

BLANCO COUNTY

Transportation and Economic Development Plan

Adopted January 14, 2014
by the Blanco County Commissioners Court

WITH SUPPORT FROM:



Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction	1
1.1 Report Organization	1
1.2 Study Background and Purpose	1
1.3 Study Area	2
1.4 Study Participants	5
1.5 Purpose and Benefits of a County Transportation and Economic Development Plan	5
1.6 Relationship between Transportation, Land Use, and Economic Development	6
1.7 Public Involvement	6
1.8 Study Process	6
Chapter 2—Existing Conditions	9
2.1 Review of Existing Plans	9
City of Blanco Comprehensive Plan	9
2.2 Demographic Trends	10
2.3 Existing Socioeconomic Conditions	15
2.4 Land Use Inventory	16
2.5 Flooding	22
2.6 Air Quality	22
2.7 Safety	22
2.8 Existing Transportation Conditions	25
2.9 Existing Transportation Financing	32
Chapter 3—Economic Development	39
3.1 Overview	39
3.2 The Approach to Economic Development Planning	39
3.3 Existing Conditions	39
3.4 Current Conditions Point to Key Issues	47
3.5 Economic Development to Date	48
3.6 Challenges	49
3.7 Recommendations	49
3.8 Organization and Funding	54
Chapter 4—Future Conditions	57
4.1 Future Population and Employment	57
4.2 Future Land Use	60
4.3 Planned and Programmed Transportation Improvements	61
Chapter 5—Travel Demand Modeling	63
5.1 Model Development	63

5.2 Evaluation of Future Needs	67
Chapter 6—Transportation and Economic Development Plan	71
6.1 The Public Involvement Process.....	71
6.2 Infrastructure Needs Assessment.....	73
6.3 Recommended Transportation and Economic Development Improvements	74
6.4 Visualization of the Blanco County Plan	85
Proposed Thoroughfare Improvements Map	86
Proposed Transportation Safety Improvements Map	87
Proposed Pedestrian/Bicycle, Tourism and Transit Improvements Map	88
Chapter 7—Recommendations and Plan Implementation Strategies	89
7.1 Findings and Recommendations	89
7.2 Project Prioritization	89
7.3 Possible Funding Sources	93
7.4 Implementation of the Plan	97
Appendix A – Blanco County Transportation & Economic Development Plan Questionnaire Results	98
Appendix B – Streetscape Concept Plan, Blanco, Texas.....	99
Appendix C – Capital Area Rural Transit System	100

Chapter 1—Introduction

1.1 Report Organization

The Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan is the result of a collaborative effort between Blanco County and the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) with support from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to develop a vision for economic growth and transportation improvements to guide Blanco County through the year 2040.

The report is organized into the following chapters:

- Introduction—description of the study area, background, and purpose; study participants; county transportation plan purpose and benefits; transportation and economic development relationship; public involvement; and study process.
- Existing Conditions—discussion of the existing land use; natural environment and air quality; safety conditions; transportation conditions; and revenue for the City of Blanco and Johnson City.
- Economic Development—discussion of the existing demographic and socioeconomic trends and conditions, including age and population, employment, schools, and health facilities; state of the county economy; tourism; development along U.S. highway corridors; broadband Internet; and future economic development recommendations for the county.
- Future Conditions—discussion of future population and employment, future land use, and planned and programmed roadway improvements.
- Travel Demand Modeling—discussion of the process utilized to develop the model, including traffic zone analyses and projected traffic volumes; deficiencies and needs; and an evaluation of the alternative roadway network, including a consideration of county goals.
- Transportation and Economic Development Plan—visualization of how recommended transportation and economic development improvements create a comprehensive strategic plan for the future growth and development of Blanco County.
- Recommendations and Plan Implementation Strategies—findings and recommendations from the study, possible funding sources for the projects, and steps to implement the plan.

1.2 Study Background and Purpose

The Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan was undertaken because Blanco County, CAPCOG, and TxDOT recognized the need for a coordinated regional transportation plan. This plan will provide guidance for system connectivity and continuity, both within and between counties, as well as integrate economic development strategies with standard transportation analyses to provide greater context for planning and implementation of transportation improvements. In addition, CAPCOG and TxDOT took advantage of the opportunity to provide insight on the best strategies to develop long-term economic prosperity for Blanco County. TxDOT sponsored the Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan in an effort to develop a long-range transportation and economic development strategy that Blanco County might not otherwise have the resources to develop.

A comprehensive countywide plan is a blueprint for the future that looks at all modes of transportation, including roads, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities. The Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan allows county officials to identify and preserve rights-of-way (ROWs) needed for expansion of existing facilities as well as future new corridors to serve anticipated growth and development.

The need for such a plan is driven by the continuing rapid population growth occurring in the nearby Austin–San Antonio region. Significant development has occurred in the area since 1980, and continued development of the unincorporated areas north of Canyon Lake and other areas can be expected to have a more direct impact on Blanco County in the future.

A proactive public involvement/outreach process assured that this comprehensive multimodal transportation and economic development plan was developed by county residents for county residents to address the needs of a growing population.

1.3 Study Area

Blanco County is located west of Hays and Travis Counties. The vicinity map for Blanco County is provided in **Figure 1.1**. The study area for the Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan included all of Blanco County and coordinated with the adjoining counties.

Blanco County is approximately 710 square miles. The county seat is Johnson City, and the incorporated cities in the county are Blanco, , and Round Mountain. The 2010 population of Blanco County was approximately 10,500 residents, with an average density of 14.8 residents per square mile.

Two public school districts serve Blanco County residents: Blanco and Johnson City Independent School Districts (ISDs). There are two state parks in Blanco County: Pedernales Falls State Park and Blanco State Park. The Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) National Historical Parks Visitor Center, Park Headquarters, and Boyhood Home are in Johnson City, while the remainder of the LBJ National Historical Park and LBJ State Park and Historic Site are just outside Blanco County near Stonewall in Gillespie County.

The Interstate Highway System does not go through Blanco County, but it does include two roads that are part of the National Highway System. Roadways within Blanco County are classified as principal arterial, minor arterial, major collector, minor collector, or local road. **Figure 1.2** shows the functional classification of the state highways (SH) within Blanco County. The major roadways for through traffic in Blanco County are U.S. Highway (US) 281 and US 290.

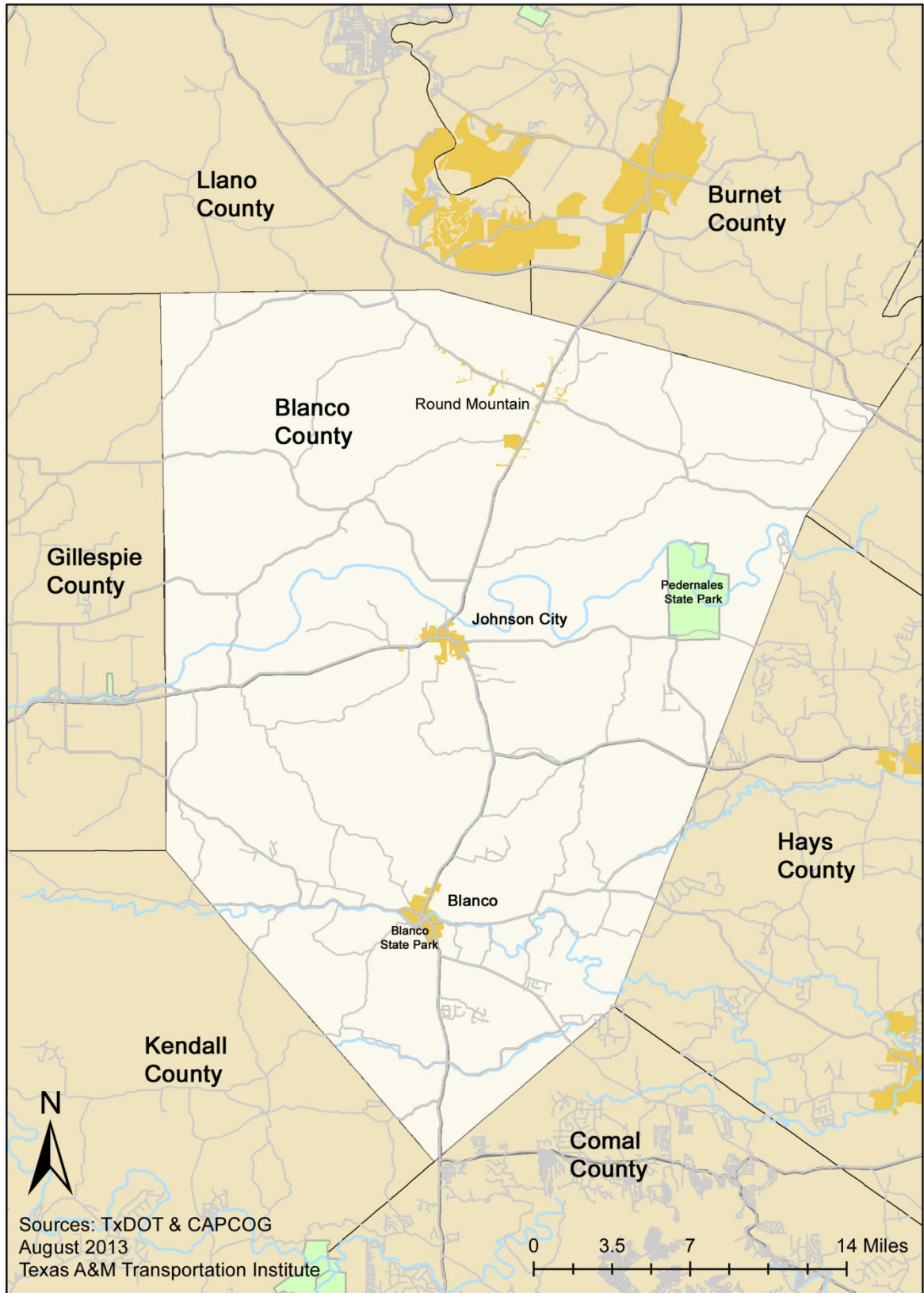


Figure 1.1. Blanco County Vicinity Map.

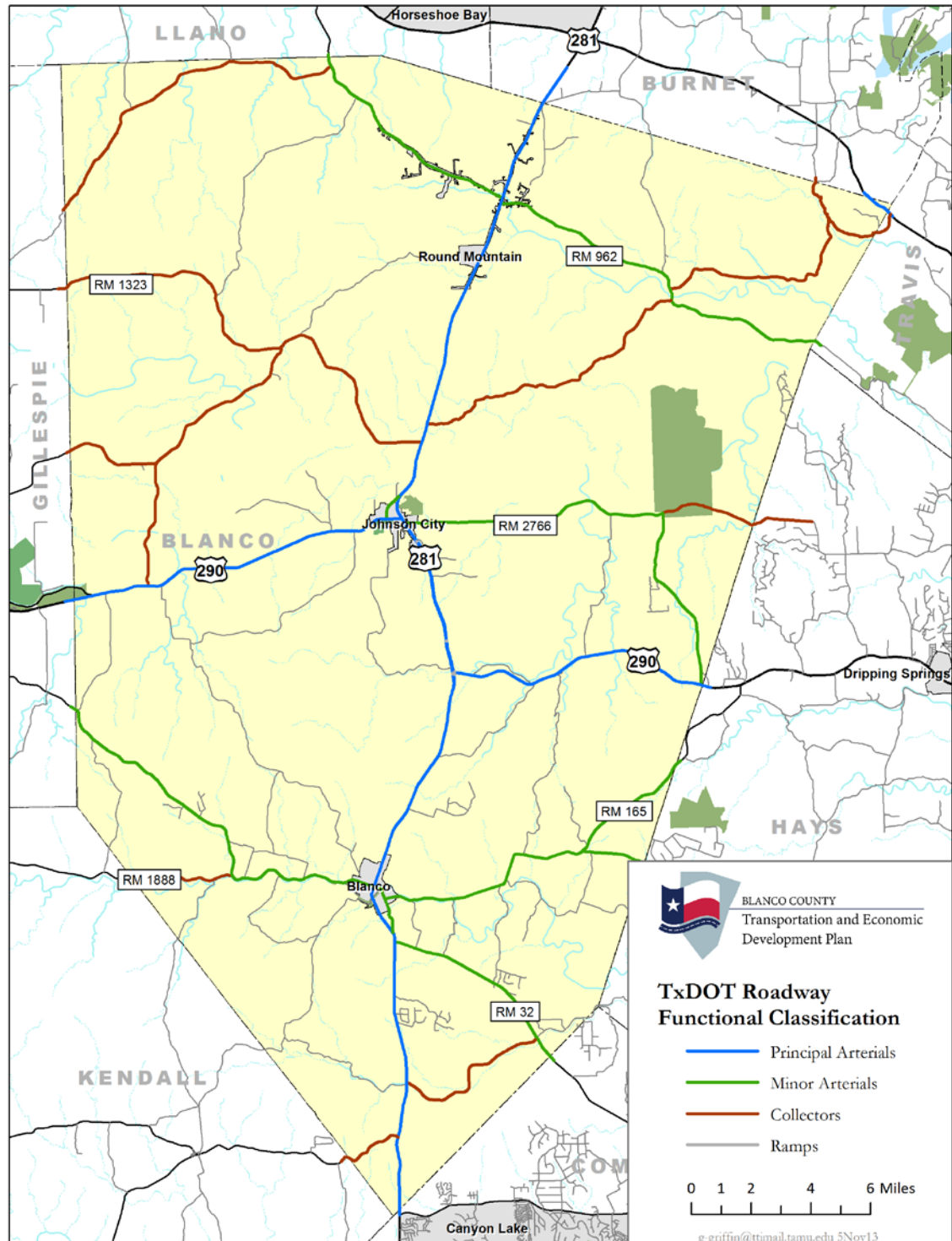


Figure 1.2. TxDOT Roadway Functional Classification for State Highways in Blanco County.

1.4 Study Participants

Four groups or agencies participated in the Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan planning process. The agencies and their responsibilities are listed below:

- Blanco County—served as the lead agency directing the project, headed by the county judge, commissioners, and staff.
- CAPCOG—provided support to other agency members; provided support to county and local officials; provided guidance for the public involvement activities; provided technical analysis for specific aspects of existing and future conditions; hosted the website; and assured that the planning process was consistent with the local and regional transportation planning process.
- TxDOT—provided support to other agency members; provided support to county and local officials to meet the goals and objectives outlined by the advisory committee; provided guidance for the public involvement activities; coordinated with CAPCOG to facilitate data sharing; provided technical analysis for specific aspects of existing conditions; and assured that the planning process was consistent with the local and regional transportation planning process.
- TTI—built the Blanco County transportation model for future roadway analysis; provided overall guidance for participants; assured uniformity in the process and content of the plan; provided technical analysis for specific aspects of existing conditions and finance; facilitated public meetings; served on the project management team; oversaw the project website; and provided technical support and analysis of the project questionnaire.

In addition to the participants listed above, an advisory committee was formed to provide guidance and input to the process (members are listed in Chapter 6). The advisory committee was comprised of county residents and representatives of local businesses, chambers of commerce, Blanco Independent School District, and Pedernales Electric Cooperative (PEC), along with the Johnson City mayor and city administrator, Blanco City Council members, and representatives from the Blanco County and Johnson City Economic Development Corporations.

1.5 Purpose and Benefits of a County Transportation and Economic Development Plan

As stated earlier in this chapter, the purpose of the county plan is to create a blueprint for the future that looks at all modes of transportation and to identify and preserve rights-of-way needed for expansion and growth. House Bill (HB) 1857 has given counties more control over how the growth occurs if the county has a thoroughfare plan. HB 1857 amended local government code 232 in 1997 to give authority to the county commissioner's court and to city councils to refuse, partially or in whole, a plat that encroaches on a future transportation corridor.

The Blanco County Transportation and Economic Plan serves as a collective vision of how transportation and economic development needs will be addressed as growth occurs in the future. It is a guideline for the county, cities within the county, and residents to consider in planning new residential, commercial, and industrial developments. The county will be able to share this plan with other entities, such as utility providers, school districts, economic development groups, TxDOT, and land developers. The Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan will also be a reference during any general planning updates and will be instrumental as undeveloped land is converted to other uses or as property is redeveloped.

1.6 Relationship between Transportation, Land Use, and Economic Development

Transportation and land use are interrelated. This means, in part, that land use affects the level of transportation service that is needed. For example, where land is used in a low-density residential pattern, frequent transit service is usually not cost effective. Similarly, it means that the level of transportation service affects the kind of land use that will be suitable for an area. For instance, an established truck route will make it easier for adjacent land to be used for industrial or commercial uses. A multimodal, high-quality transportation system can help attract or retain intended land uses. Conversely, a new large-scale residential development will generate additional travel for the existing roads that provide access to the new development. Improvements to the roads serving the development may be needed to improve access to the development.

In addition to land use affecting the level of transportation service needed, the interrelationship of land use and transportation can affect economic development as well. As land use drives transportation infrastructure needs, changes in transportation infrastructure will in turn provide increased opportunities for development as well as affect access to employment.

Given the relationship between transportation and land use, decisions about needed transportation facilities and programs should take into account the demands of the local population and the growing economy. Transportation planning should provide for a circulation system that reflects existing and proposed land use patterns—to provide efficient access within a commercial core for pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, trucks, and buses—while also encouraging quiet access in a residential neighborhood. Investments in the transportation system are expected to support growth and/or redevelopment targeted by the county's land use goals.

Land use plans at both the regional and local level are used to forecast future transportation demands. Projected employment and population growth translate to growth in traffic volumes in specific geographic areas. High-intensity land uses, such as office space and retail, generate significant demands on the transportation system. Planning for high-intensity land use should include an assessment of the traffic impact on the existing streets.

1.7 Public Involvement

The objective of the public involvement plan used when developing the Blanco County Transportation and Economic Plan was to share information with the public and project stakeholders about the planning process and how to provide feedback; collect feedback from the community in a convenient method for participants; and use the community input to identify county transportation and economic goals and to review proposed improvements.

The communication strategy included seeking feedback on effective strategies from the project advisory committee; developing a project website and cohesive look for project materials; making presentations at city council and commissioner court meetings; proactively seeking traditional and social media involvement; using a questionnaire to broaden involvement; holding three economic development, four advisory committee, and two public meetings for local input; and meaningfully incorporating public input into the development of the plan.

1.8 Study Process

The planning process was conducted in three phases. Phase I was the project initiation stage and consisted of data collection, memorandum of understanding execution between the participating entities, baseline mapping, public involvement planning, committee establishment, and initial coordination efforts. Phase II was the needs assessment stage in which land use forecasts, traffic

projections/travel demand modeling, needs analysis, scenario planning, and additional public involvement took place. Phase III was the actual plan development stage. This stage included evaluation of potential projects, drafting of the financial options, and final adoption of the plan by the county.

Chapter 2—Existing Conditions

In order to develop a plan for the future, the first step in the planning process was to gain an understanding of the existing conditions in Blanco County. A variety of factors were considered in the assessment of transportation needs, including:

- demographic and socioeconomic analyses, which help describe who is living/working in Blanco County and lays the foundation for population and employment projections;
- land uses that influence transportation needs as it relates to the location of residential, commercial, educational, and industrial developments;
- numerous natural environmental features that affect decisions on both land use and transportation;
- new air quality standards issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which will impact the transportation planning activities in most metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and in turn may impact the ability of adjacent counties to provide a coordinated transportation system; and
- vehicle crash data to help identify key locations where spot improvements may be warranted.

2.1 Review of Existing Plans

City of Blanco Comprehensive Plan

In 2005, the City of Blanco adopted a comprehensive plan. This plan covered projected demographic changes, current and future land use plans, and objectives pertaining to growth management, community and economic development, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and city storm water assessment. The plan also includes an implementation guide that outlines the detailed actions for addressing the components of the comprehensive plan.

The plan outlines the importance of public involvement, and it is noted in the introduction that the plan was not “created by outsiders working in a vacuum; rather it utilizes the concerns of Blanco residents to identify what they feel is most critical to Blanco’s prosperity.” The plan notes that it should be reviewed annually by the Blanco City Council and Advisory Committee with involvement from other groups as well.

Johnson City Comprehensive Plan

The Johnson City comprehensive plan includes a demographic analysis of current and projected population trends; land use objectives to accommodate future development; and objectives and recommendations for economic development, historic preservation, downtown revitalization, housing development, and community development.

The Johnson City comprehensive plan also outlines the following transportation thoroughfare and infrastructure goals:

- Reduce the effect of commercial trucking on the safety and quality of life within the community.
- Ensure a safe local street network by installing adequate traffic management signage and traffic-calming devices and maintaining the streets in proper operating condition.
- Promote alternative transportation opportunities to serve the needs of the residents.
- Avoid the development of new thoroughfares that would reduce traffic volume through the city’s commercial areas.

- Plan and construct new roadways to ensure safe and adequate access to all areas within the community.
- Mitigate flooding of existing roadways and lands.

The Johnson City comprehensive plan also features an implementation guide that provides strategies for turning the goals of the plan into actions.

2.2 Demographic Trends

Population

Demographic trends, as discussed in this chapter, are based upon the baseline population and employment figures taken from the 2000 U.S. Census. Population data from the U.S. Census Bureau from were obtained for Blanco, Burnet, Hays, Llano, Travis, and Williamson Counties, and the state of Texas. These data reflect the official population count for the county and are useful in the analysis of past and current growth trends. **Table 2.1** shows the 1980 to 2010 population for Blanco and other nearby counties, as well as for the state, along with the compound annual average growth in population by decade and for the 30-year period.

Table 2.1. Historic Population and Compound Annual Average Growth by Period for Blanco, Burnet, Hays, Llano, Travis, and Williamson Counties and Texas, 1980–2010.

Area	Population			
	1980	1990	2000	2010
Blanco	4,681	5,972	8,418	10,497
Burnet	17,803	22,677	34,147	42,750
Hays	40,594	65,614	97,589	157,107
Llano	10,144	11,631	17,044	19,301
Travis	419,573	576,407	812,280	1,024,266
Williamson	76,521	139,551	249,967	422,679
Texas	14,229,191	16,986,510	20,851,820	25,145,561
Area	Compound Annual Average Growth by Period			
	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	1980-2010
Blanco	2.47%	3.49%	2.23%	2.73%
Burnet	2.45%	4.18%	2.27%	2.96%
Hays	4.92%	4.05%	4.88%	4.61%
Llano	1.38%	3.90%	1.25%	2.17%
Travis	3.23%	3.49%	2.35%	3.02%
Williamson	6.19%	6.00%	5.39%	5.86%
Texas	1.79%	2.07%	1.89%	1.92%

Estimates and projections were prepared by the Texas State Data Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio. The projection anticipates slow growth, as seen in **Figure 2.1**. Under this projection, population grows from 10,500 in 2010 to 17,700 in 2050.

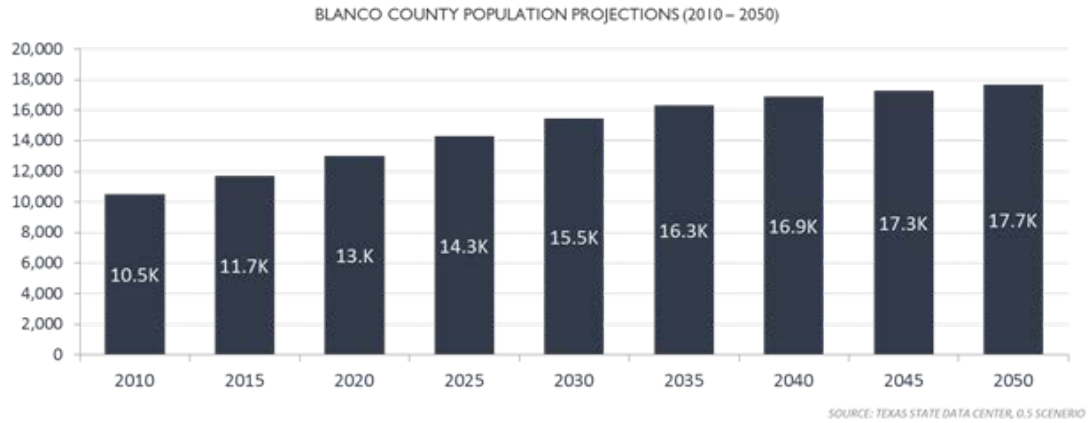


Figure 2.1. Blanco County Population Growth Projections (2010–2050).

