



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway  
Administration

# Planning Process Bundle Case Study

Broadening the Roles of Performance Measurement, Visioning and Freight in the Atlanta Region's Planning Process

## ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

*The SHRP2 Planning Process Bundle (PPB) is a collection of techniques and resources for increased collaboration in transportation planning, programming, project development, and decision making. For more information on all bundle products, visit the [Planning Process Bundle website](#).*

**Products: C02 – Performance Measurement for Highway Capacity Decision Making, C08 – Transportation Visioning for Communities, C15 – Integrating Freight Considerations into the Highway Capacity Planning Process**

### Executive Summary

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), as a Lead Adopter in the SHRP2 Implementation Assistance Program (IAP) Round 5, executed an 18-month work plan that shaped a new approach for visioning based on the SHRP2 C08 Report "Linking Community Visioning and Highway Capacity Planning," supplemented by the FHWA Scenario Planning and Visualization in Transportation materials and the NCHRP Report 750 Foresight Series. In addition, two other SHRP2 Planning Process Bundle products were integrated into the process allowing ARC to incorporate performance measures at key decision points in the planning process (C02) and involve freight stakeholders (C15). The outcomes included a scenario-based approach to transportation visioning, as well as an improved prioritization of projects to address mobility, access, and safety challenges, while also giving proper consideration to rapid changes occurring in technology, demographics and other disruptive influences that make long-range planning a tremendous challenge. Collaboration with freight stakeholders was also expanded to include others in the megaregion.



### Project Snapshot

- The Atlanta MPO region includes all or parts of 20 counties and has a population of 5.6 million.
- *The Atlanta Region's Plan Transportation Element*, approved in February 2016, identifies over \$85 billion of investments in its fiscally constrained component plus almost \$30 billion more in an unconstrained aspirational component.
- The process included a freight and megaregions peer exchange drawing over 60 participants from around the Southeast U.S.
- A new guidebook for prioritizing funding decisions in the Transportation Improvement Program was produced.
- The project team identified nine key drivers of change impacting the region's future and developed and analyzed four alternate futures based on combinations of plausible outcomes of those drivers.
- A major deliverable was an online gaming tool which will be used in the next plan update to assess what stakeholders believe is likely to happen related to those drivers of change, providing the basis for substantive policy discussions on ways to promote positive outcomes and prevent or mitigate negative outcomes.

## ARC's Challenge

Rapid change is a hallmark of our time. In response to these changes, ARC is evolving and redefining its regional planning approach to more effectively articulate the plan's vision, goals, and desired outcomes. This visioning effort is built upon a policy foundation laid out in the 2016 iteration of *The Atlanta Region's Plan*. The long-range plan, adopted in February 2016, constructed an interdisciplinary policy framework for "winning the future" which rested on the achievement of three interrelated outcomes: (a) world class infrastructure; (b) a competitive economy; and (c) healthy livable communities. The policy framework allows ARC, working with other key organizations in the Atlanta Region, to advance policy objectives and work together to meet the region's tough challenges. *The Atlanta Region's Plan* also meets Federal regulations for MPO long-range transportation planning and State mandates for regional commissions and comprehensive plans.



The purpose of the visioning effort was to implement three of the SHRP2 Planning Process Bundle products and meet the following agency specific objectives:

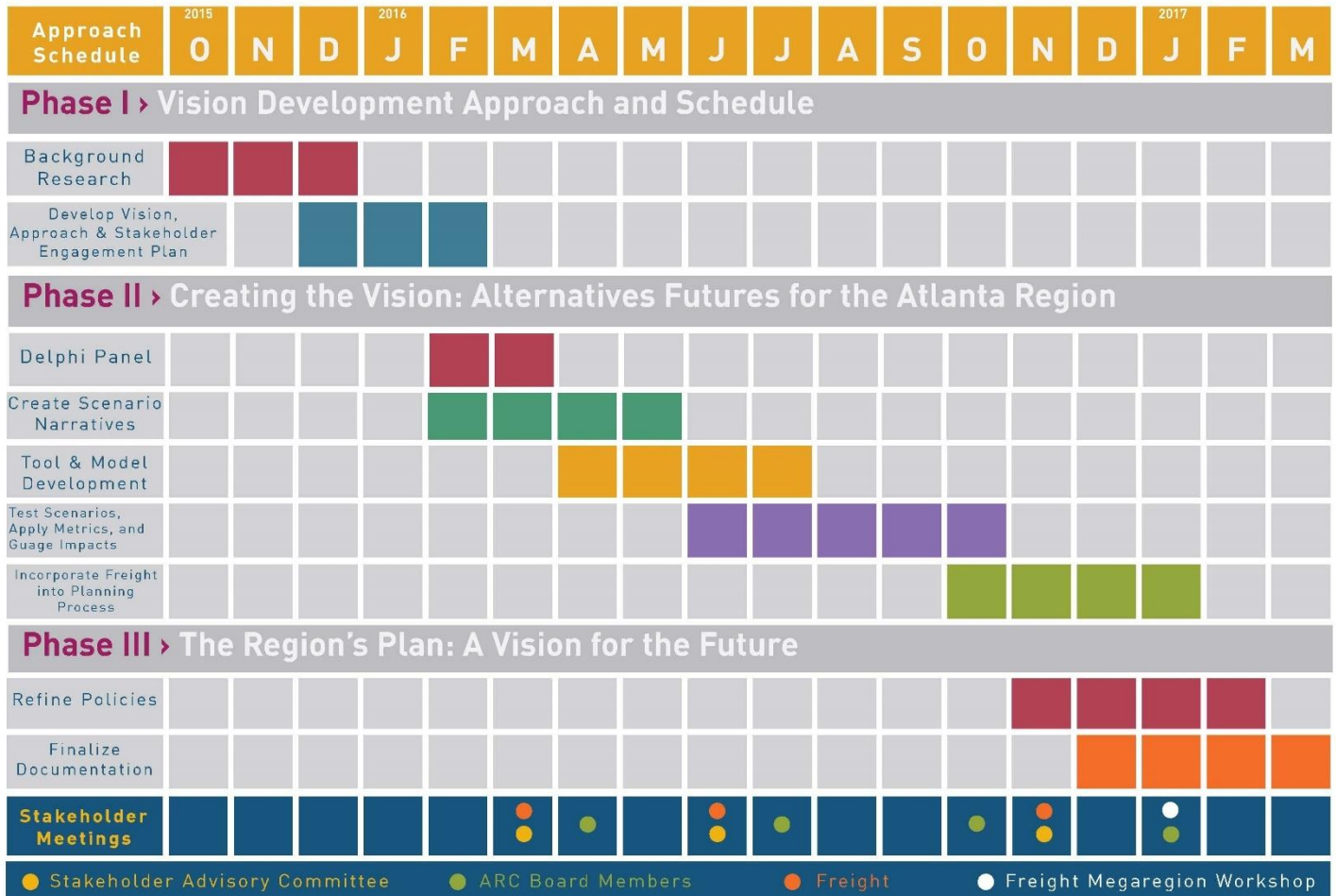
- Challenge the traditional way of doing long-range visioning to better engage elected officials, provide meaningful discussion, and to promote collaboration around shared long-range goals/visions through use of the SHRP2 suite of visioning tools and other FHWA products
- Promote fuller integration of freight considerations into the next iteration of *The Atlanta Region's Plan* through direct outreach to new stakeholders, including those in the Piedmont Megaregion
- Use enhanced performance measures to track progress, measure impact, and promote actions that yield desired results

In terms of the planning process, this implementation assistance grant was used to pivot ARC into the exploratory planning approach outlined in the NCHRP Report 750 Foresight Series. By introducing a range of alternative futures to our board and stakeholders outside of the formal plan update, there was more opportunity to lay the groundwork for what "winning the future" looks like as an overarching vision for the Atlanta Region. As the next plan update begins, there is an opportunity for more informed dialogue about specific policy goals and their applicability for mitigating or taking advantage of existing trends and key drivers. This new *exploratory planning* framework is allowing us to sharpen our focus, while at the same time, broaden the lens to envision planning policies and subsequent transportation investments in a new light.

## Product Implementation

Each year, ARC invests over \$7,000,000 in regional transportation planning and project development and an additional \$4,000,000 in data research, model development, and technical analysis. The SHRP2 grant was for \$300,000 and helped provide additional support for planning, community engagement, management and technical staff dedicated to the project.

The project was undertaken in three phases as shown in the schedule below, with \$15,000 of the SHRP2 dedicated to Phase I, \$141,000 to Phase II and the remaining \$144,000 to Phase III.



How the specific SHRP2 planning process products were used is shown below, along with the key deliverables produced by ARC under each.

