

# Introduction and Vision

## WHY UPDATE THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN?

The Charleston Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CHATS MPO) current Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was last updated in 1998, with an interim update completed in June 2004. Federal metropolitan planning requirements require that a new long-range transportation plan update be completed by April 30, 2005. With this understanding, the 2030 LRTP for the CHATS MPO will incorporate "lessons learned" from past planning, while focusing on proactive strategies for the future. A successful LRTP update will complement both economic development initiatives and community investment without compromising quality of life. With this goal in mind, this study addresses federal and state planning requirements while building upon the community vision for the future transportation system.

The LRTP seeks to address regional needs through continuous coordination with representatives of numerous stakeholders, including:

- CHATS MPO
- Cities of Charleston, Hanahan, North Charleston, Goose Creek, Isle of Palms, and Folly Beach
- Towns of Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, Summerville, Lincolnville, James Island, Kiawah Island, Rockville, and Seabrook Island
- Berkeley, Dorchester, and Charleston Counties
- Various local, regional, state, and federal agencies, including the local transit authorities (CARTA and BCD RTMA), SCDOT, FTA, and FHWA

Since 1980, the BCD Region has experienced a population growth of more than 20%. The region also has added new businesses, expanded shopping opportunities, and developed more venues to attract visitors — but not without cost. While these increases have provided positive growth for the communities, they also have increased traffic, adding to congestion and creating new traffic pressure points throughout the region. As this rate of growth continues, accommodating additional traffic will become increasingly important. The LRTP will identify methods to maintain the mobility and accessibility of goods and people while balancing the quality of life of its citizenry.

The *CHATS Long-Range Transportation Plan* identifies specific and general transportation system improvement recommendations and strategies to help

accommodate growth in travel demand. This plan supports a diversified transportation system that considers not only automobiles, but also freight, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit patrons. The LRTP also examines opportunities to incorporate portions of several proposed planning efforts into the overall transportation network, including the *Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan* (adopted in 1995) and the *Tri-County Greenway Plan* (adopted in 1997), and other various highway corridor plans.

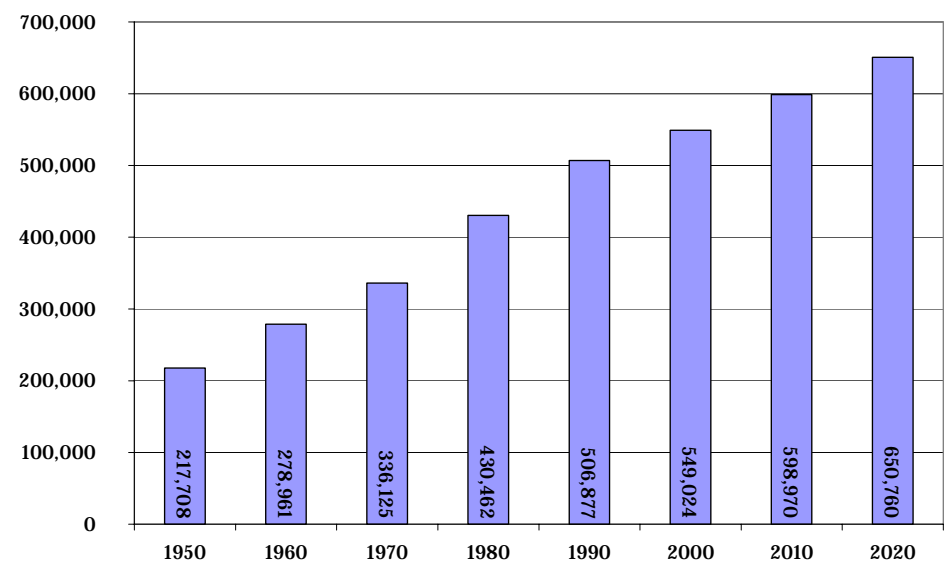
The success of this LRTP also depends greatly on its ability to *actually be implemented*. Simply put, this plan must be practical. With this in mind, the *CHATS Long-Range Transportation Plan* includes discussion on strategies, methods, and sources of funding for implementation.

In addition, this transportation plan addresses the CHATS MPO study area. The study area represents the anticipated twenty year horizon for urban growth for the CHATS area. This also is an area in which CHATS MPO can reasonably expect to be able to affect in the future. The study area is shown in **Figure 2.1**.

