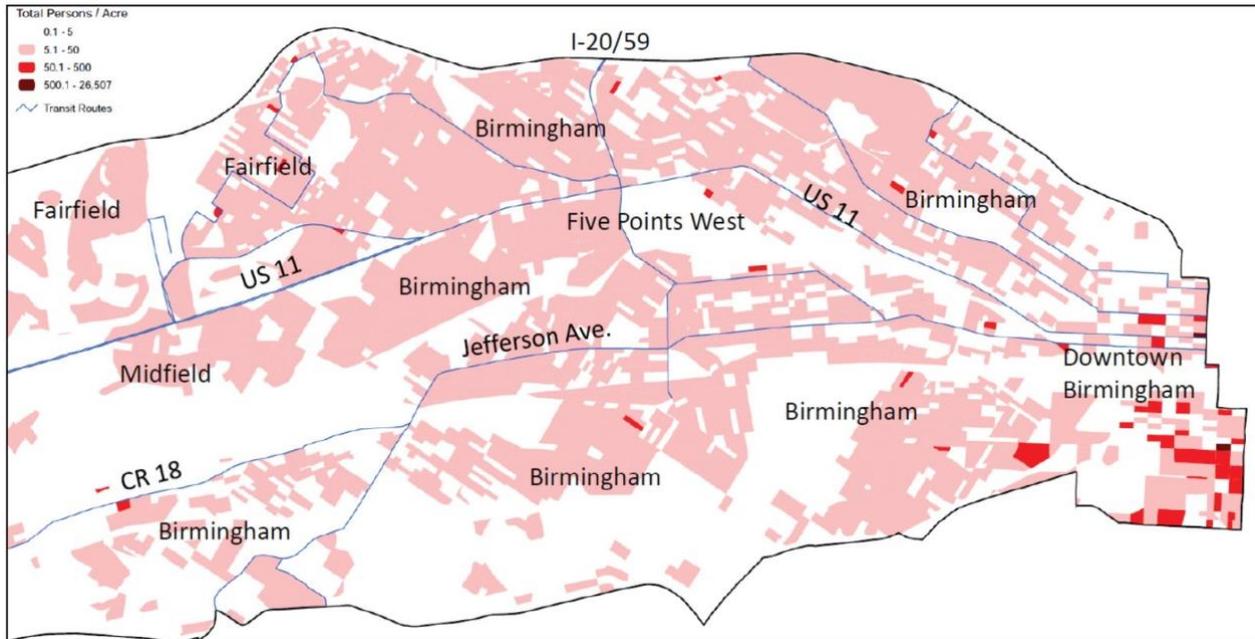
The figures below illustrate the total combined residential population and employment across the northern and middle part of the study corridor. Figure 2.58 provides some examples of residential density. The population and employment total is depicted across several bands, from 0 to 5 total persons, from 5 to 50 total persons, from 50 to 500 total persons, and from 500 to 26,500 total persons per acre. The band from 0 to 5 total persons is not shaded; this band is reflective of residential density (at a rate of 2.5 persons per household) of four residences per normal city block (300 feet by 300 feet), a relatively low residential density of two dwelling units per acre. It also captures those areas of the corridor that possess no development (vacant lands, vacant residences and commercial buildings, cemeteries, golf courses, floodplains, parks, etc. or minimal development (very low densities). The portion of the study area south of Bessemer is not shown as very few areas exceeded the five persons per acre threshold.

In the northern part of the corridor (Figure 2.60), it is seen that there are large areas of total population in the range of 5-50 persons per acre. The few scattered sites of total population over 50 persons per acres suggests that most of the study area is within the lower end of the 5-50 band, or in the 5-15 persons per acre. While there are large areas of moderate "total population" density, it is seen that there are numerous "void" areas of density in the lowest range, indicating floodplains or underutilized lands. As other graphics in this section demonstrate, the densities in this section of the corridor are among the highest in the region; nevertheless, they have been declining in recent years.

Figure 2.58: Examples of Residential Density

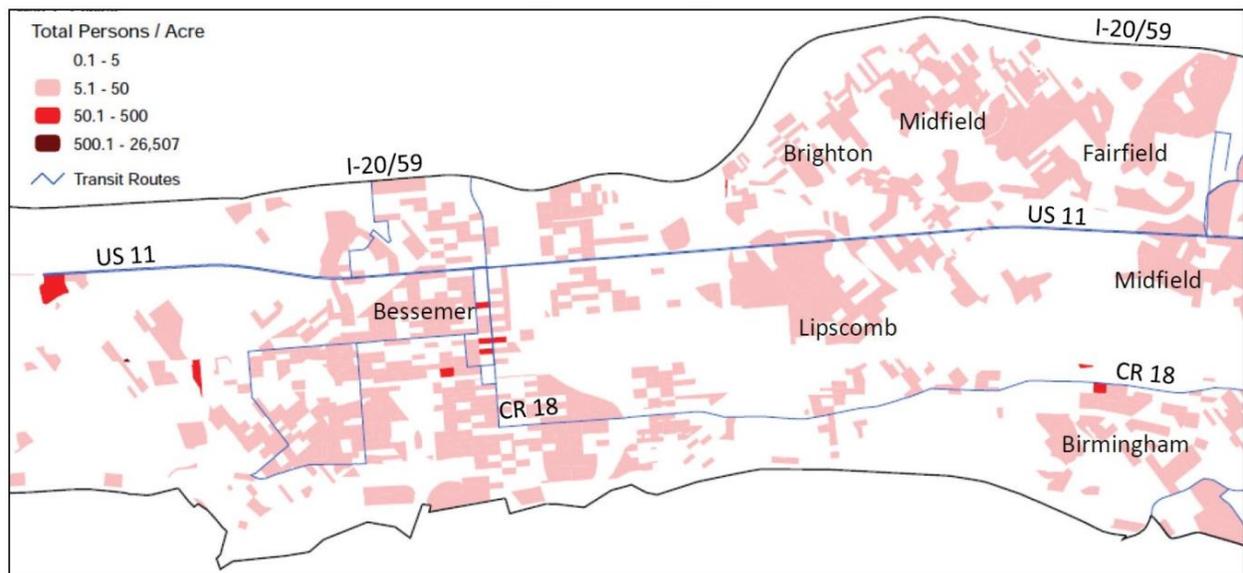


Figure 2.59: Existing (2010) Total Persons per Acre – North Section of Study Corridor



In the middle section of the corridor (Figure 2.60), the coverage of medium density (5- 50 total persons per acre) is more scattered with larger areas of low density. These are variously areas with floodplains, vacant industrial tracts, and neighborhoods that have experience decline in vitality, with vacant or demolished housing.

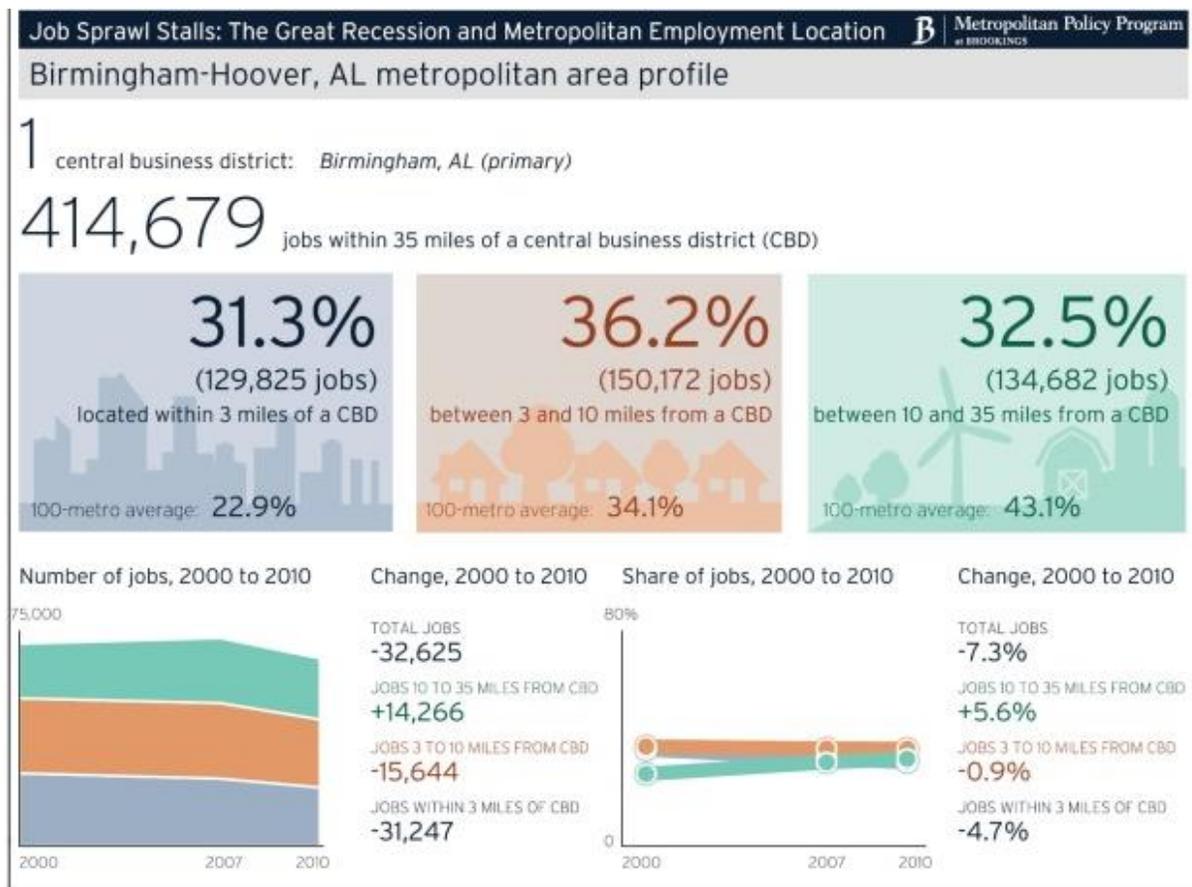
Figure 2.60: Existing (2010) Total Persons Per Acre - Middle Section of Study Corridor



The point of this analysis is to highlight those areas with concentrations of people, whether residents or employees. Such areas are more efficiently served by transit, so somewhat greater density of population is an asset for better transit service. Where there are low density voids of population, the cost per passenger carried on transit is greater, because low density areas are less productive in terms of passenger and revenue generation. Revitalizing communities and employment in the corridor is thus complementary to better supporting improved transit services.

Another interesting comparison is the distribution of jobs according to distance from the regional center, in this case, downtown Birmingham per Figure 2.61. The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program has analyzed job distribution of the 100 largest urban areas for the 2000-2010 period as summarized on this page. Due to the recession, the area lost 32,625 jobs over 2000-2010 for a 7.3% loss. The area within 3 miles of downtown saw a loss of 31,247 jobs or a 4.7% decline in that area. The 3-10 mile distant band lost 15,644 jobs for a 0.9% decline, and the 10-35 mile distant band gained 14,266 jobs for a 5.6% gain. With these changes, the regional job distribution is close to 1/3 in each of the three geographic bands. The region still has a city center concentration of jobs much higher than the 100 metro area average, but there are important regional implications to maintain the strength of downtown employment. Educational and medical employment at UAB is expected to grow, and while the region lost jobs overall, the outer band continued to gain jobs. While this parallels national trends, the national data also shows a decline in this pattern since 2007. So Birmingham as a region is running counter to this pattern. RPCGB forecasts over a 45% increase in downtown employment, indicating a rebound across all employment categories.

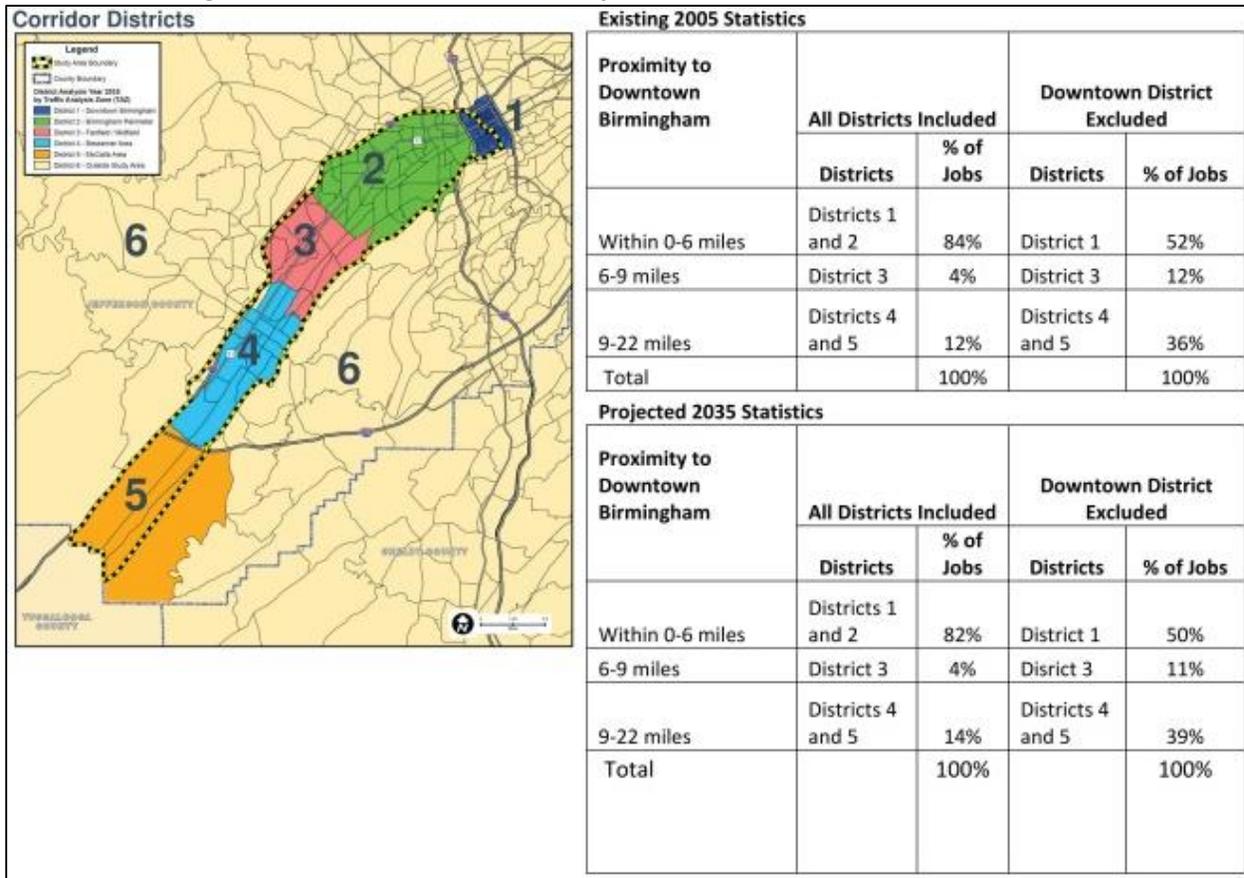
Figure 2.61: Change in Job Distribution in the Birmingham Region - 2000 to 2010



Within the study corridor, a comparison can be made to the regional patterns by reviewing corridor-specific job statistics for 2005 and as forecast to 2035 by the RPCGB, as shown in the Table 2.5: For 2005, it is seen that employment in the corridor is very downtown oriented. While the band of analysis is wider, the high figure is due to including downtown in just this one radial corridor. Without the 0-3 mile band for downtown in the calculation, the distribution is still downtown oriented at 52%. As was discussed in the prior section of the report, the segments of the corridor in Districts 2 and 3 are forecast to gradually lose jobs, District 4 has a slight net gain, and District 5 increases.

In 2035, the job statistics by band are not drastically different, although there is a slight trend of job growth in the band furthest from downtown. Given the large share of jobs downtown and in District 2 at the north of the corridor, the value of proposed premium transit services in facilitating better jobs access is significant to job holders. This is more important for employees residing in the southern areas of the corridor.

Table 2.5: Change in Job Distribution in the Study Corridor



2.4 LAND USES

While the Southwest Corridor as a whole is characterized as a suffering strip-mall corridor, the land use pattern within the study area is varied and scattered with a wide range of uses (see Table 2.6). It is apparent that many of these uses were influenced by highway corridors and railroad lines supporting industrial activities, thus the following sections provide an overview of the existing land use patterns and current utilization of properties along the corridor.

2.4.1 Residential

As seen in Table 2.6, single family residential land uses accounts for 37.7% of the land area within the Southwest Corridor and is mostly nestled behind commercial and industrial uses fronting US 11 and other parallel major streets. These single family neighborhoods such as Titusville and Fairview have varied architectural styles that contribute to their distinct and unique character.