Employment

Employment projections for the region only extend until 2022. Blanco County anticipates seeing employment growing from 2,700 in 2012 to 3,300 in 2022—a total growth of 600 jobs and compound annual growth rate of 2.03 percent (see **Figure 2.2**).

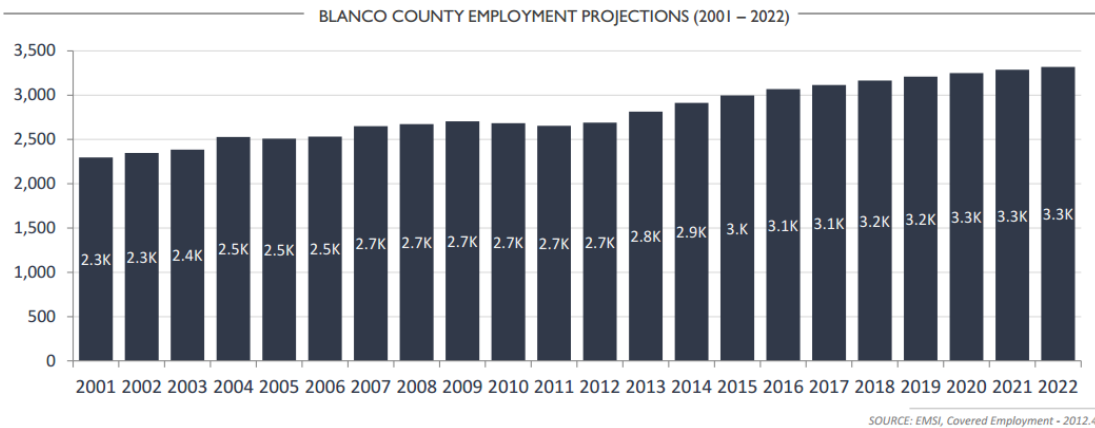


Figure 2.2. Blanco County Employment Projections (2001–2022).

Employment will also change its geographic location, with more jobs being located outside the city centers in 2040 than in 2005 (see **Figure 2.3**).

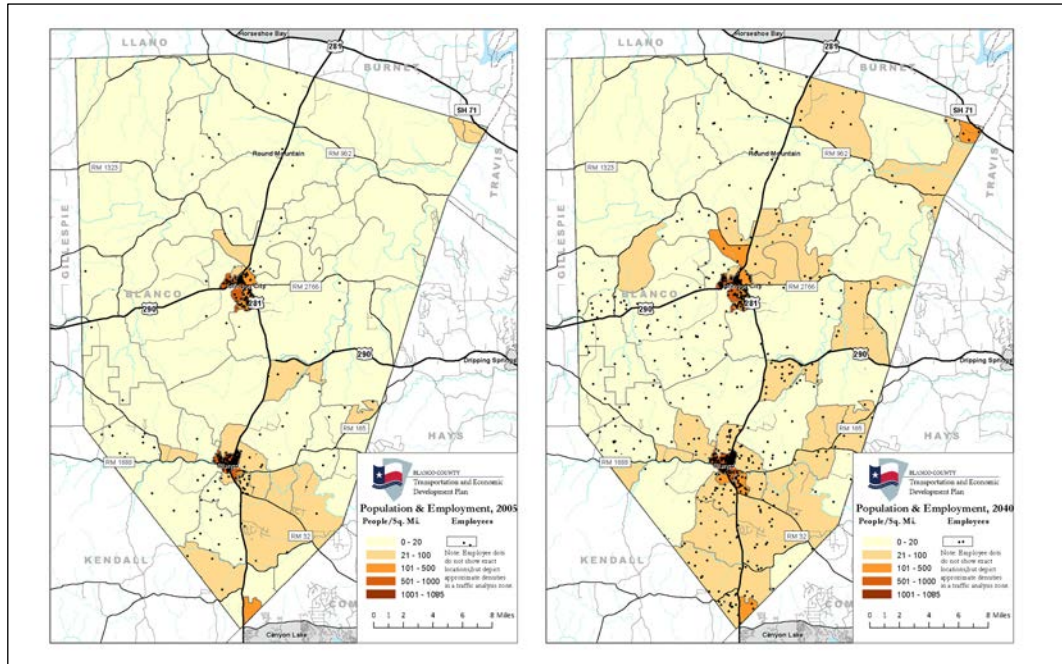


Figure 2.3. Population and Employment Projections (2005 and 2040).

See **Table 2.2** for a breakdown of projected employment in various sectors, ranging from 1990 to 2030. There appears to be a decline in transportation/utilities jobs and an increase in professional/business service jobs between 2006 and 2007. This may be due to reclassification of jobs with the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The trend is also visible in the Bureau of Labor Statistics data for those two years. The other explanation would be a loss/hiring of jobs in those two sectors. This is why the period 2005 to 2010 shows the loss and gain of jobs in those two sectors between those two data points.

Table 2.2. Blanco County Employment (1990–2030).

	Private Sector Employment	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Total	Construction, Natural Resources, & Mining	150	163	253	376	433	455	439	428	412
	Manufacturing	57	50	91	51	63	72	70	65	62
	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	490	614	719	870	525	573	577	594	592
	Information	19	19	31	36	22	24	24	25	25
	Financial Activities	201	99	150	190	176	171	159	156	157
	Professional & Business Services	149	168	269	290	921	1,143	1,305	1,438	1,547
	Educational & Health Services	144	184	174	146	144	157	170	176	181
	Leisure & Hospitality	281	252	337	212	258	271	263	263	263
	Other Services	42	47	60	50	60	58	54	54	53
	Total Private Sector Employment	1,535	1,597	2,085	2,219	2,603	2,923	3,063	3,199	3,292
As a % of County Private Sector Employment	Construction, Natural Resources, & Mining	9.80%	10.20%	12.10%	16.90%	16.60%	15.60%	14.30%	13.40%	12.50%
	Manufacturing	3.70%	3.20%	4.40%	2.30%	2.40%	2.50%	2.30%	2.00%	1.90%
	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	31.90%	38.50%	34.50%	39.20%	20.20%	19.60%	18.90%	18.60%	18.00%
	Information	1.20%	1.20%	1.50%	1.60%	0.90%	0.80%	0.80%	0.80%	0.80%
	Financial Activities	13.10%	6.20%	7.20%	8.60%	6.80%	5.80%	5.20%	4.90%	4.80%
	Professional & Business Services	9.70%	10.50%	12.90%	13.00%	35.40%	39.10%	42.60%	45.00%	47.00%
	Educational & Health Services	9.40%	11.50%	8.40%	6.60%	5.50%	5.40%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
	Leisure & Hospitality	18.30%	15.80%	16.20%	9.50%	9.90%	9.30%	8.60%	8.20%	8.00%
	Other Services	2.80%	3.00%	2.90%	2.20%	2.30%	2.00%	1.80%	1.70%	1.60%
Percentage Growth	Construction, Natural Resources, & Mining		8.70%	54.60%	48.80%	15.10%	5.10%	-3.50%	-2.50%	-3.80%
	Manufacturing		-12.00%	81.30%	-44.30%	24.80%	13.70%	-2.80%	-7.20%	-5.50%
	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities		25.30%	17.10%	21.00%	-39.60%	9.00%	0.90%	2.80%	-0.40%
	Information		0.00%	65.90%	13.70%	-37.20%	7.10%	2.00%	0.40%	1.60%
	Financial Activities		-50.70%	50.80%	26.70%	-7.30%	-3.10%	-6.50%	-1.90%	0.50%
	Professional & Business Services		12.10%	60.40%	7.80%	218.10%	24.10%	14.20%	10.20%	7.60%
	Educational & Health Services		27.90%	-5.30%	-16.20%	-1.20%	8.50%	8.40%	3.80%	3.00%
	Leisure & Hospitality		-10.60%	34.00%	-37.20%	21.70%	5.20%	-3.00%	-0.20%	0.10%
	Other Services		11.80%	27.10%	-17.40%	20.70%	-3.60%	-6.10%	0.00%	-1.80%

Travel to Work

The majority of Blanco County workers are employed within Blanco County (**Figure 2.4**). About 56 percent of the workers remain in Blanco County, while another 15.7 percent commute into Travis County, and 11 percent commute into Bexar County. Individuals often commute to Johnson City, **Blanco**, Austin, San Antonio, Fredericksburg, Marble Falls, and San Marcos.

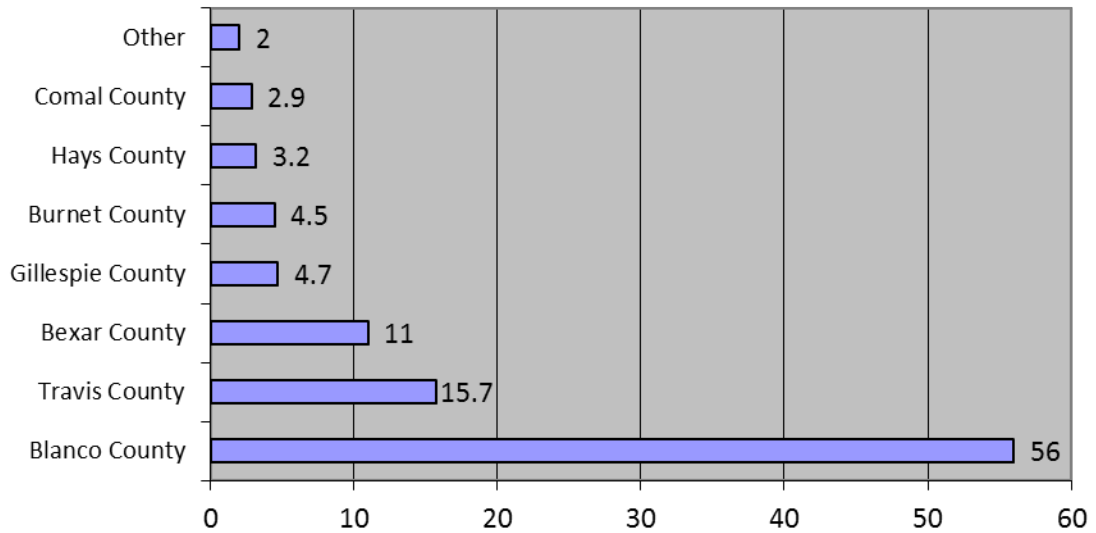


Figure 2.4. Location of Workplace for Blanco County Workers.

Age

Approximately 6.5 percent of the population in 2000 were under the age of 5, 17.7 percent were of school age (ages 5 through 19), 59.9 percent were of adult employment age (20 through 64), and 15.9 percent were of retirement age (65 and older).

Schools

Enrollment data presented in this section are taken from two sources. The first set of data is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial censuses from 1990 and 2000 with supplemental data for 2005 and 2006 from the Bureau's American Community Survey. These data cover the county as a whole and represent an aggregate of the county's two major school districts.

The second and more detailed set of data is taken from the Academic Excellence Indicators System (AEIS) compiled by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (8). These data are often used by school districts, such as Blanco ISD, to determine trends in enrollment rates and to plan for future facilities. For this analysis, AEIS data have been collected for only the county's two major school districts. The percentage of the population of school age children has steadily decreased (see **Table 2.3**), though the number of students enrolled in Blanco and Johnson City ISDs has not steadily decreased, as shown in **Table 2.4**.

Figure 2.5 shows a slight increase in student populations after a significant increase in the early 90s.

Table 2.3. Blanco County School Enrollment.

School Year	1989-1990	1999-2000	2009-2010
School age Children (age 5-19) as a percentage of County Pop.	19.30%	18.80%	17.50%

Table 2.4. TEA Enrollment Figures.

School Year	1989-1990	1999-2000	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Blanco ISD	633	926	983	951	973
Johnson City ISD	518	660	678	697	684

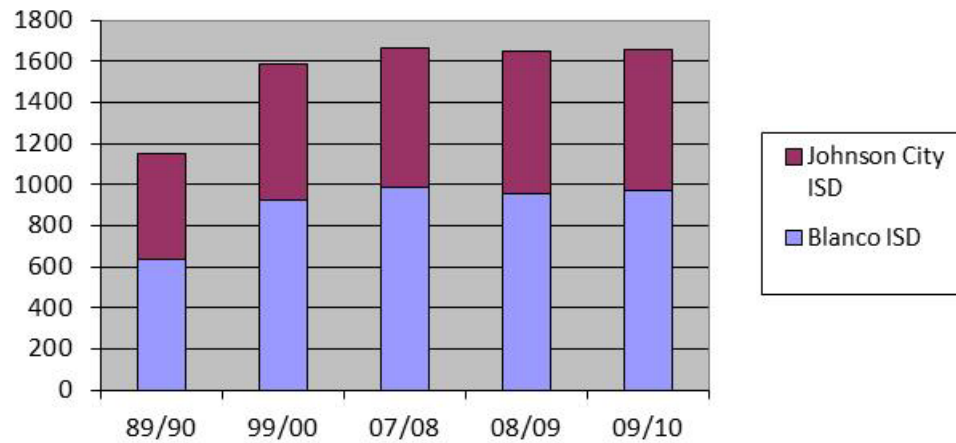


Figure 2.5. Enrollment at Blanco County School Districts.

2.3 Existing Socioeconomic Conditions

Race

Figure 2.6 provides a growth scenario through the year 2050 of the population makeup for Blanco County. Race and ethnic makeup will change dramatically for some groups by the end of the period. Hispanic populations will grow significantly (18.2 percent to 29.4 percent), Anglo populations will shrink (79.4 percent to 68.5 percent), Black populations will shrink (0.6 percent to 0.3 percent), and “other” populations will remain essentially static.

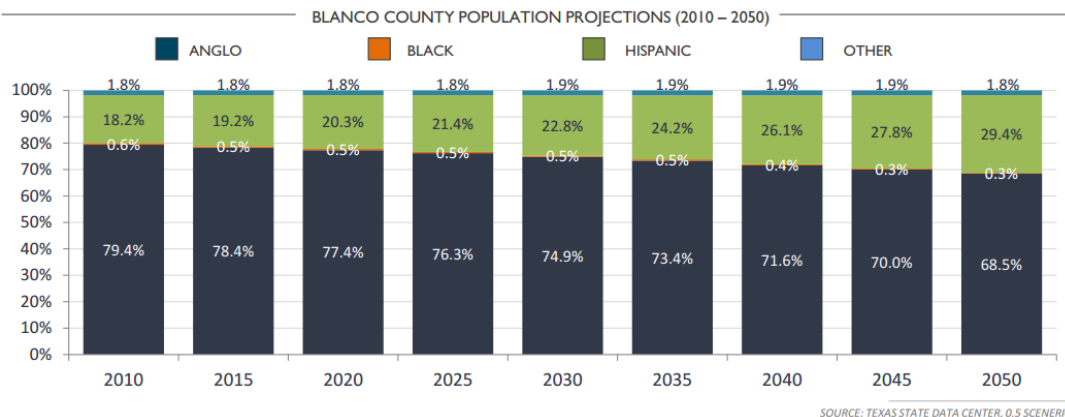


Figure 2.6. Blanco County Demographic Growth Projections by Race (2010–2050).

Income

Figure 2.7 illustrates that median household income in Blanco County (\$46,000) was slightly below the Texas median in 2011 (\$49,332).

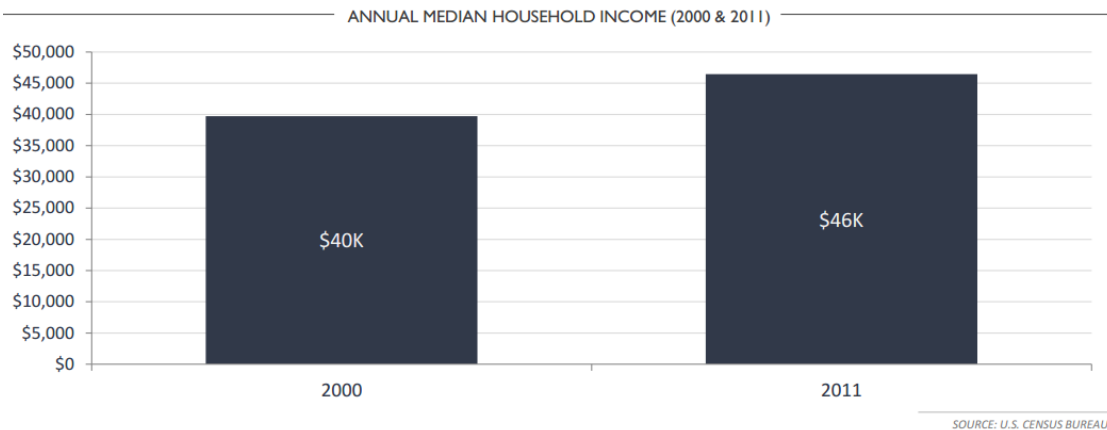


Figure 2.7. Annual Median Household Income (2000 and 2011) in Blanco County.

Poverty Levels

The Blanco County poverty rate of 8.1 percent is almost 10 points lower than Texas's overall rate of 17 percent (see **Figure 2.8**).

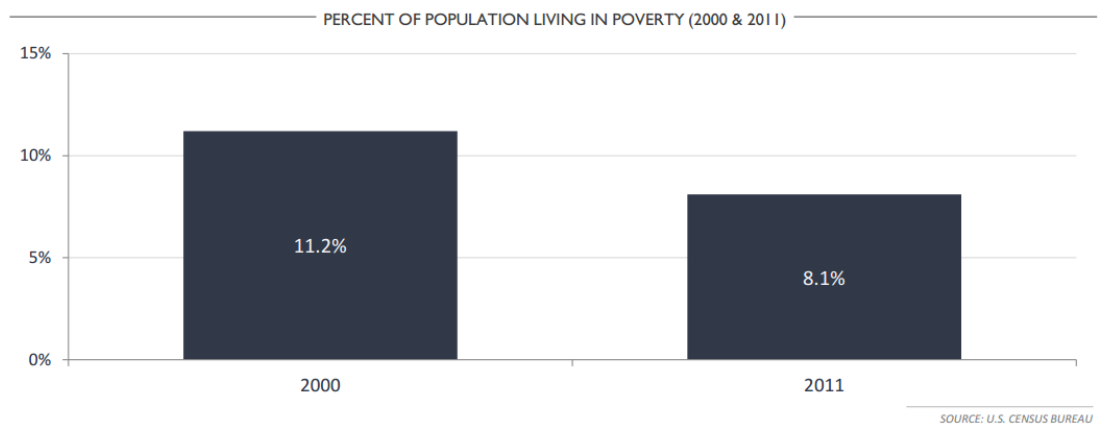


Figure 2.8. Percent of Population Living in Poverty (2000 and 2011) in Blanco County.

2.4 Land Use Inventory

Blanco County has experienced growth since the 1960s, after a 30-year period of declining population. With continued growth expected, the county needs a balance between accommodating new development and preserving the county's natural resources. The three major cities—Johnson City, Blanco, and Round Mountain—currently comprise almost 39 percent of the county's population. The growth rate of the county was 12.7 percent from the year 2000 to 2009, or just above the growth rate of the state and more than twice that of the country.

Land use is a term planners and policymakers employ that simply describes how humans use the land. Descriptive terms commonly associated with land use include:

- Type - including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, etc.;
- Intensity - meaning rural, exurban, suburban, and urban;
- Density - persons or households per square mile; and
- Connectivity - in terms of transportation, water, wastewater, power, etc.

In the past, the planning perspective was that land use determines transportation needs. For example, traffic associated with a new development on a county road outside of town creates demand for additional lanes. The new development is the catalyst for increased road capacity. Many communities are finding that increasing road capacity to support existing development can actually spur additional growth that, in turn, increases traffic and the demand for additional capacity. This demonstrates a much closer connection between land use and transportation.

Historically, Blanco County's rural land use pattern was supported by a network of local, county, farm-to-market, and state arterial roadways that satisfied county residents' transportation needs. There will be a shift, however, in the transportation infrastructure required to support the needs of the county's residents. Understanding these changing land use patterns will provide insights for future transportation requirements as well as the types of land use they stimulate.

City of Blanco Current and Future Land Use

Figure 2.9 shows the current land use in the city of Blanco. Current land use features primarily single-family residential development near the center of town (intersection of Route 163 and US 281), with retail and commercial development focused along the major thoroughfares. There is currently a notable amount of land that is vacant on the map as well. **Figure 2.10** features the city's future land use and shows the city's desire for single-family residential infill in vacant areas, with increased retail and commercial activity along the major thoroughfares. The city does designate specific areas for open space in the future land use map as well.

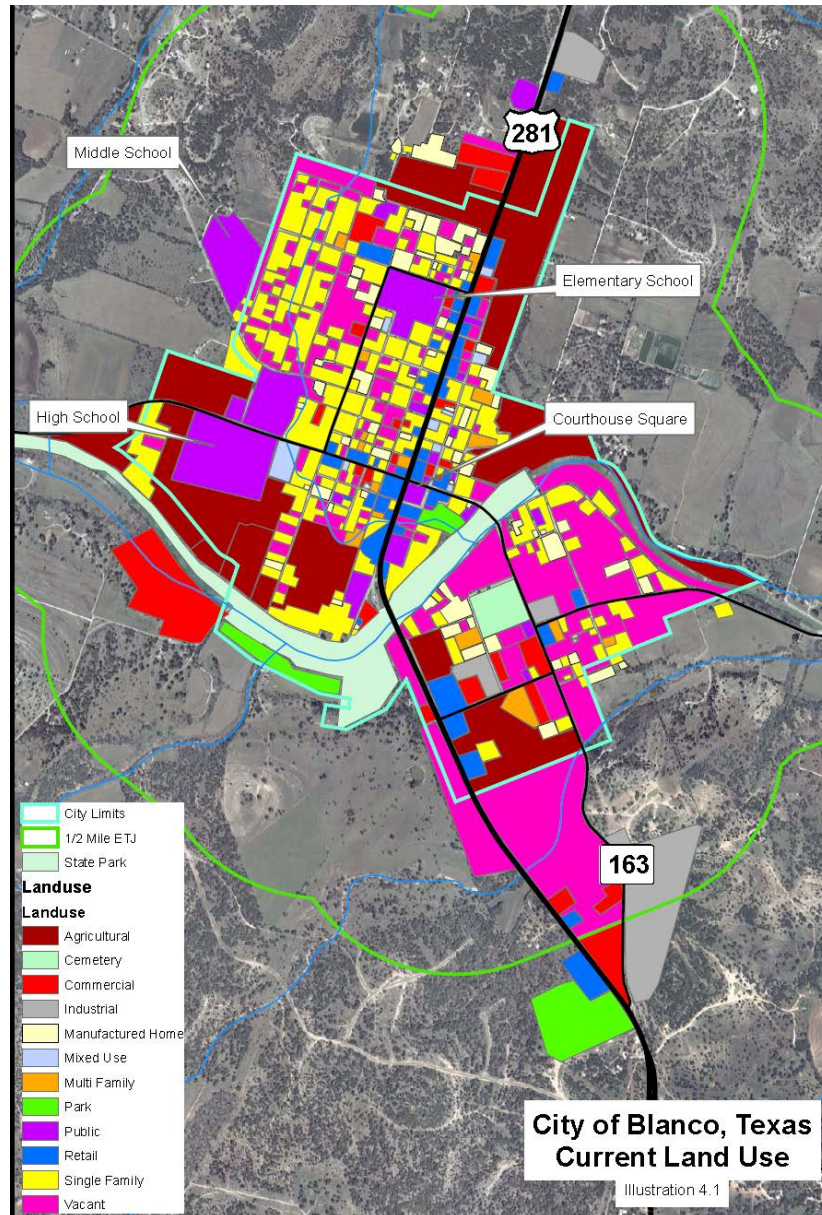


Figure 2.9. Current Land Use, City of Blanco, Texas.