SHRP2 Bundle	Description and Deliverables
<p><b>C02</b>  <b>Performance Measures for Highway Capacity Decision-Making</b></p>	<p>ARC used this product to expand the list of performance factors used in transportation decision-making during long-range planning. Performance measures were tailored to help the regional policymakers and others better understand the potential outcomes of planning decisions. By focusing on the practical application of performance metrics, ARC can better articulate the linkages between transportation, communities, and the economy.</p> <p><b>C02 Volume 1: Best Practices in Performance Measurement for Transportation Decision Making</b>  <b>C02 Volume 2: Incorporating Performance Measurement into the Planning Process</b>  <b>TIP Project Evaluation Framework</b> <i>(supplemental related material; not a core deliverable)</i></p>
<p><b>C08</b>  <b>Transportation Visioning for Communities</b></p>	<p>ARC worked with key partners and member governments to develop a vision for the Atlanta region. ARC integrated new approaches to scenario planning into <i>The Atlanta Region's Plan</i>. Innovative stakeholder engagement techniques were applied, including regional surveys. Scenario planning used the region's vision as a starting point for solutions and measuring performance.</p> <p><b>C08 Volume 1: Vision, Approach &amp; Stakeholder Engagement Plan</b>  <b>C08 Volume 2: Scenario Development Process</b>  <b>C08 Volume 3: Scenario Testing Procedures and Results</b>  <b>C08 Volume 4: Addressing Uncertainty and Change in the Planning Process</b></p>
<p><b>C15</b>  <b>Integrating Freight Considerations into Highway Capacity Planning Process</b></p>	<p>ARC concurrently finalized an update to <i>The Atlanta Region Freight Mobility Plan</i>. This planning endeavor ran in parallel to the long-range planning effort. Use of the C15 product brought freight stakeholders more fully into <i>The Atlanta's Region's Plan</i> development process. Collaboration with freight stakeholders was widened to incorporate adjacent MPOs, Georgia DOT, and key stakeholders in the Piedmont Megaregion.</p> <p><b>C15 Volume 1: Improving the Integration of Freight into the Planning Process</b>  <b>Regional Models of Cooperation Peer Exchange Summary Report: Freight Planning and Regional Cooperation in the Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion</b> <i>(supplemental related material; not a core deliverable)</i></p>

ARC enlisted consultant services to assist in various aspects of the work scope. Three subcontracts were funded entirely from the \$300,000 SHRP2 Implementation Assistance Program grant:

- Georgia Tech Research Corporation (\$30,000) - for participation throughout the process, with emphasis placed on organizing, hosting and facilitating the freight and megaregions peer exchange conducted under C15.
- Oregon Systems Analytics (\$10,000) - for assistance in running and modifying various models used to analyze the transportation impacts of alternate futures investigated under C08.
- Garrit-Jan Knaap (\$46,750) - for overall process guidance related to identification of drivers of change, developing alternate futures, assessing the state of the practice with scenario planning, and facilitating conversations with various stakeholder groups. Most of their work was directly associated with C08, but aspects did have a relationship to both C02 and C15.

In addition, ARC routinely contracts with a consultant team to provide a variety of general planning services related to development and refinement of *The Atlanta Region's Plan*. In 2016, the value of this contract was \$450,000, of which direct support to the SHRP2 process is estimated to have been \$100,000 to \$150,000. The consultant team participated in virtually all engagement activities with various committees, prepared the first draft of *C02 Volume 1: Best Practices in Performance Measurement for Transportation Decision Making* and developed an online gaming tool which will enable ARC to understand viewpoints on key drivers of change and what various stakeholder groups perceive as the likelihood of certain trends.

## Stakeholder Collaboration

Stakeholder and planning partner involvement is a hallmark of any visioning process. ARC utilized innovative techniques to build public awareness and ownership in the process. ARC identified a variety of partner entities, key stakeholders, and professional perspectives that were critical to achieving successful outcomes related to each of the SHRP2 planning process bundle products.

### **C02 - Performance Measures for Highway Capacity Decision-Making**

In addition to regular outreach and presentations to ARC's technical (Transportation Coordinating Committee) and policy (Transportation and Air Quality Committee) committees, ARC developed two additional groups to focus on the development of project prioritization criteria: (a) a staff working group and a (b) TIP Prioritization Task Force.

The staff working group, which was composed of ARC, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) staffs, met throughout the process to develop suggestions and guidance prior to seeking external input. GDOT and GRTA are both key transportation planning partners, with GDOT responsible for implementing projects and setting statewide targets and GRTA serving as the Governor's designated TIP approval agency. The conversations at the working group were used to guide facilitated discussion at the TIP Prioritization Task Force. By incorporating specialists from throughout the agency, the working group relied on modal and topical expertise including freight, bicycle and pedestrian, transit, affordable housing, and the environment.

A TIP Prioritization Task Force composed of technical staff from local governments, state agencies, transit providers, non-profits, and consultants was also formed. Meeting monthly over a seven-month period (April-October 2016), the group guided the development of the performance measures that will be used in project prioritization. The group also provided substantive feedback on linking *The Atlanta Region's Plan* policies to project prioritization.

### **C08 - Transportation Visioning for Communities**

ARC prepared the vision by identifying an engagement plan to be used throughout the 18-month visioning process. A diverse cross-section of technical stakeholders from a number of different disciplines was engaged through the creation of a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC met three times throughout the process to: (a) help



ARC ensure that the SHRP2 efforts aligned with regional needs and desires; (b) evaluate scenario impacts; and (c) hone policies. ARC also met with the ARC Board and transportation committees and developed an on-line tool to facilitate conversations with the general public at the commencement of the next update of *The Atlanta Region's Plan*.

