

Macon Area Transportation Study

2050 Freight Plan

Final Report

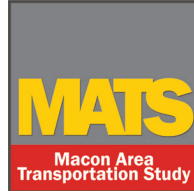
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MATS 2050 Freight Plan

Acknowledgments



We appreciate the many community members and partner agencies who provided expertise and guidance in the planning process for the 2050 Freight Plan. We extend a special thank you to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee participants for their extra time and insight throughout this process.

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Report Organization

This plan represents the culmination of the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) 2050 Freight Plan planning process. The report is organized into six chapters organized around the planning process, understanding the current freight network and system, estimating future changes and demand, and the process of developing and prioritizing recommended projects, strategies, and actions.

Plan Purpose and Overview

The first chapter introduces the purpose of the 2050 MATS Freight Plan and provides context for the plan and an overview of the planning process.

Freight Networks and Facilities

This chapter provides an overview of the MATS planning area's various freight networks and facilities, which includes roadway networks as well as networks facilitating transport of goods via rail, air, truck, and pipeline.

Freight Demand

This chapter summarizes the facilities, land uses, and trips that drive freight demand in the MATS region.

System Assessment

This chapter summarizes the needs and opportunities with respect to freight traffic, truck parking, safety, and multimodal travel.

Trends Impacting Freight

This chapter summarizes some of the trends and phenomena that are affecting freight and which are likely to impact freight over the next several years. This includes vulnerabilities due to natural and human causes, changes in the logistics and freight industries, and other factors.

Recommendations and Implementation Strategy

This chapter summarizes the process followed to identify and develop potential projects and strategies to address identified needs. It includes descriptions, tables, and maps of recommended projects and strategies, as well as potential sources of funding.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MATS 2050 FREIGHT PLAN IS TO ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION, TRAFFIC OPERATIONS, AND PLANNING NEEDS RELATED TO THE MOVEMENT OF GOODS WITH THE REGION, AND TO IDENTIFY RECOMMENDED PROJECTS AND POLICY CHANGES TO ADDRESS THOSE NEEDS.

Purpose and Overview

As more goods move throughout the state of Georgia, the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) is conducting a regional freight plan to assess the needs, strengths, challenges, and opportunities of the regional freight system now and in the future. The plan was developed by Gresham Smith, working in consultation with MATS and is funded by a grant awarded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT; Project #0019903).

Purpose

The purpose of the MATS Freight Plan is to address transportation, traffic operations, and planning needs and opportunities related to the movement of goods within the region, and to identify recommended projects and policies and strategies to address those needs. Freight, goods movement, and related industries (such as manufacturing, distribution, logistics, e-commerce) contribute to the local economy through jobs and taxes. Over time, population growth, development, the rise of e-commerce, and increasing competition for public space have created challenges for freight and other commercial vehicles.

This freight study focuses on comprehensively analyzing, assessing, and improving the transportation system in a way that can sustain area's economic competitiveness while assessing ways to reduce potential negative impacts of freight on communities. The resulting plan lays out a roadmap for projects that will improve freight operations and mobility for years to come.



Background

MATS is the official Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Macon area. It encompasses all of Macon-Bibb County, southwest Jones County, and a small portion of Monroe County. Macon-Bibb County is the hub of Middle Georgia with numerous jobs in hospitality and tourism, insurance, healthcare, and transportation and warehousing. The area's strength in distribution and e-commerce is likely due, in part, to its central location within Georgia. Located just over 80 miles south of Atlanta, MATS sits at the confluence of I-75, I-475, and I-16, providing a direct link between the Port of Savannah and the Atlanta region.

Freight and logistics are critical components of Georgia's economy. The state's multimodal transportation network carried nearly half a billion tons of freight in 2019, according to the State Freight Plan (2023).¹ Over the past several years, transportation and logistics employment in the state have outpaced the nation, with freight transportation and warehousing experiencing significant growth. The Port of Savannah is the third largest container gateway in the U.S., and is now the fastest growing port on the East Coast.² The Georgia Freight Plan forecasts a 91% increase in tonnage and a 141% increase in the value of goods carried throughout the state's freight network by the year 2050. While the volumes will vary somewhat by industry, all are expected to grow over the next 25 years. Trucks carry more than 80% of Georgia's freight tonnage and are anticipated to carry 87% of the new tonnage by 2050³ - an indication that roads and highways will require significant upkeep, expansion, and operational improvements to accommodate the forecasted growth.

The MATS region will play a significant role in supporting freight growth. The area has a long history as a transportation hub at the center of the state. Today, the MATS region includes a mix of residential, industrial, and commercial uses crisscrossed by highways, railroads, and local roads serving a variety of interstate, regional and local traffic. Additionally, Norfolk Southern's Brosnan Yard, a major classification yard that sorts 10,000 railcars each week, sits just two miles from the heart of downtown Macon. The area is also served by two airports and sits adjacent to Robins Air Force Base, a major freight generator and economic contributor to the region and state.