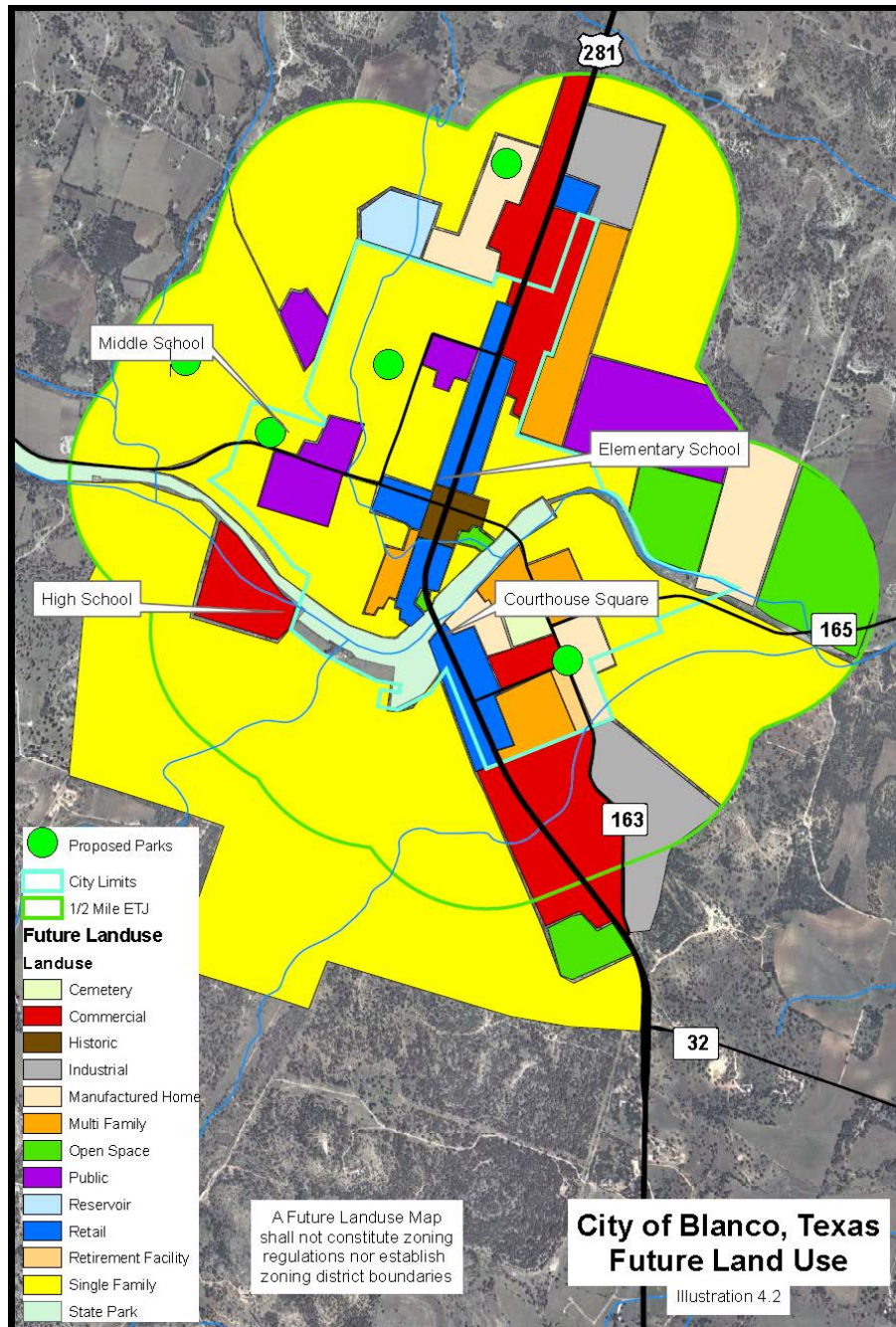


Figure 2.10. Future Land Use, City of Blanco, Texas.

Johnson City Current/Future Land Use

Johnson City's land use is characterized by a mix of residential, commercial, and public uses centered on the axis of its two main arterials, US 290 and US 281. Agricultural uses generally extend from the city limits to the extra-territorial jurisdiction (see **Figure 2.11**).

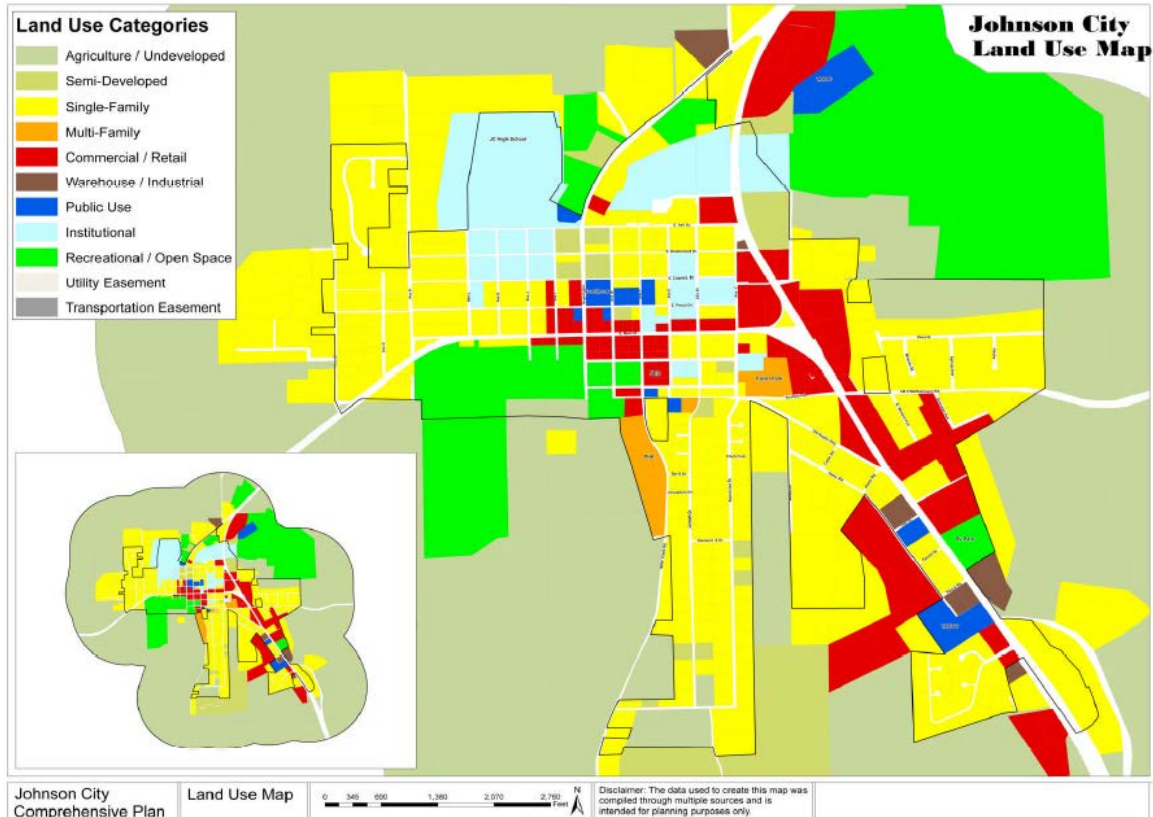


Figure 2.11. Current Land Use Map, Johnson City, Texas.

The city's planned future land use, as shown in **Figure 2.12**, extends commercial development primarily west along US 290, and to a lesser extent along US 281. Expansion of single-family homes would be served by new public land uses including schools and parks. Notably, an extensive area for industrial development is identified to the southeast along US 281. Future land use plans in both Blanco and Johnson City anticipate a balanced growth with a mix of land uses.

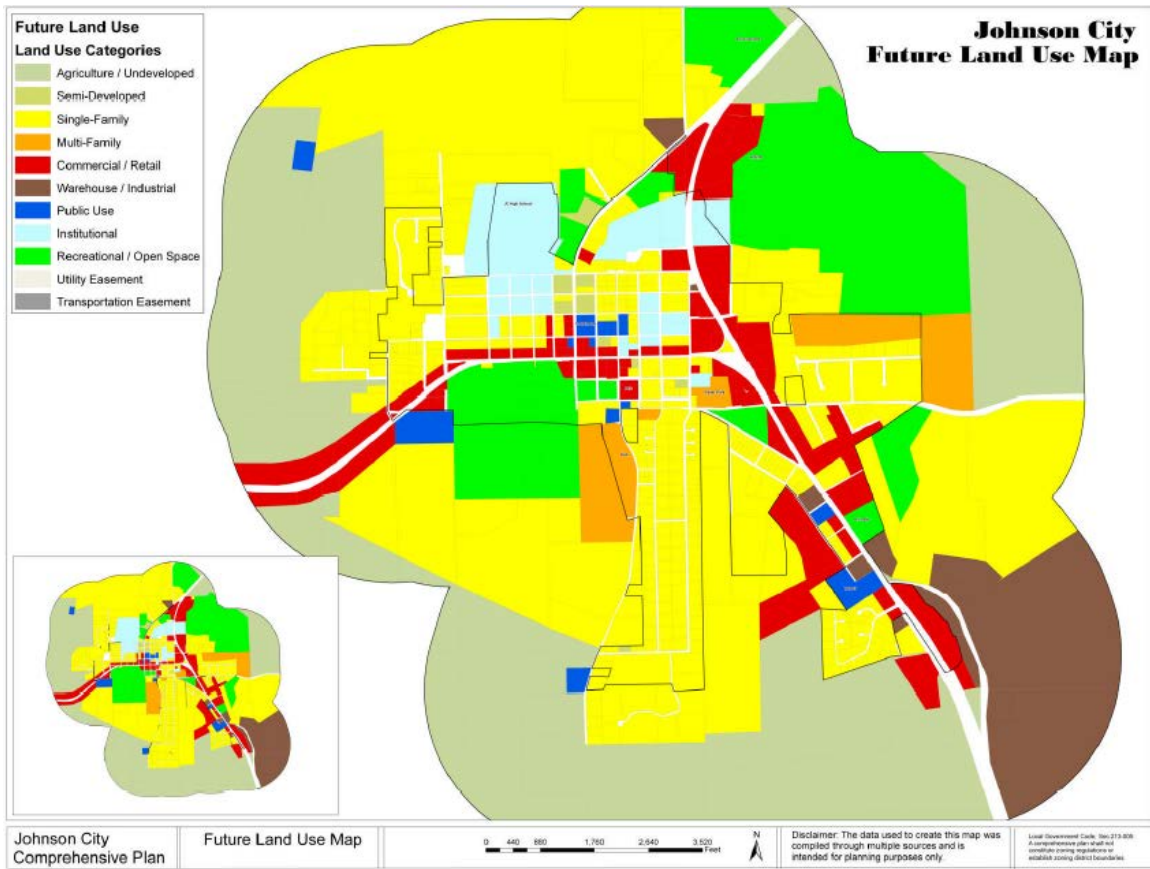


Figure 2.12. Future Land Use Map, Johnson City, Texas.

2.5 Flooding

Periodic flooding occurs throughout the county along creeks and the Blanco River basin, reducing roadway connectivity and creating safety hazards. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has not developed recent flood hazard maps for this area, and has no immediate plans to do so are known. In consultation with the public, TxDOT, and local staff, this plan considers several opportunities to improve existing low-water crossings, such as that shown in **Figure 2.13**, in Chapter 6.



Figure 2.13. Low-Water Crossings throughout the County Can Create Barriers during Flood Events (Photo Credit: G. Griffin, TTI).

2.6 Air Quality

In addition to population growth, traffic, and weather, air quality is an important shared condition that affects life throughout the region. Federal and state transportation planning guidance requires that the air quality impact of transportation-related emissions be considered in the state air quality planning process. Ground-level ozone is the primary air pollutant of concern in Central Texas. Blanco County is currently in air quality attainment. However, if the ozone standard is lowered by the EPA within the next few years, the Austin area is likely to be designated as Non-Attainment, which may affect future development in Blanco County.

2.7 Safety

Figure 2.14 and **Figure 2.15** provide a graphic illustration of the injury and fatal crashes from 2007 to 2012 and the collisions per million vehicle miles traveled, respectively. Injury crashes commonly occur in the urban environments and along the major highways. Fatal crashes occur rarely, but they occur around population centers and highways.

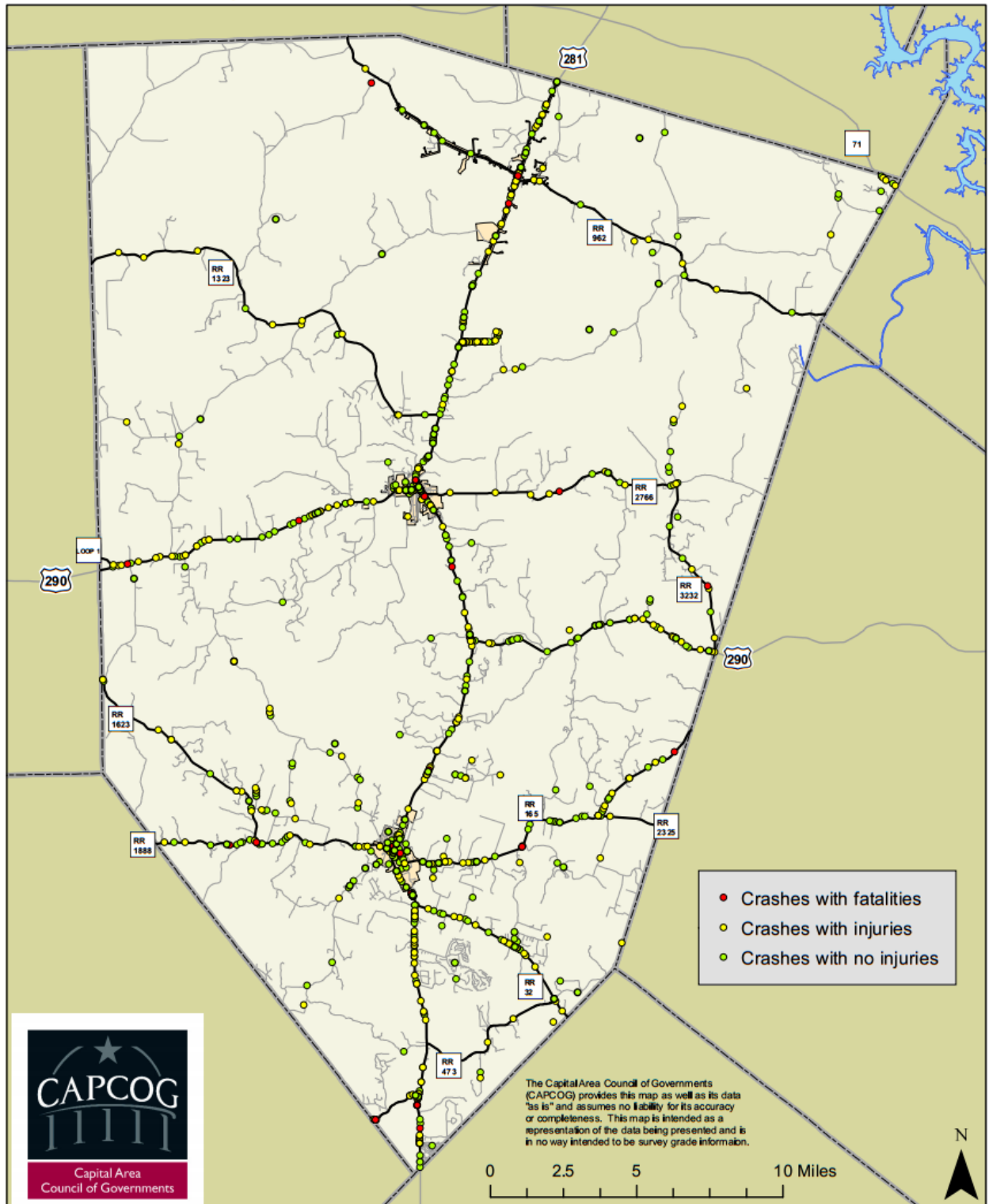


Figure 2.14. Blanco County Crash Injuries and Fatalities (2007–2012).

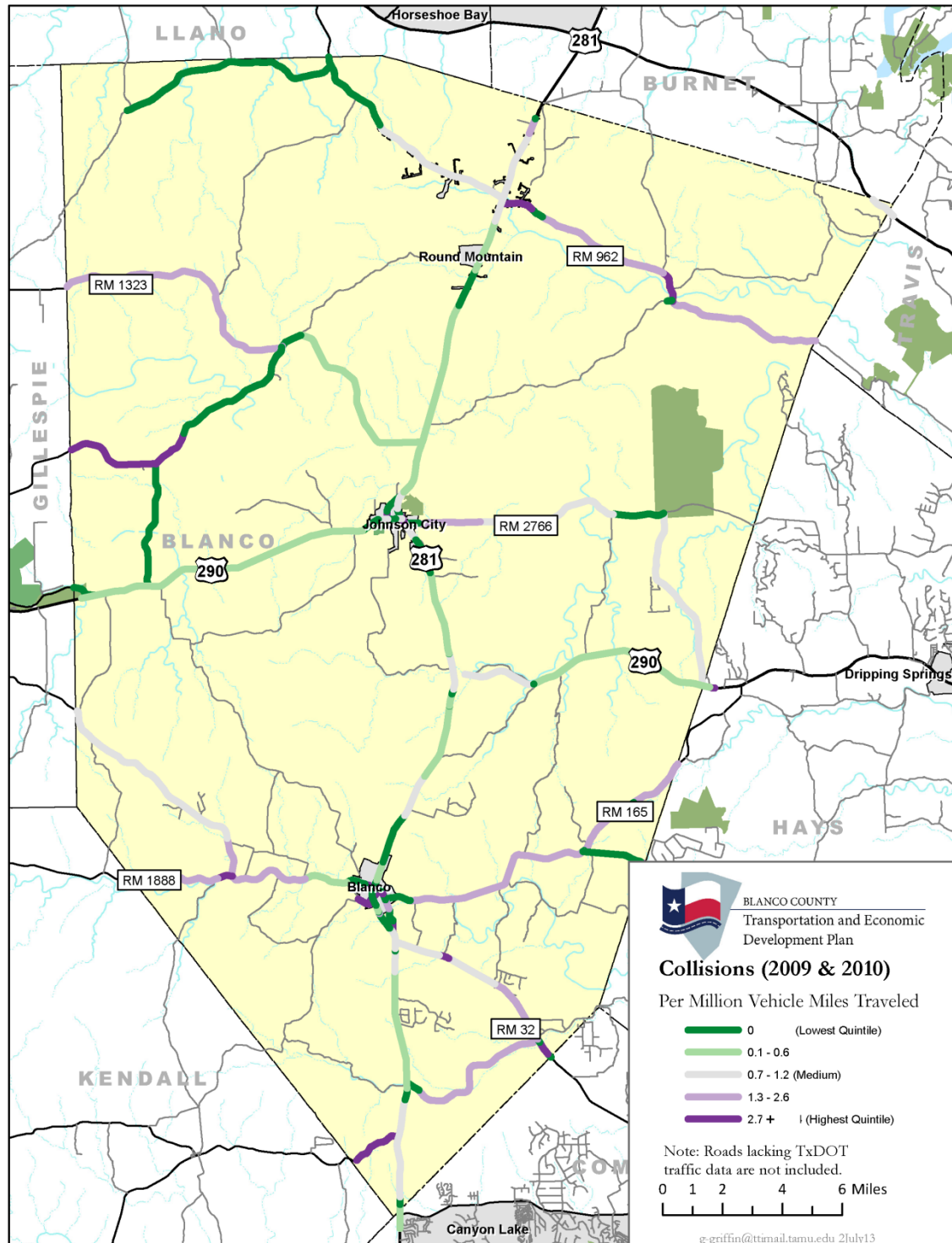


Figure 2.15. Collisions per Million Vehicle Miles Traveled (2009 and 2010).

2.8 Existing Transportation Conditions

This section provides an overview of Blanco County's roadway networks, alternative modes, transit elements, and truck traffic.

Roadway Network

The roadway system in Blanco County is provided and maintained by the state, the county, and Johnson City and Blanco. It provides a network for people and goods to move through and within Blanco County. **Figure 2.16** illustrates the existing daily traffic volumes on the road networks in Blanco County. **Figure 2.17** shows the capacities of the Blanco County road network. Most roads maintain free flows, with the exception of a few roads in the southern portion of the county.

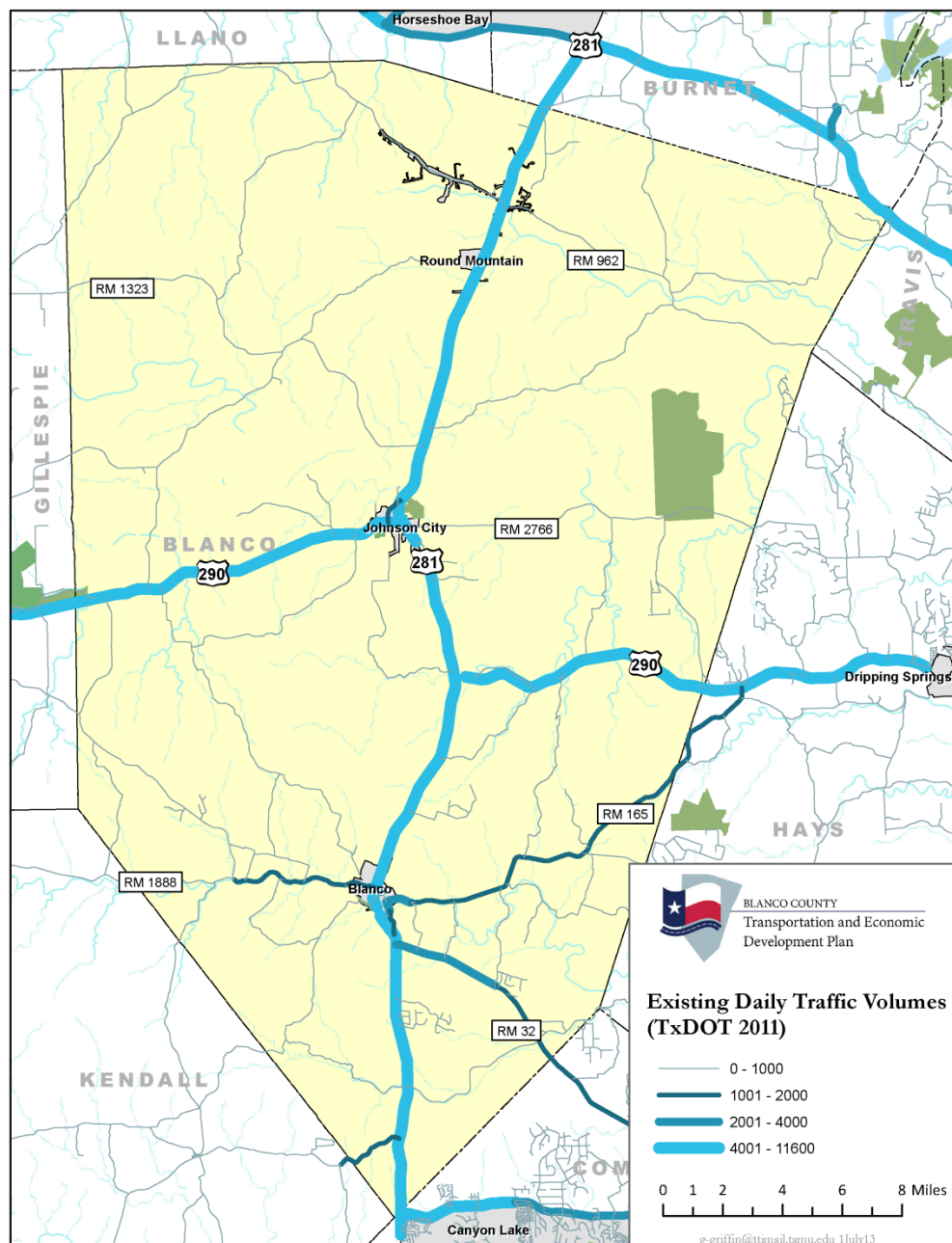


Figure 2.16. Existing Daily Traffic Volumes (2011).