To convey the importance of keeping up with global challenges and technological changes on a minute-by-minute rather than decade-by-decade basis, ARC relied heavily on real-time learning, expert review, and technical analysis. The process emphasized the uncertainty of the future, and, therefore, the importance of creating a region that can weather massive changes across the spectrum of possible alternate futures. All participants were enthusiastic about participating in dialogue related to drivers of change and the scenario analysis process. Decision-makers could easily see the scalability of these discussions to their own City and County governance, as well as the importance of working together to effectively navigate potential disruptors and keep the region on-course to win the future. They could also appreciate the value of the MPO filling the role of vanguard with staff remaining well-informed about emerging trends and the potential of disruption.

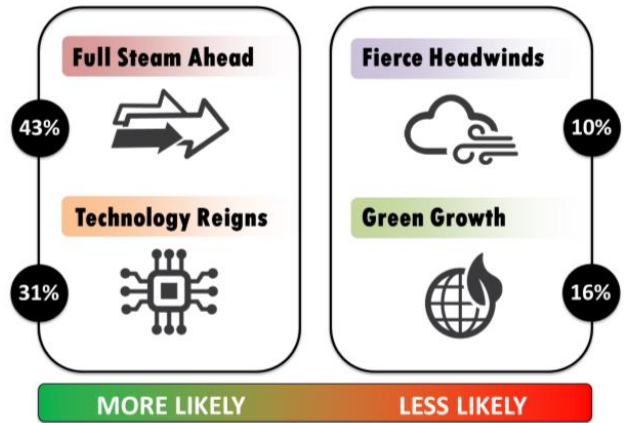
To engage technical stakeholders in the identification of drivers, ARC relied on a two-round online survey process to refine the social, technological, economic, environmental, and political “disruptors” that are likely to have the greatest impact the Atlanta region. The first online survey was distributed to 60 academics, futurists, and national experts. After collecting those answers and further refining the feedback, a second survey for local stakeholders was distributed. After comparing and aggregating the feedback from both surveys, ARC engaged the SAC for further refinement of the drivers into a final set of nine “drivers of change” (see below).



Once the basic framework of four alternate futures were in place, ARC sought to expand and vet the scenarios. Using an innovative planning exercise, the Project Steering Committee, which was composed of key staff and consultants, was tasked with examining potential event outcomes with respect to each scenario. To execute this process, staff developed multiple potential outcomes (framed as “events”) for each driver.

Those events were then printed onto playing cards. The committee members were then divided into four groups, one for each scenario, and given the card decks. The groups were charged with selecting the cards, each representing a possible outcome, that most closely aligned with their vision of the scenario they were given. After each scenario team selected the drivers/events they thought would realistically align with their future, the freshly formed scenarios were compared and the narratives were developed.

ARC's Transportation Coordinating Committee (technical staff) and Transportation and Air Quality Committee (MPO Board) played an interactive, simulated game where the members were presented with four plausible outcomes for each driver. Each outcome was tied to one of the four scenarios, but the game did not initially reveal which outcome belonged to which scenario. In the game, technical staff and policymakers were able to run through each driver and use a remote clicker to choose the outcome they believed was most likely to occur. From this, committee members could see whether they leaned more towards one scenario or another. ARC was also able to get a sense of baseline viewpoints about where Atlanta region residents think the world is heading. This exercise was facilitated by ARC to ensure that committee members were comfortable with the overall phrasing and concept before all deliverables, including the online gaming tool, were finalized.



While this piloting of this new visioning approach was relatively small in scale, the SHRP2 IAP grant allowed us to fully develop key messages and scenario descriptions that resonated with a local audience of elected officials, transportation staff, academic experts, and the ARC team. This organized communication platform offers a new launch point for the next update of *The Atlanta Region's Plan* and promises to elevate the level of engagement, interest and informed discussion. It also reshapes the definition of success by highlighting the value of incremental success. Winning the future happens one policy decision at a time.

**C15 - Integrating Freight Considerations into the Highway Capacity Planning Process**

FHWA, ARC and Georgia Tech hosted a two-day workshop focused on cooperative planning to improve freight movement and transportation planning within the Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion (PAM). Workshop participants included representatives from several MPOs in the PAM, four of the six State DOTs, Georgia Tech's Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD), and private sector participants from airports, freight railroads, trucking firms, and multinational retail corporations. The presenters and participants discussed accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned from a variety of planning initiatives and projects that required cross jurisdictional cooperation.



The two-day peer exchange consisted of five sections:

- **Global and Regional Freight Industry Trends:** The peer exchange began with an overview of the workshop agenda and goals. Freight movement at the megaregion scale was discussed in two panel discussions featuring private sector freight stakeholders. Topics included first and last mile challenges and global, national and regional trends.

