ATLANTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

2021 ANNUAL REPORT







Introduction

Metro Atlanta is continuously evolving, with a diverse collection of homes, jobs, and communities across urban, suburban, and rural landscapes. As the ninth largest metro area in the country, Metro Atlanta is home to nearly 6.1 million people and the region is expected to continue growing over the next 30 years, increasing to 8.6 million residents and 4.7 million jobs.

These future employment opportunities are anticipated to cluster around existing activity centers, likely increasing traffic congestion and delays for travelers and freight using the region's transportation network. Without improved management of this system through a suite of strategies increasing system efficiency, the region faces serious threats to its competitive advantage to attract or keep a talented workforce, businesses, and jobs. However, the coronavirus has also changed the way many employees do their jobs, impacting when and how employees travel to work while increasing the prevalence of teleworking.

One solution for mitigating traffic congestion and improving commutes for employees is through services and programs consistent with Transportation Demand Management (TDM).

This 2021 Annual Report:



Summarizes the current and past commuting characteristics in the Atlanta region

Describes the coronavirus' evolving impact to commuting and the program's outreach

Identifies
program
performance
and outcomes

Presents
innovative and
new initiatives
to help
employees
commute

Prepares how the Regional TDM program looks in the **future** and responds to the changing pandemic



Atlanta Regional TDM Program

The Atlanta Regional TDM Program is managed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) with oversight by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), with Georgia Commute Options (GCO) serving as the regional provider of TDM services. In addition, seven local Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) operate within specific employment centers in the region, providing customized and targeted TDM services to the employers and commuters who do business there. The following page has a map of these territories.

TDM is a set of policies, strategies, and supportive programs that help people change their travel behavior by avoiding a trip entirely, using alternative travel modes, traveling at different times of day, or using different routes. The TDM program within the Atlanta region provides resources, incentives, and services to decrease single occupant vehicle (SOV) travel while encouraging alternative modes. GCO also provides telework solutions and strategies for both employees and employers, helping everyone stay efficient while working and managing away from the office.



For commuters, the program includes a series of incentive programs for taking alternative modes of transportation along with assistance in finding a carpool, transit pass discounts, and providing a Guaranteed Ride Home if an unexpected event occurs.



For employers, the program provides assistance through custom TDM consultation, explaining tax benefits for commute option programs, and how TDM can translate to cost savings and improved productivity.

The GCO program aligns and supports with ARC's Policy Framework, as outlined in its Regional Transportation Plan. These goals, shown in the graphic to the right, directly relate to GCO's program goals, which are to:



Increasing the use of alternative modes to driving alone



Expanding travel options and regional accessibility for everyone



Keeping the Atlanta region economically competitive



https://atlantaregional.org/the-atlanta-regions-plan







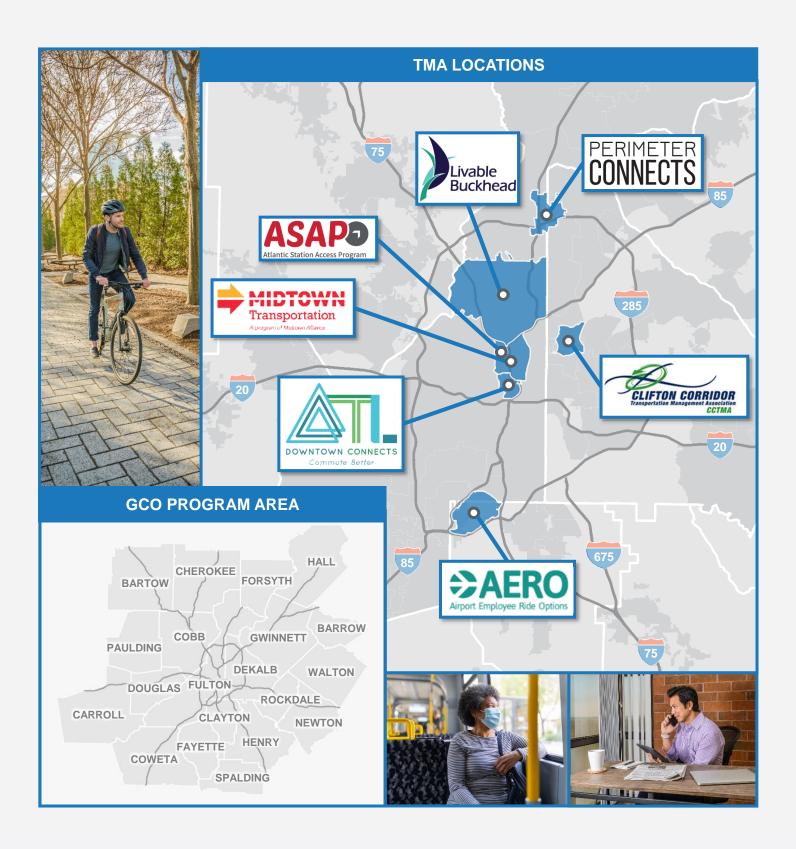








The Atlanta Regional TDM Program serves the 20-county Atlanta region and encompasses a wide range of services and programs offered through Georgia Commute Options, the regional service provider, and the seven TMAs. The program also partners with transit providers to offer information and incentives to commuters.

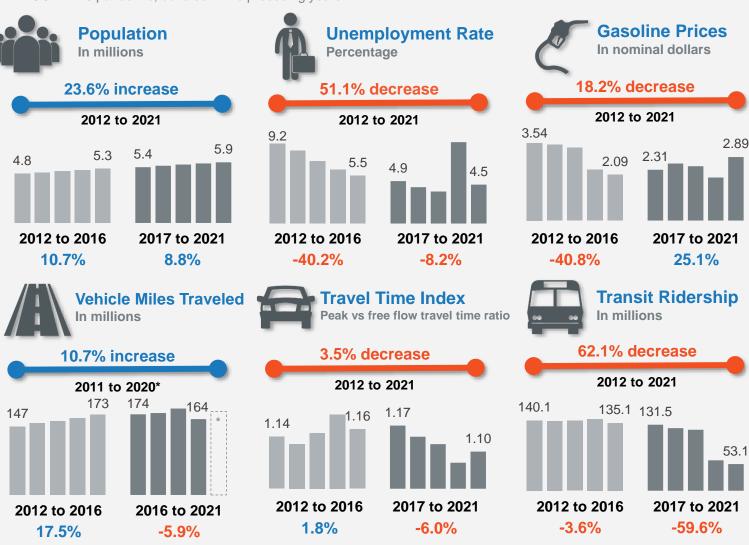


Commuting in Atlanta

Over the past ten years, commuting in Atlanta has continued to evolve, whether due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or the rapid growth and new development of the region. Population has increased by 23.6 percent over the past 10 years while the region's unemployment rate has steadily decreased from 9.2 percent in 2012 to 4.5 percent in 2021 (except for a brief rise in unemployment during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic). By 2050, it's forecasted that the 21-county Atlanta region will add almost 3 million more people. More residents and commuters translates to more demand for transportation, even if significant portions of the workforce work from home. This outcome elevates the need for more innovative TDM strategies to alleviate congestion and save workers time and money.

One way to measure total travel demand, including commuting, is through vehicle miles traveled (VMT). VMT adds the total miles all vehicles travel in the Atlanta region, regardless of where the trip starts or ends. Total VMT has increased in each year since 2012, except for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This continuing increase, which has outpaced new system capacity, leads to continued congestion. One way to measure congestion is through the travel time index (TTI), which is the ratio of peak period travel time to free-flow travel time. TTI was lower in 2020 compared to previous years but rebounded to close to pre-pandemic levels in 2021.

Travel decisions are impacted by costs, including gasoline prices, which are still lower than 2012 levels, but have increased in recent years by 25.1 percent. At the same time, transit ridership has decreased, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in the preceding years.