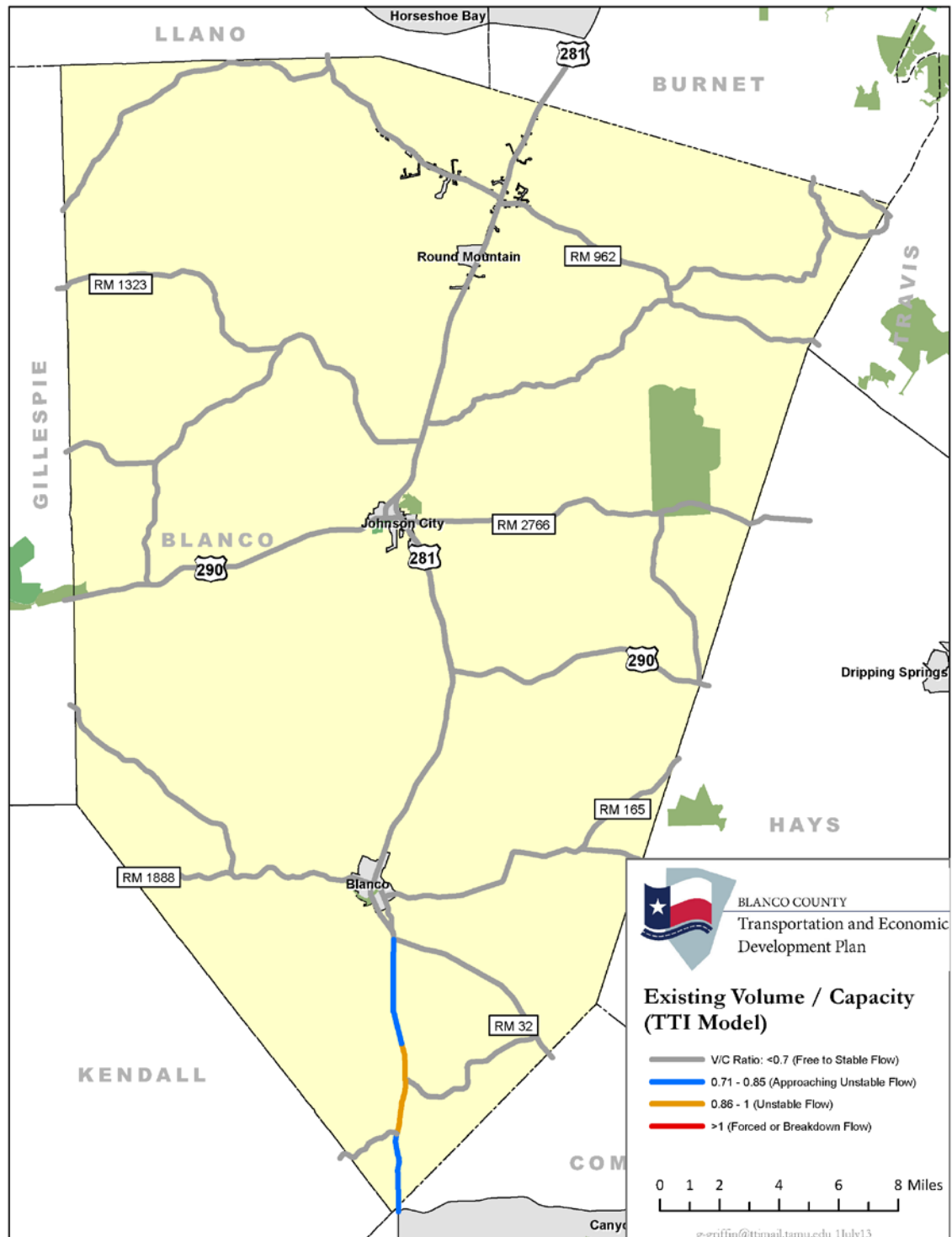


Figure 2.17. Existing Traffic Volume and Capacities.

Typical Roadway Sections

Roadways are owned, designed, and maintained by several different entities within the county. Highways, labeled “US” and “RM” in this county, as well as several other designations, are the responsibility of the Texas Department of Transportation. TxDOT also has the responsibility to maintain roads within the two state parks. County roads often include the prefix “CR” but also usually have a locally known name. City streets are generally those within city limits but not on the state highway system. Following are visual examples of typical roadway sections found in Blanco County. In reality, widths and roadway geometry vary along the roadway.

Principal Arterial, Urban (US 290 in Johnson City, Just West of US 281)

This particular section makes use of wide shoulders, providing maneuvering space for turning vehicles, bicyclists, and even pedestrians where sidewalks are not provided.

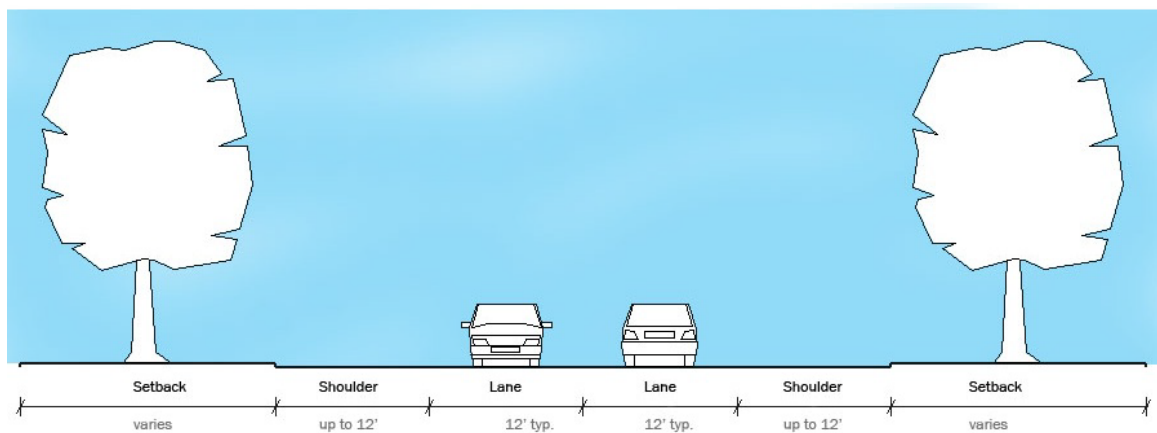


Figure 2.18.

Principal Arterial, Rural (US 290 near Hye)

As drivers head west toward Fredericksburg, US 290 transitions to four lanes of traffic with a small shoulder. The additional lane supports additional traffic volumes and discrepancies in driver speed, but shoulder width is limited.

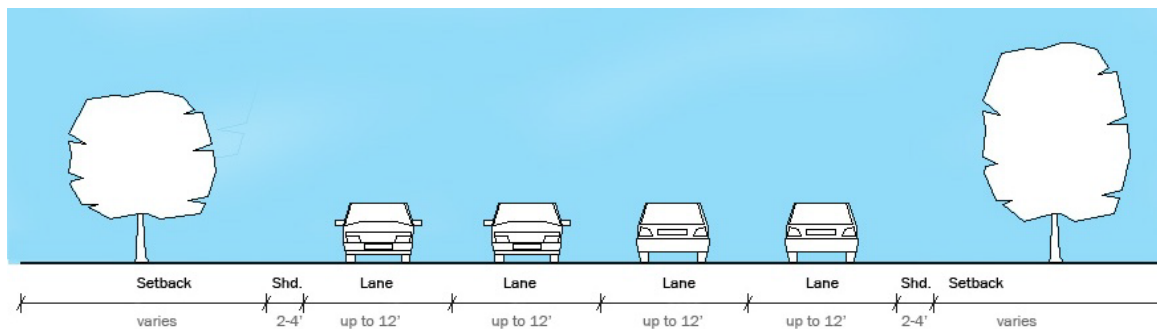


Figure 2.19.

Principal Arterial, Urban (US 281 in Downtown Blanco)

In Downtown Blanco, US 281 currently has sidewalks on both sides of the roadway for only one block, with four lanes and a center turn lane.

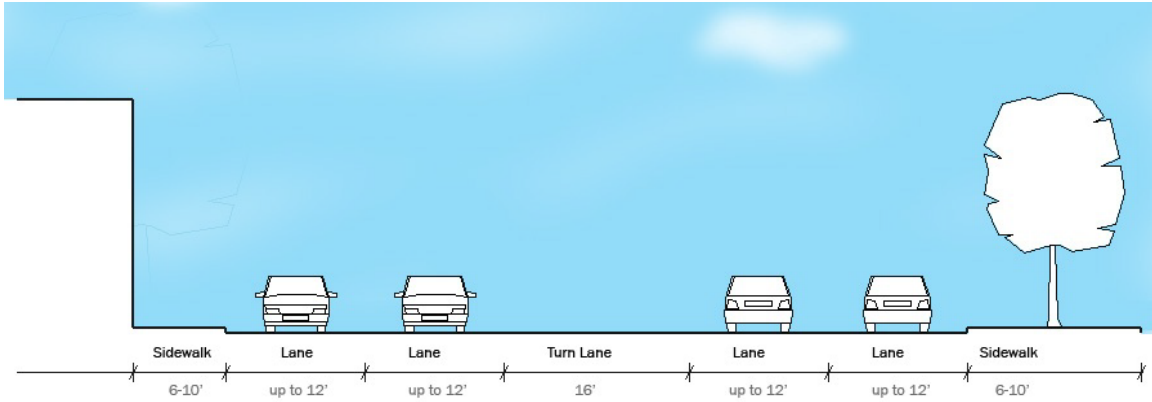


Figure 2.20.

Principal Arterial, Rural “Super 2” Section (US 281 South of Blanco)

South of Blanco, US 281 is generally a two-lane rural highway, except in some of its hilliest sections, where a Super 2 treatment is added. This improvement adds a lane on uphill climbs, where speed discrepancies between vehicles are the greatest and sight distances are often limited. This feature reduces likelihood of crashes while helping to maintain vehicle flow. Wide shoulders offer additional safety for motor vehicles and bicyclists.

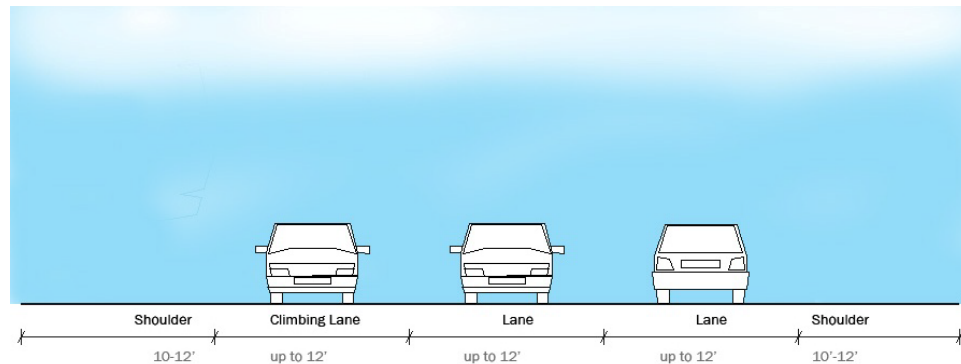


Figure 2.21.

Local, Rural (Pedernales Hills Road)

The following example of a rural local road can also serve as a collector for other roads, but it is not anticipated to serve a large volume of traffic. Though Pedernales Hills Road has a gravel surface, it has similar dimensions to a local city street, which are most often paved.

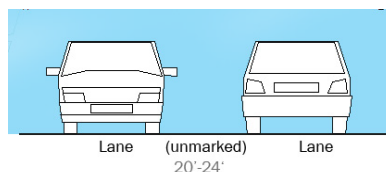


Figure 2.22.

Alternative Modes

Blanco County relies upon a diverse network of transportation infrastructure. This section looks at the transit elements and truck traffic existing in the county.

Transit Element

As Blanco County continues to grow, the level and type of transportation service historically provided by the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) will need to change and grow to meet the needs of the growing population.

To increase the efficiency of the transportation system, public transit vehicles can be utilized to accommodate many people who are taking similar routes to a common destination, as well as those who are unable to drive, walk, or bicycle to their destinations. Paratransit is a flexible alternative to fixed route/schedule traditional transit and utilizes vehicles such as shuttle buses, vans, and taxis. Paratransit service ranges from those allowing pick-up/drop-off along a defined route by request to those offering on-demand curb-to-curb service within a given geographical area.

CARTS

CARTS is a rural transit district encompassing a 7,200-square-mile region surrounding Austin. The district is a geographic combination of a rapidly growing metropolitan center surrounded by rural, suburban, exurban communities. The communities in the CARTS district include rapidly urbanizing rural to metropolitan transition areas.

Demand-response service is available to Blanco County. CARTS offers prearranged service to the public for intercity or inter-county travel, as well as travel outside of Blanco County. CARTS services are offered Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Route information can be accessed at the CARTS website: www.ridecarts.com. **Table 2.5** displays the Blanco County CARTS transit schedule. Between January 2012 and December 2012, CARTS provided a total of 4,153 passenger trips for Blanco County.

The Regional Transit Coordination Committee (RTCC), an effort covering the 10-county capital region and including multiple regional partners, is studying how to create a more seamless transit network for all residents. The eventual product of the study will be an integrated ride-finding system and enhancements to service in areas that show demonstrated needs. Blanco County is one of the counties within the RTCC study area.

Table 2.5. Blanco County CARTS Transit Schedule (<http://bit.ly/14tyxFC>).

RIDES ARE SCHEDULED MONDAY-FRIDAY FROM 8:00 AM TO 4:00 PM / 24 HOURS ADVANCE NOTICE RECOMMENDED
LOCAL VEHICLES SERVE NEIGHBORING TOWNS SO LOCAL RIDE TIMES MAY VARY

Community Served	Destination	Route Day	Departure	Return	One-Way Fare	Reduced Fare*
BLANCO	Local Service	Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday	9:00a to 12:30p		\$2.00	\$1.00
	To: Johnson City	Tuesday & Thursday	1:00p	4:00p	\$4.00	\$2.00
	To: Fredericksburg	1st Monday	8:30a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Fredericksburg	3rd Monday	10:00a	3:30p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Marble Falls	2nd Monday	8:30a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Marble Falls	4th Monday	10:00a	3:30p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Austin	4th Friday	8:30a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: San Marcos	2nd Friday	8:30a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: San Antonio	1st Friday	9:00a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: San Antonio	3rd Friday	9:00a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
JOHNSON CITY	Local Service	Tuesday & Thursday	1:00p to 4:00p		\$2.00	\$1.00
	To: Fredericksburg	1st Monday	9:00a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Fredericksburg	3rd Monday	10:30a	3:30p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Marble Falls	2nd Monday	9:00a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Marble Falls	4th Monday	10:30a	3:30p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: Austin	4th Friday	9:00a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: San Marcos	2nd Friday	8:30a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: San Antonio	1st Friday	8:30a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00
	To: San Antonio	3rd Friday	8:30a	2:00p	\$6.00	\$3.00

Pedestrian and Bicycle

Since vehicle parking is not always at the front door of a destination, every trip includes at least a short journey as a pedestrian. Both Johnson City and Blanco have many conditions conducive to pedestrian and bicycle travel, including short block lengths, sidewalks, and crosswalks. In addition, the state highway system includes wide shoulders in some areas that provide comfortable bicycle connections.

Growing business development and automobile traffic have created new conflicts for pedestrian and bicycle access in portions of the county (see **Figure 2.23**), but in many cases, these can be mitigated by infrastructure improvements.



Figure 2.23. Shopping Pedestrians Waiting to Cross Main Street (US 281) at 3rd Street in Blanco (Photo Credit: G. Griffin, TTI).

In addition to major bicycling events such as the Real Ale Ride based in Blanco and the LBJ 100 Cycling Weekend in northwest Blanco County and Gillespie County, bicyclists use the roadway network for work commuting, school trips, shopping, and social purposes (see **Figure 2.24**). When striped shoulders or bike lanes are provided, they increase the predictability of bicycle and vehicle placement in the lanes, increasing the safety of passing events.



Figure 2.24. Bicyclist on RM 1888 West of US 281 (Photo Credit: G. Griffin, TTI).

Truck Traffic

It is important that industrial sites, which affect the economic well-being of the community, are served by appropriate roadways that are designed, constructed, and designated for truck use. Large trucks may hinder the operation of local roads built for the use of passenger vehicles. Heavier vehicles cannot maneuver and stop/start with the same agility as passenger vehicles, thereby reducing traffic flow and causing damage to the existing pavement. In addition, there are safety concerns associated with large industrial traffic mixing with local traffic.

Figure 2.25 illustrates the amount of daily truck traffic flows from 2011. The data indicate that the counts are the lowest TxDOT category, with flows of 0 to 1,812 trucks per 24 hours.

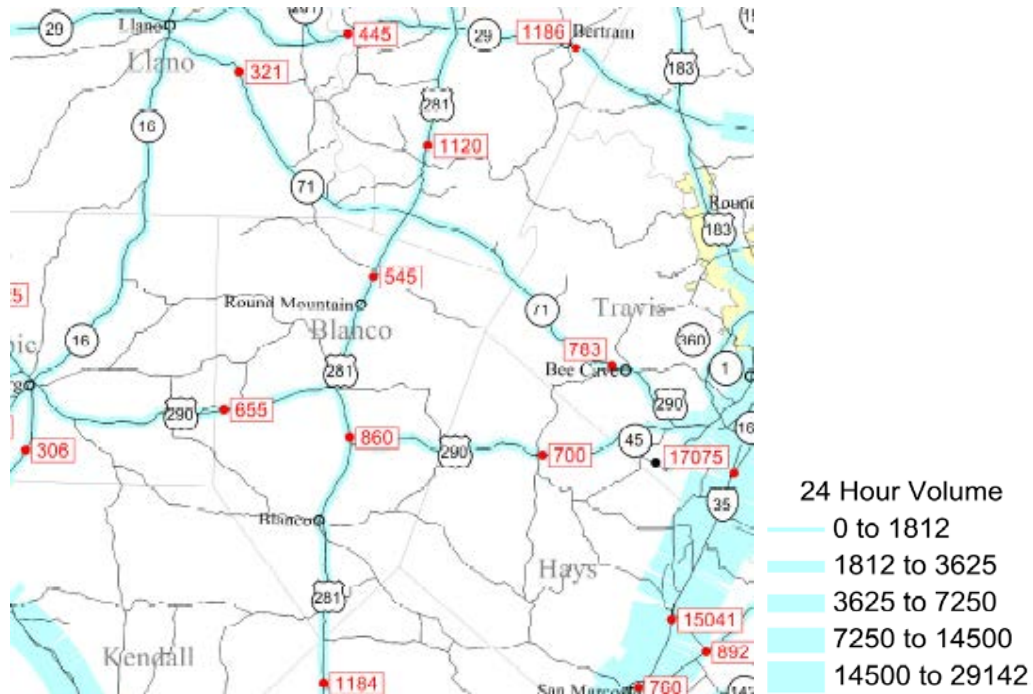


Figure 2.25. Blanco County Truck Flowband (2011).

2.9 Existing Transportation Financing

Blanco County Revenue

The majority of funding for Blanco County comes from taxes, which accounted for 62 percent of county revenues in 2011 and 2012 (**Table 2.6**).

Table 2.6. Blanco County General Revenue Fund Sources (2011–2012).

Revenues	Total	as a % of total revenue
Current Taxes	\$ 3,100,000	61.34%
Debt Service	\$ 600,000	11.87%
Transfer From Reserves	\$ 345,000	6.83%
County Sales Tax	\$ 250,000	4.95%
Out of Co boarding, prisoners	\$ 200,000	3.96%
Other Revenue Sources	\$ 558,575	11.05%
2011 - 2012 Totals	\$ 5,053,575	100.00%

The Blanco County Road and Bridge Fund receives funding from numerous sources (**Table 2.7**). The single largest source of revenue is the county's share of automobile registrations. Traffic fines and add-on fees for automobile registrations account for the second and third largest sources of road and bridge fund revenues.

Table 2.7. Blanco County Road and Bridge Fund, Revenue Sources (2011–2012).

Funding Source	Total
Auto Registration (Co. Share)	\$ 300,000
Traffic Fines (Road/Bridge)	\$ 100,000
Auto Registration (Add-on Fee)	\$ 100,000
Lateral Road Fund	\$ 14,600
TXDOT (Prorated Axle Tax)	\$ 5,000
General Fund Transfers (R&B Tax)	\$ 260,000
Total Road and Bridge Funding	779,600

Employee salaries and benefits account for approximately 52 percent of the entire fund collectively (**Table 2.8**). Materials related to road construction and maintenance (highlighted in gray) account for the next highest expense at approximately 44 percent collectively.

Table 2.8. Blanco County Road and Bridge Fund Expenditures (2011–2012).

Expenditures	Total	As a % of expenditures
Total Salaries	\$ 64,513.01	32.48%
Total Employee Benefits	\$ 37,786.05	19.03%
Paving	\$ 35,800.00	18.03%
Road Materials	\$ 12,500.00	6.29%
Fuel	\$ 12,000.00	6.04%
Concrete	\$ 11,000.00	5.54%
Equipment Maint./Tools	\$ 7,500.00	3.78%
Contract labor	\$ 4,000.00	2.01%
Maintenance of joint equip	\$ 4,000.00	2.01%
Culverts/Cattle Guards	\$ 3,000.00	1.51%
Telephone	\$ 2,000.00	1.01%
Road Signs/Markers/Safety Equipment	\$ 2,000.00	1.01%
Uniforms	\$ 1,500.00	0.76%
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,000.00	0.50%
Total Road and Bridge Fund Expenditures (2011 - 2012)	\$ 198,599.06	100.00%

City of Blanco Revenue

The largest portion of revenues for the City of Blanco comes from sales tax revenue, which accounted for 27 percent of city revenues in the city's 2010–2011 budget, as illustrated in **Figure 2.26**. The city also utilizes an ad-valorem tax, which provides funding for street services and accounted for 24 percent of the city's general fund revenues in 2010–2011.

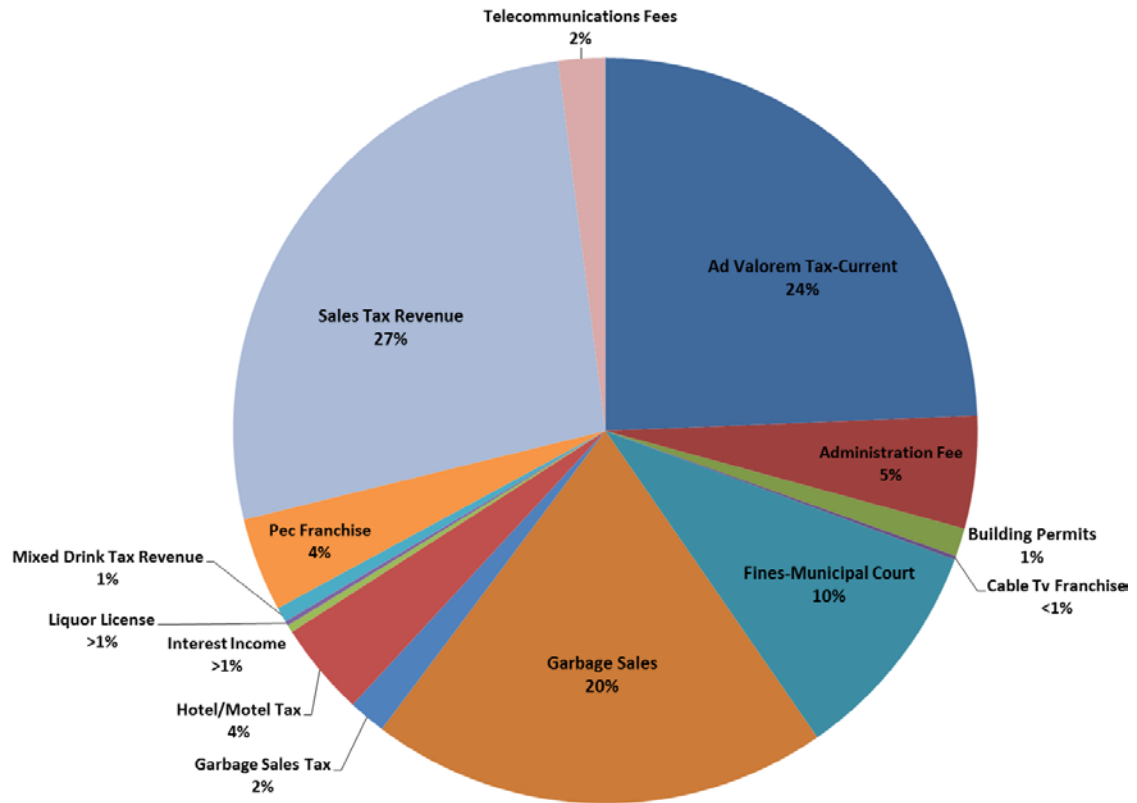


Figure 2.26. City of Blanco General Fund Revenue Sources (FY 2010–2011).