According to federal laws governing metropolitan transportation planning (as well as statewide and non-metropolitan transportation planning), it is in the national interest to encourage and promote safe and efficient management, operation, and development of surface transportation systems that serve the mobility needs of people and freight. In general, the metropolitan planning process should consider projects and strategies to increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight and to enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes for people and freight. Furthermore, laws governing metropolitan transportation planning require that freight planning be considered in the development of MPO transportation plans and other applicable work elements.

The purpose of the 2050 Freight Plan is to complete a regional freight study for the MATS MPO that includes a comprehensive assessment of freight needs, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through the year 2050. The study includes assessments of freight needs, land use, the economic development market, environmental and community impacts, system vulnerabilities and resiliency, and developing project recommendations.

1 Georgia Department of Transportation. (2023). Georgia Freight Plan, <https://www.dot.ga.gov/InvestSmart/Freight/GeorgiaFreight/GeorgiaFreightPlan.pdf>, p. 2-1
 2 Georgia Ports Authority. 2025, February 25, *Savannah fastest growing port on U.S. East Coast*, <https://gaports.com/press-releases/savannah-fastest-growing-port-on-u-s-east-coast/>
 3 Georgia Department of Transportation. (2023). Georgia Freight Plan, <https://www.dot.ga.gov/InvestSmart/Freight/GeorgiaFreight/GeorgiaFreightPlan.pdf>, p. 2-1

Relationship to MTP and Other Prior Plans

The MATS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) included a freight element that examined freight and goods movement transportation modes and tied regional freight planning to FAST Act National Planning Factors, statewide freight goals, and which also established several freight goals specific to the MATS MPO.

Federal transportation policy, under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), established Transportation Performance Management practices to increase the accountability and transparency of the Federal-aid highway program and provide a framework for investment decision-making based on performance outcomes around national transportation goals. In keeping with these practices, both the 2050 MTP and this 2050 Freight Plan recognize and work towards key national transportation goals, including reducing congestion, improving system reliability, improving freight movement and economic vitality, and enhancing the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

As part of this planning process, the project team reviewed previously approved plans and studies to develop a baseline understanding and context for development of the Freight Plan. These plans and studies serve as a foundation, providing background information, and relevant recommendations and projects to be considered as part of the freight planning process. Prior studies include not only documents from MATS, but also from GDOT, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, Macon-Bibb County, and others.

The 2050 Freight Plan will be incorporated into the next iteration of the long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Several freight-related projects and projects along designated freight corridors from the most recent 2050 MTP (amended in 2023) are being carried forward into the 2050 Freight Plan. Likewise, select Freight Plan recommendations may be incorporated into short-term Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) as they are developed over the next several years.

MATS 2050 MTP FREIGHT GOALS

Support Economic Vitality

- *Improve freight movement*
- *Increase funding and funding sources for all transportation modes*
- *Improve project delivery for all modes*

Promote Multimodal and Affordable Travel Choices

- *Improve efficient movement of goods and services within and through the region*

Manage Congestion and System Reliability

- *Allow people and goods to move with minimal congestion, time delay, and greater predictability*