Table 2.6: Existing Land Use

Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total
Agriculture	2,861	9.2%
Park	373	1.2%
Open Space	5,002	16.1%
Commercial Office	1,057	3.4%
Commercial Retail / Services	1,845	5.9%
Industrial	2,649	8.5%
School	634	2.0%
Institutional	2,024	6.5%
Residential Low Density	11,740	37.7%
Residential Medium Density	1,177	3.8%
Residential High Density	922	3.0%
Vacant	837	2.7%
TOTAL	31,121	100.0%

Source: RPCGB, 2011.

Most communities within the study area from central Bessemer and to the northeast have experienced some cosmetic and structural decline due to a combination of disinvestment, age, lack of owner occupancy, vacancy, vandalism, and tax delinquency.

Medium and high density residential is not as prevalent throughout the study area, and is mostly concentrated in urban locations. The mix of multifamily developments range from industrial loft conversions and mixed income communities located in Downtown Birmingham to garden style apartments surrounding downtown Bessemer. Both the Bessemer and Birmingham Housing Authorities have a strong presence in the study area, providing low income housing that in most cases is aging and on a decline. Although multifamily uses only make up 17.5% of all residential uses, the multifamily developments scattered throughout the study area provide diverse affordable and market rate housing options.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

2.4.2 Commercial, Office and Retail/Services

The largest concentrations of commercial office space are located in the historic downtown areas of Birmingham and Bessemer. The commercial office space, only 3.4% of the total land area along the corridor, is home within the City of Birmingham downtown area to medical research, banking, and hospitality services. The City of Bessemer has preserved the historic architecture of its downtown with the restoration of older buildings for office and retail use. "Main Street" store fronts are becoming activated with small retail shops and restaurants regularly patronized by employees working in government offices also located downtown.

Commercial Retail/Services uses comprise 5.9% of the corridor land use. The Western Hills Mall and the adjacent Walmart and other retail located at Bessemer Super Highway and Aaron Aronov Drive, the Academy Drive shopping district (with a second Walmart), and the Promenade Tannehill Mall located at the I-459/Eastern Valley Road interchange (community shopping center with chain retailers including Target, Publix, and J.C. Penney) are the major sources of affordable goods and services within the study area. The Westlake Mall indoor flea market and many small strip shopping centers and freestanding stores fronting US 11 and other arterial highways are also components of the retail and service inventory. A large share of these smaller sites are underutilized, obsolescent, or vacant and prime for redevelopment, were the market strong enough to support that. Fast food restaurants, automotive maintenance shops and small neighborhood oriented retailers also dominate the US 11 corridor as well as other roads in the northern part of the corridor and in central Bessemer. The growing presence in recent years of pawn shops and payday check cashing outlets are signs of the decline of the once thriving retail in the areas of the corridor from central Bessemer northward. The Five Points West district, once the retail cornerstone of the upper corridor, is experiencing a gradual resurgence, due in part to the nearby CrossPlex sports center on the site of the former Alabama State Fairgrounds.

2.4.3 Industrial

Industrial uses are primarily located along the rail lines throughout the corridor. A concentration of industrial uses are along the Norfolk- Southern line while the larger underutilized or unoccupied industrial properties extend approximately three miles from Downtown Birmingham to the west. At the western end of the corridor, the recently constructed light industrial and distribution properties continue to expand into the Jefferson Metropolitan Park at McCalla. This distribution park is expected to expand to the adjacent Norfolk-Southern Intermodal Facility.

2.4.4 Institutional and Schools

There are 2,024 acres of the study area that are designated institutional. The campuses of University of Alabama - Birmingham (UAB), Birmingham Southern College, Miles College, and Lawson State Community College campuses in Birmingham and Bessemer, along with UAB Medical Center, Cooper Green Mercy Hospital, Children's Hospital and Jefferson County Central Health Center Hospitals and medical campuses are all located within the study area and comprise a major employment resource. These land use categories also include government facilities at the federal, state and municipal levels. The major history and cultural institutions and attractors for visitors are located in downtown Birmingham within three distinct arts and culture districts - Civil Rights District, Theater District and Cultural District. Included in the institutional uses along the corridor are the facilities associated with the four K-12 school districts - Birmingham City Schools, Bessemer City Schools, Fairfield City schools and Jefferson County Schools. There are also YMCA facilities in Midfield and Bessemer

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

2.4.5 Parks and Open Space

The Birmingham region is a leader in the amount of "green space" per capita. This reflects the commitment of the region's cities and advocacy groups to parks, trails, and the preservation of open spaces and streams. The Southwest Corridor has its share of recreational facilities and community parks in addition to the Bessemer Golf Course. The City of Birmingham recently opened Railroad Park which includes a plaza, skate park, playgrounds, outdoor workout equipment and programming to promote healthy living. This 19-acre park's lush landscape, water feature and running trail is an important addition to the urban open space resources. Throughout the corridor there are a variety of municipal and regional open space areas, ranging from small neighborhood parks to the 1,200-acre Red Mountain Park which extends from Birmingham to Bessemer along the study corridor's southeast border.

2.4.6 Agricultural

The 2,861 acres (9.2% of corridor land area) of agricultural uses are situated principally south of I-459, with some isolated pockets further north. These agricultural lands in recent years have transitioned to suburban residential developments and large lot residences, as well as warehousing/distribution uses, including the new Norfolk Southern Railway Regional Birmingham Intermodal facility.

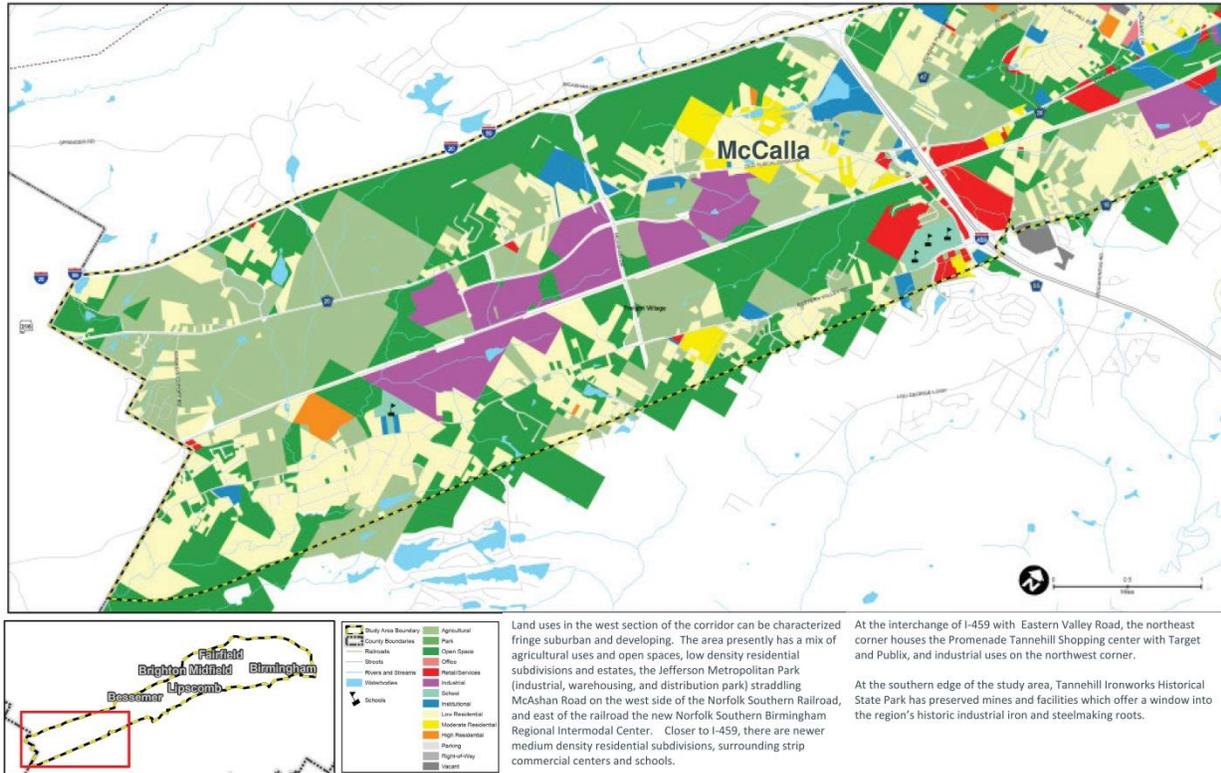
2.4.7 Corridor Land Use Profiles

The following series of maps profile the study corridor in terms of the land uses as well as the general condition of the housing stock and community resources.

West Corridor

Land uses in the west section of the corridor can be characterized fringe suburban and developing (Figure 2.62). The area presently has a mix of agricultural uses and open spaces, low density residential subdivisions and estates, the Jefferson Metropolitan Park (industrial, warehousing, and distribution park) straddling McAshan Road on the west side of the Norfolk Southern Railway, and east of the railroad the new Norfolk Southern Birmingham newer medium density residential subdivisions.

Figure 2.62: Existing Land Use



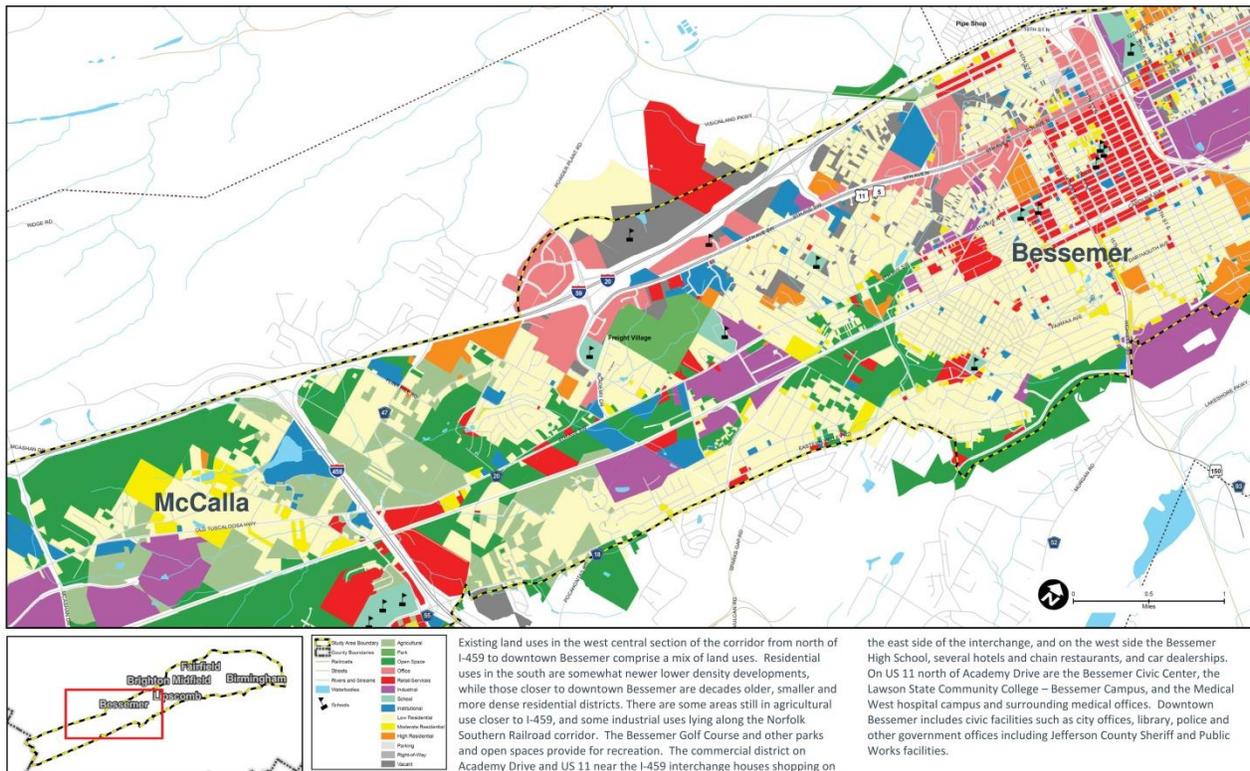
At the interchange of I-459 with Eastern Valley Road, the northeast corner houses the Promenade Tannehill Shopping center with Target and Publix, and industrial uses on the northwest corner. At the southern edge of the study area, Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park has preserved mines and facilities which offer a window into the region's historic industrial iron and steelmaking roots.

West Central Corridor

Existing land uses in the west central section of the corridor from north of I-459 to downtown Bessemer comprise a mix of land uses (Figure 2.63) Residential uses in the south are somewhat newer lower density developments, while those closer to downtown Bessemer are decades older, smaller and more dense residential districts. There are some areas still in agricultural use closer to I-459, and some industrial uses lying along the Norfolk Southern Railroad corridor. The Bessemer Golf Course and other parks and open spaces provide for recreation.

The commercial district on Academy Drive and US 11 near the I-459 interchange houses shopping on the east side of the interchange, and on the west side the Bessemer High School, several hotels and chain restaurants, and car dealerships. On US 11 north of Academy Drive are the Bessemer Civic Center, the Lawson State Community College - Bessemer Campus, and the Medical West hospital campus and surrounding medical offices. Downtown Bessemer includes civic facilities such as city offices, library, police and other government offices including Jefferson County Sheriff and Public Works facilities.

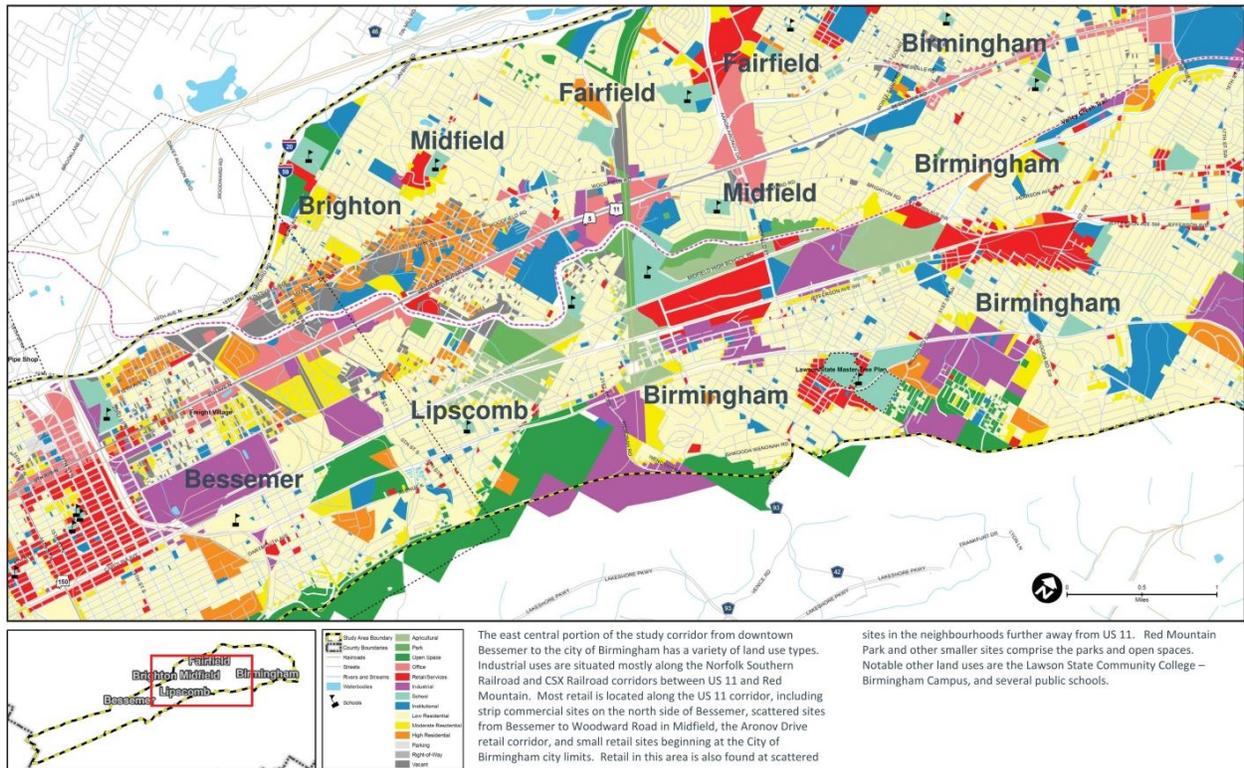
Figure 2.63: Existing Land Uses - West Central Corridor



East Central Corridor

Norfolk Southern Railway and CSX Railroad corridors lie between US 11 and Red Mountain (Figure 2.64). Most retail is located along the US 11 corridor, including strip commercial sites on the north side of Bessemer, scattered sites from Bessemer to Woodward Road in Midfield, the Aronov Drive retail corridor, and small retail sites beginning at the City of Birmingham city limits. Retail in this area is also found at scattered sites in the neighbourhoods further away from US 11. Red Mountain Park and other smaller sites comprise the parks and open spaces. Notable other land uses are the Lawson State Community College – Birmingham Campus, and several public schools.