The City of Blanco Street Department received \$276,100 (**Figure 2.27**), a little more than 22 percent, from the city's 2010–2011 general fund budget of \$1,231,500.

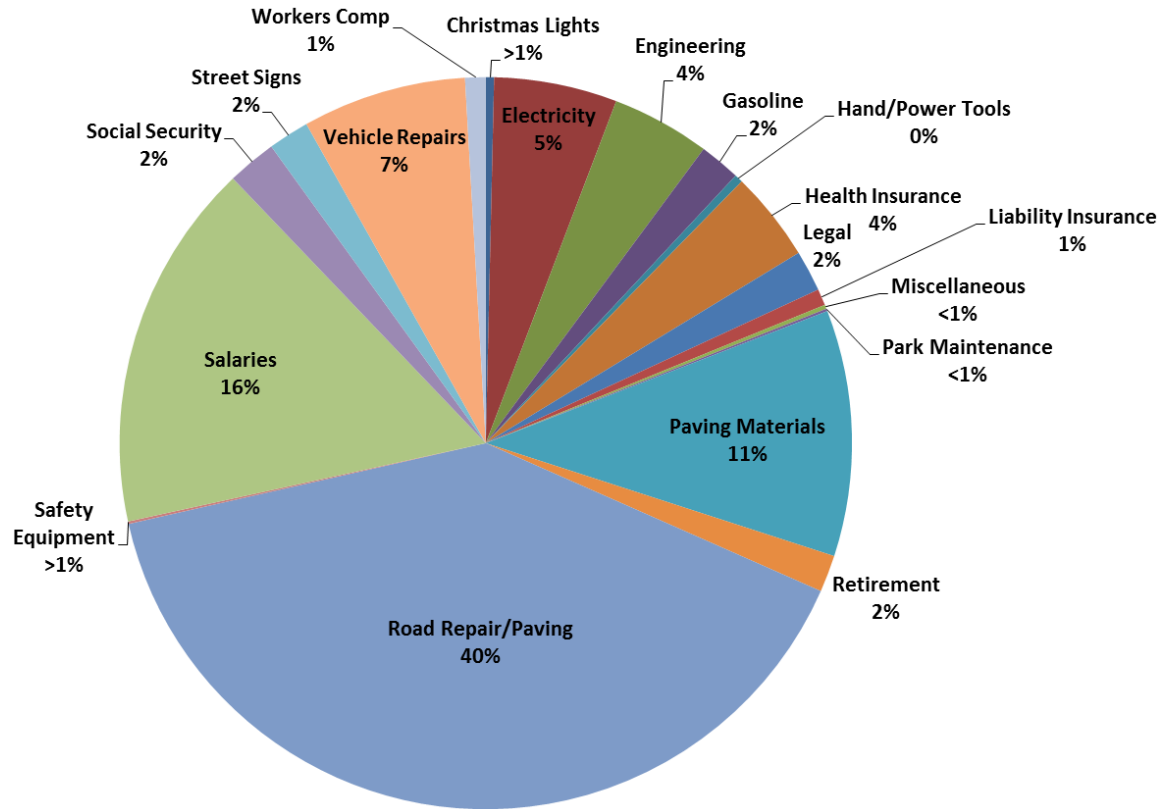


Figure 2.27. City of Blanco Street Department Expenditures (FY 2010–2011).

The majority of the City of Blanco Street Department's funding is allocated to road repair and paving, with 40 percent of the \$276,100 fund being allocated for that purpose. Street Department salaries account for the second largest expenditure, totaling 16 percent of the allocation for FY 2010–2011.

Johnson City Revenue

Service charges make up the largest percentage of Johnson City's general fund revenue, accounting for 26 percent of revenues in the 2010-2011 fiscal year (**Figure 2.28**). General sales and use tax and property tax also make up a substantial portion of Johnson City revenues, at 23 and 17 percent, respectively.

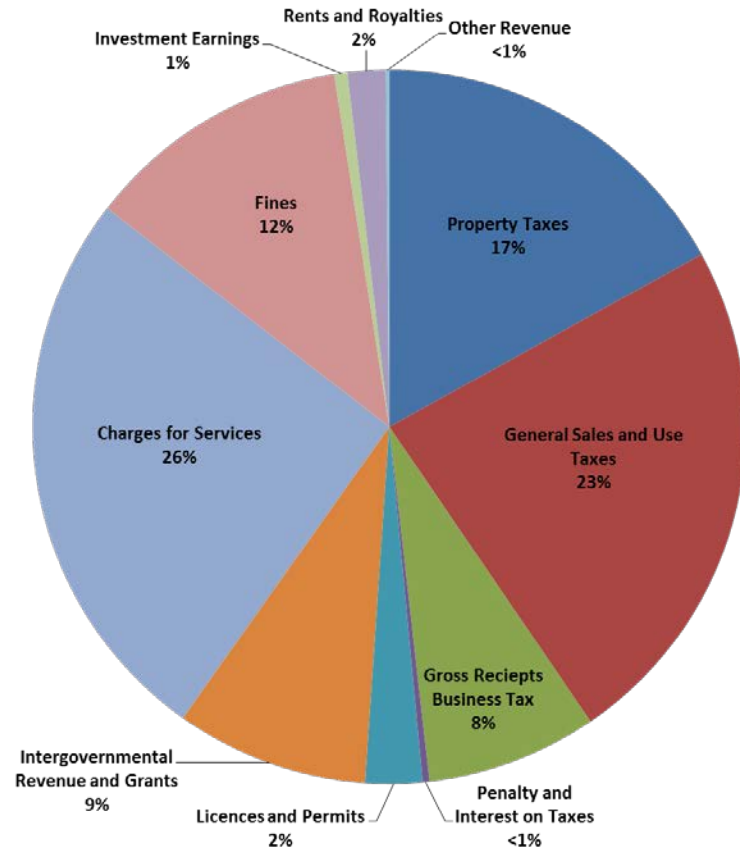


Figure 2.28. Johnson City General Fund Revenue Sources (FY 2010–2011).

Street services are provided through the city's street maintenance department, which receives funding through the general fund. These services accounted for approximately 7 percent of the city general fund expenditures in the 2010–2011 fiscal year.

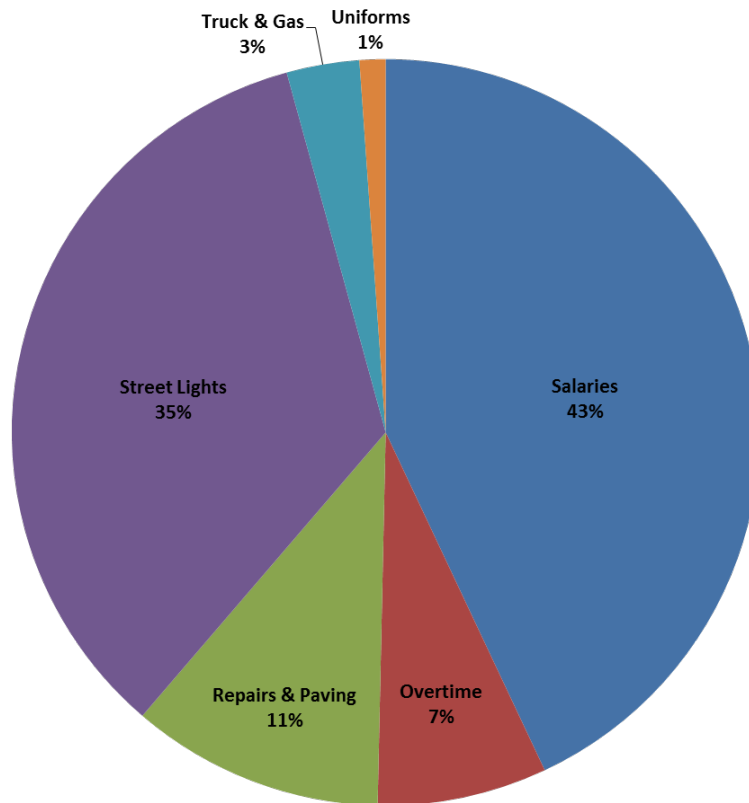


Figure 2.29. Johnson City Street Maintenance Department Expenditures (FY 2010–2011).

Figure 2.29 shows that for the 2010–2011 fiscal year, the majority of Johnson City’s Street Maintenance Department budget went to salaries, which accounted for approximately 43 percent of the expenditures. Streetlights made up the second largest percentage of street maintenance expenditures at 35 percent, while repairs and paving costs accounted for 11 percent of the funds for the 2010–2011 fiscal year.

Chapter 3—Economic Development

3.1 Overview

Combining transportation and economic development in the planning process for Blanco County is especially appropriate since so much of this county's development has been along the highway and connecting road systems, a trend that continues. Several economic development issues directly or indirectly relate to the county's road network including commuting patterns of the labor force, opportunities for future residential and commercial development, and link between traffic and tourism. Also, county transportation plans have typically looked at major employers' impact on existing traffic generation; in this case, the county could plan for infrastructure based on desired locations for future employers over the next 20 years.

This project's scope of work blended the transportation planning process with the updating and integration of strategies for economic growth, with strong consideration of infrastructure needs for future development and support and management of growth that preserves Blanco County's heritage and culture.

CAPCOG convened three focus group meetings with a stakeholder group representing citizens involved and interested in economic development; invitations went to public- and private-sector representatives who could provide some historical information about past efforts, input on what currently works and what does not, and insight on new business interests, new development, or key challenges. The participation included some members of the advisory committee but was not limited to those members.

3.2 The Approach to Economic Development Planning

CAPCOG's technical assistance to cities and counties for developing economic development strategies is always grounded in reality. Often, communities arbitrarily select strategies that cannot be supported by necessary factors of business development: available workers with appropriate skills or access to training, available infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, housing, and telecommunications), reasonable cost of doing business, and coordinated community leadership. The recommendations for economic development in this plan are an honest assessment based on information and demographic data available and identify resources appropriate for achieving realistic goals.

It is important to note that the term "economic development" refers to the involvement of the public sector to induce some level of investment that improves local economic factors; private-sector investment by an individual or a business without public-sector influence is simply capitalism. Thus, an economic development plan for Blanco County by definition should be the combined forces of the local governments and other publicly funded organizations for a common cause: to bring more dollars to the business community, which will in turn create jobs and pay taxes. Business development strategies can include starting a new business or expanding an existing business in categories that include providing more services and products for local citizens, attracting visitors, or producing goods for local use and export. Sometimes the most fundamental strategy involves building the foundation for future growth and economic prosperity.

3.3 Existing Conditions

Blanco County has been enjoying a period of steady growth and exhibits many characteristics that one would expect for a rural county that is located near a quickly growing major metropolitan center.

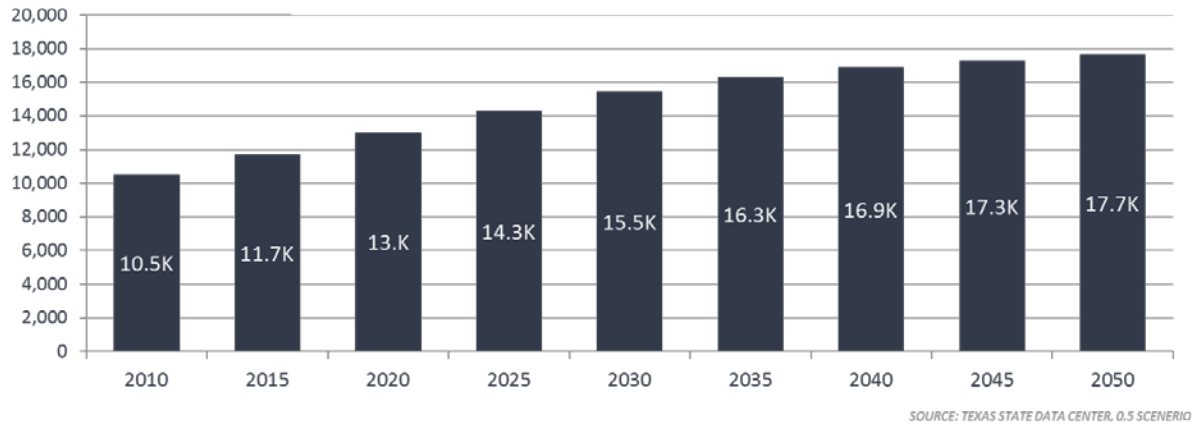


Figure 3.1. Blanco County Population Projections (2010–2050).

Current projections indicate that, though slow, growth in Blanco County's population is expected to continue in the years ahead (see **Figure 3.1**). Nevertheless, even with the additional population that is forecast, Blanco County will remain sparsely populated in comparison to other counties surrounding the Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This has implications not only for issues such as transportation and education but also for the type and amount of development that can be expected to result should current trends continue.

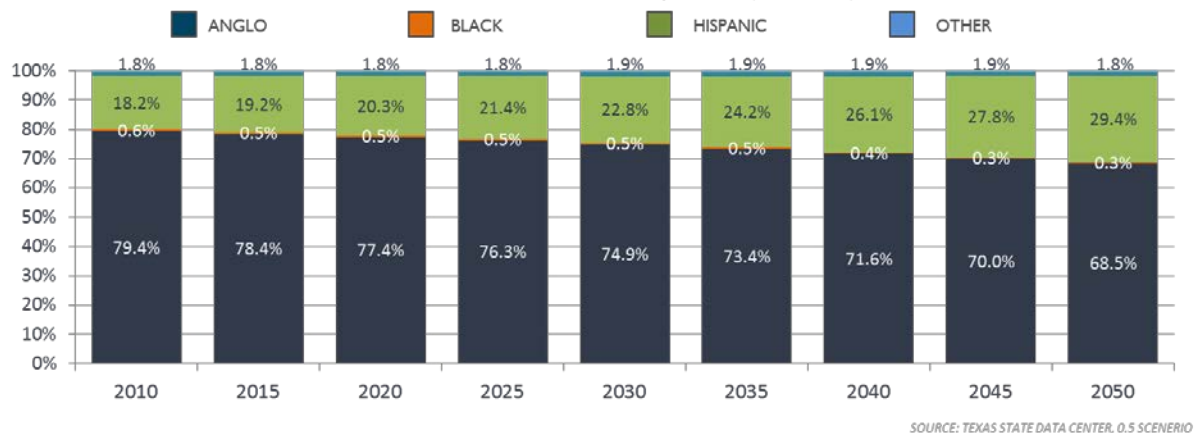
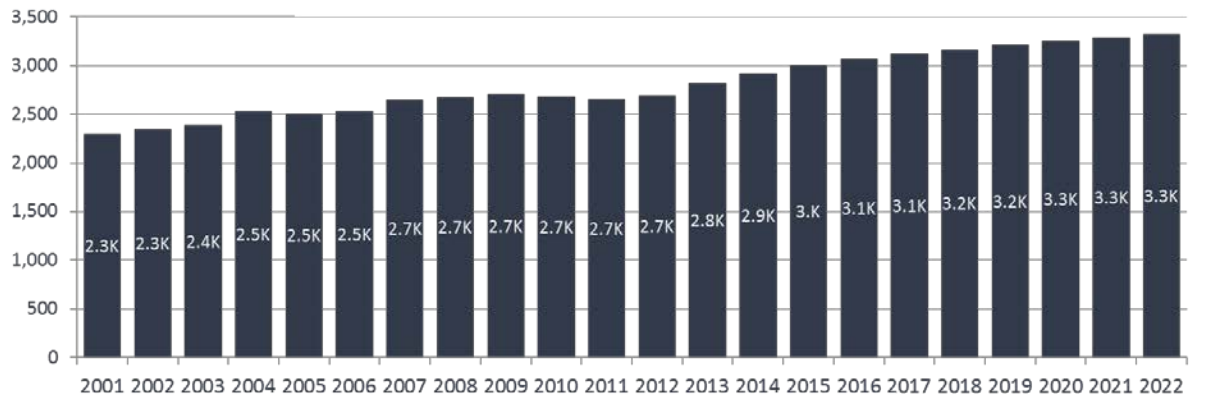


Figure 3.2. Blanco County Racial Projections (2010–2050).

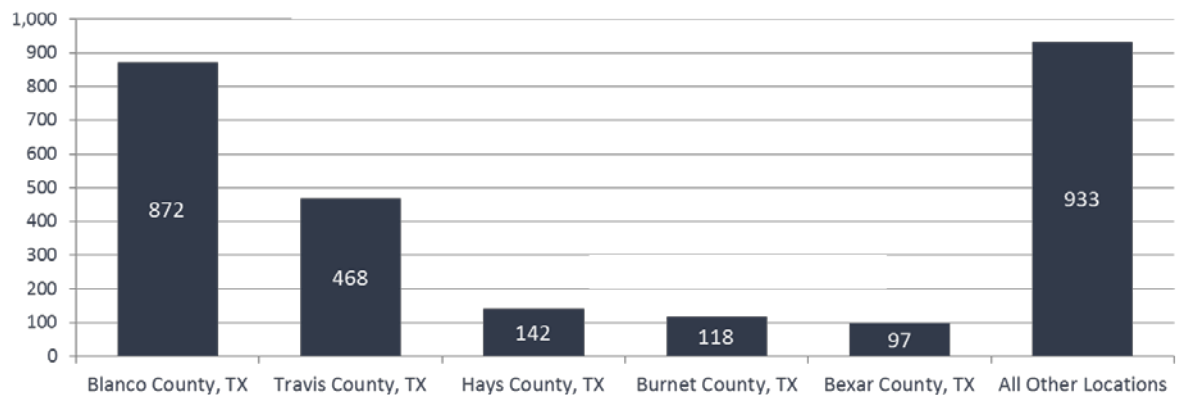
Similarly, much of the county's demographics are expected to remain largely as they are, as seen in projections for the distribution of race/ethnicity of residents shown in **Figure 3.2**.



SOURCE: EMSI, Covered Employment - 2012.4

Figure 3.3. Blanco County Employment Projections (2001–2022).

Despite two major recessions since 2001, employment levels in Blanco County have managed to rise at a modest pace (see **Figure 3.3**). Current forecasts indicate employment growth over the next decade to add about 600 new jobs to the area. Among these, the strongest gains are expected to occur in the computer and mathematical, business and financial, construction and extraction, and education, training, and library occupations.



SOURCE: EMSI, Covered Employment - 2012.4

Figure 3.4. Blanco County Residents' Place of Employment (2011).

Blanco County remains highly interconnected with and dependent on its surrounding counties—both as a source of employment opportunities for residents and as a source of workforce for businesses located in the county. While approximately 872 people live and work in Blanco County, more than twice as many residents are employed outside of Blanco County, as shown in **Figure 3.4**. While this is to be expected of a rural county located in close proximity to two major metropolitan areas, it has implications for the transportation needs of the county and for the satisfaction of job requirements and consumption needs of local residents.

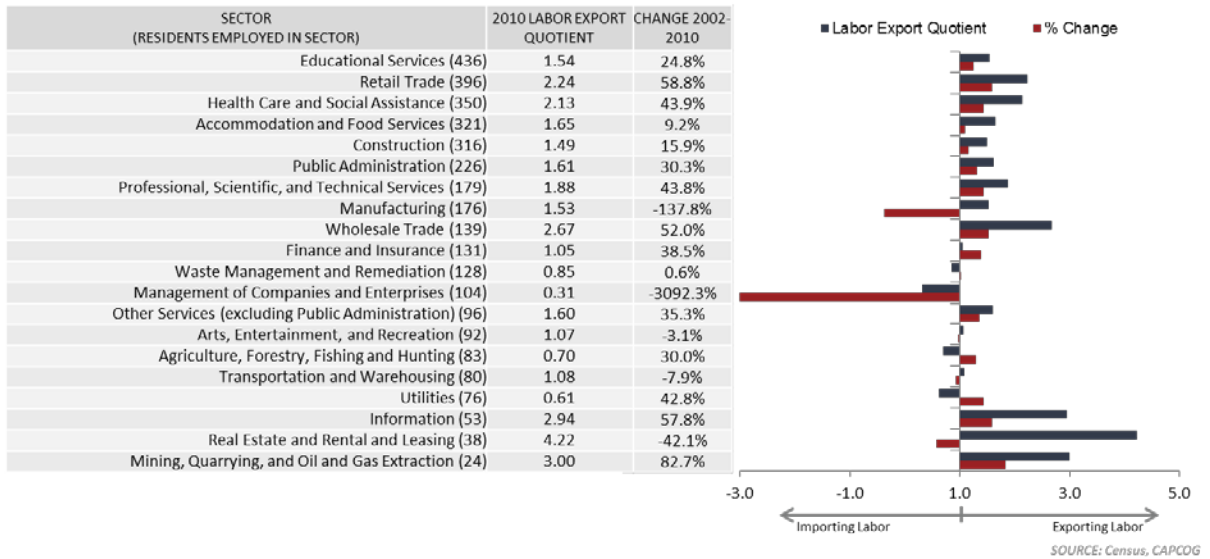


Figure 3.5. Blanco County Labor Export Balance (2010).

Blanco County is a net exporter of labor across most industry segments; however, it is increasingly reliant on commuting managers from outside of the county (see **Figure 3.5**). While Blanco County does supply labor to employers in nearby counties, it does not, at current levels, maintain a large enough workforce to support a significant base for employment that is independent of its neighboring counties. While the county's workforce is expected to grow in the years to come, its limited supply of available workers is likely to inhibit the county's ability to attract primary employers, such as manufacturers, who depend on a ready supply of skilled workers. This does not mean that Blanco County cannot still support or attract new employers, but simply that the type of employment growth and the type of industries that are suited to the county will have to look past or be unaffected by this condition.