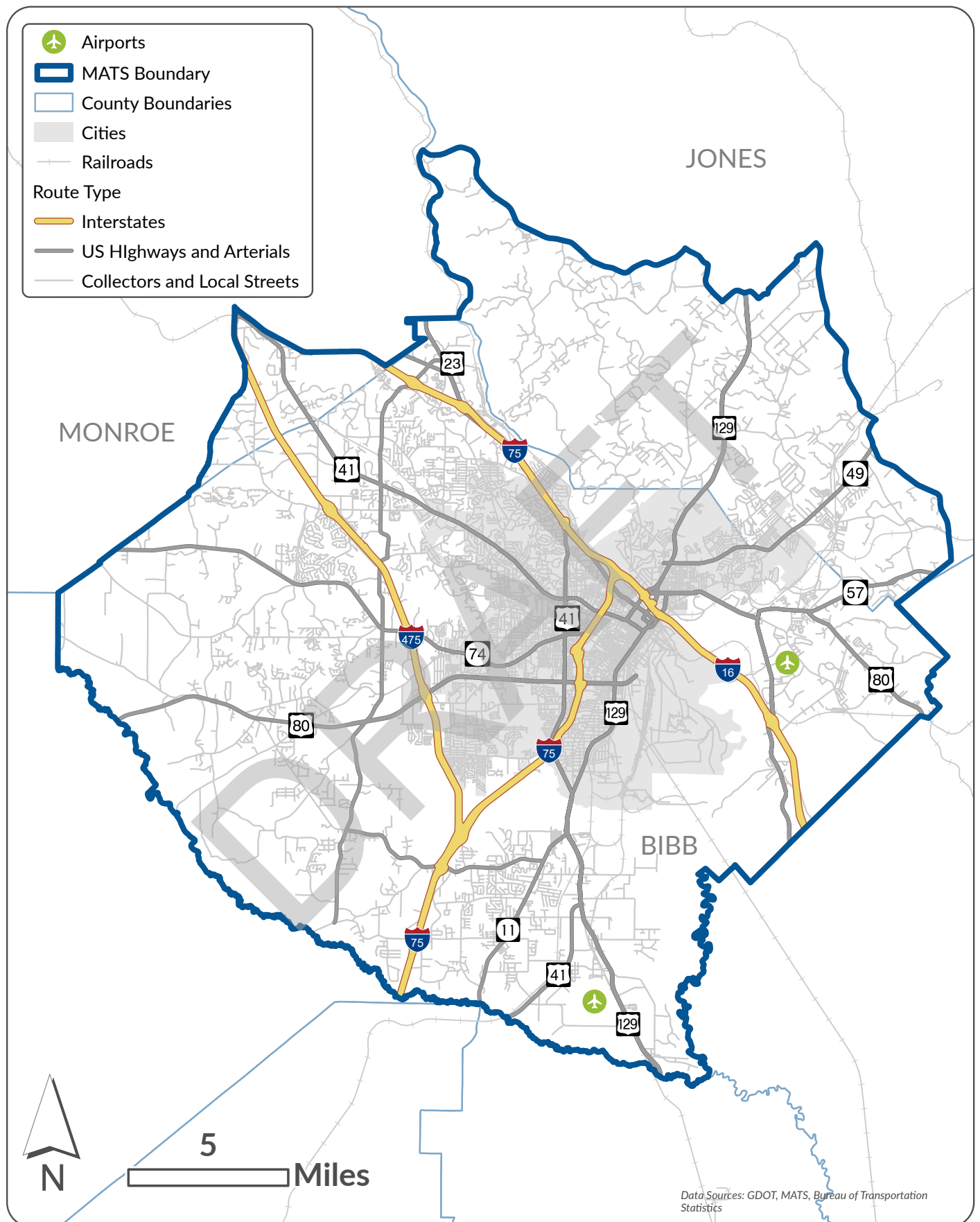


Figure 01. MATS MPO Planning Area

PRIOR PLANS AND STUDIES

Statewide Plans

- Georgia Freight Plan (2023)
- Georgia Statewide Air Cargo Study (2022)
- Statewide Truck Parking Analysis (2021)
- Georgia State Rail Plan (2021)

Regional Plans

- MATS Unified Planning Work Program
- MATS Transportation Improvement Program (FY 2024-2027)
- 2050 MATS Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2023)
- Middle Georgia – Robins Air Force Base Sustainability Plan (2022)
- 2022-2027 Middle Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Middle Georgia Intermodal Hub Master Plan (2019)
- Middle Georgia Freight and Logistics Study (2015)

Local Plans

- 2050 Macon-Bibb Comprehensive Plan (2022)
- Jones County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2022)
- Monroe County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update (2022)
- Macon-Bibb County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (2010)

Vision and Goals

Given the complex and changing environment for freight traffic, along with shifts in demographic and travel patterns in the region, the MATS 2050 Freight Plan is being developed in order to identify projects and strategies to help move freight more safely and efficiently while sustaining high-quality jobs and improving quality of life for residents and workers. The plan seeks to enhance the MPO's understanding of freight volumes, value, commodities, and modes of travel, better integrate freight into the overall transportation planning process, consider freight needs in project selection and prioritization, and help link freight mobility to other community goals, such as economic development and job growth, as discussed in the 2050 MTP.

The 2050 MATS MTP identified several key trends affecting freight over the coming years. These include a growing population and economy, diversifying global supply chain, rising domestic fuel production, changing urban-rural dynamics, growth in e-commerce, rapidly advancing technologies (including information, communications, robotics, artificial intelligence, and batteries, among others), and an evolving workforce. At the time the 2050 MTP was prepared, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) had recently been signed into law (November 15, 2021). While the IIJA included some updates to national freight transportation policy, it continued to emphasize establishing National Planning Factors and reconciling them with State and Local goals (a policy originally established under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act).

Recognizing the role of MATS regional transportation system plays in the overall freight network within Georgia and throughout the southeastern U.S., it is important that MATS continues to provide for the efficient movement of people and freight, enabling connections between regions, cities, and rural communities, as well as between businesses and customers. The overarching vision for freight in the MATS region is one of a highly functional, interconnected multimodal network that allows for the safe and efficient movement of a variety of goods and people.

Linking National Planning Factors with regional goals established in the 2050 MTP, the overarching goals of the 2050 Freight Plan are as follows:

- Improve freight mobility and safety
- Manage freight system reliability and efficiency
- Address the growing demand for e-commerce and respond to broader changes in shipping and logistics
- Identify and help mitigate potential conflicts between freight traffic, non-motorized traffic, and vulnerable communities
- Identify strategies to attract and retain freight-related businesses that contribute to the local economy and sustain quality jobs
- Leverage state and federal funding opportunities

Plan Development Process

The 2050 Freight Plan was developed over a roughly 16-month period in coordination with MATS partners at FHWA and GDOT and guided by a Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The plan kicked off in late January of 2024 and concluded in May of 2025, as shown in Figure 02. During course of the study, the project team identified strengths and weaknesses of the freight network, assessed existing conditions and future needs, evaluated freight-related land use patterns, community and environmental impacts of freight activities, the economic development market, and evaluated vulnerabilities of and potential disruptors to the freight system.