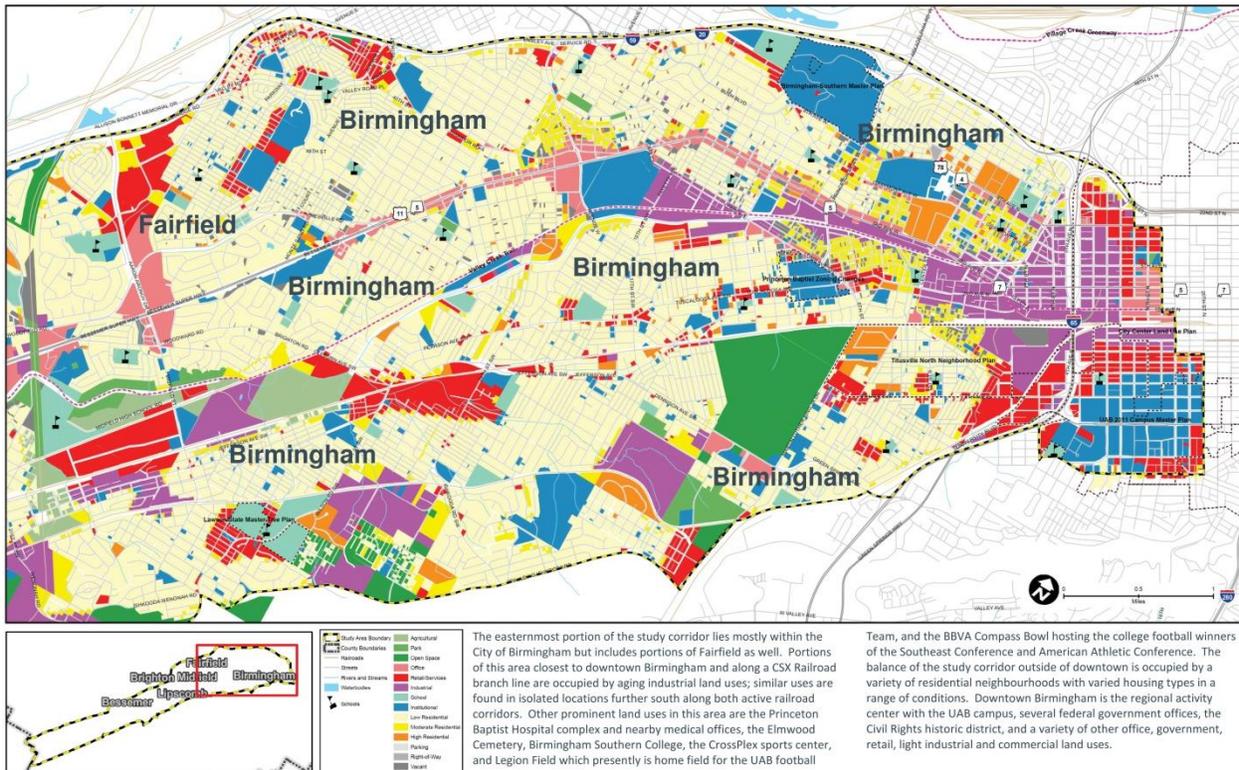
Figure 2.64: Existing Land Uses - East Central Corridor



East Corridor

The easternmost portion of the study corridor lies mostly within the City of Birmingham but includes portions of Fairfield as well. Portions of this area closest to downtown Birmingham and along a CSX Railroad branch line are occupied by aging industrial land uses; similar uses are found in isolated locations further south along both active railroad corridors (Figure 2.65). Other prominent land uses in this area are the Princeton Baptist Hospital complex and nearby medical offices, the Elmwood Cemetery, Birmingham Southern College, the CrossPlex sports center, and Legion Field which presently is home field for the UAB football Team, and the BBVA Compass Bowl hosting the college football winners of the Southeast Conference and American Athletic Conference. The balance of the study corridor outside of downtown is occupied by a variety of residential neighbourhoods with varied housing types in a range of conditions. Downtown Birmingham is the regional activity center with the UAB campus, several federal government offices, the Civil Rights historic district, and a variety of other office, government, retail, light industrial and commercial land use

Figure 2.65:



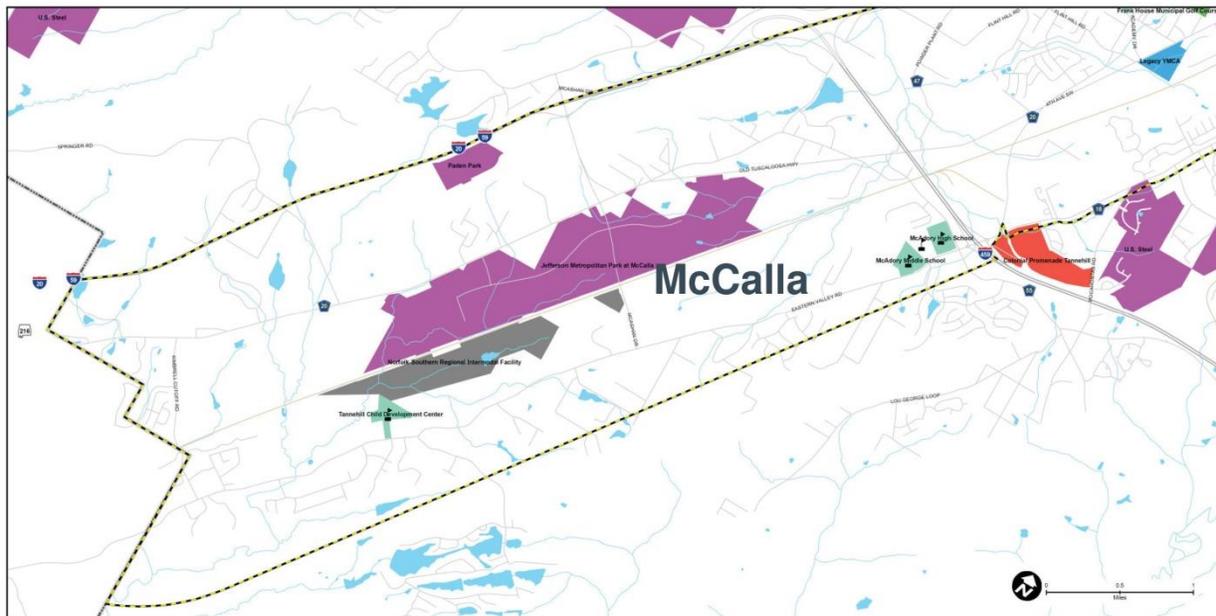
2.4.8 Significant Land Use Features and Corridor Stability

The following discussion highlights significant land use features and indicators of corridor stability across the study corridor.

West Corridor

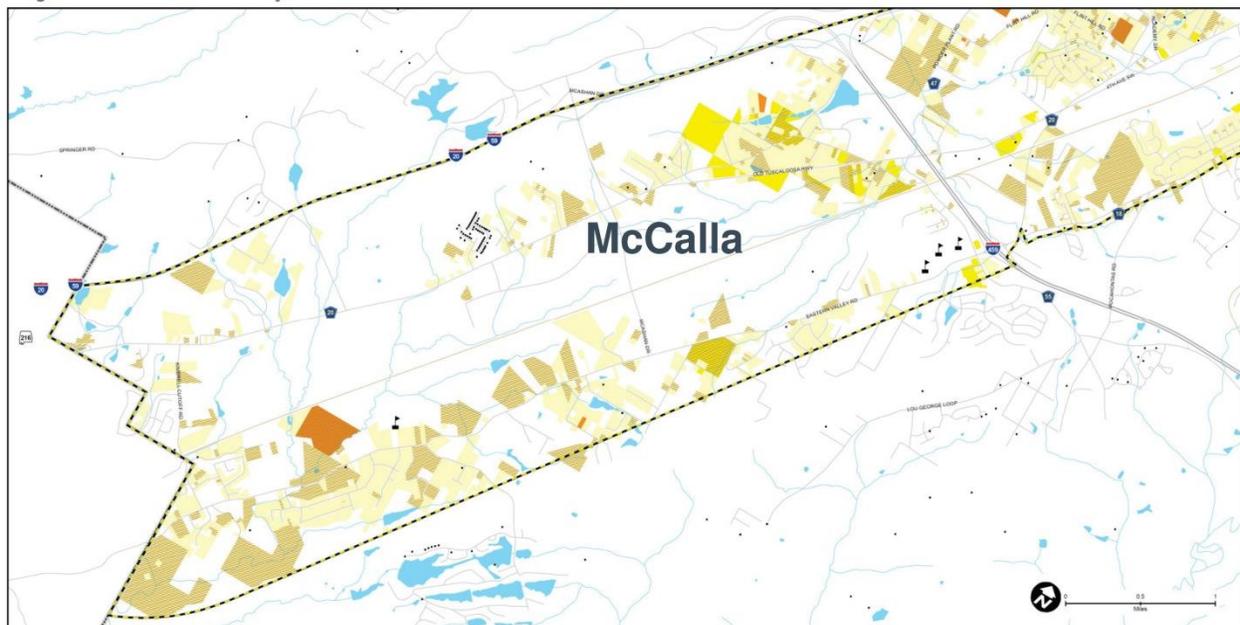
In the west part of the corridor, the significant land use features (Figure 2.66) include the Jefferson Metropolitan Park, a 739-acre industrial park operated by the Jefferson County Economic and Industrial Development Authority with several distribution centers and light manufacturing operations; the Promenade Tannehill Mall anchored by Publix, Target and JCPenney stores located at I-459 and Eastern Valley Road; and the 316-acre Norfolk Southern Railway McCalla Intermodal Center. This facility is part of the railroad's multi-state Crescent Corridor initiative to establish an efficient, high-capacity intermodal freight rail route between the Gulf Coast and the Northeast. There are also three public schools in this area.

Figure 2.66: Significant Land Use Features - Western Corridor



For this section of the corridor, Figure 2.67 illustrates indicators of corridor stability, tax delinquent housing and renter-occupied housing. There are very few of either of these indicators in this suburban portion of the corridor in which the housing stock is relatively new and which is in a development mode, subject to the strength of the local real estate market as impacted by the economic recession. The significant presence of rental properties can be a signal that property condition has declined over time, further incentivizing homeowners to sell when the opportunity presents itself. Renters individually are not an issue, but when rental properties begin to dominate residential districts, it is symptomatic of absentee landlords who maintain properties below desirable standards and of general disinvestment. The extent of tax delinquent properties also is evidence of neighborhood decline. Many of these properties may also be in poor condition, be unoccupied, and become havens of criminal activity.

Figure 2.67: Corridor Stability Indicators - Western Corridor



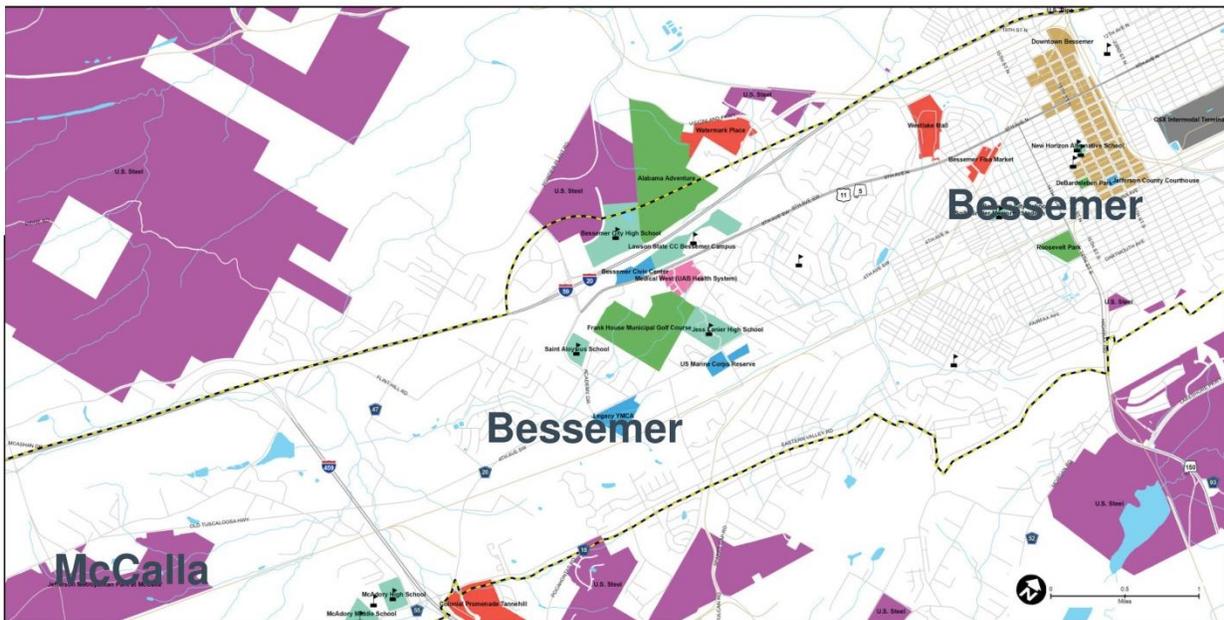
SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

West Central Corridor

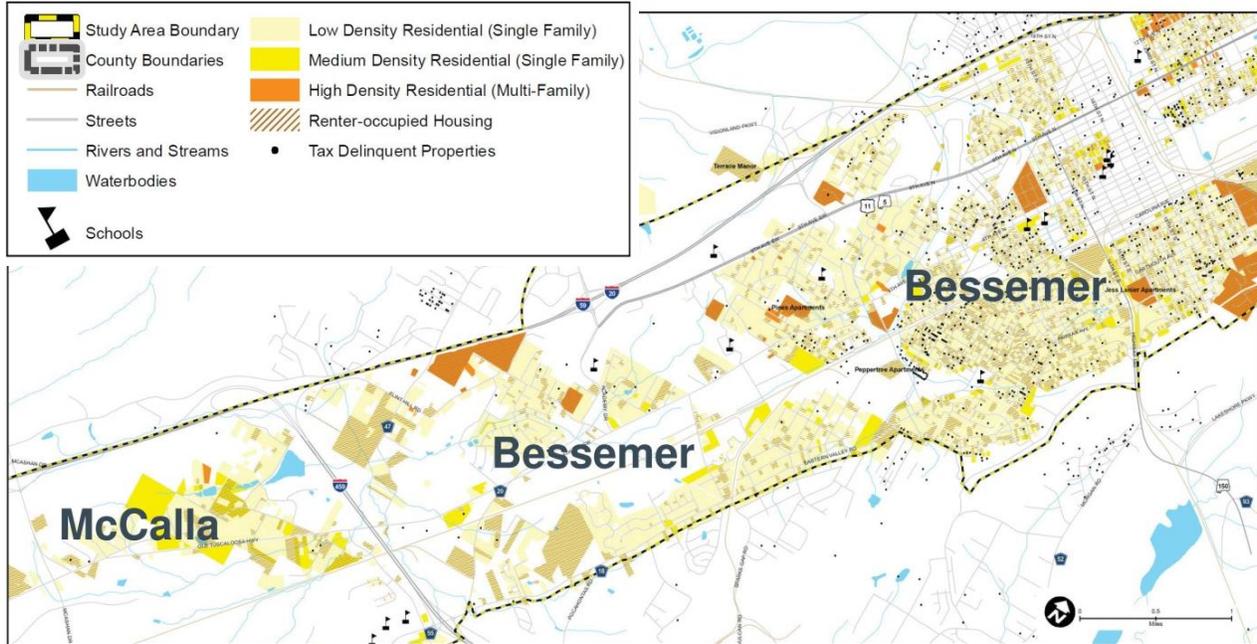
In the west central part of the corridor, the significant land use features (Figure 2.68) include the downtown Bessemer district with several county and city government offices, the Lawson State Community College - Bessemer Campus, the Aronov Drive retail corridor extending from the west near I-20/59 eastward to US 11 and beyond to Woodward Road. The active retail presently in the eastern half of the corridor include a Walmart, the Western Hills Mall, and smaller commercial areas east of US 11. The Foundry, located in a former Sears store to the west of Walmart, a religious organization focused on reshaping lives of those battling addictions through its recovery, reentry, and self-improvement programs, as well as community outreach. Other retail space remains vacant. Other significant land uses are the several public schools and the Lawson State Community College - Birmingham Campus.

Figure 2.68: Significant Land Use Features - West Central Corridor



For this section of the corridor, Figure 2.69 illustrating indicators of corridor stability shows increasing numbers of rental properties with concentrations in several older Bessemer neighborhoods to the north and south of the Bessemer downtown core. Tax delinquent properties are more prevalent in the older areas of Bessemer as well. As noted before, significant levels of tax delinquent properties and rental housing are indicators of declining neighborhoods and economic disinvestment.