- **Freight Infrastructure Changes in Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion:** The keynote address introduced transportation infrastructure impacts on megaregions, followed by a panel discussion and a presentation on Aerotropolis planning in the megaregion.
- **Regional Cooperation in Freight Planning and Other Topics:** This section included presentations of federal perspectives on the benefits of megaregion planning and regional cooperation, and a roundtable discussion on how agencies in the PAM might work together across jurisdictions.
- **Applied Research Projects Relevant to Megaregion Cooperation:** This section focused on ARC's recent work implementing scenario planning and performance management research products with discussion of how these topics may lend themselves to a cooperative approach in the megaregion.
- **Moving Forward Together:** The peer exchange concluded with a breakout session and group discussion where participants identified next steps for ongoing planning cooperation in the megaregion.

## Key Outcomes and Lessons Learned

Through the SHRP2 implementation process, ARC learned a great deal about ways to energize long-range planning policy dialogue, improve the project evaluation and prioritization process, better address uncertainty and change inherent in planning for the future, and incorporate freight considerations into highway recommendations. Following are key lessons learned through completion of products under each planning process bundle.

### C02 - Performance Measures for Highway Capacity Decision-Making

- TIP project prioritization is a key role of ARC, and jurisdictions are extremely interested in the process. To make the process transparent, feasible, and inclusive, it is key to have a lot of voices at the table. Throughout the process, ARC found it invaluable to set up a big tent since matching project prioritization to the region's values and vision requires an inclusionary process.
- Conflict resolution methods should be developed at the start of the process. When dealing with a variety of stakeholders, conflicting opinions are inevitable. Setting procedures initially will save time and frustration.
- Allow ample time for the prioritization process. ARC's entire development process took approximately ten months, including project testing. Allowing time at the end of the process for extensive project testing allowed ARC the ability to tweak final measures before applying the rubric in an official TIP call.

### C08 - Transportation Visioning for Communities

- The framework provided by the C08 product and the PlanWorks guide presents the visioning process as linear; however, a more flexible approach is needed to address the recent spike in uncertainty and rapid change. In many ways, the NCHRP Report 750 Series and associated FHWA Scenario Planning materials lay out the next generation of visioning methods.





- Once the region knows the general direction of the future it would like to see, there is a disconnect between goal setting and policy creation. The online visualization tool is the first of many steps in educating policy makers and the public on the outcomes of potential interventions and the progress that could be achieved across a number of indicators. While the next steps will evolve naturally through future updates of *The Atlanta Region's Plan*, a more established and researched bridge to connect the steps would provide a helpful framework for the Atlanta region.
- All the scenarios have the potential to disrupt how the region thinks about health, equity, and the environment. However, the current sketch tools at ARC's disposal focus primarily on transportation and economics. To create a full vision of the future, additional tools that can utilize the same inputs (for sake of consistency) should be developed. To execute more robust scenario planning processes, gaps in the modeling technology available need to be addressed. Ultimately, one technology that delivers transportation, economics, equity, environmental, and health outputs would provide the most key information to decision makers.
- One of the primary takeaways from this process is the importance of considering all tools during scenario development. As ARC continues its scenario work in the future, the technical teams will consider additional sketch planning tools and more thoroughly research potential shortfalls of models before investing significant resources in a model lacking proper documentation.
- The evolving nature of technology and demographic changes necessitates an adaptive planning process. While the scenario development process undertaken during SHRP2 looks at the year 2050, predicting the future 30+ years from now is exceedingly difficult. Rather than aspiring to plan for 20-30 years, future planning efforts may gain traction with elected officials and the public by focusing on the short-term (5 to 10 years) to ensure relevant and implementable projects. This approach would align with the notion of incremental successes as a way to reach a long-term vision.

### **C15 - Integrating Freight Considerations into the Highway Capacity Planning Process**

A peer exchange on freight and the Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion resulted in the following list of challenges identified by participants related to cooperation, collaboration, and engagement that must be overcome for freight planning outcomes to be more effective.

- Coordination across public and private sectors
- Discussion of the common goals across the region
- Analyses and comprehension of the existing and future capacity of rail freight
- Sharing project implementation progress information
- Conveying the importance of collaborative freight planning to get everyone on-board
- Impaired cooperation due to the competition for funding or business investments
- Performance measures that can be shared and used across planning boundaries
- Scalability of scenario planning at the State level
- Uncertainties related to potential increases in freight traffic arising due to the Panama Canal expansion

## Next Steps

ARC possesses a strong desire to build on the momentum the SHRP2 process has prompted. The level of engagement and interest from committee members and other stakeholders related to the issues explored is at a level rarely seen around any initiative undertaken by the agency. We consider submittal of final SHRP2 documentation to USDOT to be a point of transition, not a conclusion, on our work in these areas. While many questions remain on how to best proceed and where those paths may ultimately lead, there are numerous opportunities available to us moving forward. A few in which the conversation is already underway are listed below.