The overall process consisted of seven technical analysis and research tasks along with ongoing stakeholder engagement. Several key tasks were iterative, building upon and informing other tasks already under way. For example, the land use and economic development market assessments were developed early on in the process to help inform the freight needs assessment, but ultimately combined with the environmental and community impact assessment. Likewise, the freight needs assessment incorporated key findings from the land use assessment, along with findings related to freight system conditions and performance.

The following sections discuss components of the planning process and some of the key findings from each. Additional details on these tasks and key take-aways can be found throughout the Freight Plan and in the technical memoranda included as appendices.

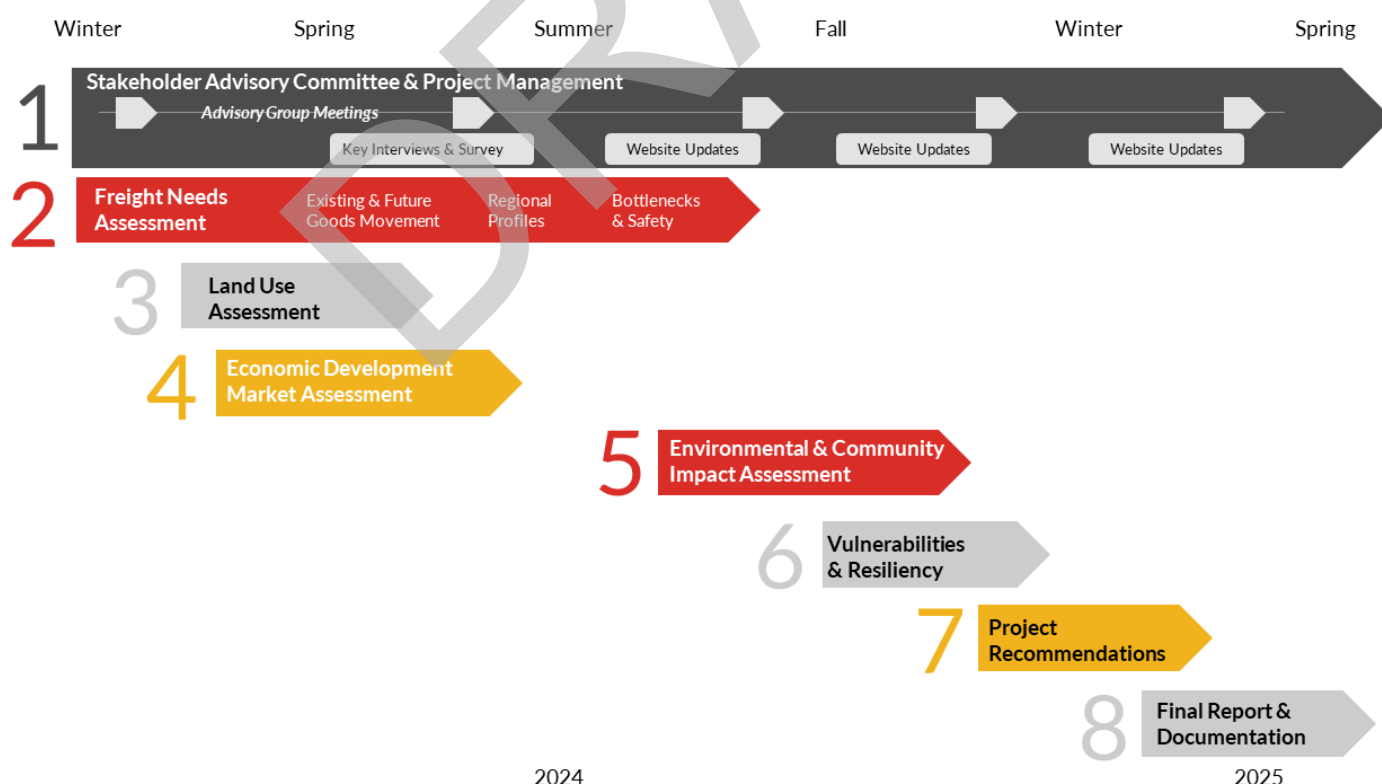


Figure 02. Freight Plan Study Timeline

Freight Needs Assessment

The Freight Needs Assessment technical memorandum provides an overview of the existing freight transportation system in the MATS planning area and assesses current and future needs. The memorandum summarizes key prior plans and studies, and covers existing conditions related to various modes of freight transportation - highway, rail, and air cargo - as well as an overview of freight traffic patterns based on travel demand model outputs for the years 2020 and 2050. It also summarizes key findings pertaining to origin-destination patterns, truck parking facilities, clusters of freight-related businesses, and commodity flows. The intent of this initial overview is to establish an overall understanding of existing and anticipated future conditions, to inform an assessment of future needs and development of recommendations. Alongside the key findings from assessments of land use, economic development, and community impacts, the Freight Needs Assessment helps identify opportunities for improvement to support safer and more efficient freight travel and goods movement.