Figure 2.69: Corridor Stability Indicators - West

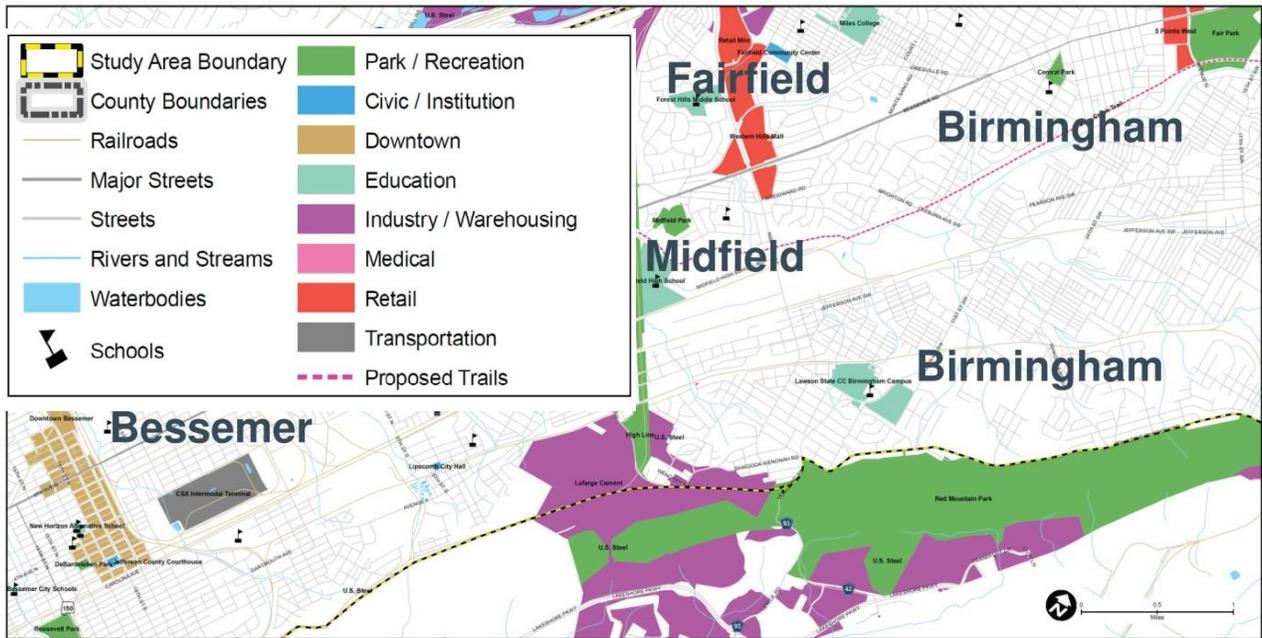


Central Corridor

East Central Corridor

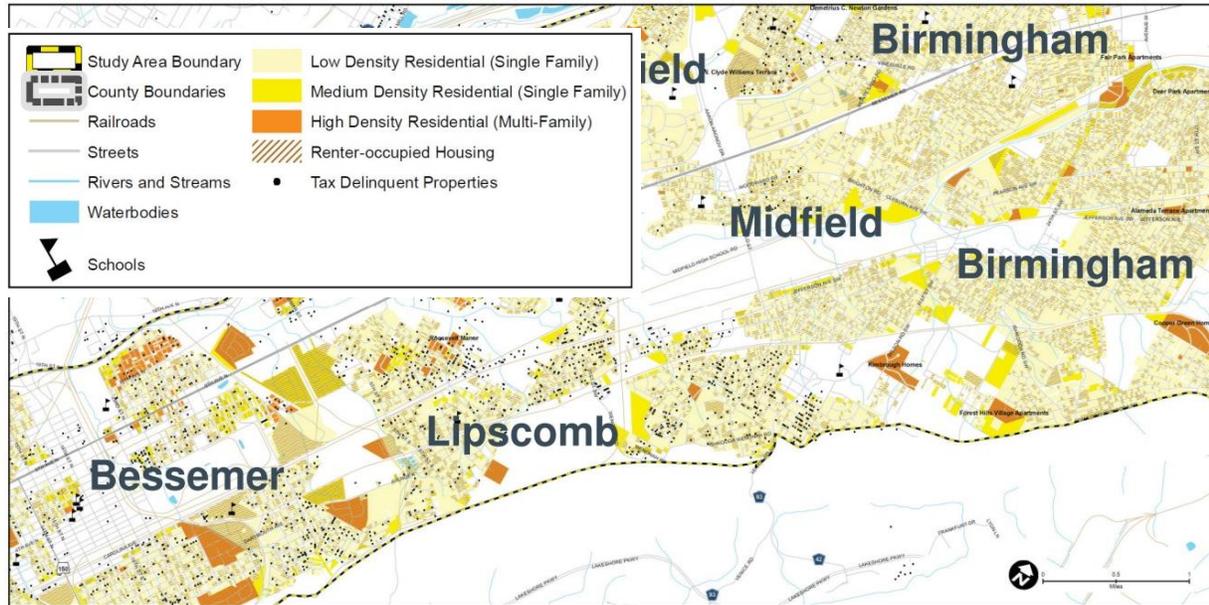
In the east central part of the corridor, the significant land use features (Figure 2.70) include the Aronov Drive retail corridor extending from the west near I-20/59 eastward to US 11 and beyond to Woodward Road. The active retail in presently in the eastern half of the corridor in the form of a Walmart, the Western Hills Mall, and smaller commercial areas east of US 11. The Foundry, located in a former Sears store to the west of Walmart, a religious organization focused on reshaping lives of those battling addictions through its recovery, reentry, and self-improvement programs, as well as community outreach. Other retail space remains vacant. Other significant land uses are the several public schools and the Lawson State Community College - Birmingham Campus.

Figure 2.70: Significant Land Use Features - East Central Corridor



For this section of the corridor, Figure 2.71 illustrating indicators of corridor stability shows rental properties across the corridor with concentrations across much of the corridor except for areas in Fairfield and Midfield on the west side of US 11 and in a portion of Midfield east of US 11. Midfield and much of Fairfield have few tax delinquent properties, but these become more prevalent in Brighton, Lipscomb and the northern residential areas of Bessemer. As noted before, significant levels of tax delinquent properties and rental housing are indicators of declining neighborhoods and economic disinvestment.

Figure 2.71: Corridor Stability Indicators - East Central Corridor



East Corridor

In the easternmost part of the corridor, there are several prominent land use features (Figure 2.72) which include Princeton-Baptist Medical Center, the Crossplex athletics center at Five Points West on the site of the former Alabama State Fairgrounds, Birmingham Southern College, Legion Field which presently serves as the home football field for the University of Alabama - Birmingham (UAB), and Rickwood Field which is the oldest surviving baseball stadium in the country, and several public schools. The significant shopping district in this area is at Five Points West. The key downtown uses are the UAB campus and associated medical facilities, the new Birmingham Barons baseball stadium, the Civil Rights historic district, the Innovation Depot, the federal Social Security Administration offices, and the headquarters of Alabama Power.

Figure 2.72: Significant Land Use Features - Eastern Corridor



For this section of the corridor, Figure 2.73 illustrates indicators of corridor stability. It is seen that there are significant numbers of rental properties across this area. While Figure 2.73 does not illustrate tax delinquent properties within the City of Birmingham, Figure 2.74 from the recently completed City of Birmingham Comprehensive Master Plan (Part III, Chapter 8 - Community Renewal) provides coverage of both tax delinquent and vacant properties within Birmingham. It is seen that there are many properties in this status. Many of these properties may also be in poor condition, be unoccupied, and become havens of criminal activity. As noted before, significant levels of tax delinquent properties and rental housing are indicators of declining neighborhoods and economic disinvestment.

Figure 2.73: Corridor Stability Indicators - Eastern Corridor

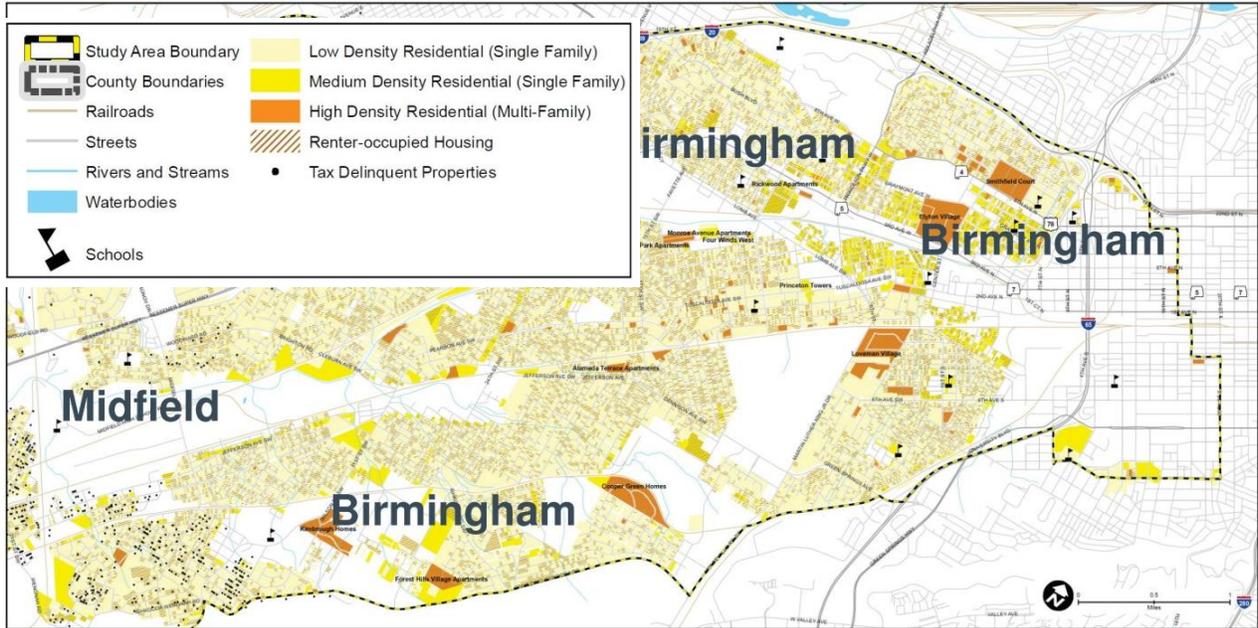
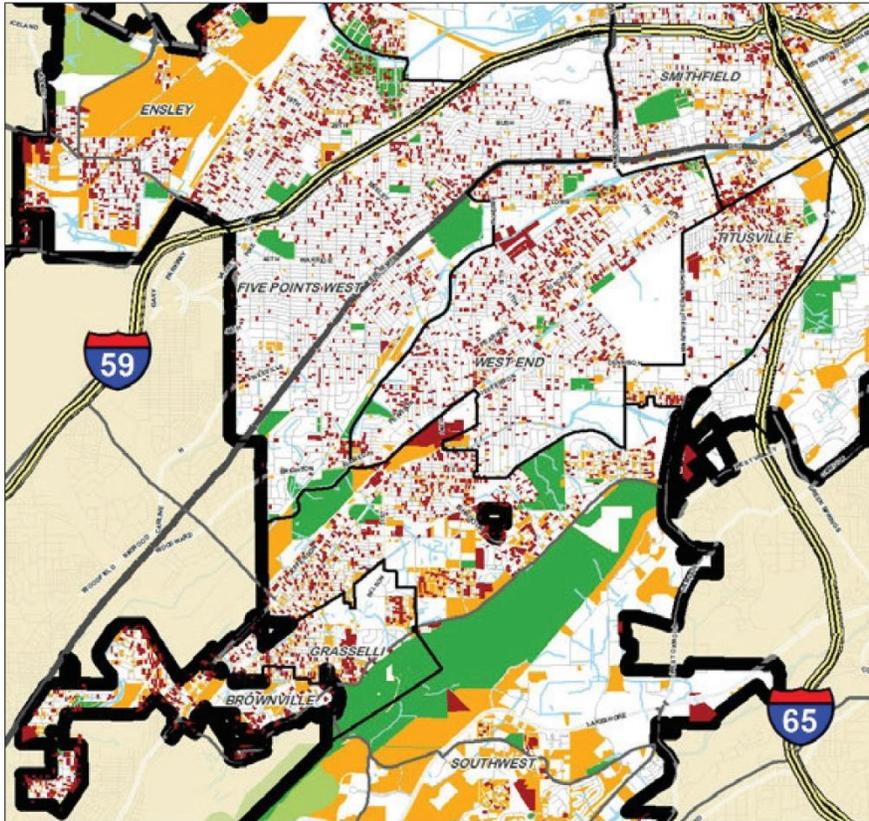


Figure 2.74: Tax Delinquent and Vacant Properties Within the City of Birmingham



2.4.9 Natural and Environmental Features

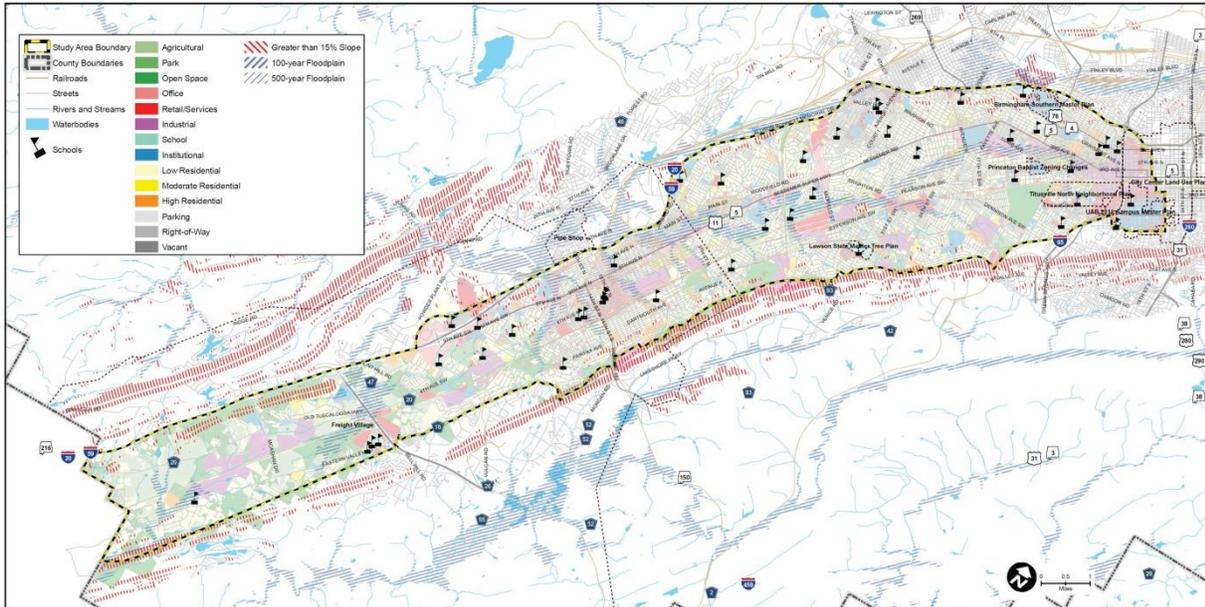
The study corridor is characterized by a diversity of natural and physical features which helped shape its settlement and evolution. Situated in the Jones Valley, the study area is characterized by the natural streams running along its length and their associated floodplains. Much of the corridor is relatively flat with slight rolling hills to either side of its center. This topography along with the mineral resources of the Red Mountain and other nearby ridges was part of what drove early decisions to establish mines for coal and iron ore, and the building of steel foundries and allied businesses in the study corridor.

From Figure 2.75 it is seen that Red Mountain forms a definitive boundary on the southeast side of the corridor with its pronounced ridge topography running the length of the corridor. Similar topography bounds the corridor to the northwest through the southern half of the corridor. Further north, railroad corridors first, and later the I-20/59 highway, together define the limits of the corridor. Comparing this map to the land use maps and the population density map shows the restrictions of the waterway floodplains on land development, effectively reducing the gross density of the corridor while creating open spaces. The topography of the corridor has helped to define its pronounced linearity. This is advantageous in terms of concentrating parts of most trips into a directional pattern along length of the corridor, while at the same time creating longer trips for those residing further south and traveling to downtown Birmingham. Nevertheless, the linear orientation promotes a development pattern with activity centers that can be served from a single primary premium transit improvement project.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.75: Study Corridor Natural Features



2.5 ECONOMIC AND MARKET CONDITIONS

An important element of this study is the review of existing real estate market and economic conditions in the study area and the identification of market opportunities that could be developed in tandem with proposed investment in upgraded, premium transit service in the corridor. To provide a foundation for identifying such prospects, an analysis of growth trends and the outlook for future development opportunities within the study area was conducted, relying in part on mapping and statistical information provided by the RPCGB. The following discussion summarizes the investigation of existing real estate market and economic conditions within the region and the study corridor.