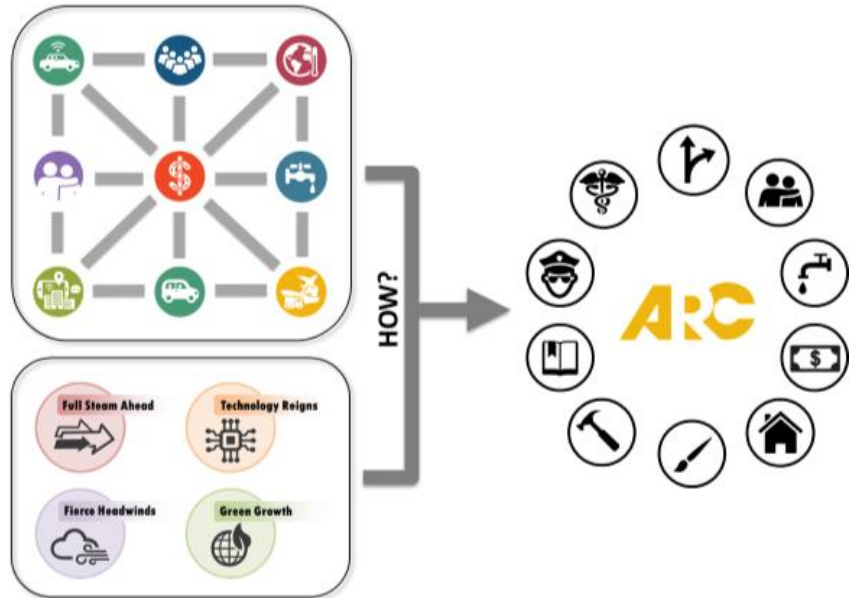
### Performance Measures for Highway Capacity Decision-Making

- **TIP Project Evaluation Process** - ARC aimed to develop a performance measurement framework for TIP project selection that was rooted in *The Atlanta Region's Plan*, the *Georgia Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan*, and Federal regulations. Using the SHRP C02 product as an outline, ARC approached the process hierarchically and aimed to expand the state of the process by including all project types. The use of key decision points continues to inform decision-making and enables ARC to continually invite stakeholder feedback. While an initial project prioritization methodology is ready for the next call for TIP funding, C02's emphasis on the value of process and results will aid ARC as the agency continues to iterate the process moving forward. Looking ahead, ARC recognizes the importance of integrating performance measurement throughout the organization and will look to track selected metrics throughout the lifetime of the plan.

### Transportation Visioning for Communities

- **Integration into ARC Work Program** - On April 6, 2017, ARC staff from each of the agency's major divisions convened for a full-day workshop to learn about the SHRP2 work and discuss how it could be leveraged in future efforts. While there was a general level of awareness of the effort throughout the agency, several divisions outside of Transportation Access and Mobility Division had not been substantively involved due to the technical nature of the work. As we begin the transition to a more policy oriented discussion, the timing was right to bring key staff across a broad spectrum of disciplines up to speed and identify opportunities for collaboration. There was great energy and interest from participants throughout the day, with a general consensus emerging that the SHRP2 work could be leveraged across the agency in multiple ways. There was, however, a recognition that the workshop was just a first step in a much longer internal coordination process which will stretch over the next several months, if not years.

- Transportation Technology Policy Plan** - This report builds on the SHRP2 work by identifying and exploring transportation technology trends, their potential impacts, and their policy implications, both generally and those specific to the Atlanta region. The result is intended to help support the Atlanta region in developing a regional transportation technology program to prepare for and take advantage of technology innovations in support of the region's goals. By identifying measures associated with key drivers of change and then tracking those metrics over time, ARC can then determine which policies to implement to either encourage/support a positive trend or arrest/reverse a negative trend.



- Transit Vision Update** - ARC is currently updating the transit vision for the Atlanta region, encompassing physical infrastructure, rolling stock, services, policy, and technological infrastructure. Transportation and transit options are subject to rapid changes in the near future as new modes and approaches come into the mobility picture. Some of the questions being considered in the transit vision update highlight how transit providers might respond as these trends unfold and have a direct relationship to those posed through the SHRP2 implementation process. Some services might be most effective only under certain conditions, which means the long-range transit vision must be responsive to various future scenarios and cannot be a single “static” set of recommendations.
- County Transportation Planning (CTP) Program** - Since 2005, ARC has made federal funding available to assist counties and cities in developing joint long-range transportation plans. These plans serve as the foundational building blocks of regional transportation planning efforts and are updated on a 5-7 year rotating cycle. For future CTPs, ARC will be working with local governments to determine how drivers of change and alternate futures might impact the plan development process and the outcomes of individual plans.
- Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)** - Grants and technical assistance have been made available for over 15 years to assist local jurisdictions with developing the planning and regulatory framework to create connected, mixed-use centers and corridors that foster a jobs-housing balance and support transit, biking and walking trips. As the LCI program has matured and ARC undertakes an assessment of how the program can remain relevant and vital for the next 15+ years, an emphasis on transportation technology and its potential land use impacts has emerged as a leading topic of discussion. We expect the SHRP2 work and its findings to inform that decision-making process.