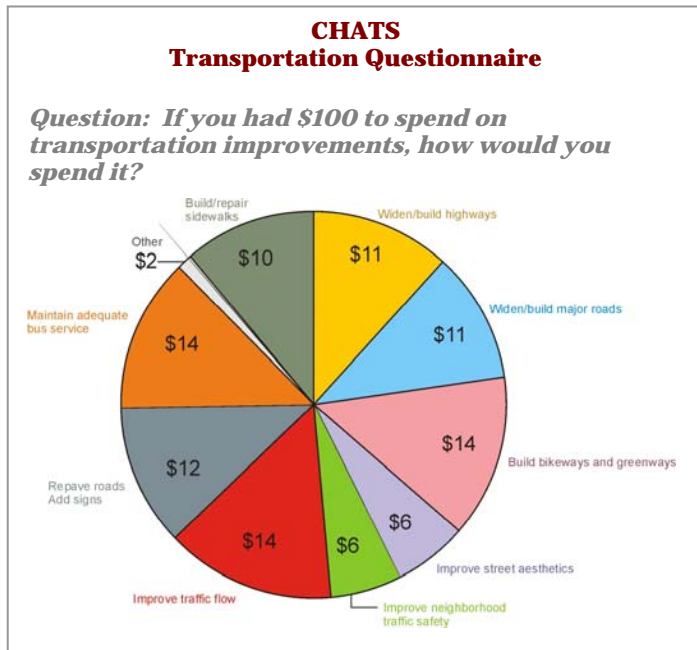
## Census and Demographics

The Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region is a growing area. Total population has increased more than 20% from 1980 to 2000, and is expected to grow at a similar rate from 2000 to 2020. While this rate of growth can