*As of publication, 2021 VMT data not available

Sources: Population, Unemployment Rate, Gasoline Prices, Vehicle Miles Traveled, Travel Time Index, Transit Ridership

COVID-19 Impact to Commuting

COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of how we live and work and continues to force businesses and employees to re-evaluate their priorities. Although changes to commuting behavior have been complex and continue to evolve, two trends stood out in 2021: the continuation of teleworking and the changes to peak period travel times.

Continuation of Teleworking

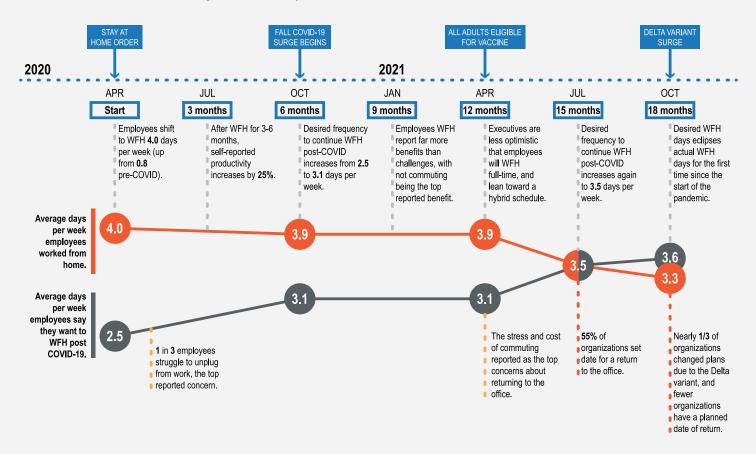
Beginning in April 2020 and continuing through 2021, GCO began to monitor how the COVID-19 pandemic was reshaping day-to-day business operations within the region by conducting a series of surveys and outreach initiatives to further understand and support the constantly changing work environment.

According to GCOs Remote Work Survey:

- 44 percent of employees never worked from home before the pandemic
- 67 percent of employees shifted to working from home 5 days a week during the pandemic
- 60 percent of employees have the desire to work from home 3-5 days a week in the future

To meet these demands, GCO has developed a series of programs to help businesses ease the transition into a hybrid work environment to support flexibility and enhance coordination between managers and employees. These efforts enable the continuity of operations across the region in the event of future pandemic-related or other events impacting workplaces.

The figure below shows how the work from home reality has changed since the start of the pandemic and as vaccines and variants have shifted the dynamics of the public health crisis.



Changing Peak Period Commuting

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a historic shift in commuting patterns. Across all weekly commute trips prior to the pandemic, 77 percent of commuters drove alone, 15 percent used public transit, carpool, vanpool, biking, or ondemand services like Uber or Lyft, and 7 percent teleworked. In 2020 and 2021, the motivation for choosing a commute mode substantially shifted from traditional factors such as access to a personal vehicle, access to transit, or the cost of commuting to health concerns associated with COVID-19, local mandates, or new employer policies on remote work.

While telework has decreased trips during peak commuting hours, the flexibility of remote-work has contributed to more types of trips (both work and non-work related) being spread throughout the day. This is anticipated to continue in 2022 and beyond – ARC and its partners are focusing on an approach to work with partners to **RETHINK**, **RESHAPE**, and **REBUILD** programs to support employee needs in this new commuting environment.

RETHINK

There is a strong demand for a hybrid, flexible future that allows employees to work remotely during and after the pandemic.