- **Conferences, Peer Exchanges and Other Information Sharing Opportunities** - ARC's experience can provide valuable direction to other communities, regions and states considering undertaking a visioning process of their own. We will actively seek to maintain and build upon our newly found role at the forefront of exploratory scenario planning through participation in a wide variety of forums with our peer planning agencies.

### Integrating Freight Considerations into the Highway Capacity Planning Process

Several specific recommendations emerged from the freight and megaregions peer exchange, all of which ARC will continue to explore as it gears up for the next update of *The Atlanta Region's Plan*.

- Develop custom outreach approaches for various stakeholders and engage the private sector early
- Establish freight advisory committees to improve knowledge sharing between MPO planners and private sector representatives
- Expand data collection on land use and freight relationships
- Improve multimodal planning, including rail/high speed rail, as expanded opportunities to improve freight and commuter operations
- Consider the environmental impacts from a multimodal perspective of *not* completing projects
- Improve the level of understanding of how freight stakeholders utilize the highway system across local, regional, and State boundaries and continue to think through how to extend their understanding across State boundaries
- Ensure long term planning in the region is flexible enough to respond to the potential impacts the Panama Canal expansion will have on existing and emerging freight operations to and through the region
- Continue to gather data about current trends in truck activity and commodity flow in the region and update the plan accordingly
- Develop and maintain a website to facilitate stakeholder involvement in the megaregion through shared data and information on projects
- Forge a closer connection between safety planning and long-range freight highway planning
- Assess the opportunities and challenges associated with emerging technologies, such as automated vehicle technology and electric trucks powered by dynamic wireless charging, which may require additional and/or specialized infrastructure



## Connections to PlanWorks

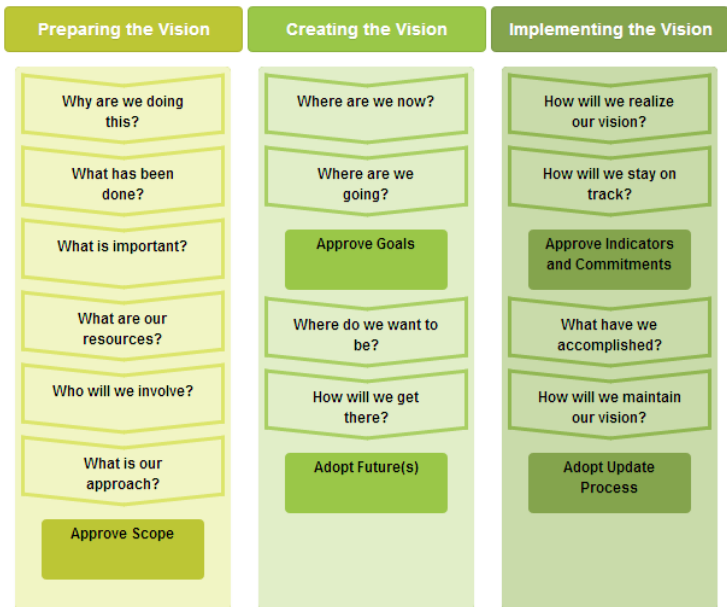
ARC’s implementation assistance grant focused on topics (project prioritization, visioning, and freight) that relate to specific key project decisions. ARC initiated this work between Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) update cycles, but did in-depth work associated with the Decision Guide of the PlanWorks process to inform and support the next plan and program updates:

- LRP-1 (Approve Scope of RTP Process)
- LRP-2 (Approve Vision and Goals)
- PRO-4 (Approve Project Prioritization)

With respect to the role of visioning in the transportation plan development process, the results of this effort do not align neatly with the PlanWorks framework. Exploratory scenario planning lends itself to preparing for multiple futures rather than selecting a single preferred future, so the “**creating the vision**” portion of the visioning process shown in the graphic below does not accurately depict the visioning process undertaken by ARC.