Land Use, Community and Environmental Impacts, and Economic Development Market

As part of the 2050 Freight Plan, the project team sought to assess current and future land use patterns, understand the state of the freight-related economic development market, and to characterize the impacts of freight and goods movement on communities and the environment. The purpose of this second technical memorandum is to round out the MPOs understanding of both existing and potential future conditions and to begin to identify opportunities for improvement and potential projects or recommendations. With its central position at the confluence of three interstate highways and location between Savannah and Atlanta, the MATS region is likely to experience substantial growth in freight traffic, warehouses and distribution facilities, and associated activity over the coming decades. Freight and goods movement operations already play a significant role in the regional economy.

Land Use Assessment: The first section of the memorandum summarizes key findings related to current land use patterns and characteristics of freight related businesses (warehouses, distribution centers, manufacturing facilities), with a focus on identifying clusters of industrial and freight related uses as well as the characteristics that make them potentially suitable for freight growth or expansion in the future. Nine clusters of “freight active” parcels were identified, primarily along US 129, US 41, I-75, and I-475 in the southern half of the MATS planning area. As part of this process, the team assessed the potential suitability for future freight development based on a number of characteristics and criteria. Areas that exhibit potential for future expansion and growth of freight-related businesses tend to be clustered along key freight corridors in the southern portion of the MPO planning area.





Community and Environmental Impacts: The second section of the memorandum describes and characterizes the impacts of freight and foods movement and related industries on communities and the environment within the MATS planning area. Freight activities, such as truck traffic, rail operations, and industrial and warehouse developments, often concentrate in specific areas served by designated freight corridors or within areas zoned for industrial uses. Communities adjacent to these corridors may be more susceptible to the negative impacts of freight operations, including air pollution, noise, traffic congestion, and collisions involving heavy-duty vehicles. The memorandum describes the potential impacts to people, wetlands, parks, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources, examines case studies of strategies used in other communities to reduce and minimize the potential negative impacts of freight on communities and the environment, and offers recommendations for mitigation strategies potentially appropriate for the MATS region.

Economic Development Market Assessment: The third and final section of the memorandum is an assessment of the economic development market. It provides insight into potential future freight growth related to current and projected economic factors, as well as opportunities and challenges faces by industries that utilize or generate freight. The MATS region experienced strong job growth in freight-related industries like manufacturing and warehousing over the past 15 years, and recent investments by large manufacturers are expected to continue this growth. The memorandum summarizes employment trends, strengths and challenges of freight-related industries, wages, cluster analysis, and industrial development patterns. It also includes comparisons to peer regions and summarizes key findings that can support continued improvements to freight and related industries in the MATS region.

System Vulnerabilities and Resiliency

Building on the findings from the assessments of freight needs, land use, community and environmental impacts, and the economic development market conditions, the project team examined potential vulnerabilities in the MATS region's freight network. The purpose of this exercise was to identify potential disruptors to the freight system and to identify potentially applicable mitigation strategies. When there is a disruption to the freight network, the movement of goods may be impacted for hours, days, or even weeks, depending on the cause and severity of the disruption.

The technical memorandum summarizes key take aways from a review of Macon-Bibb County's Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, GDOT's Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan, the Georgia Freight Plan, and the Georgia Hazard Mitigation Strategy. Assessing the relevance of potential hazards and disruptors identified in these and other regional freight plans, the team focused on seven key potential disruptors and assessed the likelihood, impact, duration, and overall threat level to freight in the MATS region. The memorandum also includes summaries and examples of potential mitigation strategies that may help MATS and its partners guard against future disruptions or adapt or respond to them should they occur.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement plays a critical role in all transportation planning initiatives. For the MATS 2050 Freight Plan, engagement was primarily conducted through a Stakeholder Advisory Committee established by MATS in consultation with the project team. Stakeholders provided important firsthand knowledge and insight into local conditions, needs, opportunities, and challenges. The process also included development of a project-specific website, one-on-one interviews, an online survey, a StoryMap, and briefings or presentations given to MATS Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Technical Coordinating Committee (TAC), and Policy Committee. The multifaceted engagement process included a variety of techniques and mechanisms for connecting and engaging with key freight and logistics industry representatives, economic development leaders, government agencies, and a variety of other community members.

Project Website

Within the first few months of the planning process, the project team collaborated with MATS staff to create a project-specific website to serve as the online hub for information about the plan, opportunities to provide input and feedback, the overall schedule, and key activities and milestones. The project website was built as a standalone site intended to be “live” during the duration of the planning process. A link was placed on the MATS MPO website (www.maconmpo.com) so that community members could navigate to it from the MPO site as well.

The project website was designed with interactive features to allow users to learn more about key tasks, to submit comments to the project team, and to provide input via an online interactive map and stakeholder survey, both of which were built into the site directly while they were active. After the online StoryMap was developed, a link was placed on the website, inviting users to browse the StoryMap to learn more about freight in the MATS region.

Stakeholder Survey

During the summer of 2024, the project team collaborated with MATS staff to develop an online survey to gather input on challenge and opportunities facing freight and related industries in the region. Questions touched on industry trends, challenges and opportunities facing freight and goods movement, priorities for infrastructure improvements and policy changes that respondents would like to see in the Macon region, and recommendations for other groups to reach out to.