RESHAPE

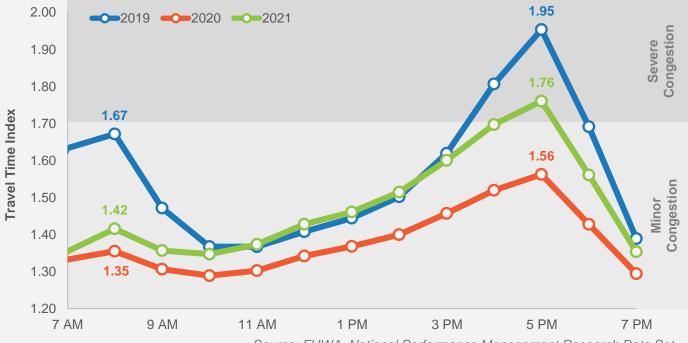
Commuting is a barrier for returning to in-office work – with 40% of employees noting that they will quit if required to be in the office 5 days per week.

REBUILD

Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic length, especially with new COVID variants, employees remain concerned about commuting and productivity.

The graph below shows the Travel Time Index (TTI) for pre-pandemic (2019), the initial start of the pandemic (2020), and current (2021) conditions. During the morning and afternoon peak hours, TTI is lower in 2021 than in 2019, while during the afternoon periods, TTI is slightly higher in 2021 than in 2019. This confirms that people are spreading their trips out more throughout the day and changing the reliance on the "peak period" for travel. Nevertheless, 2021 travel times are increasing compared to 2020. All hours of the day in 2021 have a greater TTI than the same hour in 2020.

Based on VMT data collected by GDOT at continuous traffic count stations and submitted to FHWA, average daily VMT in urban areas across Georgia eclipsed 2019 levels by June 2021 and remained at or slightly above 2019 levels for the rest of the year.



Program Highlights

The GCO and partner programs interact with businesses, community organizations, and commuters throughout the Atlanta Region. This includes employer services to help partners develop and implement commuter programs at worksites, helping commuters find better ways to get around, and much more. This section presents some of the 2021 partner and participation highlights of the program. More detailed information on these highlights can be found throughout this annual report.

Employer Partners and Property Managers

Outreach and marketing to the GCO partners continued to address the challenges and changing commutes due to the pandemic. This page explores the changes in the program's outreach to employer partners and property managers (INFLUENCE), including information on partner outreach, the total number of partners, and transit passes provided to partner employees.

840 EMPLOYER PARTNERS



Total program partners as of the end of December 2021.

Total employer and property manager partners for the entire Atlanta Regional TDM Program gradually increased through 2021. These partnerships were vital for supporting telework programs and other pandemic-related outreach while establishing relationships for the future.

NEW PARTNERS

432
EMPLOYER MEETINGS

343
COMMUNITY
PARTNER
MEETINGS

88
COMMUTER
EVENTS

In addition, GCO led outreach to employers and commuters through telework assistance and other guidance, tools and resources. This outreach also provided GCO the opportunity to conduct surveys to understand employers' plans for telework after the pandemic.

Commuter events continued using creative ways to engage employees. These in-person and virtual events helped boost morale through lunch and learns, virtual fairs, and virtual new hire orientations. Events also supported essential employees commuting to work, such as offering commuter care packages as well as continuing traditional programs like guaranteed ride home.

Fostering commuting flexibility in the hybrid work environment was a focus of outreach and marketing to program partners.

Livable Buckhead explored flexible parking strategies with property managers through a parking survey, a virtual panel discussion on the Rise of Flexible Parking, and a flexible parking pilot at Atlanta Tech Village.

ASAP, through relationships with Atlantic Station property managers, developed building microsites, tenant manuals, and leasing materials that provided access to resources and plans for balanced work schedules and strategies for returning to the office.



Program Participation

This page explores the changes in the program's outreach to individuals (PARTICIPATION), as opposed to employers and property managers. This includes information on the total number of participants within the GCO Program and participation in modal promotions, like *Biketober*. Participation in the program is also tracked through "logging" in the *Georgia Commute App*. Within the app, program registrants submit information on their commute trips such as the length of the trip and the trip mode. The *Georgia Commute App* also allows program registrants to earn cash and win prizes related to their logging habits, as well as connect and inform individuals to more sustainable commuting options.