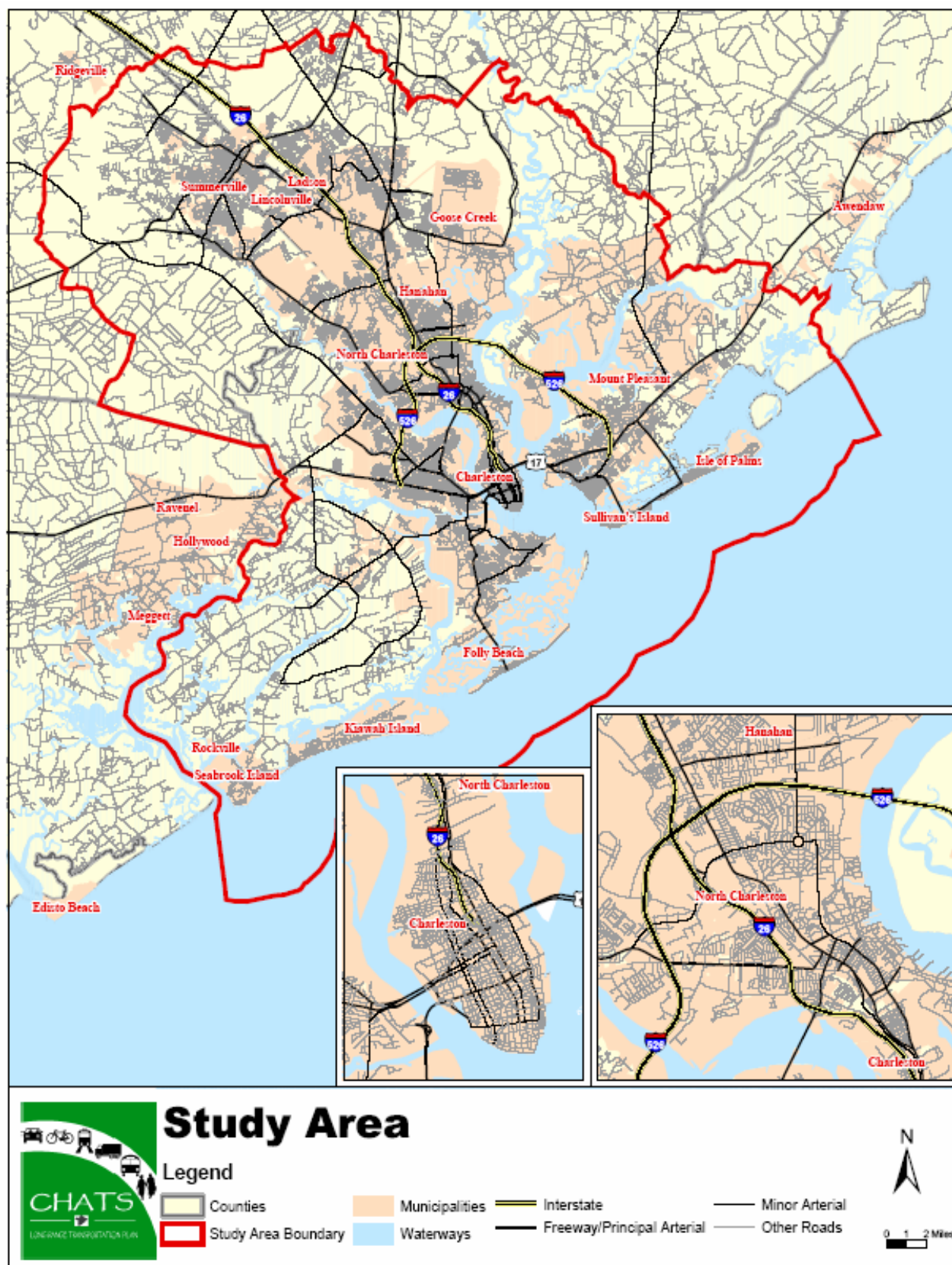
Population Trends and Projections



Source: South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics, Health and Demographics Division



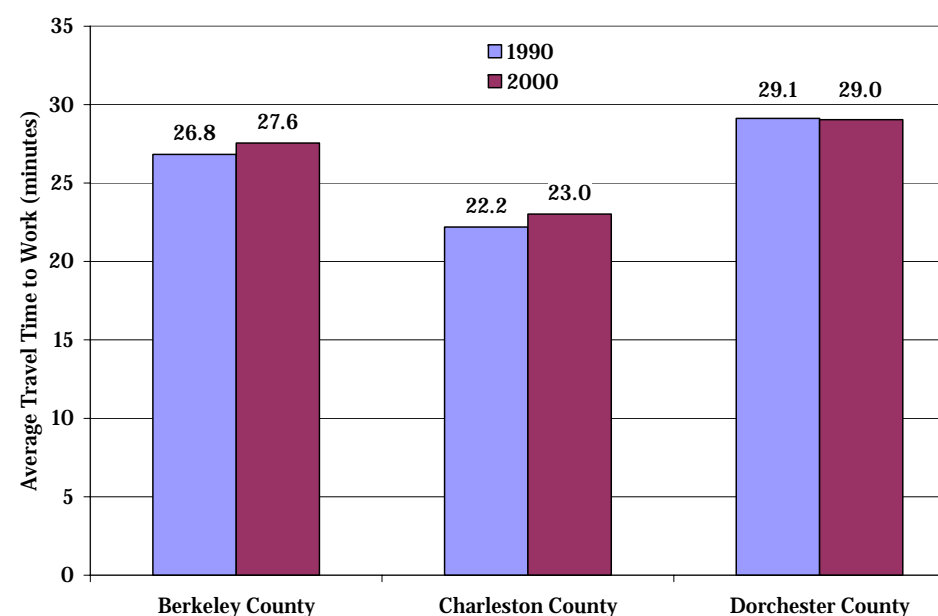
For complete public questionnaire results see Appendix.



result in numerous opportunities for a region, it also can create challenges such as increased traffic congestion, pollution, and loss of open space. In fact, total vehicle-miles of travel (VMT) have increased at three times the rate of population growth for the same period (11.6 million total VMT in 1990 versus 14.8 million in 2000).

Average commute times in the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region have showed only marginal increases from 1990 to 2000, possibly due to the opening of several major freeway facilities in the early 1990's. However, current commute times in the region are comparable in length to those of Atlanta, GA (26.0 minutes in 1990, 31.2 minutes in 2000) and Raleigh, NC (20.2 minutes in 1990, 24.9 minutes in 2000). Long commute times increase pollution and decrease productivity (as a result of lost work time).