The survey was advertised through the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority Newsletter, MATS committee and website, and other sources. In total, 64 people responded to the survey. Respondents represent a variety of perspectives, including truck or delivery drivers, business and property owners, freight company operators, policy makers and public officials, and others. Key findings from the survey include:

- More than half of respondents are tracking continued economic growth in Georgia and investments in existing infrastructure as relevant industry trends. Likewise, new investment in existing infrastructure is the biggest opportunity facing freight and goods movement in the area, as noted by 77% of respondents.
- Workforce challenges, keeping up with demand, and supply chain issues are among the biggest challenges facing freight and goods movement in the area.

Table 01. Key Community and Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Activity	Date(s)	Description
Stakeholder Advisory Committee	January 31, 2024 May 29, 2024 September 10, 2024 January 9, 2025 March 17, 2025	A group consisting of representatives of local government agencies, MATS, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, GDOT, private sector freight businesses, and other key stakeholders to provide input on study issues, needs, and opportunities, and key findings as well as to provide input and feedback on draft recommendations.
Project Website	May 2024 - June 2025	An accessible, online mobile-friendly platform to share study information and convey plan progress. Includes interactive features like map platforms and surveys. The project website was active mainly during the plan development process. The project-specific website was linked via the MATS MPO website.
Stakeholder Survey	May 23, 2024 - October 10, 2024	An online survey developed to gather information from local staff and truck drivers on industry trends, priorities, challenges, and opportunities related to freight mobility within the study area.
Online StoryMap (Click here to access)	June 2024 - Ongoing	Interactive, map-centric multimedia presentation to provide information on the Freight Plan process and key findings. Includes interactive map and graphic features. The first iteration was published in June 2024. An update to the StoryMap was published in April 2025 and will live on beyond the life of the planning process.
Stakeholder Interviews	May and June 2024	One-on-one interviews with a handful of key stakeholders involved in the business of freight and logistics in the MATS MPO area, including representatives of Norfolk Southern, the Greater Macon Chamber, real estate developers, and the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority.
MATS Committee Briefings	Ongoing - Quarterly	Brief presentations to provide updates on study progress and gather input at regularly scheduled meetings of the Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Coordinating Committee, and Policy Committee.

- Top desired priorities for infrastructure improvements among respondents include dedicated freight travel lanes (80%), roadway capacity improvements (71%), and increased truck parking (60%).
- Among policy changes respondents would like to see in the future, there is a strong desire for dedicated truck routes (86%), workforce development initiatives (50%), and easing of truck parking restrictions (37%).
- Specific challenges facing buildings and infrastructure are primarily related to the need for modernization (84%) and maintenance (72%), whereas environmental, utility, and lack of space ranked lower among issues.
- Improvements seen as most helpful to freight and logistics operations include improving access to major roadways, intermodal facilities

Further questions delved into why businesses choose to operate in the Macon Metropolitan Planning Area, specific non-interstate routes used most often by drivers and freight operators, security and safety at area freight facilities, and policies and programs that could help improve freight mobility and operations. Several examples of responses and results are provided on the following pages.

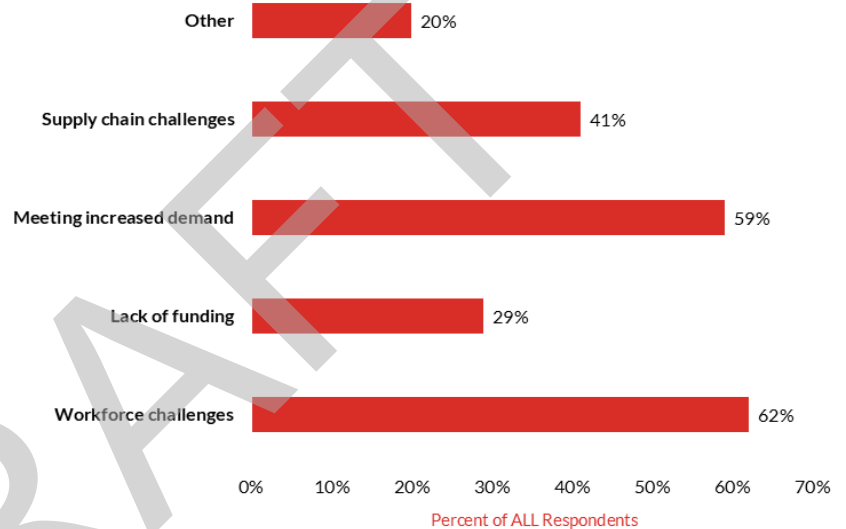
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Freight Plan Stakeholder Survey asked questions about the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the region as well as ideas for improvement.