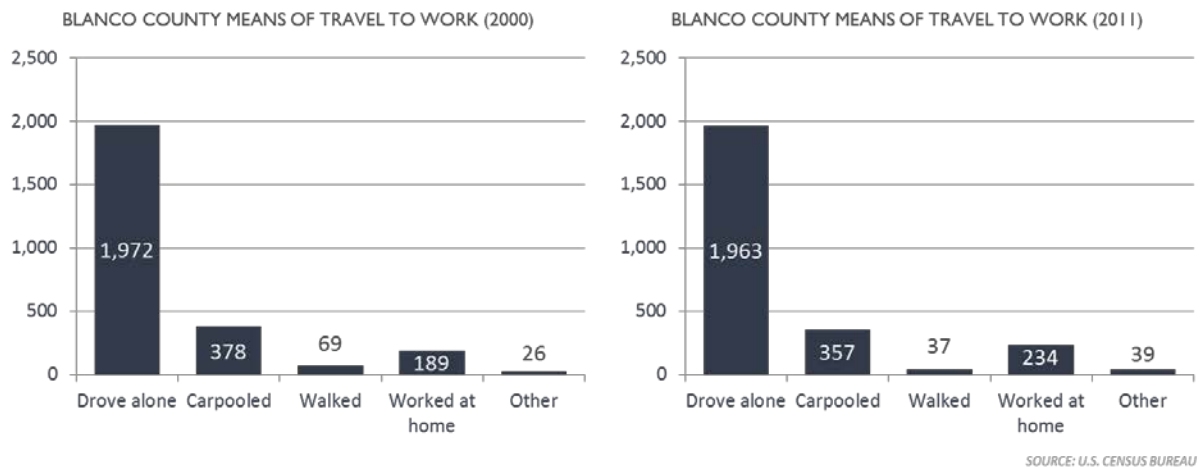
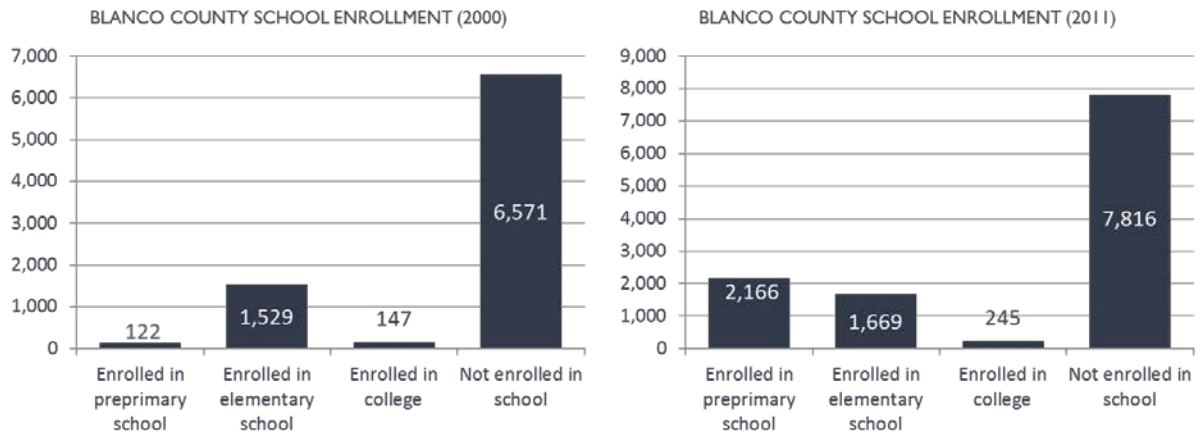


Figure 3.6. Blanco County Means of Travel to Work (2000 and 2011).

Over the past decade, little has changed about how Blanco County residents travel to work every day. They still overwhelmingly travel alone by car. One change that is rather significant from the standpoint of economic development, however, is the increase in the number of individuals who work at home (see **Figure 3.6**). This reflects broader trends occurring as a result of advancements in communications technologies and wider acceptance of telecommuting by

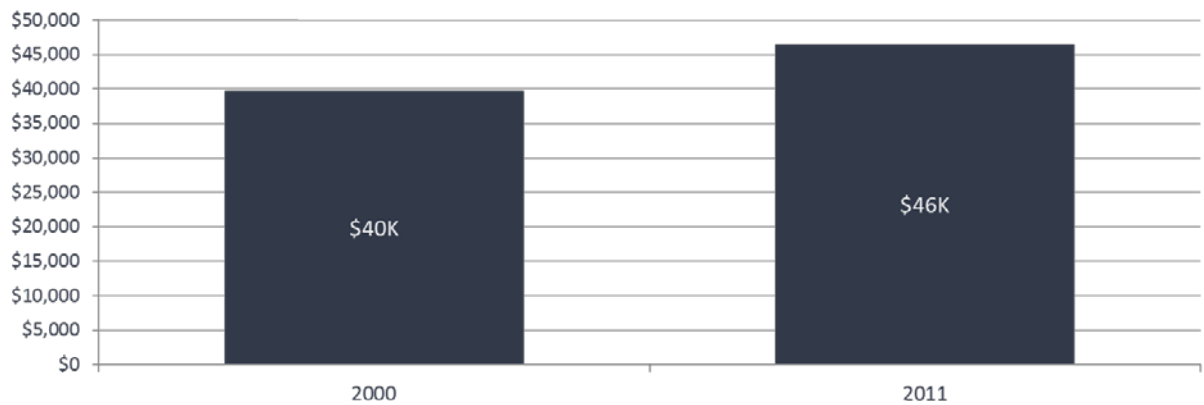
businesses. It also highlights the need and opportunities associated with communications infrastructure in Blanco County, particularly fiber optic and broadband Internet.



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Figure 3.7. Blanco County School Enrollment (2000 and 2011).

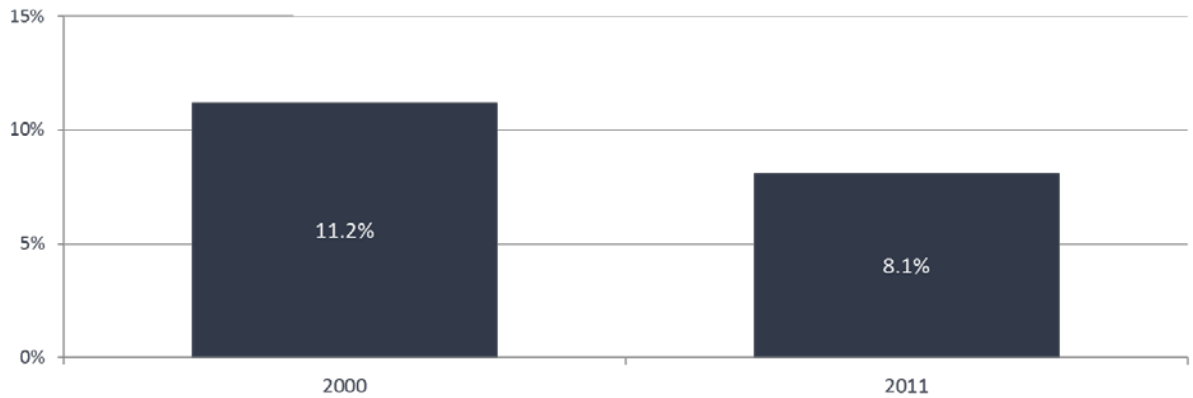
A reflection of both its small rural population and its somewhat older population, Blanco County has very few residents that are currently enrolled in college. Moreover, the number of residents enrolled in college has changed only slightly over the past decade (see **Figure 3.7**). Meanwhile, however, the number of children in preschool has grown significantly—rising from just 122 in 2000 to 2,166 in 2011. This increase will have implications for both the demands placed on local schools in the years ahead and the types and adequacy of amenities desired by residents.



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Figure 3.8. Annual Median Household Income (2000 and 2011).

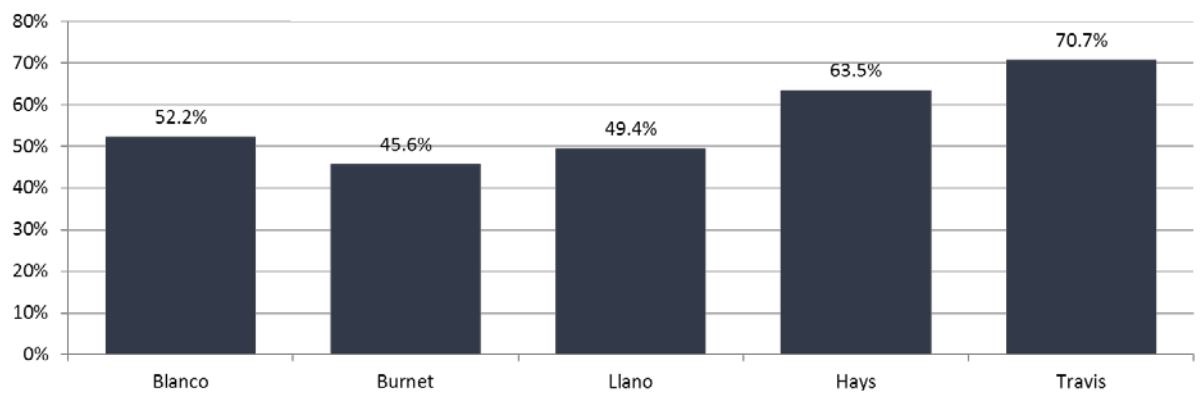
Although median income in Blanco County rose from \$40,000 to \$46,000 from 2000 to 2011, it remains below the statewide median income of \$49,332 (see **Figure 3.8**).



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Figure 3.9. Percent of Population Living in Poverty (2000 and 2011).

An area of particular success for Blanco County over the past decade has been the reduction in poverty from 11.2 percent to 8.1 percent, even as two recessions disrupted labor markets across the country (see **Figure 3.9**). As of 2011, the poverty rate in Blanco County was a full 10 percentage points lower than that of the state as a whole.



SOURCE: Texas Governor's Office of Economic Development & Tourism

Figure 3.10. Hotel Occupancy (2012).

Although the selection of hotels is rather limited (again, a factor of the county's small population and rural location), hotel occupancy rates are generally healthy when compared to surrounding counties, as shown in **Figure 3.10**. Hotel occupancy is a key measure for tourism and is looked at by hotel developers as a way to gauge the potential of a given location to support new hotels.

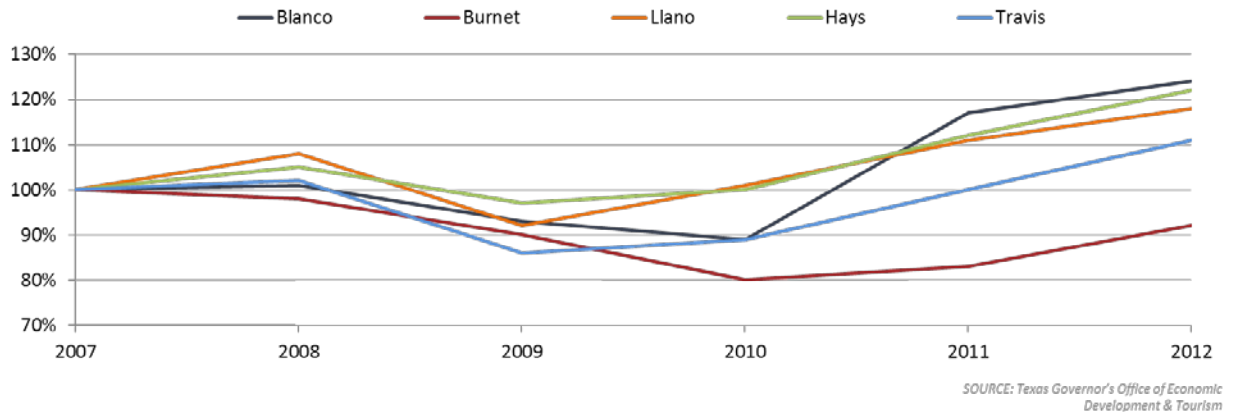


Figure 3.11. Revenue per Available Room, Indexed to 2007.

A second measure typically looked at as a way to assess the health of the tourism sector and as an indication of a location's potential for future hotel development is revenue per available room. Blanco County has performed quite well, outperforming nearby counties from 2010–2012 (see **Figure 3.11**).

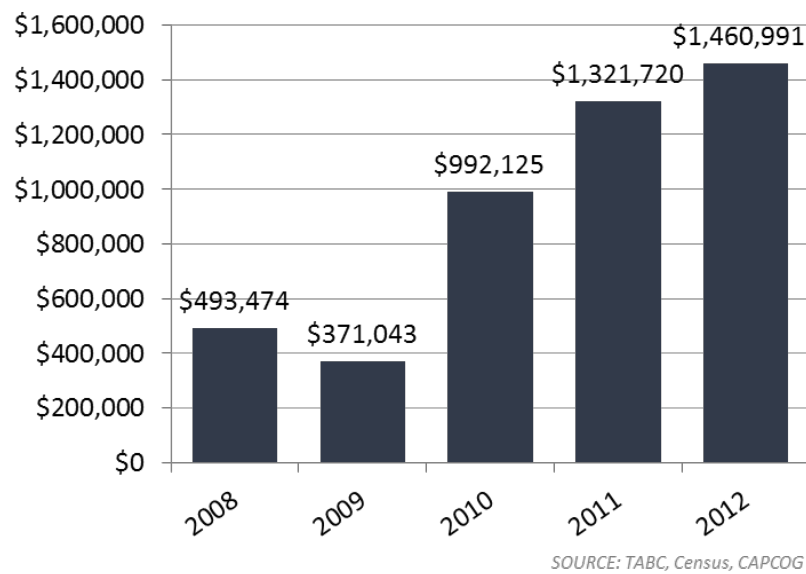
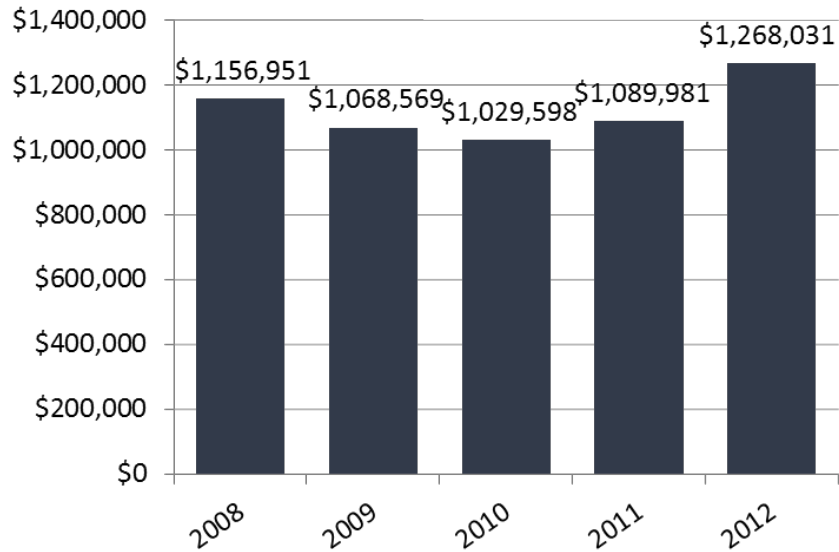


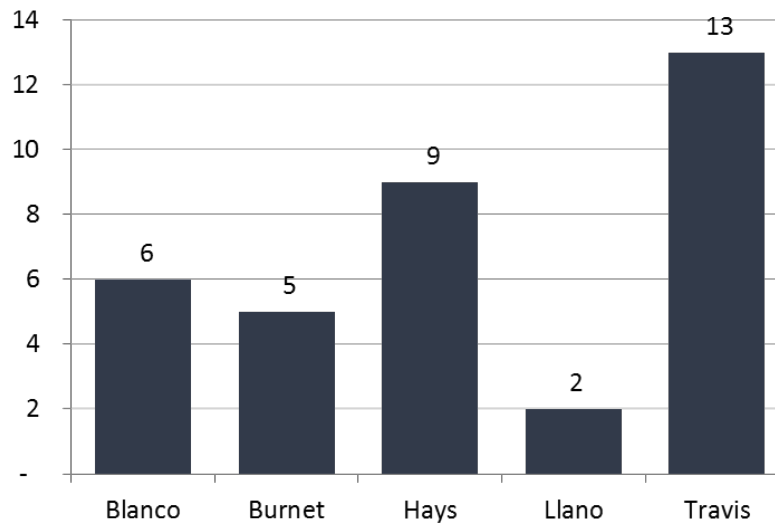
Figure 3.12. Blanco Taxable Hotel Receipts.



SOURCE: TABC, Census, CAPCOG

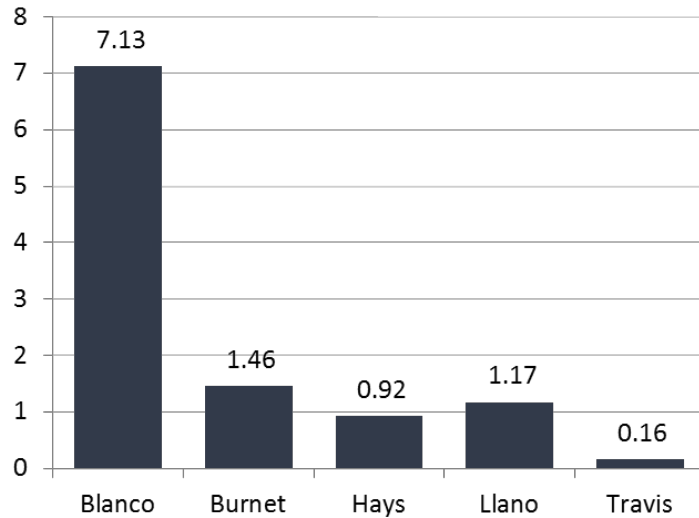
Figure 3.13. Johnson City Taxable Hotel Receipts.

The general health of Blanco County's tourism sector has produced a solid source of tax dollars that are used to support public services as well as community and economic development initiatives. As of 2012, hotels in the city of Blanco (**Figure 3.12**) and in Johnson City (**Figure 3.13**) had posted a combined \$2.7 million in taxable hotel receipts. Through efforts to increase tourism activity in Blanco County, these figures can strengthen, leading to additional public resources without increasing tax rates.



SOURCE: TABC, Census, CAPCOG

Figure 3.14. Total Permitted Wineries (2012).



SOURCE: TABC, Census, CAPCOG

Figure 3.15. Wineries per 10,000 Population (2012).

A major component of Blanco County's tourism sector is the large presence of vineyards and wineries located in the county (see **Figures 3.14 and 3.15**). Blanco County is in the heart of the Texas Wine Trail, and with a highly successful brewery and distillery present, the county has several attractive tourism assets that it can leverage to support local and regional tourism. For those assets to have a broader impact on the county's economy, however, it will be important for communities within the county to fully incorporate them into a cohesive countywide brand and to take steps to ensure that the county's transportation infrastructure and downtown areas complement the growth occurring within this sector.

3.4 Current Conditions Point to Key Issues

There is a popular adage no local elected official wants to hear: economic development is a marathon, not a sprint. This is especially true for Blanco County and its cities. With a limited available workforce, much of the business development that can be expected to occur is likely to be generated through organic growth and local entrepreneurship, as seen with the county's distillery and ale brewing companies. This particular type of business development cannot always, if ever, be traced to a specific initiative or campaign; rather, it typically occurs as local business activity builds upon itself, leading to better utilization of existing infrastructure and resources and the development of wider and stronger business linkages. For these reasons, organic business development is often more enduring than growth resulting from the recruitment of a company from somewhere else. Other current conditions that point to key issues include the following:

- Establishing the conditions for businesses is key; having workers to supply local businesses will be a challenge until the county's population grows so that more people live and work within the county.
- Telecommunication services are critical to larger businesses as well as small ones who may conduct business transactions online or may have built a business model dependent on a robust online presence.
- Housing is a chicken-and-egg issue when discussed in terms of economic development; if there were more housing units, more workers would be available to supply a labor force. However, if more employers were in the county, the employees would create a greater demand for housing. Currently the Marble Falls PHA is developing smaller Marble Falls

- housing using HOME funding, which is beginning to meet a pent-up demand for affordable units.
- Roads are a longer-term issue when it comes to economic development since there are no major employers currently clogging up arterials with freight movement or commuting patterns of a large workforce.
 - Expanded opportunities for transit are being planned by CARTS beyond the call-for-a-ride service now in place; increasingly, Blanco County, like many other outer-ring counties, will see a demand for alternatives to complete dependence on automobiles. While the move to a more routine service will not generate huge ridership overnight, it is a significant step to support growth.
 - Increased traffic volume on US Highways 281 and 290 is inevitable; the challenge is how to capture the attention of motorists that might have the time and inclination to break from their trip to get coffee, have a meal, or stop at local shops and boutiques.
 - Urbanization from the north and south are acknowledged trends but will not have a significant impact on economic development for several years. Development patterns will eventually support more retail and professional services. Since the daytime population is estimated to be approximately 8,700, some additional research into the feasibility of a retail project may be worthwhile.

3.5 Economic Development to Date

Two planning efforts have been undertaken in the last six years; both resulted in viable strategies that have not been implemented.

In the fall of 2008, CAPCOG staff provided an overview of economic and demographic trends and conducted a workshop to identify priorities for an economic development committee to pursue. The workshop included an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, commonly called a SWOT analysis. Three priorities were identified: maximizing tourism, improving communication infrastructure, and developing worker housing.

In the spring of 2011, the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) and PEC teamed up to work with the Blanco County Economic Development Corporation for a more extensive planning process with a focus on five areas: county infrastructure, business development, tourism and promotion, leadership development, and organizational financing and structure. From this effort came a work plan that included the areas identified in 2008 along with some strategies to create a foundation for carrying out the plan.

During CAPCOG's focus group meetings for this plan, it was evident that participants, whether they were familiar with the past planning efforts or not, generally agreed on many of the strategies. There did not seem to be a consensus, however, on how to organize or fund a coordinated effort that would benefit the county and its cities.

Several great events happen each year that attract visitors from Blanco County, surrounding counties, and beyond. Natural assets including Pedernales State Park and Blanco State Park along with two traditional downtown districts, each with its own history and locational advantages, punctuate the county's opportunity to become a highly successful regional tourism destination. Wineries continue to expand into the northwest corner of the county, and the Real Ale Brewing Company is an additional success story that adds intrigue to tourism possibilities. Blanco County is known for its Lavender Festival but has other activities like the LBJ 100 Bicycle Tour that are getting started. Entrepreneurship is captured by stories like the Amoskys, who started a small farm and now provide fresh-cut flowers to 60-70 retail outlets.

Restaurants and shops have come and gone along the streets of the downtowns, some more successful than others; a more focused effort on developing the downtown areas as the cornerstone of tourism should improve that trend.

3.6 Challenges

Because Blanco County and its cities are small and rural, the human and financial resources are limited, which means the pool of individuals who are actively involved in the community is finite; and those who are willing volunteers are called on often but risk getting burned out. The limited resources available (particularly the time of those actively supporting community development efforts) coupled with the work required to support the execution of strategies that are regarded favorably within the county highlights the importance of coordinating efforts and investments in ways that are able to produce a significant impact on the economy and on the community.

The small, rural population of Blanco County also presents a challenge to attracting most national and regional retailers. The demographics simply do not meet the criteria used by retail developers and their favorite tenants (and their lenders) to choose to locate in a particular community. Although, in time, Blanco County can expect to see its population increase to the point that it may be in a better position to support broader retail development, this increase will take many years and should not be a central component of an economic development strategy for the county and its individual communities. Retailers and restaurants are unlikely to come to Blanco County from outside in the numbers that may be desired; however, this is not to say that there are not opportunities for Blanco County to grow its retail and restaurant offerings—it will simply require that growth to be spurred from inside the county, primarily by local independent businesses.

Emergent in focus groups and questionnaire responses was some level of insistence that the county government should be funding the economic development efforts, presumably because economic development planning is being done countywide and should be an additional layer on top of what the cities are doing. While counties definitely need to be included in incentive policies and development decisions, they typically do not fund or take the lead. Of the 10 counties in CAPCOG, only Bastrop and Burnet Counties provide any funding for economic development, and in both cases, the focus is tourism only.

Because of a limited workforce, as outlined in the Existing Conditions section above, the attraction of primary employers (a firm in an industry such as manufacturing that employs a significant number of workers and produces goods or services that are typically consumed outside of the region) is not a strategy likely to reap a strong degree of success, particularly in the near term.

The promotion of events and assets throughout the county to attract visitors is currently being done with some success. The research team was unable to gather specific metrics on attendance to festivals, etc., that would detail the extent of that success; however, anecdotal evidence and input from focus groups offer reason for confidence. The best way to maximize efforts for a robust promotion campaign is through a coordinated effort of all entities engaged in tourism and visitor outreach efforts; this is a challenge today because there is insufficient motivation to work for the greater good of the county, even as stronger coordination of efforts could be expected to benefit all portions of the county.

3.7 Recommendations

The following recommendations will help guide the economic prosperity and sustainability of Blanco County.

Downtown Revitalization

Local governments already have an investment in their downtowns—that is a given because those are perhaps some of the older property tax-paying proprietors in the city and county. So why is the downtown not the first focus of all economic development efforts? For Blanco County

and its two largest cities, the downtowns should be thought of as the “anchor tenant” to the area’s tourism list of assets.