2.5.1 Introduction

The Birmingham region has long been one of the economic powerhouse cities of the southeastern United States. Since the namesake city was established as a municipality following the American Civil War, Birmingham has been a major railroad transportation hub and a center for mining and manufacturing. The region was found to be rich in iron ore, coal, and limestone, making it a natural location for the production of iron and steel products. While the manufacturing industry is still important to Birmingham, the economy has diversified significantly over the past fifty years to include significant development in banking, university education, telecommunications, insurance, power generation, and life sciences industries. In 2010, the largest employer in Birmingham (and in Alabama) was the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) with about 20,000 employees. Combined with other major medical facilities such as St. Vincent's Health System, Children's Hospital, Brookwood Medical Center, Trinity Medical, and Shelby Baptist Medical Center, UAB anchors a highly regarded life sciences industry cluster that supports a broad segment of the local economy.

Biotechnology and medical research based largely at UAB has placed Birmingham among the most successful research centers in the nation according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Research

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

is centered on treatment for AIDS, cancer and heart disease. In many ways, the medical facilities in Birmingham shape opportunities for new development and visitor trends related to wellness, healthcare and other medical treatments. Technology spin-offs reflect innovation resulting from the highly trained workforce and commercialization of intellectual property emerging from the universities and medical industries.

While the legacy manufacturing industries have waned, opportunities persist and expand for secondary production and fabrication of automobile parts and other electronic components resulting from Alabama's successful recruitment of major auto makers including Honda, Mercedes, Saturn, Toyota, Kia, Nissan, General Motors, and Hyundai. Nine assembly plants are located within a 200-mile radius of Birmingham. At the same time, the tourism sector is growing, drawn to Birmingham's rich cultural resources and profound civil rights history. City leaders have pushed hard in recent years to expand Birmingham's potential as a convention, organized team sports events, and entertainment destination with the addition of facilities such as the Birmingham-Jefferson County Convention Center (BJCCC), Railroad Park, the new Barons minor league baseball stadium, a planned domed arena, potential renovation of Legion Field, and development of the CrossPlex sports complex on the site of the former Alabama State Fairgrounds. A new mixed-use entertainment district adjacent to BJCCC is intended to enhance the resources available to visitors and residents alike. Not far away, Talladega International Speedway appeals to auto racing fans.

Transportation has played a significant role in the development patterns in Birmingham. Four primary interstate highways (I-22, I-59, I-65, and I-20) and a partial perimeter highway (I-459) provide radial and regional access between downtown Birmingham and nearby communities such as Bessemer, Hoover, Mountain Brook, Pelham, Trussville, and Talladega. US 31 and US 280 are principal surface arterials servicing downtown Birmingham and nearby suburbs. US 11 - the focus of this current corridor planning effort - connects downtown Birmingham with Bessemer and several smaller municipalities such as Midfield, Fairfield, Lipscomb, Brighton, and McCalla. US 280, US 31, and I-65 were the primary corridors which facilitated so-called "white flight" during the decades between 1960 and 2000 to Shelby County, located south of Jefferson County and the central core of Birmingham. While Shelby County "boomed," the population within Birmingham's municipal limits has sustained a steady decline, as have those of other corridor cities. A discussion of recent population, housing, and employment trends is included later in this report.

2.5.2 Corridor Context and Development Issues

Commonly known as "the Bessemer Super Highway," US 11 corridor historically was one of the most heavily utilized roadways providing through-passage from points north of Birmingham to popular destinations south like Tuscaloosa, Florida, and the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. US 11 also connected the Birmingham business district with US Steel's headquarters and production facilities in Fairfield, as well as the business centers in Bessemer. Downtown Birmingham and Bessemer still function as the northern and southern anchors of the Southwest Corridor. However, the "glory days" when US Steel was at its peak in the 1950s and 1960s have long passed. Today the super highway's critical transportation role has faded and has been largely replaced by I-20/59, which parallels US 11 just to the west. The Southwest Corridor study area is roughly twenty-two miles long from downtown Birmingham to the Tuscaloosa County Line south of McCalla. The physical character of the neighborhoods changes widely as one travels from north to south, generally older in the northern reaches and more recently

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

developed toward the southern end. There are several significant economic focal points in the study corridor:

- The small business Entrepreneurial District just west of downtown Birmingham,
- The expansive UAB campus in downtown,
- Five Points West" near the former Alabama State Fairgrounds,
- Princeton Baptist Hospital complex,
- Retail district comprising Western Hills Mall, Walmart, and other retail on Aronov Drive in Fairfield and Midfield,
- The Bessemer downtown business district,
- The Academy Drive retail and institutional district, including,
- Walmart, UAB Medical West, Bessemer Civic Center and Lawson State Community College - Bessemer, and
- The industrial and commercial districts in the McCalla area along and south of I-459.

A more detailed description of the corridor study area is presented elsewhere in this report, but these activity centers represent the varied character of historic business development around which potential opportunities for new development or redevelopment might occur. In between these nodes, there is a mixture of neighborhoods that still retain their distinctive character, as well as significant areas that are functionally and physically obsolete and lie fallow or vacant. There is abundant capacity to absorb new development in the US 11 corridor, but recent growth trends and development patterns have largely bypassed the area in favor of suburban destinations to the south and east.

In order to attract new investment and development of "in-fill" housing or redevelopment of commercial areas, planning strategies must embrace improvements to aging (or absent) infrastructure, enhance schools and other family oriented services, provide new and expanded parks and civic amenities, and implement more frequent and convenient modern transportation systems. Determining how transportation investments best be used to increase and enhance the future development opportunities in the Southwest Corridor a key focus of this analysis.

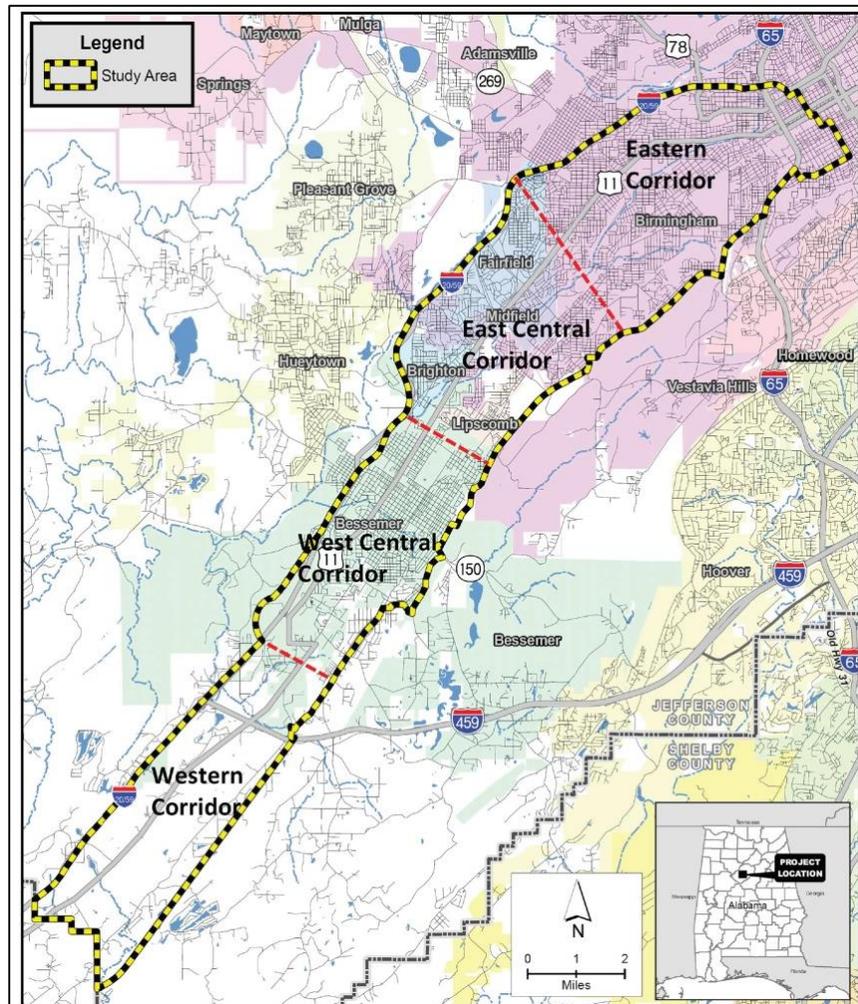
2.5.3 Corridor Overview

The Southwest Corridor, generally straddling US 11 in the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), extends southwestward from Downtown Birmingham to the Tuscaloosa County line. The Southwest Corridor study area illustrated in Figure 2.76 below is two to three miles wide and contained entirely within the bounds of Jefferson County. The subject corridor passes through six different incorporated jurisdictions, including the cities of Birmingham, Fairfield, Midfield, Lipscomb, Brighton, and Bessemer. The boundaries of the Southwest Corridor are generally described as downtown Birmingham and 17th and 20th Streets South to the north/northeast, Interstate 20/Interstate 59 to the west/northwest, Tuscaloosa County to the south/southwest, and Red Mountain and Eastern Valley Road to the east/southeast.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Figure 2.76: Corridor Study Subareas



2.5.4 General Character of the Corridor

The Southwest Corridor study area, which generally follows US 11, is anchored by downtown Birmingham on one end and historic downtown Bessemer and the unincorporated area of McCalla on the other. The physical character of the roughly twenty-two mile-long corridor shifts noticeably from (largely) what could be generally characterized as older, outdated development through the northern and central portions between Birmingham and Bessemer to newer, more suburban-style development toward the southern end in the vicinity of I-459.

A broad variety of land uses currently exist within the Southwest Corridor study area including single and multifamily residential, commercial uses such as retail and office space, institutional uses like health care and educational facilities, recreational and cultural sites, and industrial uses such as manufacturing, warehousing and distribution activities, as well as vacant buildings and land, both infill and greenfield sites. Though the study area in its entirety is heavily residential, for the most part commercial uses or vacant sites line the US 11 corridor, with residential generally tucked behind or set back significantly from this main thoroughfare. Institutional facilities and a variety of recreational uses can be found

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

throughout the corridor study area as well. Industrial uses are scattered throughout the corridor area, but are especially concentrated along main rail lines and the southern study area boundary and just outside of the study area boundary to the north.

Overall, the study area can be characterized as highly residential throughout the corridor, with a variety of income levels, housing stock, and neighborhood types. Within the study area, neighborhood character transitions as the corridor moves southward from a more urban and urban-edge format/feel to older, traditional urban neighborhoods moving to first-ring style suburban development/communities to exurban enclaves and even in some areas to what could be characterized as rural in nature. There is certainly a mixture of older neighborhoods within the corridor study area, some that still retain their character and quality, as well as those that are deteriorating or functionally and physically obsolete and other areas that lie fallow or vacant. Both established and newer suburban style subdivisions with a range of housing unit sizes and types are also found in the study area but mainly along the southern end. Other housing types found along the corridor include multifamily apartment complexes and some public housing communities.

Commercial space abounds within the study area, primarily in the form of retail, restaurants and services. Generally, through much of the corridor, retail shopping centers and retail buildings currently in operation are showing signs of considerable age and wear, even physical and functional obsolescence, while still others sit vacant or abandoned and further deteriorating. While newer or refurbished commercial development can be found in limited amounts scattered throughout the middle and northern portions of the study area, concentrations of it are found only toward the southern end of the corridor. Common retail land uses within the corridor as a whole include a variety of discount retailers, clothing and accessories stores, and thrift stores; health and beauty goods and pharmacies; supermarkets and convenience stores; fast food and limited/full service restaurants, including both national and local franchises as well as neighborhood bars and "mom-and-pop" locally owned restaurants; and cell phone and electronics stores, among others. Other commercial uses include financial services such as bank branches and tax preparation, pawnshops, title loans, and check cashing/payday loan operations; auto-related places, such as auto parts stores, dealerships and used car lots, tire sales, auto repair and scrap yards, and gas stations; self-storage facilities, rental goods, and hotel/motel properties. General service-type uses observed include daycares, laundry facilities, outpatient medical care such as dialysis and general medical clinics and rehabilitation centers, and salons and barbershops, among others.

A limited amount of conventional office space exists within the corridor, generally located proximate to downtown Birmingham in and around the Entrepreneurial District or associated with medical centers, public sector government offices, (especially in downtown Bessemer) or UAB. Other office-type properties scattered throughout the remainder of the corridor study area are generally small-scale professional buildings and primarily older, though a limited number of more recently developed spaces were observed.

A considerable number of institutional uses exist within the Southwest Corridor study area, including healthcare and a variety of educational facilities. Two major healthcare centers are located within the study area: Princeton Baptist Medical Center, a long-established 368-bed facility located toward the northern reaches of the corridor, and Medical West, a 189-bed facility located south of Downtown Bessemer affiliated with the UAB Health System. Both facilities have affiliated medical office building space as well and serve as substantial employment centers in the study area. Numerous K-12

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

educational facilities - public, private, faith-based, and charter - are located throughout the corridor study area, serving the educational needs of the 26% of the population under the age of 18 living in this area. Additionally, a number of higher educational facilities are located within the bounds of the study area, including the main campus of UAB, Birmingham Southern College, Miles College, and two branches of Lawson State Community College. Educational facilities and campuses such as these are vital assets within any community and can present critical linkages to the success of potential economic development initiatives and redevelopment programs within a targeted area.

The Southwest Corridor is also known for numerous recreational and cultural uses as well. The corridor boasts several key recreational sites that draw visitors from around the region and even statewide, including long-established landmarks such as Legion Field and Rickwood Field, the CrossPlex sports complex on the site of the former Alabama State Fairgrounds, and newly developed destinations such as Railroad Park. The Alabama Adventures theme park lies just outside the study area west of Bessemer. Located within the corridor near Downtown Birmingham and UAB's main campus, Railroad Park has been described as "Birmingham's Living Room", drawing visitors and residents from all over the metro area to its recreational and cultural offerings. Other recreational uses include the Robert House Municipal Golf Course and a number of parks of various sizes and uses located throughout the study area. Important cultural destinations can also be found within the bounds of the study area, including the Civil Rights District where the landmark 16 Street Baptist Church and Birmingham Civil Rights Institute are located. A number of time-honored cemeteries are also located within the corridor, including historic Elmwood Cemetery. This notable cemetery was established in the early 1900s, occupies more than 400 acres of park-like land, and is the final resting place of decorated veterans, civil rights leaders, prominent citizens, and local heroes. A national wildlife refuge is also located within the corridor, as is the Arlington Antebellum Home and Gardens, which showcases the estate of one of Birmingham's founders. The historic area of Elyton where Birmingham industry has its roots is also located toward the northern portion of the study area.

The Southwest Corridor has generally been associated with industrial operations and uses. While warehousing, distribution, manufacturing and other industrial type uses are scattered throughout the study area, major industrial concentrations are also prominently located just outside the corridor boundary to the north/northwest. Such operations include US Steel's Fairfield Works plant, US Pipe's Birmingham plant, Vulcan Materials Bessemer plant, and various other industrial or distribution/warehouse users. Within the corridor, industrial parks and sites tend to locate proximate major rail lines or toward the southern boundary of the study area. Industrial uses within the corridor are also expanding with the development of the Jefferson Metropolitan Industrial Park in McCalla and other smaller industrial concentrations, such as Bessemer Industrial Park and Interstate Industrial Park north of downtown Bessemer, as well as individual industrial sites. Transportation options that support industrial development are also continuing to expand with the recent addition of the 25-acre CSX rail hub in Bessemer and the recently opened 316-acre Norfolk Southern Birmingham Regional Intermodal Hub in McCalla.

A significant number of vacant or neglected properties and unoccupied or partially empty buildings and commercial centers are also found throughout the corridor study area. Depending on their location and local goals for the corridor, these properties may provide opportunities for redevelopment and adaptive re-use projects aligned with alternative transportation solutions and community redevelopment strategies implemented to increase and enhance the future development opportunities in the Southwest Corridor study area.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

2.5.5 Socio-economic Profile

The project team analyzed demographic trend data available from third-party sources to define each trade area's socioeconomic context and compare its characteristics to Jefferson County and the Birmingham- Hoover MSA. Five-year projections (2010 to 2015) for attribute data were used to analyze near-term trends for the study area. The future data included here indicate general trending and are in no way predictive of actual outcomes. Third-party population and household projections are consistent within standard industry practices and are included as one perspective in the analysis.

The following Table 2.7 illustrates the data analyzed for the corridor study area compared to the Birmingham-Hoover MSA and Jefferson County. Between 2000 and 2010, the population within the study area has declined at a faster pace than experienced by the county. Meanwhile, population has increased within the MSA over the same time period. These trends are expected to continue through 2015.