Biggest Challenges

- Other concerns:
 - Inadequate local road infrastructure
 - Overcrowded interstates
 - Continued degradation of roadway infrastructure

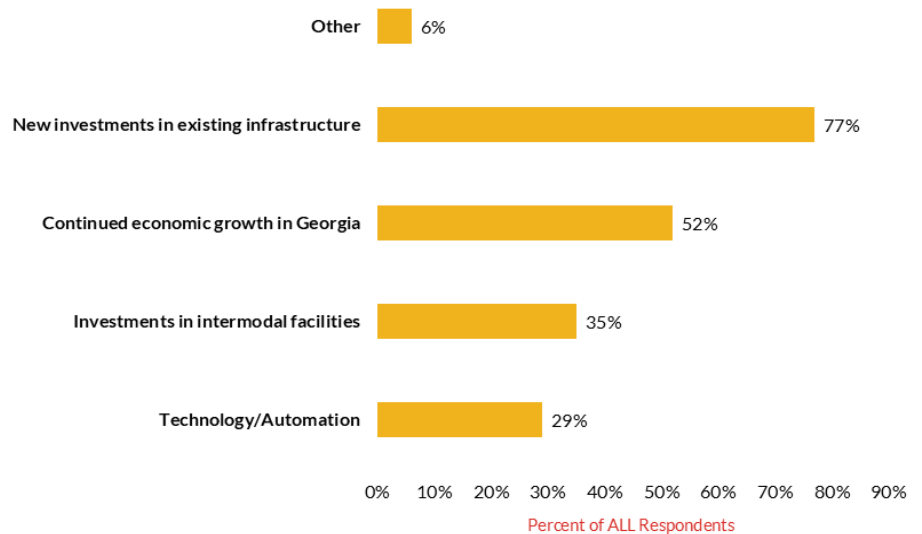
What do you see as the biggest **challenges** facing freight and goods movement in the area?



Biggest Opportunities

- Other concerns:
 - Commit to funding road infrastructure repair
 - Reducing warehouse footprint
 - Increasing access to airports

What do you see as the biggest **opportunities** facing freight and goods movement in the area?



KEY THEMES

Several key themes emerged among groups of respondents related to challenges, opportunities, and ideas to support potential future improvements. The following summarize some of the key themes.

Specific Challenges with Buildings and Infrastructure

- Need modernization
- Maintenance
- Environmental concerns
- Utility concerns
- Able to better handle commercial traffic (in and around exits and distribution centers)

Ideas to Support Existing Business Operations and Future Growth

- Workforce development assistance
- Fast track roadway improvements
- Passenger rail
- Infrastructure development plans for projects not shovel ready

Ideas to Help Freight and Logistics Operations

- Easy access to major roadways
- Space constraints
- Easy access to intermodal facilities
- Maintain infrastructure
- Reduce congestion
- Increase transport – freight and passenger

General Freight Related Concerns Raised by Constituents

- Traffic congestion
- Lack of truck parking or staging
- Railroad crossings - safety
- Environmental and deforestation concerns

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Beginning with a kickoff meeting in January 2024, engagement of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee was ongoing throughout the duration of the planning process. The committee served as a sounding board, providing context to support key findings, guidance on analysis and activities, and input on challenges, opportunities, and potential ideas. The committee was comprised of representatives of MATS local governments (Macon-Bibb County, Monroe County, and Jones County), private sector freight businesses, the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, and others:

- 21st Century Partnership
- Federal Highway Administration - Georgia Division
- Georgia Department of Transportation - Intermodal Division, Office of Planning
- Jones County (Building Official/Zoning Director)
- Macon-Bibb County Airports
- Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority
- Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning
- Middle Georgia Regional Commission
- Monroe County (Community Development Manager)
- Norfolk Southern Railroad

The committee met five times throughout the duration of the study. Meetings were held virtually to make efficient use of everyone's time. An initial kickoff meeting at the start of the study was followed by meetings that touched on key findings from the assessment of existing conditions, stakeholder survey results, the community and environmental impact assessment, economic development market assessment, and the vulnerability assessment. The last two meetings focused on shaping and gathering input on potential types of projects and recommendations as well as the draft plan. A summary of meetings and topics is provided in Table 02. Copies of stakeholder meeting materials are included in the appendices to the plan.

Table 02. Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings

Date	Topics Covered
January 31, 2024	Kickoff Meeting - Project background and overview, study objectives, questions to explore, summary of key tasks, overall schedule, stakeholder engagement activities, and open discussion.
May 29, 2024	Project refresher, overview of existing conditions (roadways, traffic volumes, truck percentages, airports, railroads, warehouse facilities, origins and destinations), economic development market key findings, launch of the stakeholder survey and interviews, and next steps.
September 10, 2024	Project refresher and update, freight needs assessment key findings (commodity flow, bottlenecks, travel time reliability), land use, stakeholder survey responses, community impact assessment findings, and next steps.
January 9, 2025	Project refresher and status update, vulnerability assessment findings, draft recommendations - potential types/categories, prioritization framework, preliminary ideas, and next steps.
March 17, 2025	Draft plan overview, project summary/refresher, examples of draft recommendations, initial stakeholder feedback, and next steps.

StoryMap

StoryMaps are interactive, map-centric, multi-media presentations. They flow from top to bottom and invite viewers to scroll through the story being told, graphics, and interactive map features. The MATS 2050 Freight Plan StoryMap was envisioned to provide a succinct overview of the study process and key findings from the first phase of the plan - focused on existing conditions. The intent is to tell the story of freight in the MATS region, helping people understand what types of freight businesses and freight facilities are present, and to provide information about the value and impacts of freight to the area.