**Average Commute Times, 1990 and 2000**

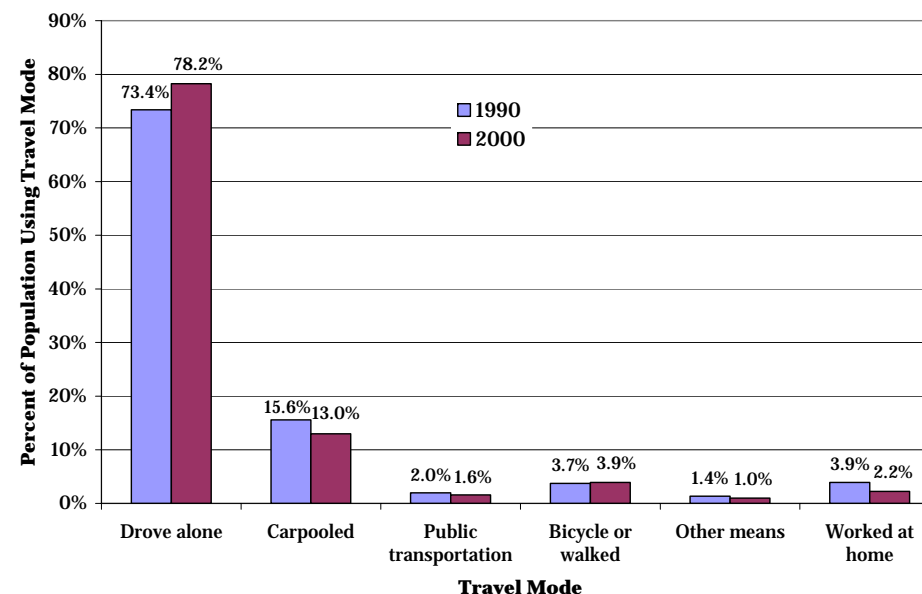


Source: US Census Bureau

The Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester area experienced an increase in the percentage of workers driving alone to work between 1990 and 2000. The use of alternative modes, such as carpooling and public transportation, has experienced a decline during that same period. The percentage of individuals working from home also has decreased, meaning more individuals are using the transportation system during work hours. Many metropolitan areas have been able to reduce long travel times and congestion by making multiple travel options available to the public. A multimodal transportation system can effectively meet the transportation needs of a regional population.



**Mode of Travel to Work**  
(workers 16 years and over)



Source: US Census Bureau

### Traveling Trends

Today, people drive more often, make longer trips, and own more vehicles than ever before. In 1969, households made an average of 3.83 trips per day, in 1995 that number rose to 6.36 trips per day, an increase of 2 ½ trips per household or 66%<sup>1</sup>. This is despite the fact that average household size has decreased from 3.16 to 2.63 persons per household since 1969.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Transportation planning has become a more inclusive process that builds on strong citizen involvement. Historically, transportation planners did not think that the public would either be interested in or understand long-term planning studies and issues.

Citizens, however, are the very ones that face the daily challenges associated with travel. To ensure that the *CHATS Long-Range Transportation Plan* considered these important issues *and* kept the region's best interest in mind, a Transportation Plan Advisory Group (TPAG) was formed and involved early in the planning process. In order to make sure that the community was

<sup>1</sup> Source: 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey, Office of Policy Information, United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

adequately represented, citizens and planners from a broad range of backgrounds met monthly to participate in the TPAG.

The TPAG's first task was to generate a list of regional characteristics that have attracted them to and kept them in the area. A reoccurring theme was an appreciation of coastal water features in the community. Other characteristics include the historical context, convenience, attractiveness, and overall atmosphere of the region. The committee members agreed that they wanted to retain each of these characteristics while promoting a plan that would protect the integrity of the transportation system.

The public involvement process was not limited to members of the TPAG. Three public workshops were held on March 30, May 4, and May 18, 2004 to allow members of the community to express their transportation concerns and list priorities. After a brief presentation, workshop participants discussed transportation issues and projects. Frequently mentioned projects included:

- Add transit service from Charleston Peninsula to islands
  - More landscaping for transportation facilities
  - Improve existing (ADA compliant) and build new bicycle and pedestrian facilities in James Island, West Ashley, Sullivan's Island, North Charleston, Mount Pleasant, Charleston Peninsula, Folly Beach, Isle of Palms, and Summerville
  - Coordinate traffic lights along US Highway 17
  - Rutledge Avenue, Ashley Avenue, and Calhoun Street should accommodate two way traffic
  - Connect Ashley Phosphate Road to Ladson Road
  - Extend North Rhett Avenue to tie into US Highway 52
  - Lower speed limit along SC 41 at Phillip's Community
  - Extend Gregory Ferry Road to Dunes West Boulevard to ease traffic in Mount Pleasant
  - Extend Hungry Neck Boulevard to Hamlin Road in Mount Pleasant
  - Connect US Highway 17 to Clements Ferry Road
  - Widen all of I-526 to three lanes to improve traffic flow in Mount Pleasant
  - Connect Dorchester Road to the airport
  - Widen Orangeburg Road to alleviate traffic in Summerville
- Create direct access from James Island Connector to US Highway 17 North

Yet another population within the three-county region are members of the community that are considered "hard to reach". A key initiative of this Plan was to aggressively pursue minority, low income and Hispanic communities that are typically left out of the planning process. In May and June of 2004, members of the project team initiated a campaign to specifically target these groups. Several tools were used to engage these community groups including

developing a mailing list, one-on-one interviews, bilingual flyers, attendance at neighborhood organizational meetings and church meetings, and oral surveys. Several “walk-in” sessions were conducted in the Hispanic business community located on Remount Road. This aging shopping center is dominated by businesses that sell Hispanic food, videos and books, which provided a great opportunity to solicit comments directly from the Hispanic community that shop in this area.