GCO Program participants fall into various categories based on their level of activity in the program. Shown below are statistics for 2021 participants.

ACTIVE USER

An individual who has created a GA Commute account and done some activity on that account in any way and for whatever reason during the time period in question. Actions include:

- 1) Having a log pushed to your profile from another application,
- 2) Passively logging commute trips, or
- 3) Actively signing into application through the mobile app or website.

7,728 ACTIVE USERS

NEW MEMBER

Some active users are also new members. New members can be an indicator of the success of marketing and outreach. An individual is considered a new member if it is their firsttime logging in. This would not include individuals who had their accounts created by a GCO program representative but had yet to login to their account.

2,774 NEW MEMBERS

LOGGER

An active user who has logged a trip during the time period in question, whether through active, passive, or pushed logging (through an API from another app). This includes all types of logs – drive alone, alternative modes, or teleworking/compressed work week (CWW) - for all trip types.

5,231 TOTAL LOGGERS

CLEAN LOGGER

An active user who has logged an alternative mode trip during the time period in question, whether through active, passive, or pushed logging (through an API from another app). Alternative modes include: carpool, vanpool, transit, walk, bike, telework, CWW, and scooter.

1,106,737 CLEAN COMMUTE TRIPS LOGGED

Performance Evaluation

The TDM evaluation framework establishes the structure for measuring and tracking progress toward strengthening regional TDM efforts. The framework defines objectives, strategies, and measures to achieve the goals in the Atlanta Region's Plan while supporting ARC's guiding principles. In 2018 and 2019, ARC and its partners developed a TDM evaluation framework, reflecting program awareness, influence, participation, and impact. The framework has evolved over time as data has improved and has adapted to the dynamics of measuring performance during the pandemic.

Measuring progress against articulated investment goals is essential to showing that transportation agencies are making the best use of limited resources in the context of desired, long-term outcomes.

This report details performance of the regional TDM program in 2021, highlighting key outcomes, major activities to encourage alternative commutes, and results of interactions with commuters.

The TDM evaluation framework recognizes that each TMA/GCO has unique characteristics, opportunities and challenges. It establishes base goals and objectives with variable TMA-specific strategies that can be measured and evaluated according to context of each TDM service provider.

The framework provides flexibility to customize performance targets based on local conditions and tailored TDM strategies, while still allowing performance evaluation at a consistent program-wide, regional scale (e.g., across a core set of required performance measures that track key regional outcomes). This flexibility was crucial in response to the pandemic. It allowed GCO and individual TMAs the ability to tailor approaches, customize outreach, and shift priorities in response to teleworking and change in commuting patterns.

Definitions of the measures are outlined below with the following pages summarizing data, outreach, and programs that align with performance outcomes. The information provides a series of key indicators describing program trends, continuing evolving impact of the pandemic, and GCO and the TMA's responses.

TDM Evaluation Measures PARTICIPATION IMPACT AWARENESS INFLUENCE Commuter and **Employer and property Commuter awareness** employer participation manager engagement **Regional progress** of the regional and in regional and local **TMA-specific commute** with the regional and toward SOV travel promotions that **TMA-specific commute** reduction and air options program increase awareness through marketing and options programs and quality goals and use of alternative incentives outreach modes

Awareness



Commuter and employer awareness of existing and new commuting resources

The starting point for driving behavior change is to increase employee and employer awareness of TDM programs and alternative commute opportunities. Awareness occurs through marketing and outreach activities led by GCO and the TMAs. In 2021, marketing and outreach continued to focus on telework programs and commuting to support employers and employees during the ongoing pandemic.



Resources

In 2021, GCO provided a series of resources to assist employers with work from home and back to work transitions. This included informative brochures related to Finding Balance in Today's Work Environment, Telework Do's/Don'ts, Telework Policy, a Workplace Safety Checklist, and a Work From Home virtual care package that received 75 downloads.