The study area has a noticeably lower median household income when compared to the county and MSA, as well as a higher number of persons per household. The MSA and the county both exhibit an owner/rental split of about 70%/30%, while the study area is lower at about 60%/40%. The average household income and the percentage of households in the highest income bracket lag both measures in the county and MSA.

Median and average household income in the study area are also projected to grow at a slower rate than the county. Much of the housing stock is considerably older in the corridor study area than the county or MSA with about 84% of all housing built prior to 1979.

With a median age of 37.3 years, the resident population of the corridor study area is only slightly younger than the MSA population, which has a median age of 37.8 years. In the corridor, the majority of housing units - more than 75% - are valued at no more than \$100,000 whereas only 37% of housing units in the MSA fall into this value range. Owner-occupied homes valued between \$100,000 and \$199,999 comprise another 37% of total units in the MSA but only 21.4% of total housing units within the corridor. This disparity suggests factors such as a greater percentage of lower income earners in the area, a higher balance of renter-occupied units, and proximity to major industrial and heavy manufacturing concentrations may have likely contributed to a depreciation (or exerted downward pressure on) of property values especially for the more in-town, long-established neighborhoods along the corridor.

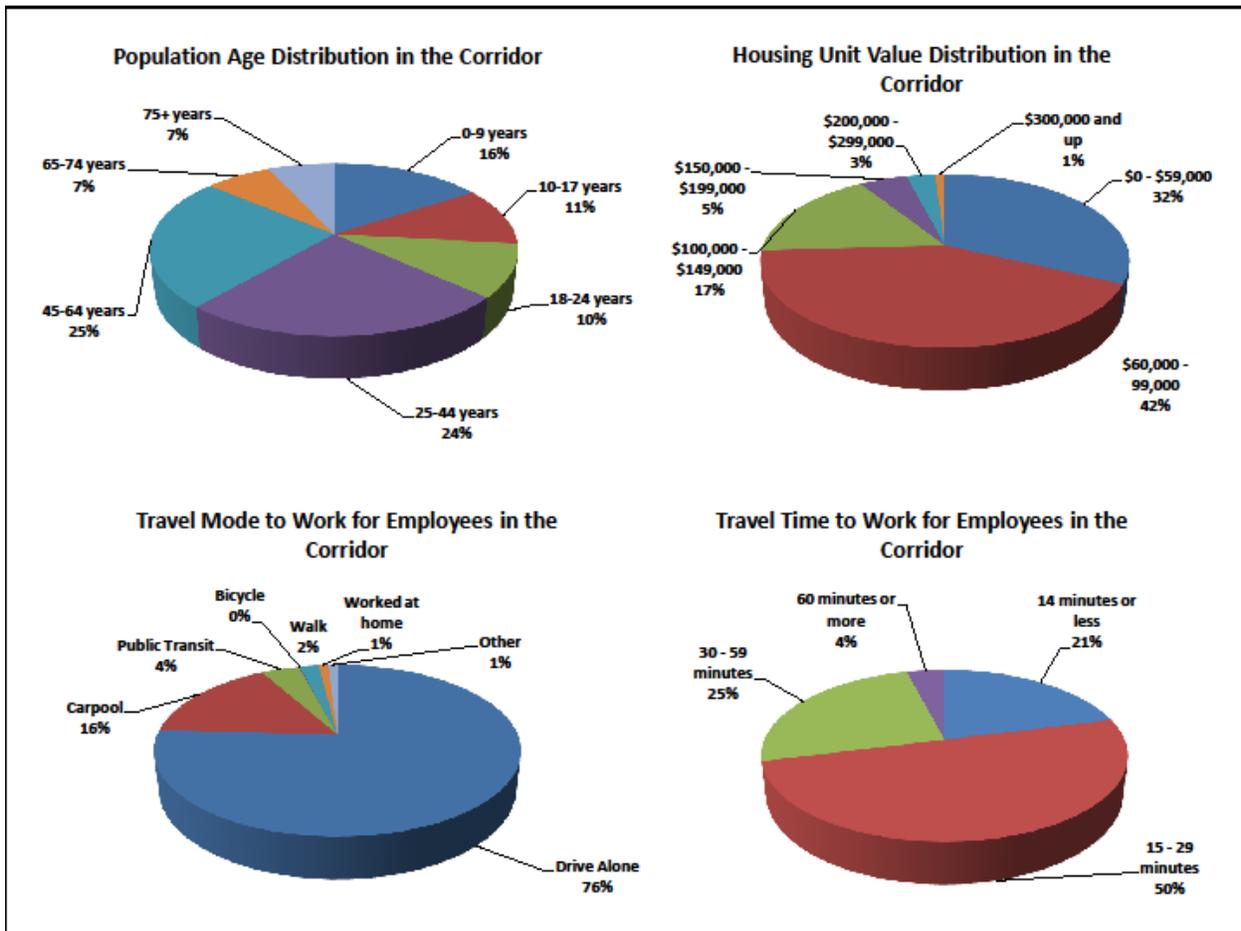
In terms of access to employment, 71% of the employed resident population within the study area can commute to work in 29 minutes or less while 61% of the MSA's working residents can travel to work within the same timeframe (Figure 2.77). Notably, nearly 4% of the working resident population in the corridor study area uses public transportation to travel to work while less than 1% in the MSA chose this same mode. Further, nearly 2% of resident employees in the study area walk as a travel mode to work as compared to 1% in the MSA. The use of carpooling in the study area also outpaces the MSA at 16% and nearly 12%, respectively.

Table 2.7: Demographic Trends Analysis

Demographics Trends Analysis				
		SW Corridor Study Area	Birmingham - Hoover MSA	Jefferson County
Population	2000 Census-based	138,680	1,052,238	662,047
	2010 Estimated	128,362	1,130,075	659,636
	2015 Projected	123,592	1,161,967	655,122
	<i>Historical Annual Growth 2000 to 2010</i>	-0.8%	0.7%	0.0%
	<i>Projected Annual Growth 2010 to 2015</i>	-0.8%	0.6%	-0.1%
Households	2000 Census-based	52,905	412,376	263,265
	2010 Estimated	58,602	449,542	267,317
	2015 Projected	48,059	464,477	267,173
	<i>Historical Annual Growth 2000 to 2010</i>	1.0%	0.9%	0.2%
	<i>Projected Annual Growth 2010 to 2015</i>	-3.9%	0.7%	0.0%
	Average Household Size	2.49	2.46	2.40
Household Income	2010 \$0 - \$49,000	61.2%	42.9%	53.3%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	21.4%	22.1%	18.5%
	\$75,000 - \$99,999	8.8%	13.8%	11.0%
	\$100,000 - \$149,999	6.5%	12.8%	10.2%
	\$150,000 or more	2.1%	8.3%	7.0%
	<i>Median Household Income</i>	<i>\$30,152</i>	<i>\$48,852</i>	<i>\$46,783</i>
	<i>Average Household Income</i>	<i>\$40,199</i>	<i>\$66,891</i>	<i>\$65,283</i>
	2015 \$0 - \$49,000	68.9%	47.3%	49.8%
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	15.8%	18.6%	18.2%
	\$75,000 - \$99,999	7.3%	12.3%	11.5%
	\$100,000 - \$149,999	5.9%	13.0%	12.0%
	\$150,000 or more	2.0%	8.8%	8.4%
	<i>Median Household Income</i>	<i>\$32,148</i>	<i>\$53,600</i>	<i>\$50,256</i>
<i>Average Household Income</i>	<i>\$43,598</i>	<i>\$73,581</i>	<i>\$71,294</i>	
<i>Projected Annual Growth in Median (2010-2015)</i>	<i>1.29%</i>	<i>1.87%</i>	<i>1.44%</i>	
<i>Projected Annual Growth in Average (2010-2015)</i>	<i>1.64%</i>	<i>1.92%</i>	<i>1.78%</i>	
Housing Units	2010 Total Housing Units	58,602	504,022	303,083
	Total Occupied Units	49,699	449,542	267,317
	% Owner	60.4%	72.5%	67.5%
	% Renter	39.6%	27.5%	32.5%
	2015 Total Housing Units	56,549	519,763	302,545
	Total Occupied Units	48,059	464,477	267,173
	% Owner	60.2%	72.7%	67.4%
	% Renter	39.8%	27.3%	32.6%
	<i>Projected Annual Growth of Total Occupied Units (2010-2015)</i>	<i>-0.67%</i>	<i>0.66%</i>	<i>-0.01%</i>
	Homes by Year Built	Prior to 1939	15.3%	7.5%
1940 to 1959		35.1%	17.1%	22.7%
1960 to 1979		33.7%	30.0%	34.5%
1980 to 1989		6.6%	13.9%	12.0%
1990 to 1999		4.5%	17.9%	12.0%
2000 or after		4.8%	13.7%	9.4%

Source: Claritas (2010); RERC Strategic Advisors

Figure 2.77: Selected Demographic Characteristics



Source: Claritas 2010; RERC Strategic Advisors.

Beyond 2015, the corridor is estimated to further decline in population by about 0.8% annually through 2030. The number of households in the corridor is also projected to decrease over the next 15 year period by approximately 0.7% a year. Conversely, median income is projected to grow at slightly more than 2% annually during the same time period for households in the corridor study area. According to preliminary data from the 2010 US Census, McCalla is the only area of the corridor study area demonstrating a positive trend in population and households. In fact, the McCalla area contains the fast-growing census tracts in Jefferson County and the entire MSA, owing in part to its relatively small reference base. The expanding industrial and intermodal-related opportunities and new housing options available in McCalla suggest that this positive trend may likely continue in this area over the next decade.

2.5.6 Corridor Segments

The Southwest Corridor study area can be generally organized into four broad subareas, each containing one or more significant economic focal point. A description of each segment follows.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

East Corridor Segment

Location: generally from Birmingham's central business district westward toward Birmingham city limits.

Significant US 11 Economic Focal Points include:

- Main campus of the UAB and its main medical center,
- Princeton Baptist Medical Center, and
- Crossplex sports center with indoor track and aquatics facilities.

Other notable features and activity centers include:

- Innovation Depot in the Entrepreneurial District - technology incubator public-private partnership with UAB, the City of Birmingham, Jefferson County, and the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, among others;
- The Civil Rights District - Birmingham Civil Rights Institute & 16th Street Baptist Church,
- Railroad Park, described as Birmingham's Living Room,
- Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority - Central Station,
- Federal government offices, including the Social Security Administration,
- Legion Field, and
- Birmingham Southern College.



Princeton Baptist Medical Center

Physical Character and General Land Uses: Though this eastern-most portion of the corridor contains the UAB campus, Railroad Park, and some residential neighborhoods within its bounds, the majority of the west downtown area along US 11 is characterized by mainly commercial and light industrial uses due to its proximity to the downtown core. Older, low rise warehouse-type buildings house such operations as light manufacturing or assembly, wholesale retailers, construction materials and building suppliers, distributors, machine and repair shops, and others. Other commercial uses include several restaurants, car lots and auto parts stores, storage facilities, and other convenience-style retail.

Vacant commercial buildings and land, as well as declining motel properties, were also observed. Moving west along the corridor, a number of adult venues can be found in addition to a sizable older public housing development. Limited office uses within this segment can be found closer to the downtown core.

Most daytime activity observed in this area was in and around the Innovation Depot, the centerpiece of the Entrepreneurial District (E- District), a multi-block area identified with street signage that has been designed and implemented to attract biotechnology and technology- related firms to the area. Excellent

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

location for proximity and immediate access to the downtown core and older building stock has architectural appeal.

Further west, this segment of the Southwest Corridor is generally characterized by dated, neighborhood retail shopping centers surrounded by residential neighborhoods that extend back toward the northern and southern boundaries of the corridor. Industrial uses can be found scattered throughout this segment as well. The former Alabama State Fairgrounds that occupied 117 acres at the northeastern corner of US 11 and Ensley Avenue is being redeveloped, beginning with the new CrossPlex sports facility. Future phases of this complex have been planned. Commercial development is proposed for the area of the site bordering US 11. The City of Birmingham Economic Development Dept. issued a request for proposals from developers for the first commercial phase of its master plan, with a focus on commercial uses that relate to the sports theme of the fairgrounds redevelopment plan, including family restaurants and sports equipment retailers. The Phase 2 retail component would be larger, but the tenant specifications and timing are future pursuits.

The main intersection at Ensley Avenue and US 11 is also fronted by older retail centers, including the Five Points West shopping center, built in the late 1960s and a dated grocery-anchored shopping center. Many of the retail and commercial properties in this segment are either set back considerably from the road with parking fronting the main corridor or have window-less brick exteriors that come right up to the sidewalk, when present.



Vacant Strip Center

Other commercial offerings in the area include discount apparel and accessories, beauty supply shops, check-cashing, title loan, and tax preparation operations, pawn shops, auto parts and tire stores, restaurant outparcels including fast food and chain restaurants as well as local eateries, and several bank branches. A number of vacant parcels and dilapidated properties are also present along US 11. There is a relatively new Winn Dixie grocery and CVS drugstore sharing a building on the northwest corner of US 11 at Ensley Avenue. Considerable daytime car traffic and pedestrian and retail activity around the retail centers and major intersection was observed.

East Central Corridor Segment

Location: generally situated around the intersection of US 11 and Aronov Boulevard.

Significant Economic Focal Points include:

- Western Hills Mall and adjacent Walmart center.
- Other notable features and activity centers include:
- Neighborhood shopping centers, including Midfield Shopping Center,

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- Former Sears and vacant shopping centers,
- Home Depot,
- Former US Steel Fairfield Works headquarters building, and
- Miles College.

Physical Character and General Land Uses: The East Central segment of the Southwest Corridor is situated centrally within the corridor study area and can be generally characterized as a significant center of activity within the corridor given the concentration of retail surrounded by residential neighborhoods and industrial uses. The commercial uses in this area include both a mix of older spaces, such as Western Hills Mall, the Midfield Shopping Center, and other adjacent strip centers, and more



Western Hills Mall

recently developed commercial uses such as the Walmart Supercenter adjacent to the mall, the Home Depot fronting I- 20/59. Several significant retail centers sit vacant or nearly empty, including the former Sears location, an old Winn-Dixie, and the previous Walmart site. Some larger commercial spaces have been backfilled with bingo halls and other non-retail tenants. Other retail/commercial uses in the area include several bank branches, grocery stores, health and beauty retailers, fast food and limited service restaurants, discount clothing and accessories stores and pawn shops and check-cashing/title loan services.

Office uses within the corridor are mainly limited to older small-scale professional and medical office space and the former US Steel headquarters building, which is still in use but largely unoccupied. A major concentration of industrial and heavy manufacturing operations sits just across I-20/59 and the northern boundary of the study area where US Steel's Fairfield Works plant is located. Industrial sites within the corridor are clustered toward the southern boundary of the corridor and near a main rail line that runs through this segment below US 11. Despite the significant and concentrated activity observed in this area likely attributed to its location along US 11 and in the corridor, proximity to a significant industrial site and employer, and variety of surrounding residential neighborhoods, a number of neglected or vacant properties and partially vacant or unoccupied centers were also observed here.

West Central Corridor Segment

Location: generally situated around the intersection of US 11 and 14th Street through the intersection of US 11 and Academy Drive.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Significant Economic Focal Points include:

- Historic Downtown Bessemer - includes business incubator facility in partnership with Bessemer Development Board, and
- Academy Drive retail district.

Other notable features and activity centers include:

- UAB Medical West hospital and affiliated clinics,
- Lawson State Community College - Bessemer Campus - includes business incubator partnership with Bessemer Development Board,
- CSX Rail Hub and Interstate Industrial Park just north of the downtown, and
- Alabama Adventure Park and largely vacant Watermark Place outlet center just west of I-20/I-59 and the study area boundary.

Physical Character and General Land Uses: The West Central segment of the Southwest Corridor is one of the most varied segments by land use and development period within the study area. Like a large extent of the corridor north of it, a mix of low end commercial uses line US 11 through much of this area, including auto parts stores, check cashing and title loans services, pawn shops, discount retailers, and fast food restaurants. The West Lake Mall, late 1960s-era indoor shopping mall, now sits vacant surrounded by dated shopping centers with tenants that include a variety of discount retailers and even a large-format local thrift store operated by local non-profit called The Foundry.