An update to the StoryMap was developed as in conjunction with the preparation of the Freight Plan document. The update complements the previous sections with information on the process of developing recommendations and interactive maps to view Freight Plan recommended projects. The StoryMap will live on beyond the life of the plan, as an online summary of the process and accompaniment to the plan itself.

Stakeholder Interviews

To supplement and complement technical analysis and input from the Stakeholder Committee, project team members conducted phone interviews with key industry representatives and notable stakeholders. The purpose of the interviews was to inform stakeholders about the Freight Plan; coordinate development of the Freight Plan with ongoing initiatives; and to collect input on challenges, opportunities for improvements, technologies, and future trends regarding freight operations in the study area. Stakeholders interviewed as part of the process include representatives from industrial and warehousing real estate development, the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, and Norfolk Southern.

Announcement of the
MATS 2050 Freight
Study on the MPO
Website

Announcing the MATS 2050 Freight Study

The Macon-Bibb Planning & Zoning Commission is in the process of completing a Regional Freight Network Plan for the Macon Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (MATS MPO). This project began in January 2024, and will run through June 30, 2025.

[Click here to see the project website](#), including a map outlining the plan's study area, and a timeline describing key tasks involved in the study. Each of the tasks will help MATS and the project team assess regional freight needs, strengths, challenges and opportunities through the year 2050.

MATS 2050 Freight Plan
The purpose of this study is to complete a regional freight plan for the Macon Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (MATS MPO) planning area.

Project Introduction
The Macon-Bibb Planning & Zoning Commission is in the process of completing a Regional Freight Network Plan for the Macon Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (MATS MPO). A map outlining the plan's study area (the MATS MPO) can be found below. The timeline to the right lists key tasks involved in the study. Each of the tasks will help MATS and the project team assess regional freight needs, strengths, challenges and opportunities through the year 2050.

Please check back here regularly for updates on the study as well as opportunities to provide input! Or to submit a comment to the project team, please use the "Leave a Comment" page in located in the website menu.

MATS 2050 Freight Plan StoryMap
StoryMaps are interactive, map-centric presentations that allow users to view and interact with certain project details and learn more. The MATS Freight Plan StoryMap provides background information on the study, information on existing conditions, land use, and the economic development market.

Project Timeline

- Stakeholder Group Establishment/Engagement**
A project-specific stakeholder committee will be formed to help inform the study with on-the-ground perspectives. The stakeholder committee is to include (but is not limited to) local governments within the MATS MPO, the GDOT Office of Planning and Research, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, the Middle Georgia Regional Airport, 21st Century Partnership, and the FHWA.
- Freight Needs Assessment & Analysis**
During this stage the project team will examine and analyze trends in freight data around the Macon MPO, including existing bottlenecks and barriers for future growth.
- Land Use Assessment**
During the process of the project, the team will analyze existing concentrations of freight volume and uses and the role that it plays in successful freight movement.
- Conduct an Economic Development Market Assessment**

MATS 2050 Freight Plan
Envisioning a vibrant future for the Macon region
Project Study Area

MATS 2050 Freight Plan

Project Home | Why Plan for Freight? | **Existing Freight Conditions** | Key Findings: Macon Freight | Challenges and Opportunities | Project Contact

Transportation Infrastructure and Land Use

Click below to view the Freight Related Transportation Infrastructure in the MATS region.

Roads

The MATS region is served by more than 2,000 miles of roads, including, but not limited to Interstate highways (I-15, I-75, and I-475), U.S. Highways (US 28, US 41, US 90, US 129), state routes (SR 11, SR 19, SR 49, SR 74, SR 57, SR 247), and hundreds of local roads. The overall freight network is comprised of several sets of designated networks, including the National Highway Freight Network, the Strategic Highway Freight Network (STRAHNET), and the State

Briefings to MATS Committees

MATS has three committees to engage community members and guide the work of the MPO: the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), and the Policy Committee. The CAC was created as the primary forum for citizen engagement, to gauge community values and public attitudes in planning processes. The TCC is comprised of agency staff from MATS member jurisdictions and is convened to assist the Policy Committee with collecting information, conducting technical reviews, formulating recommendations, setting priorities, and supporting MPO processes and documents. The Policy Committee is charged with carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process and is the board that formally adopts the MTP, TIP, and other documents that officially reflect MATS policies.⁴

To apprise committee members of the ongoing progress of the freight plan, brief updates were provided by MATS staff at regular committee meetings, which are held on a quarterly basis throughout the year. Periodically throughout the planning process, slightly longer presentations were developed to provide more in-depth information and substantial updates on ongoing activities. These include briefings to the Policy Committee in August 2024 and short presentations to each of the committee during the January/February 2025 cycle. **The final briefing to the MATS Policy Committee, anticipated to take place on May 7, 2025 will be the mechanism for adoption of the plan (note: highlighted in pink since this item is pending - will update for final version).**

⁴ Excerpted from MATS MPO website, <https://www.maconmpo.com/>