Return to Office Campaign

GCO worked in collaboration with worksite advisors, employers, and community partners to develop a list of content categories that would help employers as they navigate a turn to the workplace. The campaign includes a library of branded templates for GCO advisors and partners to customize to fit their own needs.



Air Quality Social Media Series

GCO teamed with Trees Atlanta to develop a content series on social media platforms that educated the public on the positive impacts reduced driving had on air quality during the height of the pandemic. Phase 1 and Phase 2 each had over 1.4 million social media engagements

Social Strategy Launch

GCO launched a new social strategy that has led to significant follower and engagement growth across all GCO channels. This strategy, recognized by the Academy for Interactive and Visual arts as a Davey Award winner for Community Building and Engagement campaigns, led to the total following growth per platform, shown below.



Facebook: 54.7%



Instagram: 19.3%



Twitter: 26%



LinkedIn: 76%

In addition to the social strategy, GCO continues to distribute newsletters to spread awareness. In 2021, GCO launched the B2B newsletter, distributed to regional ETCs and partner prospects, along with the Georgia Commute Schools newsletter.

Influence

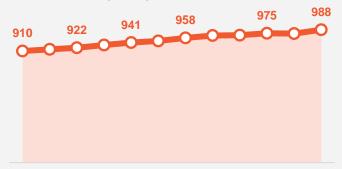


Engagement with employers and employees to facilitate a smooth transition and effective work from home environment

Influence primarily occurs directly between the employer and the employee. GCO and the TMAs distribute information to employers to help facilitate information sharing and programs to encourage alternative mode use. In 2021, employers continued to focus on enabling an efficient work from home environment, in order to maintain productivity and employee morale.

Throughout 2021, the total number of employer and property manager partners increased. This reflects the GCO Program's continuous outreach throughout the year, including the FlexWork implementations, 4C Partnerships, and other promotions. At the same time, other historic programs, such as distributing discounted transit passes, have declined as employees continue working from home. The transit passes distributed prepandemic and throughout the pandemic also reflects the change in how people travel and commute, mimicking an overall decline in transit ridership, increase in telework, and support for a hybrid work schedule.

Total Partners (2021)



Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Transit Passes Distributed Compared to Regional Transit Ridership

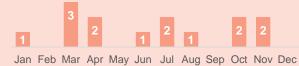
	TOTAL PASSES DISTRIBUTED	REGIONAL TRANSIT RIDERSHIP
2019	201,146	121,467,905
2020	116,761	60,557,358
2021	56,361	53,103,283

Transit Ridership Source: National Transit Database

FlexWork Implementations

The GCO Program assisted in developing, enhancing, and/or implementing telework, or FlexWork, policies for several employers around the region. This outreach established formal telework policies and assistance to aid in the transition, such as technological improvements, training, and customized programs. The GCO Program conducted one-on-one implementations for 14 different employers.

Implementation Timeline (2021)



4C Partnerships

Since the start of the pandemic, the team has seen an increase in engagement with public and community entities, including Cities, Counties, CIDs and Chambers/C-Suite (4Cs). As employers, The 4Cs continued to embrace GCO programming and became a strategic focus area for Worksite Advisor networking efforts. This increased program awareness for survey efforts, webinars, telework consulting services, and modal promotions. In addition to increased evaluation of GCO's 4C engagement, the Intensive Territory Development (ITD) initiative supports strategic alliance with these entities with hopes to grow GCO reach and influence in targeted geographic areas.

- 61 City and County Organizations
- 54 Official City and County Partnerships
- 13 New City and County Partners

AERO 2021 Workforce Survey

AERO's workforce survey gathered feedback from current and former employees around barriers to accessing job sites. The survey also promoted services, such as the discount transit pass program and carpool parking rates. AERO received over 320 responses, from an even mix of current and former employees.

Participation



Participation in regional and local promotions that will increase the public awareness and use of alternative modes

Activities led by GCO, the TMAs, and employers to expand awareness and create influence to change behavior help commuters make informed decisions. In participation, it often comes down to incentives, friendly competition, and rewards to help commuters try a new mode, have a positive experience, and change behavior.