By concentrating economic development efforts and investment in downtown districts, communities are typically able to support a more significant and near-term impact than would occur by spreading resources across a wider (but thinner) set of priorities. As successful development takes hold in the downtown districts, communities are then able to apply the gains realized through increased property values and taxable sales to address other priorities that build on a successful core. Moreover, by focusing development and public investment in downtown areas as opposed to green fields, communities are able to better utilize and improve upon existing infrastructure as opposed to paying for new infrastructure where none exists. This has significant implications not only for economic development but also for transportation.

Development in central business districts (CBDs) leads to businesses that are interesting to locals as well as to visitors. The biggest challenge is finding the next entrepreneur—that person that has the idea, desire, and money to open a business. The next biggest challenge is keeping that business open. Small businesses close because the owner rarely has enough financing to pay costs until a profit starts coming in. There are two great resources for start-up businesses in this area. First, the Small Business Development Center located at Texas State University is willing to meet with individuals interested in starting a business and can provide great assistance in creating a business plan. Business & Community Lenders (BCL) is the other great resource. It is the organization that provides Small Business Administration (SBA) loans as well as other low-interest, long-term financing, and it will help business owners identify the most strategic blend of tools to meet their needs. BCL specializes in projects in rural areas.

The key is getting the right business—a new business has a better chance of making it if it is providing a product or service that is in demand. A retail survey should be conducted to get a better understanding of the market. Gaps in products and services can be identified from two types of potential consumers: people who live in the area but shop somewhere else, and people who work in the area and might shop near their work for convenience.

Once community members are made aware of an economic development strategy focused on starting up and keeping local businesses, they must routinely be reminded to help keep them in business, so a “Buy Local” campaign is appropriate. Furthermore, part of the importance of doing a business plan is making sure that business owners understand that they only stay in business if they are providing what the customers want and need. Achieving this balance exponentially increases the success of a downtown.

The overarching message is that businesses must be propagated and maintained by locals but should be attractive to visitors.

In addition to strategies to support local business owners, successful economic development in downtown areas also requires working with property owners to ensure that the right conditions are in place to support business success and the vitality of the district. Important considerations can include whether existing rent rates are in line with market conditions or are prohibitive of the types of businesses most likely to locate downtown; whether existing building design regulations are supportive of the improvement of the district; whether there are key infrastructure improvements that should be made; and whether existing or regulated uses are capable of supporting increased daytime and evening customer traffic.

For downtown districts (which were originally designed to be mixed use), ensuring that mixed-use development is able to be supported given existing regulation and market conditions is key for any successful revitalization effort. In certain cases and where property owners are able to provide support and cooperation, downtown districts can realize accelerated gains by focusing on attracting ground-floor retailers and restaurants by offering rent rates that are highly competitive or even below market, while making up any differences through slightly higher rates applied to the

space that is not on the ground floor (typically used by office or, sometimes, residential tenants). This has the effect of attracting amenities and activity to the downtown district that then attracts additional users on upper floors. While this strategy is not applicable in all situations, it has been shown to be effective in supporting outsized improvements to downtown districts, as long as the community is capable of managing the efforts over a five-to-ten-year span (after which rates typically equalize to the market).

Tourism as a Key Economic Development Strategy

As a result of focus group meetings and significant online research, it was easy to surmise that Blanco County and the cities of Blanco and Johnson City have an attractive list of places and events. The problem is that there does not seem to be one comprehensive site, either printed or online, that lists them. This is a huge missed opportunity that should be addressed if the area is going to maximize tourism revenue. This is also a critical challenge given the distance to the center of neighboring metropolitan centers and given the number of competing alternative destinations for weekend travelers and more casual day-trippers.

Current online efforts, while better than no visibility, are segmented and incomplete. With limited resources, that is to be expected. Pooling efforts and resources would result in a significant upgrade to outreach and should be tried. In Texas, every city does its own thing when it comes to economic development, and that often includes tourism, but a broader, more regional effort in all types of marketing has proven to be more successful. It is also more cost effective.

The first step in developing a more comprehensive, focused campaign is to complete an inventory of all assets—this should include any place where someone can shop, eat, play a sport, undertake a hobby, fish or hunt, rope or ride, sleep, drink, or just tour. The value of these assets as tourism destinations can be enhanced through the creation of multiple recommended itineraries and travel packages (simply a list of places to go and things to do based on time and interest), each designed to appeal to different age groups, interests, and places of origin (e.g., Austin versus Houston).

Blanco County should consider a tag line that can be used in all promotions—simple but catchy—so that even when individual organizations or businesses are marketing, they can use it to tie themselves to the area. A branding campaign to develop a single identity at the county level (even if it does not directly reference Blanco County) for marketing purposes should be undertaken and is an ideal project for hotel occupancy tax funds. As an example of a similar effort, Bastrop County recently went through a branding campaign partnering with existing organizations including area chambers of commerce, downtown business alliances, the Main Street Program, and the cities. Yes, Elgin has its sausage, Smithville has its movie productions, and Bastrop has its Main Street, but working together will leverage more activity. The brand that is established for Blanco County should capture its ambition of becoming a can't-miss day trip out of Austin and San Antonio and an authentic Texas experience in the heart of the Texas Wine Country.

As part of its efforts to support increased tourism activity within the county, a dual strategy should be considered that is capable of recruiting and catering to two separate demographics, each with divergent interests and resources: Baby Boomers/retirees and young professionals. Considering different approaches that appeal to each of these two groups while still fitting a single cohesive brand could help the county to better highlight what about Blanco County's tourism assets would be appealing, which could then assist efforts to better communicate tourism opportunities to nearby markets in a more targeted and effective way.

Developing assets in the downtown areas will be important. An interesting and recent case study is found in Belton, Texas, where the redevelopment of old cotton gin properties into a quaint group of restaurants and shops now attracts visitors—the project got legs when the city, chamber

of commerce, and economic development corporation began working together as the result of a pact made to do 10 things together. Recognizing there is often turf between cities and turf within cities, the concept of agreeing to do 10 things together sounds like a non-threatening effort to improve coordination.

Recruiting Primary Employers

In Texas, perhaps even more than other states, local economic developers tend to gauge success by the location decisions of relocating companies. Done correctly, a new company that is community friendly and can provide good salaries and benefits to local workers is high on the success scale. However, it can take many years of marketing and responding to leads that may or may not bring results. Thus, it is important to figure out what a community has that might be needed by a certain type of industry; in Blanco County's case, there seems to be a self-organizing movement toward wineries and distilleries. Meanwhile, the food sector, as it expands in and beyond Austin, may provide some interesting options if businesses are looking for options beyond the core of the five-county MSA, which is becoming increasingly more densely developed. Outer-edge counties like Blanco County should begin to look for ways to attract food-sector activity.

Central Texas's growing food sector reaches outward from Austin and includes agriculture, food processing and distribution, and consumer demand for local products in stores and restaurants. Local, small producers are preferred over large industrial farm producers, as consumers want freshness and want to know the source of their product. Local, as defined by Whole Foods, is a product from not more than seven hours away. According to a 2013 study by Austin consulting firm TXP, there are 1.7 million acres of farmland in the five-county MSA.

Infrastructure for Economic Development

Developing telecommunications services should be a primary focus for this area. The appeal for folks who want to live outside a metro area and do their work online can be realized if reliable broadband service is available in and around both cities (see **Figure 3.16**).

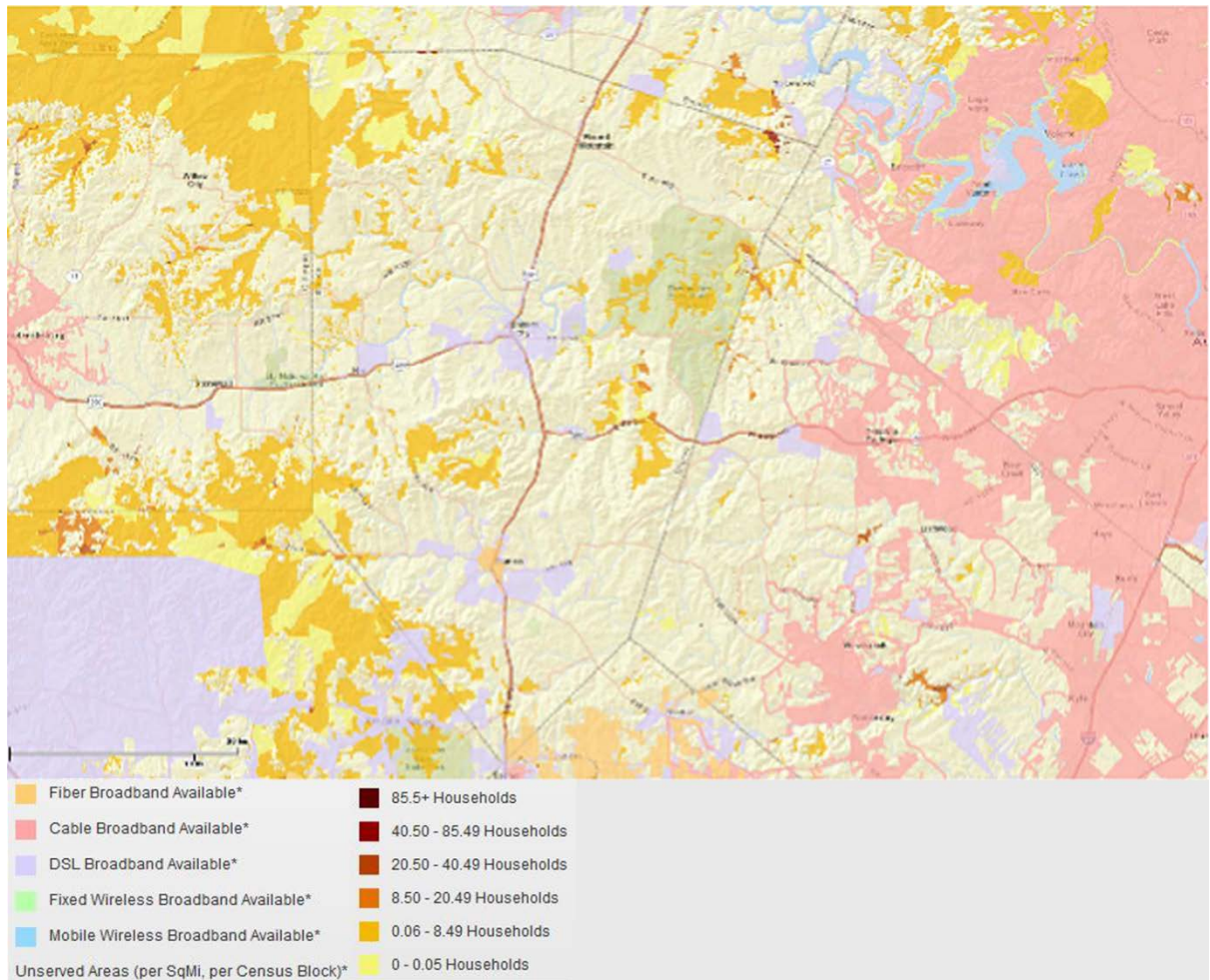


Figure 3.16. Broadband Internet Availability in Blanco County.

At least one service provider, GVTC, has already made significant investment in the county by installing comprehensive broadband services throughout Blanco, and, in fact, this provides a significant competitive advantage that the city is not leveraging. Johnson City can make a full-court press toward its own broadband infrastructure by pulling together a committee of business owners, community leaders, and utility representatives to work directly with GVTC to focus on an appropriate business model for the north end of the county.

The downtown areas are tremendous assets for both Blanco and Johnson City; however, some consideration needs to be given to streetscaping and other improvements that will create an appeal that invites visitors to linger and passersby to stop. Recommendations include:

- Consider the establishment of a program that supplies free WiFi in downtown districts (see case study below).
- Bring together local realtors to review available supply of lots for infill; review city ordinances to ensure they are friendly to housing development options.
- Consider the use of form-based codes (as opposed to conventional zoning) in downtown areas and surrounding properties to ease development regulation while encouraging appropriate development form and design that preserves Blanco County's heritage and rural appeal.

Case Study: Hico, Texas's Free Downtown WiFi Program

The Hico Free Downtown WiFi Program is a collaborative effort between Hico's Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation, and businesses that debuted in 2008. The Free Downtown WiFi Program is part of ongoing efforts to improve the appeal of Hico's revitalized downtown area to travelers looking for a weekend getaway. The free Internet access provided to visitors to Hico enables them to check their email and browse the Web on their laptops and wireless devices, all for free. Users are simply required to agree to the terms and conditions upon use, after which they can freely use the Web in the setting of Hico's successfully restored downtown shopping area.

Hico's Free WiFi Program is one of many recent improvements that the Hico Chamber of Commerce, Hico's Economic Development Corporation, and the City of Hico have focused on in the downtown area. These efforts are part of the community's strategy to become a weekend getaway hotspot for tourists driving from Dallas, Fort Worth, Waco, or Austin.

3.8 Organization and Funding

Involvement by a broad representation of the communities, including a good representation of business owners, is necessary to sustain a meaningful economic development work plan. Plus, a large pool of volunteers prevents burnout, which is always a risk when a small group of willing folks try to handle everything. This also makes the case for why, with limited resources and fewer folks in a rural county, a combined effort between the cities and county is important. The first step toward a renewed countywide effort will be generating more interest in serving on a committee; the focus groups organized by CAPCOG for this planning effort included many people with good ideas and enthusiasm, but the business community was under represented. Once the committee is in place, subcommittees should be charged with specific tasks based on the four recommended focus areas. For best results, all four should not be taken on at the same time; instead, the focus should be on the top two priorities based on current trends that will best contribute to momentum. The first project that succeeds will build tremendous momentum for subsequent and ongoing activities. For example, telecommunications services are a key aspect of infrastructure and the foundation to the growth of small and home-based businesses. GVTC has already indicated its interest in the county by building a complete digital network for Blanco with intentions of serving Johnson City at some point; a small committee including business owners should be assigned to work directly with representatives of GVTC. Also, embarking on a county branding effort could be done rather quickly and could be the cornerstone of more coordination across the county. In selecting a workable brand for the county, committee members should focus on being authentic instead of being unique and on choosing a brand that reflects desires to build a vibrant and growing community while also preserving the county's heritage and small-town country appeal, and leveraging the natural assets found in the area.

After having first completed the initial task set before the countywide committee, efforts can then be focused toward the better execution of strategies that are of mutual interest to residents throughout the county. As part of these efforts, specific metrics and time-bound objectives should be established to ensure that progress is made and that resources are being applied effectively.

A decent amount of hotel occupancy tax revenue is generated annually and should be focused toward a robust economic development effort to bring in visitors. As efforts to boost tourism activity become successful, public revenue from hotel occupancy taxes can be expected to strengthen, which can then be reinvested toward other initiatives. Over time, this approach can serve as a cornerstone of long-term economic development for the county and its individual communities; however, the success of these efforts can easily be limited by communities' or local organizations' unwillingness to cooperate with one another in efforts that benefit the entire county.

Potential funding sources for streetscaping include direct investment of hotel occupancy taxes, the establishment of a public improvement district (PID), local private sponsorship, some economic development funding, and TxDOT programs. A PID is merely an organized way for a group of property owners to decide on an equitable assessment based on a reasonable budget and ask the city to make that assessment for a designated use. Another tool typically used in downtowns as a means for generating revenue is tax increment financing (TIF). A TIF generates revenue from the incremental increases in property tax revenue when development or redevelopment occurs; a TIF becomes feasible when a significant amount of investment is imminent or predictable; however, that investment can come from a few large projects or many small ones. Again, a budget must be used to define the intended amount and use of revenue generated.

To summarize, the organization of a strong committee can begin achieving results without a full-time economic development person at the county level, but the committee's work must be integrated with an agreement among the cities for a unified approach on specific strategies, with the most obvious being a marketing and outreach effort.

Chapter 4—Future Conditions

4.1 Future Population and Employment

The population of Blanco County based on the 2010 U.S. Census was 10,497. For the past three decades, population in Blanco County has been increasing at an annual rate of between 2 and 3.5 percent per year, a rate greater than that for the state as a whole but less than the growth rate of the core urban counties of Hays, Travis, and Williamson. The population projections, as provided by the Texas State Data Center (TSDC), show an increase of more than 6,400 persons between 2010 and 2040 for Blanco County, which represents a 61 percent change. To analyze the future roadway network, it was necessary to determine the socioeconomic characteristics of the county. The future population and employment estimates provide a basis for understanding the socioeconomic conditions expected in Blanco County. The future transportation needs are based on growth patterns and distribution of population and employment throughout the county.

The 2005 base year estimates for existing socioeconomic data were established on information provided by TSDC. **Table 4.1** illustrates the TSDC base year data.

Table 4.1. Blanco County 2005 Base Year Estimates.

Demographics (2005 Base Year)	
Population	9,363
Households	4,309
Employment (2005 Base Year)	
Basic Employment	948
Retail Employment	528
Service Employment	617
Education Employment	251
Total Employment	2,344

With a projected population of 16,900 persons for Blanco County by 2040, it is expected that residential growth will increase along the transportation corridors leading to Blanco County from Comal, Hays, Burnet, and Travis Counties as they are upgraded, and within the city limits and extra-territorial jurisdictions of the cities of Blanco and Johnson City. **Figure 4.1** represents the results of the population and employment density for 2005, and **Figure 4.2** shows the estimated population and employment density for the 2040 design year.

Future estimates of the total employment for Blanco County were based on the 2005 base year population-to-employment ratio and the population projections under the TSDC 1.0 migration scenario. It is expected that the population-to-employment ratio in Blanco County will increase marginally over the next 30 years and may decrease slightly if future residents are employed outside of the county. As a result, the population-to-employment ratios for future years show limited growth. Actual employment within the county is projected to grow by less than 2,000 over the next three decades. The employment was further refined by employment sector, as seen in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2. Blanco County 2040 Employment Estimates.

Employment (Design Year 2040)	
Basic Employment	1,535
Retail Employment	938
Service Employment	1,342
Education Employment	448
Total Employment	4,263

As shown in **Figure 4.1** and **Figure 4.2**, the majority of employment growth over the next three decades is expected to primarily occur in Johnson City, the city of Blanco, and along the US 281 and US 290 corridors.

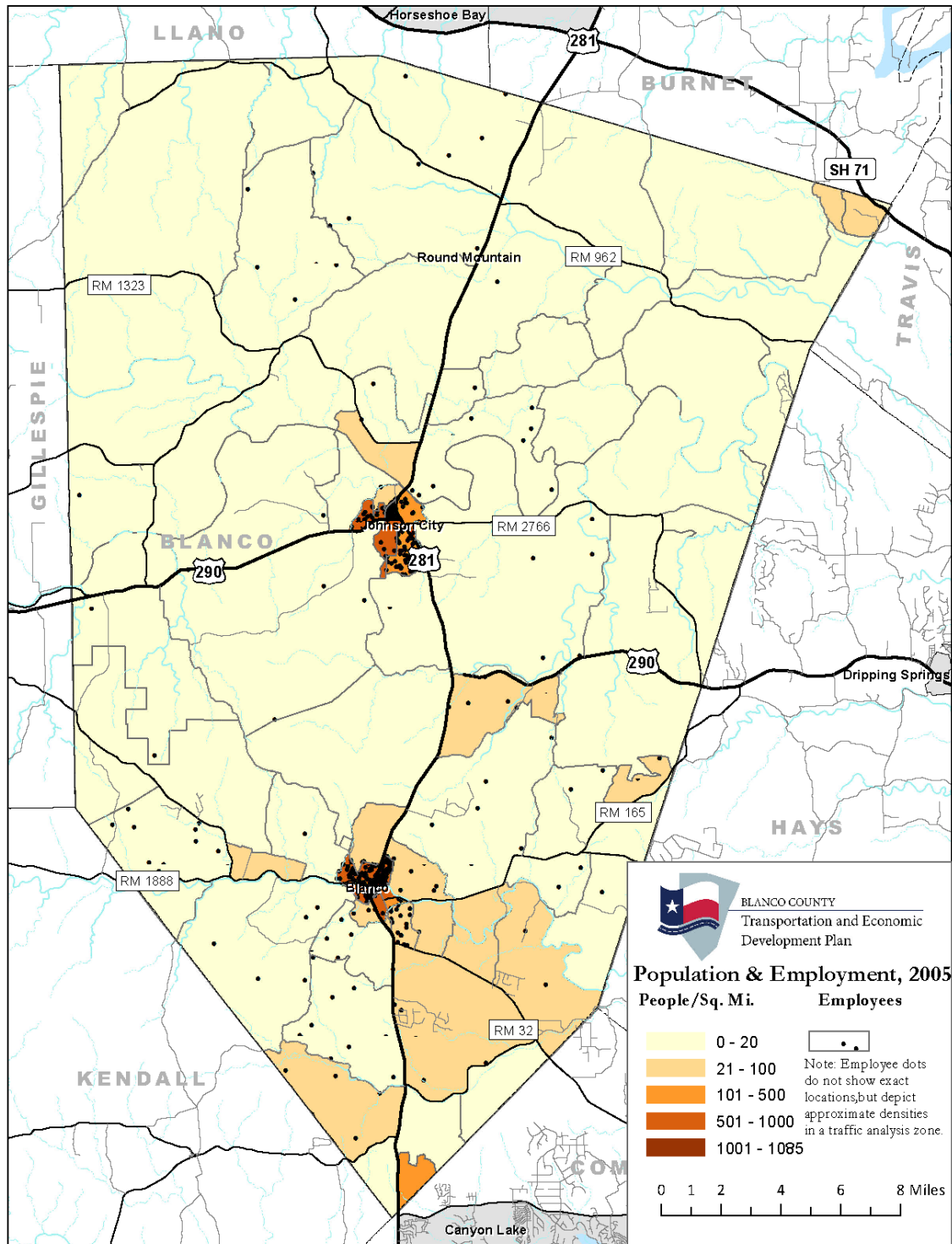


Figure 4.1. 2005 Blanco County Population and Employment Density.

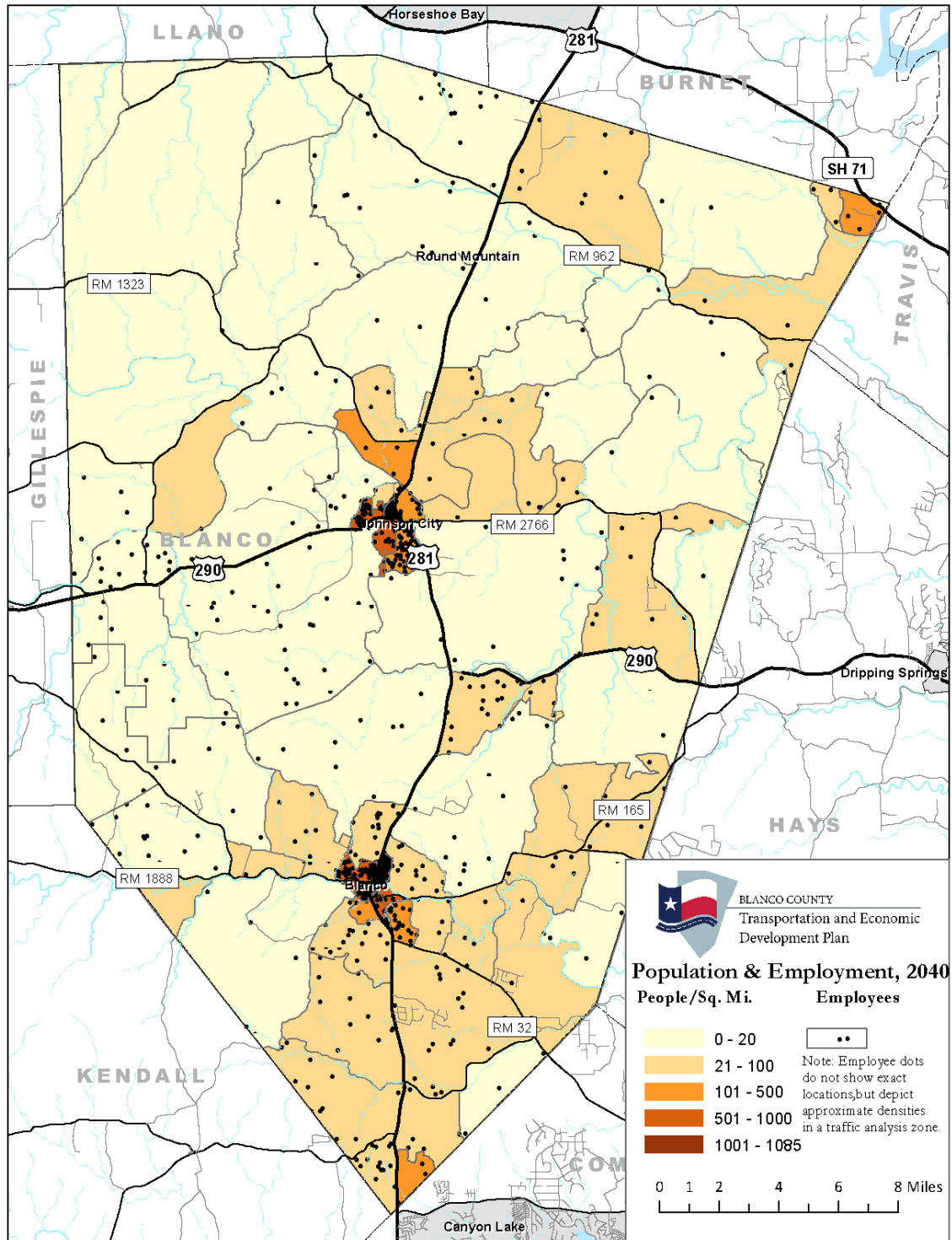


Figure 4.2. Estimated 2040 Blanco County Population and Employment Density.