However, historical downtown Bessemer, which lies just southeast of the main thoroughfare, still maintains much of the original charm and character associated with a small town center despite continued declines in population and employment and the economic climate. Land uses within the downtown include office buildings, public buildings such as the local court system and library, retailers such as a sporting goods store and furniture showrooms, restaurants and grocers, and services like bank branches and barbershops as well as church buildings



Industrial Site in Bessemer

and social services. The original train station, still in good condition, stands next to the rail line that frames the southern edge of the historic downtown. A significant amount of open space adjacent to the train depot could be suitable for a new transit-oriented mixed use development tying into the fabric of the existing downtown. Mature neighborhoods with a traditional in-town feel surround the historic downtown, though varying levels of stability exist. Significant levels of automobile traffic were observed along US 11 and major streets through the downtown, and a number of pedestrians were active within the downtown.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Further south, an area of newer development has evolved at Academy Drive where US 11 and I-20/59 converge and is a bright spot along this corridor. Many of the land uses in this portion of the corridor are commercial in nature and include newer mid-scale hotels affiliated with national flags (chains), several car dealerships, full service national chain restaurants such as Ruby Tuesday and Applebee's, a Walmart anchored shopping center with other smaller discount retail stores and outparcel restaurants, and some limited small-scale professional office space. Several significant institutional uses include UAB Medical Center West, the Bessemer Civic Center, and a brand new hilltop campus for Bessemer High School. The Bessemer campus of Lawson State Community College is also located along this portion of the corridor, and though it appears to be comprised of mainly older buildings, it also appears to be expanding outward occupying a former bank branch building along the corridor for operations. Other land uses in the area include several churches and private schools, as well as an established suburban-style residential community just off the corridor. It is at this point that the character of the corridor clearly begins to transition to more of an exurban style of development with some areas still largely rural in character.

Western Corridor Segment

Location: generally situated from the area south of downtown Bessemer to I-459 and beyond to the county line.

Significant Economic Focal Points:

- Jefferson Metropolitan Industrial Park,
- Norfolk Southern Birmingham Regional Intermodal Center, and
- Tannehill Promenade Shopping Center.

Other notable features and activity centers include:

- New housing developments along McAdory School and Eastern Valley Roads,
- Industrial and retail development and high school campus along I- 459, and
- Bessemer Industrial Park.



Tannehill Promenade Mall

Physical Character and General

Land Uses: The McCalla area is the western segment of the Southwest Corridor study area and has been identified by preliminary 2010 census tract data as one of the fastest growing areas within the Birmingham-Hoover MSA. Much of the McCalla area can still be characterized as generally rural in character. Established homes sit on large parcels and are significantly set back from roads and neighboring homes or surrounded by wooded property. Commercial uses are generally limited and include a lumber company, a skilled care facility for

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

the elderly and a Flying J travel plaza just off I-59. Though industrial uses are expanding considerably in the area, these sites are still generally surrounded by undeveloped land. However, a portion of this southern-most segment is clearly transitioning to an exurban community with a mix of new suburban style housing developments, a grocery-anchored neighborhood shopping center, an expanding high school campus and multiple industrial sites located along I-459. Further, a large community style shopping complex with a Target, numerous junior anchors and a variety of restaurants and smaller retail stores sits just outside of the southern boundary of the corridor adjacent to this growing center of activity.

Industrial uses in the McCalla area are located primarily along the southern boundary of the study area, proximate I-459 and south of I-459 near a main rail line. The Jefferson Metropolitan Industrial Park, located south of I-459, is approximately 740 acres of large-scale light manufacturing and distribution centers. Tenants include the Home Depot with a 600,000 SF regional distribution center Office Max, and Plastipak, among others. Industrial-type uses are continuing to expand throughout the area as the planned and approved 316-acre, \$112 million Norfolk Southern Intermodal Facility comes online in McCalla near the Jefferson Metro Industrial Park. Daytime activity in the form of automobile traffic was concentrated around the local high school campus, neighborhood retail center and industrial areas concentrated around I-459 and the southern boundary of the study area. This area is largely incompatible with pedestrian foot traffic.



Distribution Center

2.5.7 Market and Economic Context

Recent data from a number of industry sources provide context for the assumptions used in the accompanying analysis. This information should not be construed as an affirmation of the market in which the project will perform, but it does provide some perspective on the underlying economic influences associated with the region's real estate sales and leasing activity.

Employment

As in many places nationwide, the entire State of Alabama continues to experience an economic slowdown even though the recession is now reported officially to have ended. In both the Birmingham-Hoover MSA and the state, unemployment rates were moderately lower than the national rate in December 2010. For the United States, unemployment was reported to be approximately 9.4% compared to 8.4% and 9.1% for the MSA and Alabama respectively. Within the MSA, Shelby County posted the lowest unemployment rate at 6.7%, compared to Jefferson County with 8.7% unemployment.

Actual employment counts in the MSA, however, are up 1.3% from the 2009 annualized number of 465,551 workers to an estimated 471,817 workers reported for December 2010. The December 2010 amount is about 6.5% less than the average annual employment over the previous ten years. The MSA

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

hit its historical peak employment of 520,536 people in 2006, in the middle of the economic expansion that ended in 2007. Between 2000 and 2008, the MSA's unemployment rate remained below 5.0%. In 2009, however, the unemployment rate increased from 4.6% to 9.4% while total employment declined by over 20,000 jobs.

In the multi-county MSA, Jefferson County is the principal commercial center and represents about 55% of the region's total employment. Employment is disproportionately concentrated in Jefferson County, similar to characteristics of the region's population as described below. Shelby County, however, has experienced the highest rate of growth in the MSA while Jefferson County has posted slight decreases in employment over the last ten years.

There are a number of major private employers in the MSA. Many locate in or proximate to Birmingham's CBD and are associated with stable conditions or moderate growth potential. The twenty largest employers in the MSA represent about 85,000 employees. About 29.6% of these employees are employed by public sector organizations such as the Jefferson County Board of Education and the City of Birmingham. About 20.4% are employed by the health services industry, including Baptist Health Systems, St. Vincent's Health System, Children's Health System, Brookwood Medical Center, and the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation. UAB is the area's largest employer with nearly 20,000 employees. Birmingham is also a leading financial center in the southeast. Two major banks - Regions Bank and BBVA (formerly Compass Bank) - are headquartered in the MSA. Financial and insurance companies such as Regions, Wells Fargo, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, and BBVA represent about 15,000 employees. Other major employers include AT&T and the Alabama Power Company.

Population

Despite the state of the economy, population continues to increase in the MSA providing implicit opportunities for both housing development and commercial service. The 2010 estimated census counts place the MSA population at approximately 1,128,000 people, up from 1,052,000 people in 2000. Jefferson County is by far the most populous county within the MSA, but experienced a low 0.5% gain between 2000 and 2010. Unlike the MSA, the City of Birmingham, which has shown population decreases in the last four decades, experienced a decline of almost 13%, or over 30,000 people. Despite the decline across the city, census tracts comprising the CBD and UAB both posted population increases, indicating a growing preference for urban residential settings, not only in the city, but the MSA as well. Birmingham's decline was offset by significant growth in the City of Hoover and Shelby County, both growing by approximately 36% over the past decade. Shelby County, now with a population of about 195,000, moved up to the fifth largest county in the state. In southwest Jefferson County, recent growth in retail, residential and distribution center projects has propelled the McCalla area to the top census tract in terms of population growth over the past decade.

Residential Market

Residential construction activity has declined in Alabama and within the Birmingham-Hoover MSA, mirroring other areas across the US. Statewide, the number of permits issued has fallen to levels not seen in more than a decade. Table 2.8 shows the total number of permits issued annually for the eleven-year period from 2000 to 2010 in Jefferson County, Shelby County, the MSA and the State of Alabama. Though residential permits issued within Jefferson County have declined from a spike of 4,548

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

in 2006, the number of permits issued in 2007 and 2008 are consistent with annual totals from prior years. Growth in single family permits in Shelby County kept pace with much larger Jefferson County between 2000 and 2008. As shown in Table 2.8, very few multi-family units were built in Shelby, whereas in Jefferson County multi-family units consistently made up over 75% of the total multi-family units built in the MSA. Total residential permits in the MSA declined to 1,615 in 2010. Given interest in the area, partly as the result of development activities in downtown Birmingham, Hoover, Shelby County, and the McCalla area, it is foreseeable the number of permits issued will improve to prior levels.

Table 2.8: Building Permits Issued 2000-2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Jefferson County											
Single Family	2,347	2,377	2,567	3,325	3,269	3,396	3,300	2,589	1,393	972	910
Multi-Family	<u>710</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>256</u>	<u>624</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>465</u>	<u>1,248</u>	<u>402</u>	<u>946</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>36</u>
Total	3,057	2,507	2,823	3,949	4,269	3,861	4,548	2,991	2,339	1,034	946
Shelby County											
Single Family	1,742	2,028	2,076	2,159	2,442	2,638	2,321	1,829	685	559	274
Multi-Family	<u>56</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>246</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	1,798	2,028	2,076	2,228	2,688	2,734	2,345	1,883	725	563	274
Birmingham MSA											
Single Family	4,352	4,652	4,918	5,970	6,338	6,873	6,437	4,930	2,325	1,683	1,571
Multi-Family	781	430	259	703	1,393	795	1,370	503	1,034	124	<u>44</u>
Total	5,133	5,082	5,177	6,673	7,731	7,668	7,807	5,433	3,359	1,807	1,615
State of Alabama											
Single Family	17,406	17,706	18,403	22,256	27,411	30,612	32,034	25,845	17,464	13,266	8,126
Multi-Family	<u>3,734</u>	<u>3,662</u>	<u>3,258</u>	<u>4,585</u>	<u>5,019</u>	<u>5,958</u>	<u>7,902</u>	<u>6,899</u>	<u>5,447</u>	<u>3,857</u>	<u>2,107</u>
Total	21,140	21,368	21,661	26,841	32,430	36,570	39,936	32,744	22,911	17,123	10,233

Source: FHUD SOCDS Building Permits Database (US Bureau of the Census); RERC.

Given the broad concerns about foreclosure activity nationally, Alabama's position is notable. Alabama ranked a favorable 34th among all states based on Realty Trac's January 2011 report. In its 2010 year-end report, Realty Trac listed the Birmingham-Hoover MSA 103rd out of 206 metropolitan areas in terms of overall foreclosure activity with 1.63% of its inventory under financial duress compared with the nation's 2.23% and Las Vegas' 10.88%.

Residential sales in the metro area gained 15.6% for Sept. 2013 over Sept. 2012, and year to date the gain is 10.8% Median sales price crept up 3.1% to \$165,000 over the same period. Days on the market declined 12.2% year to year to 86 days. The number of units listed for sale declined to about 8,000 in the metro area, down from the recession peak in 2007 of 13,560. The inventory to sales ratio has declined from 14.7 in 2010 to 9.2 in 2012. These are all signs of a gradually improving market, albeit a very measured recovery. As noted, however, the study corridor lags in market strength and improvement due to its structural issues in housing age, condition and neighbourhood environments.

Among the reasons the metro area has not performed as poorly as other areas of the country - even as employment may have ebbed - is that it was not exposed to the explosive building conditions and rapid price appreciation experienced elsewhere. While questions likely remain about the general health of the housing market, prices are considered to be at their floor, with the prospect of a slow rate of recovery over the coming years, subject to property condition and market issues.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Office Market

According to Graham and Company's 2010 Office Market Survey, 2009 was a particularly difficult year in the Birmingham office market. Reported as being one of the worst years of the decade, the market posted a negative absorption of 450,000 square feet (SF). Most (approximately 62%) of this negative absorption took place in Class B buildings. The Birmingham CBD went through 2009 relatively unscathed, with it being the only submarket posting positive absorption. Suburban markets such as Midtown (Homewood and Mountain Brook) and southern Birmingham (Rocky Ridge and Riverchase) experienced the worst net absorption of the market areas analyzed. Interestingly, the Highway 280 submarket "bounced back" in 2009 with negative absorption of 11,000 SF, after posting more than 200,000 SF negative absorption in 2008. The office market in the study corridor is not specifically tracked owing to its very small inventory of office space.

In 2010, the CBD continued its trend of being the most viable and productive office submarket. The CBD featured positive net absorption of 88,000 SF, significantly higher than any other submarket in 2010. The Midtown submarket posted the highest occupancy with 93.4%, compared to 92.9% occupancy in the CBD. Despite exhibiting a negative absorption of about 80,000 SF the Highway 280 submarket still commands the highest average lease rate in the metro area at \$21.55 per SF.

Total vacancy in the MSA increased by nearly 25% between 2007 and 2008, which was then followed by a 20% increase between 2008 and 2009. The growth of vacant office space in the market slowed to 4.7% between 2009 and 2010, likely due to reduced construction. Commensurate with the increases in total vacancy, occupancy rates across the Birmingham market dropped from about 91.2% in 2008 to 89.9% in 2010. Lease rates, however, increased during this same timeframe. Among the group of buildings comprising the Class A inventory, the occupancy rate is about 89.2%. For Class B and C buildings, occupancy rates are 89.2% and 88.7%, respectively.

The office market performance across the Birmingham market area is clearly impacted by location within the metro area. The downtown core remains the area's financial center despite being hit hard by bank consolidations. The CBD and Midtown submarkets continue to remain strong through difficult economic conditions. The areas along Highway 280 - a major commercial corridor - will likely have the highest sublease availability in the area because of current economic conditions. Other areas such as Rocky Ridge and Riverchase continue to present great potential for medical office and research and development uses, despite experiencing their largest negative absorption in a decade during 2009.

Negative absorption has continued through 2012, dropping overall occupancy to 84.4%. New construction has been negligible. It is anticipated that beyond 2013, the economic recovery will gradually drive leasing and absorption into the positive range. As noted the office market in the study corridor is very small and is not actively tracked by real estate consultants.

Retail Market

Birmingham's retail market faced a variety of setbacks and challenges in 2009, but 2010 has been reported to be the beginning of a slow and steady recovery as consumer sales began to increase in late 2009 and continue throughout 2012. According to EGS's annual marketing reports, the Birmingham market area posted a negative absorption of 164,000 SF in 2009, but the market significantly improved

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

in 2010 with a net absorption of 36,000 SF. Occupancy and lease rates, however, decreased slightly from 88% to 87.6% and from \$16.04 per SF to \$15.77 per SF, respectively.

In their annual report, EGS defined the Birmingham market area as eight submarkets. The Western submarket, which includes areas along US 11 and I-20/59, has been a particular "bright spot" within the region. Despite a growing amount of obsolete space likely needing to be repurposed or removed from the inventory, this submarket posted a positive net absorption of 20,243 SF in 2010. Occupancy was up from 85.6% in 2009 to 86.2% in 2010. The average lease rate within the submarket also posted an increase from \$11.88 in 2009 to \$12.04 in 2010.

According to the market report, the Hoover/Riverchase submarket includes the most retail square footage with about 4,900,000 SF and commands the highest average lease rate of \$29.58 per SF. The greatest potential for future growth, however, appears to be within the Highway 31 South and Highway 280 submarkets. With favorable demographics and accessibility to primary transportation corridors in the region, these submarkets should continue to command a greater share of future growth in the Birmingham market area. The US 31 submarket maintained the highest occupancy rate of 92.2% at year-end 2010.

In addition to its general attractiveness to retail tenants, its low lease rate of \$10.75 per SF also plays a role in the submarket's high occupancy. The US 280 submarket experienced a year-over-year occupancy decrease of 1.3% to 86.2% in 2010, but the average lease rate increased from \$18.40 in 2009 to \$19.67 in 2010 - the second highest in the Birmingham market area.

While 2010 may not have posted significant increases in occupancy or net absorption, there are signs pointing to a gradual rebound across the Birmingham market area. As new residential construction continues to occur in areas along the US 31 and US 280 corridors, new retail growth is anticipated to occur over the next several years. Over 2011-2012, the metro retail market was flat with subpar occupancy continuing. The west submarket including the corridor had a net loss in absorption of nearly 100,000 square feet due to two box retailers. 2012 was also flat with some isolated gains, but little new inventory.

Industrial Market

The Birmingham area industrial market has been on a sharp downward slide since 2007. In 2008, the overall industrial market posted negative absorption of more than 290,000 SF. In 2009 and 2010, the trend continued with negative 308,000 SF and negative 172,000 SF absorption, respectively. Few expansions occurred in 2010, attributing to a decrease in occupancy from 80.3% in 2009 to 78.9% in 2010. With sublease space becoming a prominent feature in the market, the overall occupancy in 2010 decreased to 76.3%. According to EGS's 2011 annual report, this overall occupancy level is the second lowest out of 63 first and second tier industrial markets in the US.

On a more positive note, several new built-to-suit buildings either began or completed construction in 2010. These include a 120,000 SF facility for TruBlu Logistics, a 150,000 SF facility for Posco America, a 120,000 SF facility for BLG Logistics, and a 55,000 SF truck terminal for Old Dominion Freight.