Total Active Users and Loggers fluctuated on a monthly basis, with an average of **3,232** active users and **2,761** loggers per month. These differences correspond to GCO outreach, such as the Million Air Challenge in August and Biketober in October. This could also be attributed to the pandemic's dynamic impact and influence on commuting, such as variations in offices returning to work and response to COVID-19 variants.





Biketober Continues to be a Success

October 2021 marked the 9th annual *Biketober*, a monthlong bicycle challenge. Like previous years, bicyclists participated by riding and logging their trips, competing to win dozens of prizes, such as bicycle gear and restaurant gift cards. This year the promotion encouraged cyclists to get outdoors to ride to improve their health and the environment. *Biketober* continued to result in strong participation, with similar total registrants, participants, total trips, and miles logged as previous years.

- 4,377 Total Registrants
- 2,808 Total Participants
- 29,115 Total Trips
- 342,831 Total Miles Ridden



The Million Air Challenge's First Year

August 2021 held the GCO's newest modal promotion, the *Million Air Challenge*. This promotion was designed as a two-week-long, multi-modal challenge where employers pledged participation of their employees taking a clean commute options. Likewise, commuters could opt-in and pledge participation themselves and be eligible to win prizes. The goal was to increase clean commute logging and reduce 1 million pounds of CO₂.

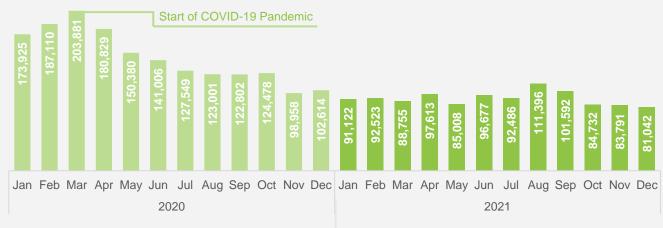
- 3,108 Total Participations
- 52,887 Recorded Clean Trips
- 1,059,992 Reduced Vehicle Miles Traveled
- 938,000 Pounds of CO₂ removed from the air

Clean Commute Logging Participation

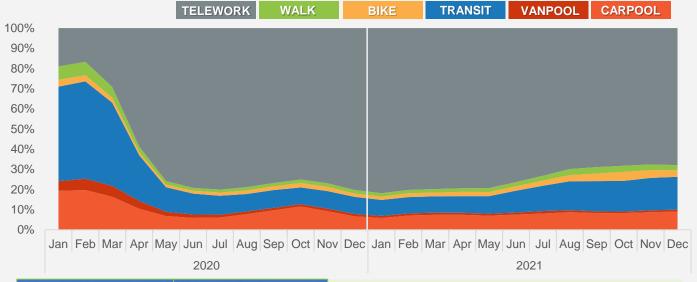
With the large shift to working from home since the start of the pandemic, clean commute logging has also gradually decreased. With decreased commuting into a physical office, employees may not be considering logging their commute into the GCO app. Similarly, the motivation to log may be less for those who telework since they are not physically traveling to a new location.

However, GCO's programs and outreach influenced clean commuting throughout the year. Most notably is the jump in total clean commutes in August 2021, aligning with the **Million Air Challenge**. Likewise, the share of bicycle trips increased leading up to and during **Biketober** in October of 2020 and 2021. The share of transit trips also gradually increased starting in the summer of 2021.

Total Clean Commutes Logged (2020 – 2021)



Clean Commute Distribution (2020 - 2021)





The Georgia Commute Schools (GCS) Team

partnered with 20 schools across eight counties in Metro Atlanta to celebrate Air Quality Awareness Week (AQAW) in May. Students worked on air quality projects virtually and at school and encouraged their peers and families to take action and help improve the air around their schools and neighborhoods. Over 450 students joined one of the 20 different events.