Several issues and ideas were identified by the minority, low income and Hispanic communities including:

- Local transit is not suitable to meet the needs of Latino’s living in Dorchester County who work in downtown Charleston (mainly in hotels). Many of these individuals rely on carpools to get to work, doctor’s appointments, outreach programs and public health services
- Need for public transit bus schedules and informational brochures in Spanish
- Improved frequency of CARTA services in North Charleston: need to add routes from North Charleston-Remount Road area and along 52 Rivers Ave to Downtown Charleston and Johns Island
- Extend CARTA Dorchester Route 5/15 past 6pm to allow work to home trips
- Need Park-N-Ride lot in a shopping center along Johnny Dodds blvd/US17 to reduce morning commuter traffic into Downtown Charleston
- Need Park-N-Ride lots along hwy 78 /hwy 52
- Adding bike paths along Mathis Perry Rd. or somewhere in Mt Pleasant where traffic is not heavy
- Minimize Freight travel along Dorchester Rd and Remount Rd

Once the *Draft* CHATS Long-Range Transportation Plan was developed, the community provided valuable feedback towards the Plans findings and recommendations. Three public information workshops were held on March 8, 10, and 14, 2005. To solicit additional public comments on the *Draft* Plan, a 30-day public review process was conducted.

The community outreach efforts included several media to encourage participation and engage the general public in the transportation planning process. For this plan, the range of media included press releases, distributing flyers, television and radio interviews, newspaper articles, direct mailings, emails, BCDCOG website announcements, presentation to various groups, local board announcements and a comprehensive public survey.

## VISION AND OBJECTIVES

In light of these key characteristics that help make the BCD Region a special place, the TPAG envisioned a future region that provides accessibility and mobility for people and goods by developing and maintaining an adequate, safe, and balanced transportation system. During the development of the previous LRTP, an extensive process was created to identify explicit goals and policies related to transportation. This effort helped guide the overall development of the new LRTP and is referenced in the *CHATS 1998-2018 Transportation Plan*. This 2004 LRTP update attempts to balance both the vision and objectives expressed by TPAG members *and* comments recieved at the public workshops. This effort has resulted in the following goals of the Study (in no particular order):

- **Develop a compatible plan** — consider future land use and adjacent jurisdiction plans
- **Create a plan** — accommodate community growth and related traffic increases
- **Improve roadway safety**
- **Recognize specific mobility needs** — consider regional tourism and economic development (business and industry)
- **Recognize access and limited mobility** — address disabled persons and other similar needs
- **Create a system of interconnected streets** — improve mobility and distribute traffic efficiently based on purpose and function
- **Provide for convenient, efficient connections** — connect various surface and air transportation modes and facilities
- **Enhance the efficiency of the existing transportation system** — implement low cost improvements and incorporate innovative techniques (such as congestion management strategies)
- **Enhance the quality of life** — minimize adverse impacts and/or positively affect the natural and social environments
- **Support “mixed-use” development** — encourage bicyclists and pedestrians by promoting context-sensitive roadway design
- **Promote a pedestrian-friendly environment** — fill in gaps and improve interconnection within the sidewalk system
- **Support additional bike lanes and trails to parks and community activity centers**
- **Evaluate the need for passenger/commuter rail service between regional activity centers**
- **Create interconnected bicycle and pedestrian networks**

- **Provide and plan for future transit service expansions** — include park-and-ride facilities and readily available transit service information
- **Protect and reserve rights-of-way** — encourage local jurisdictions within the BCD Region to plan for ROW needs as future development occurs
- **Build consensus and locate funding sources** — determine acceptable local sources and implement innovative techniques to supplement federal and state revenues

## **A TRANSPORTATION PLANNING GUIDE**

The vision of a safe, multi-modal, and interconnected transportation system for the BCD Region can become a reality. This plan is intended to serve as a tool and guide for the future success in the implementation of the Region's

transportation system (2030 is the planning horizon for the transportation plan). The *CHATS Long-Range Transportation Plan* includes the following chapters:

- Background and History
- Introduction and Vision
- Existing Conditions
- Future Conditions
- Highway/ Collector Street Element
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Element
- Transit Element
- Freight and Aviation Element
- Management Strategies
- Financial Plan
- Implementation Plan