Of the five industrial submarkets tracked by EGS, the only area to experience positive absorption in 2010 was the Central submarket, which posted absorption of about 24,000 SF. This submarket also featured

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

the highest occupancy at 84.3%, but commanded the lowest average lease rate at \$3.19 per SF. The Southern submarket, which includes areas along the US 31 corridor south of I-459, had the greatest available sublease space with about 200,000 SF. After posting an approximate 7% decrease in year-over-year occupancy to 80.8% in 2009, the submarket remained relatively stable with 80.5% occupancy in 2010. Although the Southwestern submarket, comprising areas generally located along the US 11 and I-20/59 corridors, exhibits the lowest occupancy of the five submarkets, it was the only submarket to feature positive absorption in 2009. In 2010, the submarket posted a negative absorption of 24,100 and an average lease rate of \$3.93 per SF. In 2011, lease rates improved slightly, and this submarket had a net gain of leasing of nearly 400,000 square feet, best in the region, owing to leasing activity at the Jefferson Metropolitan Park. Inventory is at a 5-year low, and occupancy rates are at a 5-year high.

The industrial market in the Birmingham area has experienced great challenges and setbacks over recent three years. There are, however, plans for new developments in the near future likely to create significant impact in the region. Dollar General recently completed an 800,000 SF distribution center in the Oxmoor submarket. Perhaps garnering the most interest in the region is the planned \$100 million Norfolk Southern Railway intermodal facility in the McCalla area, which is expected to generate significant economic impact around the region as well as spin-off development opportunities adjacent to the facility.

Implications

Even as the overall unemployment rate has inched upwards, actual job counts in the MSA have shown some growth. In part, the area's relative stability must be attributed to its numerous healthcare, public sector (including UAB), and financial sector employers, which also represent industry segments with the greatest potential for expansion.

Population trends in the MSA continue to reflect migration away from the City of Birmingham - with the exceptions of the CBD and UAB areas and into outlying areas such as Shelby and St. Claire Counties. With specific regard to the Southwest Corridor study area, cities along the US 11 corridor, such as Bessemer, Brighton, Fairfield, Lipscomb, and Midfield all lost population between 2000 and 2010. Lipscomb and Fairfield experienced a 10% decline while Brighton fared worse with a decline of nearly 20% over the past decade. Areas along the corridor farther from the CBD such as McCalla posted a significant population increase, resulting from the increased development activities along I-459.

Recent trends indicate some potential rebound opportunities across the office, retail and industrial sectors. The US 280 corridor continues to command attention in the office and retail markets due to its favorable demographics and accessibility to major transportation networks.

The areas along the US 11 and I-20/59 corridors - southwest of the CBD have exhibited potential for limited retail and office growth in areas such as Bessemer and McCalla, but the area's greatest growth potential is in the industrial sector. This market area is ostensibly oversupplied with distribution facilities, but recent developments of major distribution centers near the McCalla area, including the opening of the Norfolk Southern intermodal facility, indicate significant potential for increased economic activity in the area.

A subsequent report element of this study will build on this assessment of the existing real estate and market conditions to identify opportunities for development in the corridor over the coming years.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3.1 APPROACH AND GOALS

To support the transit and land use planning effort, RPCGB has implemented a comprehensive and systematic public engagement process. Effective public engagement allows the study team to gain a better understanding of the corridor through the people who live, work, shop, play, and attend school there. This public engagement process employed a wide range of outreach methods to interact with a broad array of stakeholders, partners, interested parties and involved agencies, community groups, affected parties, organizations and citizens.

While the intent of the transit plan is to discern what transportation system demand and infrastructure investments will most effectively meet the travel demands resulting from land development/ redevelopment scenarios, the purposes of the public engagement process were to establish a relationship with the general public and other stakeholders through ongoing and meaningful communication, and to inform the community about the various transportation mode alternatives and how transit investment and land use strategies could be pursued to leverage economic development in the corridor. The public engagement process also presented clear messages that accurately reflect the goals of the project, the issues and needs of the corridor, the range of options and strategies considered, and consensus on the final recommended action plan.

The study employed several channels of outreach during its course. These included:

- **Stakeholders and Community Leaders:** a group of 40 individuals were identified on the basis of their status as elected officials, key agency management roles, community presence and involvement, corridor and regional leadership, or role with major corridor activity centers or constituent groups. The result was a diverse cross section of business, public, technical and community leadership. Structured interviews were conducted with each person to discern their opinions on the issues and needs of the corridor, insights as to strategies and priorities, and suggestions for possible solutions.
- **Steering Committee:** The Steering Committee is the Southwest Corridor Consultant Team's default advisory resource. The members of the Steering Committee include key members of the elected community; heads of chambers of commerce and business groups along the Southwest Corridor, as well as school system administrators and others who serve in a strategic planning role vital to the Greater Birmingham region.
- **Working Groups:** Four working groups were organized to provide specific input to key topic areas, as follows:
 - **Community Development Working Group:** The Community Development Working Group comprised law enforcement agents, school administrators, planning and land use specialists and others with a strong stake in community development. The Community Development Working Group guided the Southwest Corridor Transit Study Consultant Team on issues concerning land use analysis, and the managing and leveraging of unused and underused property and assets in municipalities along the Southwest Corridor.
 - **Economic Development Working Group:** The Economic Development Working Group comprised contractors, developers, business and economic development experts, and others with a professional stake in economic development. The Economic Development Working Group provided insight regarding existing economic development efforts along,

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- or near, the Southwest Corridor. The Group will also advise the Southwest Corridor Consultant Team of past efforts that have been effective in energizing economic development interest in the Greater Birmingham region.
- **Public Involvement Working Group:** The Public Involvement Working Group was established as a community outreach resource to study team. The Public Involvement Working Group comprised neighborhood Jefferson County Transit association leaders, Birmingham Authority board members, staff members to city councilors, and others who have ongoing access to residents who live in communities along the Southwest Corridor.
 - **Transportation Working Group:** The Transportation Working Group was established to provide input to the study team on the transit and transportation network in the corridor and on strategies proposed for enhancement of transit. The transportation Working Group comprised representatives from the City of Birmingham traffic engineering, Alabama DOT, Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority planning, Jefferson County engineering, and municipality consultant.
 - **Community Forums:** There were five rounds of community forums over the course of the study. The principal element of each round was one or more meetings targeted for the general public to attend, learn about the progress of the study, and solicit their opinions and feedback on key subjects which would be used to inform the study process. These meetings were generally conducted in an open house format, usually with afternoon/early evening hours for the convenience of the public, at locations in the study corridor. At the time of these forums there were also meetings conducted with the Steering Committee, Working Groups, and other organizations and entities. The specifics of the community forums for the public are discussed further in this section of the report.
 - **Other Outreach:** In addition to the preceding outreach efforts, the study team conducted a number of other meetings with various agencies and organizations in the study corridor or involved with the study corridor. These included representatives of major activity centers in the corridor, city elected officials, public agency staff (dealing with land use, planning, transportation, and economic development), trade organizations (contractors and developers), regional and corridor level chambers of commerce, and other relevant entities such as Main Street Birmingham, now REV Birmingham.

To engage the public, stakeholders, and partners, a range of instruments were used, including these:

- Survey and opinion forms: several survey forms were used during the study to solicit input from the public, using structured multiple choice questions and open-ended comment questions
- Map exercises: These were used at three of the community forums to solicit public input on key corridor activity centers, possible land use strategies at key proposed transit stations, and potential alignments for improved transit service.
- Polling exercises: Community Forum 2 employed an interactive polling exercise with attendees to solicit their opinions on corridor issues and needs.
- Interviews: these included interviews with stakeholders and community leaders.
- Individual discussions: these included discussions with representatives of key organizations and elected officials, and the general public.
- Structured meetings: these included sessions with the Steering Committee and Working Groups and outreach to other organizations.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- Website surveys and email comments: the project website included short online surveys on topics relevant to the study, and a location to provide comments by email.

Information and feedback from these methods were documented and considered in the development of the study.

To convey project information and to publicize community forums, a broad palette of communication tools were employed, including these:

- Study website,
- Newspaper advertisements,
- Public service announcements,
- Press releases,
- Postings on community organization calendars,
- Store window posters,
- Notices on the RPCGB website,
- Summary study video,
- Powerpoint presentations,
- Handouts,
- Project fact sheets, and
- Email blasts to:
 - RPCGB e-newsletter list,
 - Additional emails compiled by the study team,
 - Working Groups and Steering Committee,
 - Print, television, and radio media outlets,
 - Corridor city mayor and/or communications office,
 - Other organizations (social service, city, trade, educational), requesting distribution to their email lists business.
 - The type range of contacts covered the following types:
 - Chamber of Commerce,
 - City Council Members,
 - City Planning Commissions,
 - Neighborhood Associations,
 - Community Advisory Boards,
 - Economic Development Corporations,
 - Educational Groups,
 - State and Local Elected Officials,
 - Environmental Organizations,
 - Housing Development Organizations,
 - Large Employers,
 - Libraries,
 - Local Civic Institutions,
 - Low Income Organizations,
 - Mayors,
 - Media Contacts (magazine, newspaper, radio, television),

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- Metropolitan Planning Organizations,
- Professional Organizations,
- Regional Planning Commission Public Involvement Contacts,
- Small Employers on Corridor,
- Social Services (Disabled, Elderly, Health/Medical, Non- Profit, Region 2020 Leadership),
- Transportation Groups (Horizon 280, CLASTRAN, BJCTA, Board, Chamber Transportation Committee),
- Transportation Contacts, and
- Underserved Groups.

3.2 STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY LEADER INPUT

The interviews with each of the identified stakeholders and community leaders were approached with a standard list of discussion items, but were conducted flexibly to allow the interviewees the opportunity to express their views on other issues and elements related to the study. The topics that were covered included: key activity centers, public transit improvement priorities, transit funding, corridor land use and social issues, barriers and opportunities, role of government in shaping the corridor future, economic development strategies, future public meeting locations, strategies to promote redevelopment and new development, role of transit, and other topics. The feedback from these sessions was far-ranging, and was captured into a summary report for reference in formulating the study mission and goals/objective statement, and in conducting the various study technical tasks.

3.3 FIVE ROUNDS OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH

To generate meaningful dialogue about transportation and land use issues, five rounds of focused outreach efforts were conducted during the study. These each included the Community Forum element that was a fundamental element of the Public Engagement Plan. The Community Forums were characterized by an open-house format, the use of surveys and interactive exercises, discussions, and maps, videos, and other visual displays of project information. The five rounds of community outreach exercises conducted for the study are summarized as follows:

Round 1 - Kickoff Meeting, Orientation, and Issues

Identification: The initial round of meetings was held Feb 21-23, 2011, and consisted of three community forums conducted each day at different corridor locations. Topics presented included a study overview which described the study goals and objectives, study process and schedule, and community engagement opportunities. The meeting was structured to solicit input from the community regarding their perceptions of



Community Forum 1

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

issues and needs in the study corridor relating to transportation and transit, land use and development, economic development, and other concerns. This meeting was also used to gather information for the study area contact list. Activities included three exercises on issues and needs relating to land use, transportation and economic development; an exercise on mapping daily travel; an exercise on project priorities; and another on activity centers.

Round 2 - Corridor Conditions and Corridor Visioning: This round was conducted as a series of meetings within a workshop framework, and was held during the week of June 21-23, 2011. Topics presented included a study overview of the corridor conditions, both existing and future, in relation to transportation, land use and demographics, based on collection and analysis of corridor parameters. There were also structured exercises to gather input from the attendees as to their perspectives on the corridor vision. The specific elements of this round included:

- **Community Forum:** Conducted on June 23, this meeting was held in an open house format with two identical scheduled presentations summarizing the study status and then soliciting public input on a vision for the future of the corridor, using interactive polling devices. Based on prior input from stakeholder interviews and immediate feedback at the meeting, a proposed corridor vision statement was offered and received over 80% support from those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.



- **Coordination Meeting with Our One Mile:** This initiative to develop a regional system of trails and greenways, resulted in the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Plan. This was an early coordination meeting to look for opportunities to provide input from a transit perspective and to interconnect transit with the proposed system routes.
- **Jefferson County Dept. of Land Planning and Development:** This meeting was held to discuss the status of the planning for unincorporated lands at the south end corridor within the Shades Creek basin.
- **City of Birmingham Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits:** This meeting provided an opportunity to coordinate land use planning within the Birmingham proper part of the corridor and the comprehensive plan update which was to start soon.
- **Land Owners and Developers:** This meeting afforded an open discussion as to challenges in the corridor to development and approaches to build around existing corridor anchors.
- **Steering Committee:** The committee received a briefing on the study status and feedback from the public to date. In the open discussion that followed, key topics covered the need for transit funding, corridor assets and opportunities including building on a sports-oriented tourism strategy, and the importance of viable community redevelopment strategies.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

- **Economic Development Working Group:** The meeting with this body including a briefing on the corridor study status, and in an interactive map exercise to identify land use opportunities and types across the corridor.
- **Community Development Working Group:** After a team presentation on land use planning for the corridor, the group participated in an interactive map exercise to identify land use opportunities and types across the corridor.
- **Transportation Working Group:** This group discussed possible transit technologies, alignments, integration with existing services, and coordination with the pending regional trail plan.
- **Study Team Debriefing:** At the close of the workshop, the study team recapped key observations drawn from the series of meetings, including pertinent feedback that points the way toward emerging strategies to reinvent the corridor.

Round 3 - Transit Alternatives: This round of meetings occurred over Sept. 20-21, 2011. Transit service alternatives were presented to the public after the initial short-listing of options from a broad palette of possible technologies and alignments. For proposed shortlisted options, descriptive exhibits depicting the alternatives were provided. Key features and attributes of the various options were described and accentuated with graphics, photographs, and other visual exhibits. The specific elements of this round included:

- **Community Forum:** Conducted on both days, these public meetings were held in an open house format. Exhibit boards provided background information on transit service options. There were three exercises conducted with attendees. The first was a short survey form soliciting their preferences regarding transit funding and the impacts of improved transit. The other two exercises related to preferences as to transit technology and transit alignments, wherein they were asked to draw their preferred transit routing.
- **Steering Committee:** The committee received a briefing on the study status and feedback from the public to date, as well as in- depth summaries on the land use planning work and transit alternatives. In the following discussion, the key topic was the need for workable, affordable recommendations that had better potential for implementation.
- **Joint Working Group Meeting:** The attendees were given a presentation updating them on the study status and on public feedback thus far. The groups then participated in the same exercises conducted for the community forum meetings.
- **BJCTA Central Terminal Transit User Interviews:** A display was set up at the central bus terminal downtown as a stage for interviewing transit patrons, using the same forms as for the community forum meetings.



SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

Round 4 - Land Use/Station Area Planning: This group of meetings was conducted over December 6-7, 2012. The specific elements of this round included:

- **Community Forum:** A land use/station planning workshop took place to solicit community input into potential redevelopment around five primary proposed transit station locations. Attendees first viewed a presentation which provided background on land use planning and transit-oriented development. Then, they participated in an interactive map-based exercise working with team members to offer their ideas and opinions on the types and configuration of land use infill and redevelopment at the selected station locations, using large-scale maps to capture the ideas. Participants contributed insights and ideas on possible station locations.
- **Steering Committee:** The committee received a briefing on the study status, further public feedback, and the development of options and strategies for the corridor, which was followed by their questions and comments.
- **Economic Development Committee:** The committee met at the Birmingham Business Alliance, along with other invitees from the development community, where they were first briefed on the study status and highlights. An open discussion followed on strategies for rejuvenating the study corridor from a development perspective were discussed as facilitated by the study team.
- **Miles College Outreach:** Members of the study team conducted an outreach session on campus with student from Miles College. The students viewed a presentation about the study, completed a visual preference survey, and provided their input as to the need for transit services to support students, and their thoughts on how that transit should be configured.

Round 5 - Preferred Transit and Land Use Alternatives and Corridor Plan/Implementation Strategies:

This round was conducted on May 11, 2013 as a Corridor Roundtable meeting to present the recommended transit system improvements, and proposed land use and economic development strategies to the general public and community leaders. The roundtable agenda included remarks from the keynote speaker, Ann August Dawson - Executive Director of BJCTA;

a video presenting the study findings and recommendations; a roundtable discussion where meeting attendees could express their opinions and ask questions; a panel of four corridor



Community Forum 5 – Roundtable

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 1: Corridor Framework Report

mayors addressing the importance of transit, steps to the way forward, and the potential for economic redevelopment. The final step is complete the plan report, including the development of an implementation plan that lays out a set of potential strategies and actions required to move the transportation and land use initiatives forward toward implementation. This will include station area-specific implementation plans and an overview of requirements and potential funding sources.

Documentation of the public outreach activities is provided in detail in the report appendix. All of the feedback received in the form of survey form responses, map exercises, and other commentary and discussions were incorporated into the corridor analysis work tasks and considered in the formulation of study corridor recommendations.