Impact



Progress toward SOV travel reduction goals through improved clean commute options and use

The availability of commute services and financial benefits is one of many factors that motivate commuters to change their behaviors. Other factors driving commuting decisions, some of which TDM programs cannot control for, include the cost of fuel, work schedules, or family needs. This was especially true in 2021, with many commuters continuing to work from home. While this shift in commuting behavior ultimately impacted the total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and air quality, it isn't all due to the efforts from the GCO program. Increasing use of clean commute options provides benefits not only to the commuter, but also to the entire region through helping reduce congestion and improve air quality.

Total Vehicle Miles Reduced



Clean Commute Logging	22,841,804
Biketober	342,831
Million Air Challenge	1,059,992
Million Air Challenge	1,059,992

GHG Emissions Prevented (in tons)



Biketober	450
	153
Million Air Challenge	469

Livable Buckhead Continued the Success of the buckheadWALKS! Challenge

Held in May 2021, Livable Buckhead continued its annual *buckheadWALKS!*, a month-long challenge for Buckhead employees and residents. Participants could create teams and compete against each other for prizes, such as gift cards to local restaurants and swag. Daily events encouraged participation through scavenger hunts, guided meditation, and virtual walks through local partners. This year resulted in a total of 47,000 miles walked equating to over 3.7 million calories burned. Additionally, 63 percent of participants learned about or visited a new location in Buckhead.

CCTMA Continues to Support Bicyclists

Emory University, one of the largest employers, has many unique resources to support local bicycles. One resource are the local **Bike Champ Ambassadors**, a group of expert bike commuters who mentor and support new bike riders by helping plan routes and providing tips and best practices. Emory faculty, staff, and students are also eligible to **rent a bicycle** for the semester. Emory University also saw tremendous success during Biketober, coming in **second place** for all worksites with a total of **19.507 miles ridden**.

Starting a transit comeback was a common theme across innovative activities led by the TMAs in 2021.

Perimeter Connects worked with MARTA and other local partners starting in 2020 to implement aesthetic and safety improvements to the Park & Ride and shuttle pick-up area at the Dunwoody station. Perimeter Connects built on that success through leading a stakeholder audit of the Sandy Springs station to identify future wayfinding, safety, aesthetic, and transfer improvements.

Midtown Transportation concluded its bus stop audit and successfully applied for and was awarded a Livable Centers Initiative grant to study, evaluate, design, and present creative placemaking enhancements for bus stops.



Looking Forward

Regional TDM Plan

ARC's Mobility Services Group is currently in the process of updating the Regional TDM Plan!

The first and only Atlanta Regional TDM Plan was published in 2013. It was intended to help stakeholders leverage existing programs and build on the TDM concepts within PLAN 2040, the region's long-range comprehensive plan at that time. Many of the strategies developed for the 2013 TDM Plan have been pursued in the intervening years and remain central to the regional TDM program; however, there is a need to update the plan to ensure it aligns with updates to the Atlanta Region's Plan and changes in both national and regional commute/travel trends – many of which have occurred in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Mobility Connections: A Plan for Expanding Opportunity," aims to help local governments, transportation agencies, businesses and community partners better meet the mobility needs of metro Atlanta residents. The plan will evaluate commute patterns and other travel behaviors and identify changes that could reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and increase access to jobs and services. To accomplish this, Mobility Services seeks to engage various stakeholder groups, including multiple rounds of public outreach, with three primary goals:



- Gather input and gain insight on how the regional TDM program can better serve a broad range of socio-economic mobility needs;
- Support the integration of TDM into other initiatives put forth by stakeholders; and
- Define opportunities for innovative TDM pilot programs and strategies across the region.

The update is in its planning phase now and is scheduled to be completed in 2023. More information can be found at **arctdmplan.org**.



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More Information







gacommuteoptions.com





asap-plus.com









midtownatl.com

CONNECTS CONNECTS

perimeterconnects.com