**SUMMARY OF PLANWORKS CONNECTIONS**

- **Decision Guide**  
Visioning Guide - LRP-1 and LRP-2  
Freight - LRP-2  
Project Prioritization - PRO-4
- **Assessment(s) and Application(s)**  
Not associated with these applications
- **Library**  
SHRP2 Bundle Products, including: SHRP2 C02 Report, SHRP2 C08 Report, SHRP2 C015 Report
- **Additional Research**  
NCHRP Report 750 Series  
FHWA HEP-16-068, Scenario Planning



The lines between “Where are we going?” and “Where do we want to be?” are constantly blurred. In addition, the key decision point shown of “Approve Goals” was actually “Approve Alternative Futures/Scenarios” in the case of our effort. Since the Atlanta region could be going a variety of places, we need to constantly survey the potential outcomes and fix our vision on winning the future, regardless of global and local trends. This realization that the visioning process is no longer one-dimensional, brought ARC to the conclusion that traditional ways of doing visions are no longer providing an effective organizing framework for consensus-building and subsequent plan/policy dialogue with decision-makers and potential partners.

For these reasons, ARC's alternate process for "Creating the Vision" consisted of the following steps:

- QUESTION - Where are we now?
- QUESTION - What could the future hold?
- **DECISION - Approve Alternate Futures / Scenarios** (*The scenario planning process stopped here.*)
- QUESTION - Where do we want to be? (*This is the starting point for the next RTP update, which will utilize the greater specificity and knowledge gained through this effort to better inform the dialogue on what "winning the future" might look like under different scenarios.*)
- QUESTION - How will we get there? (*This requires a robust discussion about goals and policies throughout the next RTP update.*)
- **DECISION - Approve Goals**

### ***The Decision Guide***

- LRP-1: ARC used the SHRP2 IAP grant to develop and approve the scope and approach of a new scenario-planning and visioning process to support the RTP and other agency work.
- LRP-2: ARC created a vision, modifying the steps in the visioning guide to explore the "Where are we now?", "What could the future hold?", and "Approve Alternate Futures/Scenarios" steps. The scenario-development process ended at this point in the visioning guide with plans to begin the next RTP update process by exploring more specific goals and policies focused on how to best navigate through times of rapid change. Forthcoming steps will include "Where do we want to be?", "How will we get there?", and "Approve Goals."

In addition, ARC expanded the geography of dialogue about freight needs and goals by hosting a peer exchange with freight stakeholders from the Piedmont megaregion. This collaborative discussion will also help inform the next update of the RTP.

- PRO-4: The project prioritization methodology developed, while not formally adopted, is now the first tier of ARC's official project selection process for the TIP.

### ***Assessments/Applications***

ARC used the assessment for stakeholder collaboration and the results indicated that the extent to which the agency was equipped and able to work effectively in a collaborative environment was "average". This was helpful feedback that amplified the need for ARC to develop clearer definition of roles, responsibilities and authority.

ARC tested three applications in this SHRP2 Round 5 grant. Specifically, these applications were: Freight (C15), Performance Measures (C02) and Visioning/Transportation (C08). These applications are the subject of this case study.

### ***The Library***

Ideas and inspiration for ARC's applications came from SHRP2 C02, C08, and C15 reports and products. These materials, highlighting research on performance measures, visioning, transportation, and freight built the foundation for new approaches to incorporate into long range planning and programming processes. Other NCHRP and FHWA research products were also used.

## For More Information

### *Contacts*

#### **John Orr, Manager**

Transportation Access and Mobility Division  
Atlanta Regional Commission  
(404) 463-3265  
jorr@atlantaregional.com

#### **Reena Mathews**

Transportation Specialist  
Federal Highway Administration  
(202) 366-2076  
reena.mathews@dot.gov

### *Resources*

All documents are located on ARC's website at [www.atlantaregional.org/transportation/shrp2](http://www.atlantaregional.org/transportation/shrp2) unless otherwise noted.

#### **C02 - Performance Measures for Highway Capacity Decision-Making**

- C02 Volume 1: Best Practices in Performance Measurement for Transportation Decision Making
- C02 Volume 2: Incorporating Performance Measurement into the Planning Process
- TIP Project Evaluation Framework  
[www.atlantaregional.org/tip-project-solicitations](http://www.atlantaregional.org/tip-project-solicitations)

#### **C08 - Transportation Visioning for Communities**

- C08 Volume 1: Vision, Approach and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- C08 Volume 2: Scenario Development Process
- C08 Volume 3: Scenario Testing Procedures and Results
- C08 Volume 4: Addressing Uncertainty and Change in the Planning Process
- Online alternate future gaming tool  
<http://scenarios.atlantaregional.org>

#### **C15 - Integrating Freight Considerations into Highway Capacity Planning Process**

- C15 Volume 1: Improving the Integration of Freight into the Planning Process
- Regional Models of Cooperation Peer Exchange Summary Report: Freight Planning and Regional Cooperation in the Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion  
[www.atlantaregional.org/freight-transportation](http://www.atlantaregional.org/freight-transportation)