4.2 Future Land Use

The cities of Blanco and Johnson City both have comprehensive plans that include current and future land use maps (refer to Chapter 2). In order to implement a plan, the governing authority must have the implicit and explicit authority to manage growth (i.e., future land use). Implicitly, the

governing authority's elected officials must agree on a set of policies that reinforce the approved plan. The Johnson City and Blanco comprehensive planning documents represent these municipalities' efforts to define policies that govern future land use. The Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan is a major initiative to shape the future of Blanco County. However, one must be aware that counties' abilities to control land use is extremely limited, especially in comparison to cities.

These planning documents are then implemented via explicit authorities granted to the governing bodies by the State of Texas. For municipalities, that means land use control in the form of zoning, platting, and building codes. These controls are implemented in coordination with the comprehensive plan in an effort to encourage efficient and compatible growth. Counties have less authority, but with a completed major thoroughfare plan such as this document, Blanco County can begin requiring ROW dedication from developers for future transportation corridors. This explicit, but subtle, tool will allow Blanco County to do its part in encouraging an efficient transportation system while significantly reducing the cost of future ROW acquisition.

4.3 Planned and Programmed Transportation Improvements

TxDOT has several transportation improvements that have already been programmed for Blanco County. These planned projects are either underway or will begin in the next few years. These improvements address some of the more immediate transportation needs within the county. Future needs and improvements will be addressed in Chapters 5 and 6. **Table 4.3** lists the TxDOT projects for Blanco County.

Table 4.3. TxDOT Planned and Programmed Projects for Blanco County.

TxDOT Planned Roadway Repairs/Replacements			
Location	Issues	Planned Improvements	TxDOT Project Year
US 281 (Burnet Co. Line to US 290 in Johnson City)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Mill, seal, & overlay	2013
RM 2721 (FM 1320 to Gillespie County line)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Level-up & seal coat	2015
SH 71 (Northeast corner of Blanco County.)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Seal Coat	2014
US 281 (Comal County line to just south of FM 32)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Level-up & seal coat	2015
US 290 at Rocky Creek	Bridge condition and design	Replace bridge and approaches	2013
TxDOT Planned Roadway Expansions/Operational Improvements			
Location	Issues	Planned Improvements	TxDOT Project Year
US 281 (FM 32 to Loma Ranch Rd.)	Traffic congestion/ mobility problems	Upgrade to Super 2	2013
RM 2766 (FM 3232 to US 281 in Johnson City)	Inadequate pavement width (primary road access to Pedernales Falls SP from J.C.)	Provide additional paved surface width	2015
RM 3232 (FM 2766 to US 290)	Inadequate pavement width (primary access road to Pedernales Falls SP from US 290)	Provide additional paved surface width	2015
TxDOT Planned Safety Related Improvements			
Location	Issues	Planned Improvements	TxDOT Project Year
RM 2766	Damaged and inadequate guardrail along roadway	Guardrail and safety, treat fixed objects	2015

Chapter 5—Travel Demand Modeling

Following the study of the existing conditions of an area, the next step in a transportation planning process involves analysis of the information to estimate future transportation demands. The travel demand model serves as an important tool during the analysis of the future transportation system. Its primary role is to forecast future vehicular trips and then distribute them onto the county network of roadways to estimate future roadway level of service. This section provides an overview of the modeling procedure used to develop and evaluate the existing and future network performance as well as the travel demand model results for the 2040 forecast year.

5.1 Model Development

To develop the base model, the team relied heavily on data provided by TxDOT and TTI. The data provided included the definition of 91 internal traffic analysis zones (TAZs), relatively small geographic zones used for analysis of travel activity, and 19 external traffic nodes to represent traffic entering into the county from the exterior boundary.

Traffic Analysis Zones

Socioeconomic data were developed to include various categories and allocated to TAZs. The TAZs are geographical areas, polygons, generally bounded by a roadway network, natural barrier, or geographic feature. The Blanco County model consists of two zone types: internal and external. Internal zones are those zones within the study area, and external zones are placed along roadways entering and leaving Blanco County. **Figure 5.1** shows the TAZ boundaries developed for this study. There are a total of 110 zones, including 91 internal and 19 external zones. **Figure 5.1** provides a map of the TAZs for the Blanco County travel demand model.

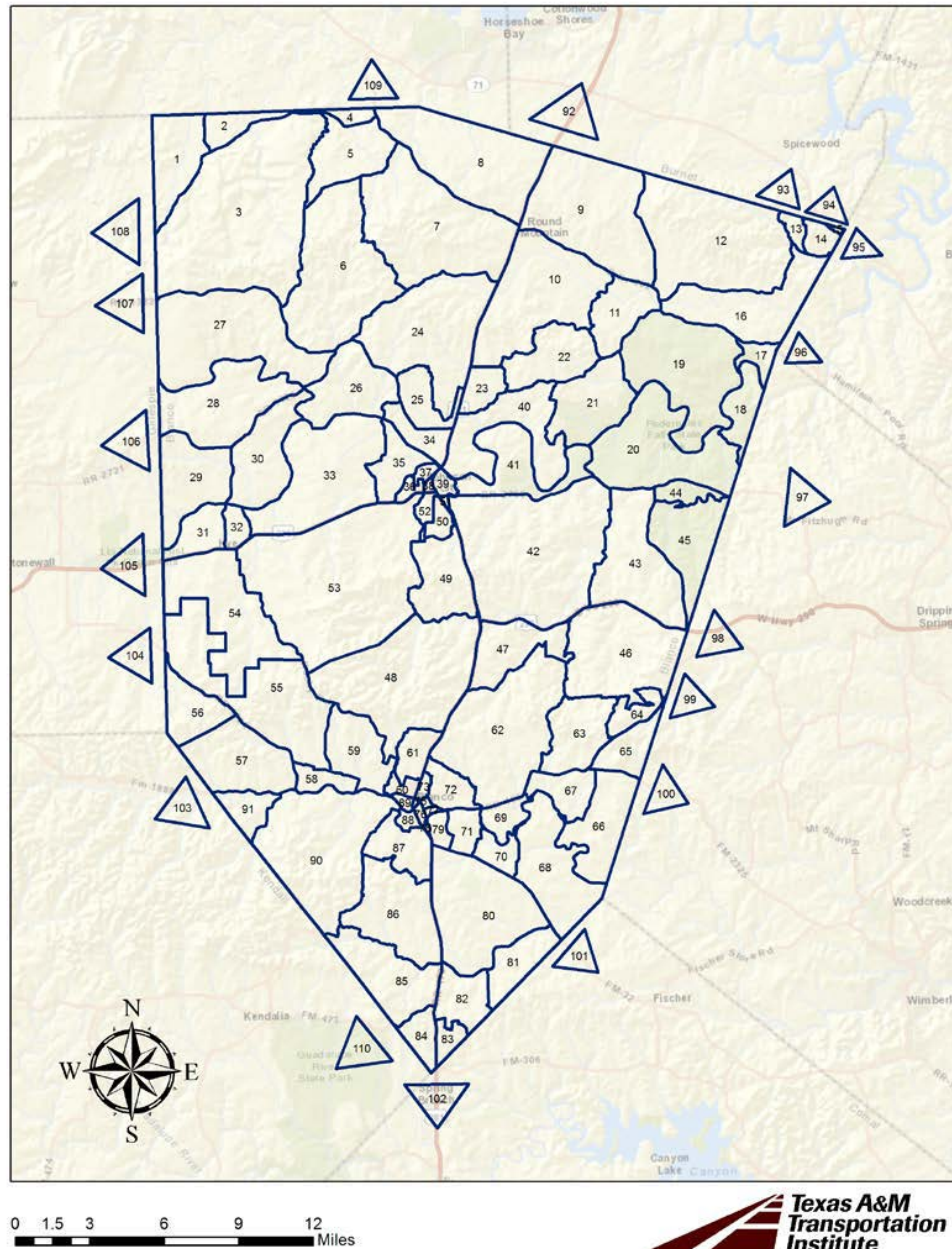


Figure 5.1. Traffic Analysis Zones for Blanco County Travel Demand Model.

Most urban travel demand models follow a four-step process that includes mode choice (transit, auto, etc.). Since Blanco County currently has limited bus service, the number of trips provided does not make a significant impact on roadway capacity. Therefore, the travel demand model was developed using the following three-step process:

1. Trip generation: Trip generation is a simple statistical model that projects the number of weekday trips a household will produce, based on household income, number of autos owned, number of workers, and household size.¹ The objective of trip generation is to

¹ Johnston, Robert A. "The Urban Transportation Planning Process." In *The Geography of Urban Transportation*, by Susan Hanson & Susan Giuliano. New York: Guilford Press, 2004.

- estimate the trip productions and trip attractions by trip purpose for each zone and external station in the region. The zonal trip generation estimates for Blanco County were prepared using TxDOT's TripCAL5 trip generation software.
2. Trip distribution: The second step matches trip origins at households (by zone) to trip destinations at employment locations (by zone).² The objective of trip distribution is to determine the origin-destination trip patterns of the trip productions and attractions estimated in the trip generation step. The trip distribution models were performed using TxDOT's ATOM2 software.
 3. Trip assignment: The final step of this travel demand model involves assigning the vehicles to the network of roads.³ The objective of trip assignment is to load the trips onto appropriate links in the roadway network in order to identify levels of roadway congestion.

In order to ensure that the model accurately estimates traffic, a calibration process is needed. The assigned traffic volumes are compared against actual traffic counts for a known year—in this case, 2005. The 2005 roadway network was validated by first comparing the region's assigned vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) to counted VMTs. The results indicated that the overall network assigned VMTs (on the counted links) was slightly larger than 100 percent, which indicated a good match between modeled and observed travel demand. **Table 5.1** provides the region-wide VMT summary.

Table 5.1. Study Area VMT Summary.

Counted VMT	Assigned VMT	Percent of VMT
199,776	200,337	100.28

The final step in the validation process was to examine the model's ability to replicate traffic for each individual roadway network link. As seen in the scattergram in **Figure 5.2**, the diagonal line represents a tight fit, while the values above the line represent an over-assignment and the ones below the line represent an under-assignment. Overall, the graphic indicates a reasonable fit of the individual assigned links for the 2005 Blanco County base year model.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

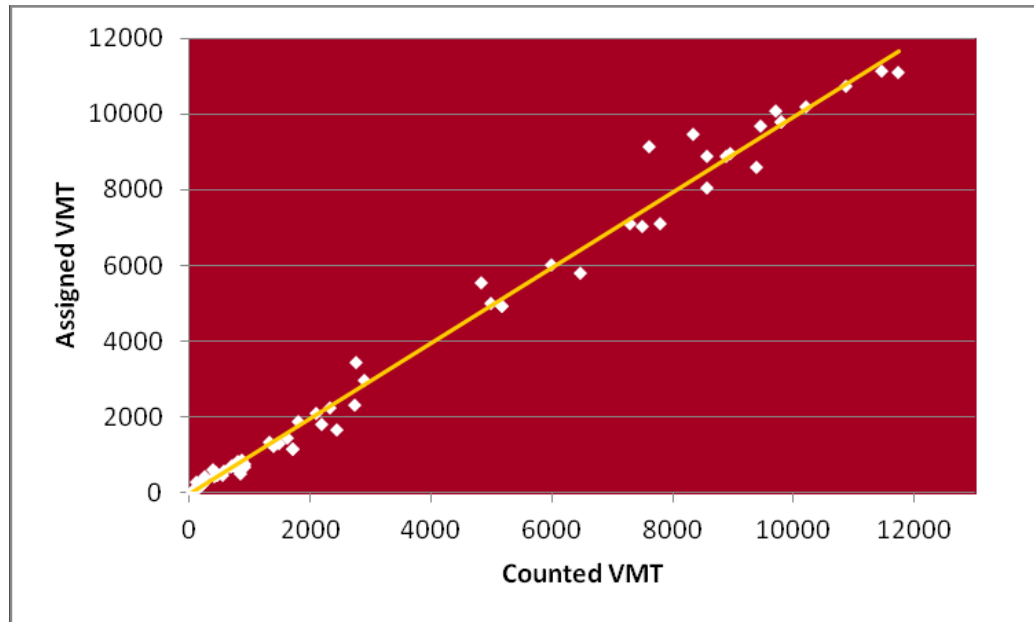


Figure 5.2. Scattergram of Counted VMTs to Assigned VMTs.

Traffic Volume Projections

Based on the 2005 base year assignment results, the assigned total VMTs in the study area were approximately 593,895 miles per day, while the estimated vehicle hours traveled (VHTs) were 12,791 hours per day. The average daily resulting speed on the network was 45.84 miles per hour. The resulting 2005 traffic assignment volumes for the study area, as well as the volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratios (the amount of vehicles on the road divided by the capacity of the roadway infrastructure) are shown in **Figure 5.3**.

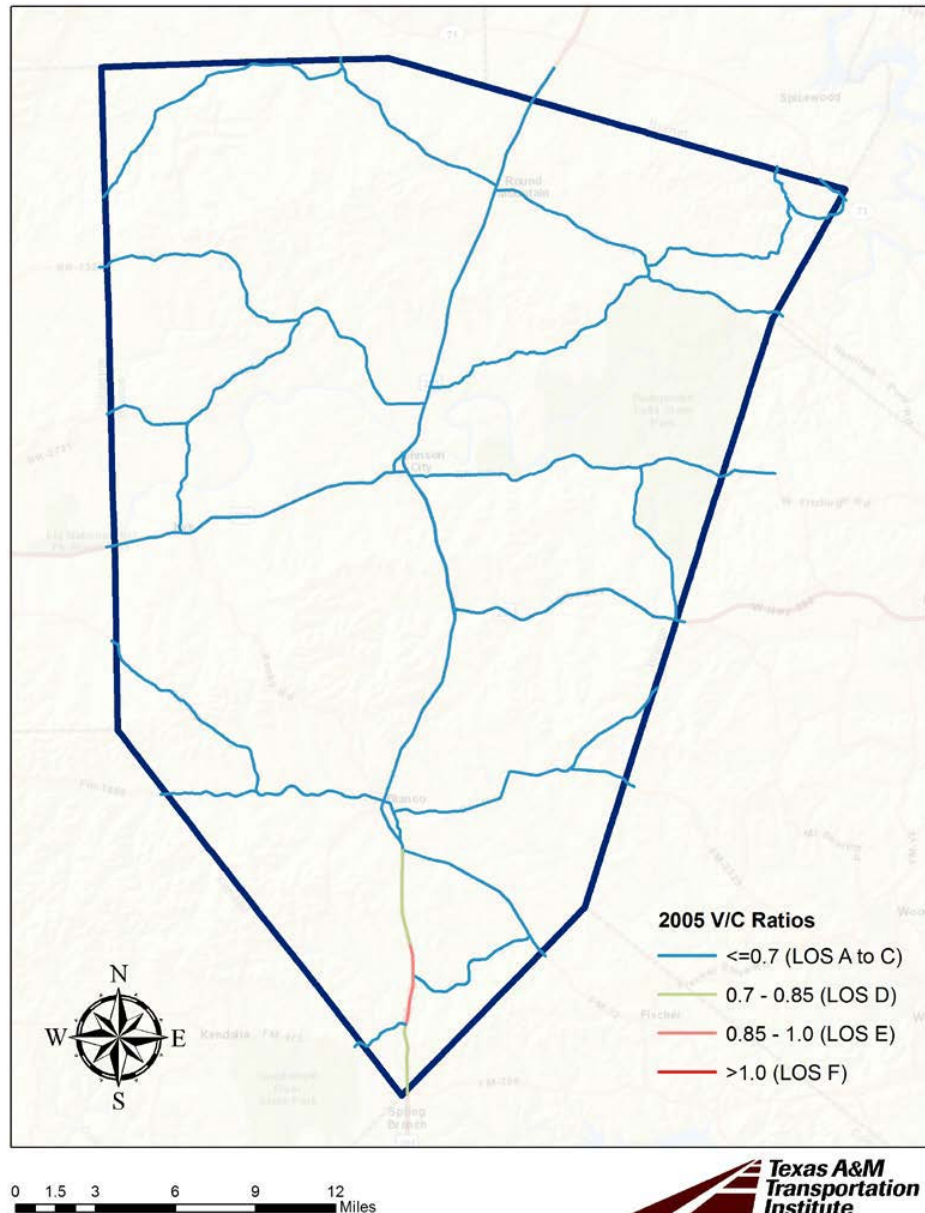


Figure 5.3. 2005 Modeled Blanco County Traffic Volumes and Level of Service (LOS).

5.2 Evaluation of Future Needs

Once the 2005 base year travel demand model was developed and validated, the model was used to evaluate the transportation needs for the 2040 planning horizon. To achieve this, two different model scenarios using the 2040 forecast year demographic database were developed:

- Scenario I—No-build model scenario: The network system was evaluated without making any adjustments or improvements to the 2005 base year network under the 2040 projected population and employment growth.
- Scenario II—Improved US 281 scenario: The network system was evaluated after improving the capacity of US 281 south of the city of Blanco to the Comal County line (with a change from a two-lane to four-lane roadway) under the 2040 projected population and employment growth.

Table 5.2 presents the traffic assignment summary results for both Scenarios I and II as well as the base year model for comparison.

Table 5.2. Forecast Year Traffic Assignment Summary Results.

Statistics	2005 Base Year	2040 Scenario I No Build	2040 Scenario II Improved US 281
Total Assigned VMT	593,895	836,065	835,753
VMT/Person	63.43	49.42	49.4
VMT/Household	158.8	114.75	114.71
Average Input Network Speed	46.43	45.57	45.56
Total Assigned VHT Using Input Speeds	12,791	18,348	18,342
Average Resulting Network Speed	45.85	44.1	45.16
Total Assigned VHT Using Resulting Speeds	12,954	18,958	18,505
Average Trip Length for All Trip Purposes	10.21	9.59	9.59
Capacity VMT	2,692,027	2,715,185	2,813,203
Assigned VMT/Capacity VMT (V/C ratio)	22.06%	30.79%	29.71%

As shown in **Figure 5.3**, there were no roadway segments in the base year model with LOS F (forced traffic flow with significant delays). When the 2040 no-build scenario (Scenario I) was applied, US 281 south of the city of Blanco experienced congestion, with a V/C ratio exceeding 1, resulting in LOS F. The Scenario I traffic volume results are shown in **Figure 5.4**.

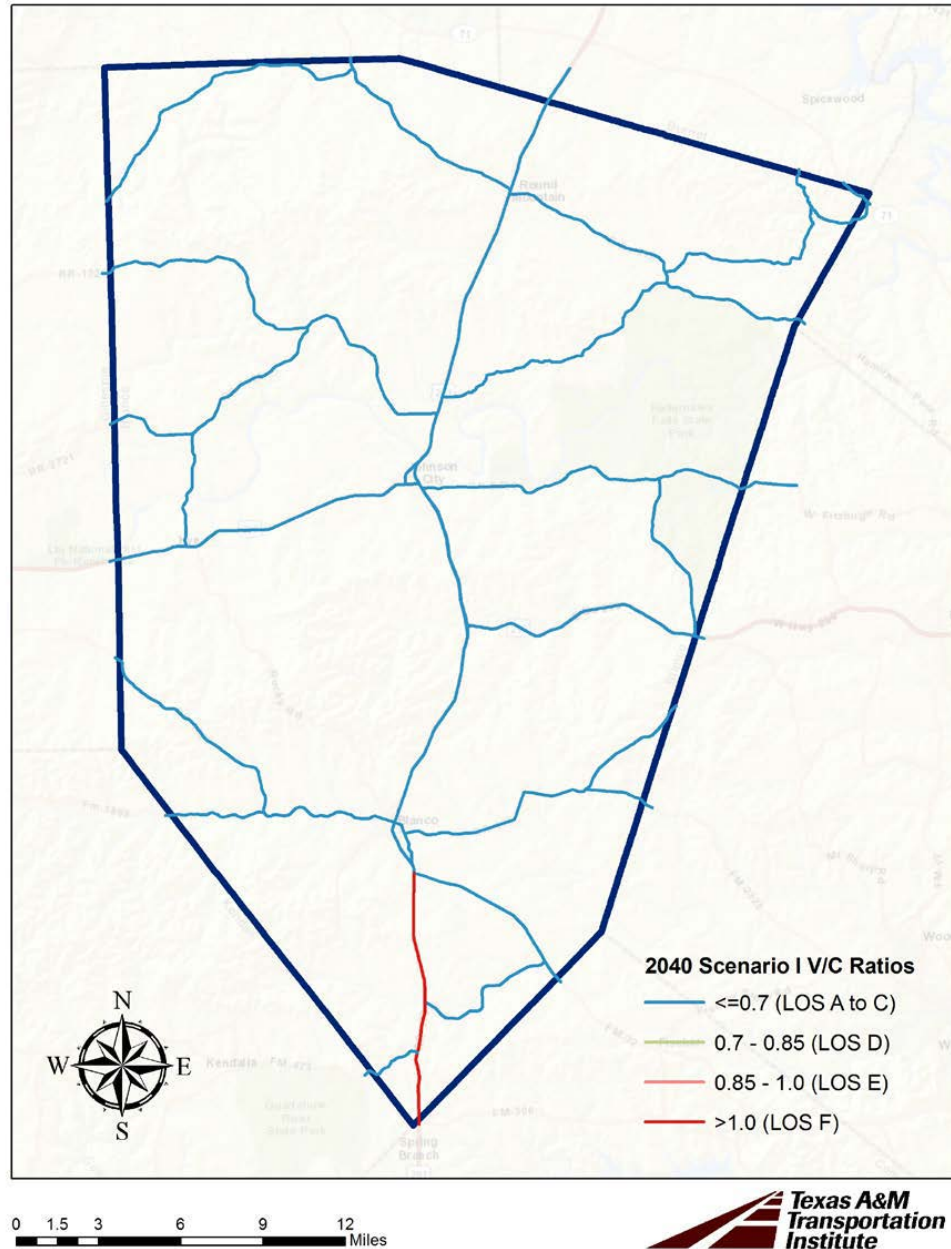


Figure 5.4. Blanco County Model Traffic Volumes and LOS—Scenario I: No Build.

However, under Scenario II, the congestion on the southern portion of US 281 was eliminated. In Scenario II, the southern part of US 281 was improved by adding lanes to the roadway segment. The modeling results for Scenario II showed that no roadway segments exceeded a V/C ratio of 1 or had LOS F, and all roadway segments had LOS A to C. The Scenario II traffic volume results are shown in **Figure 5.5**.

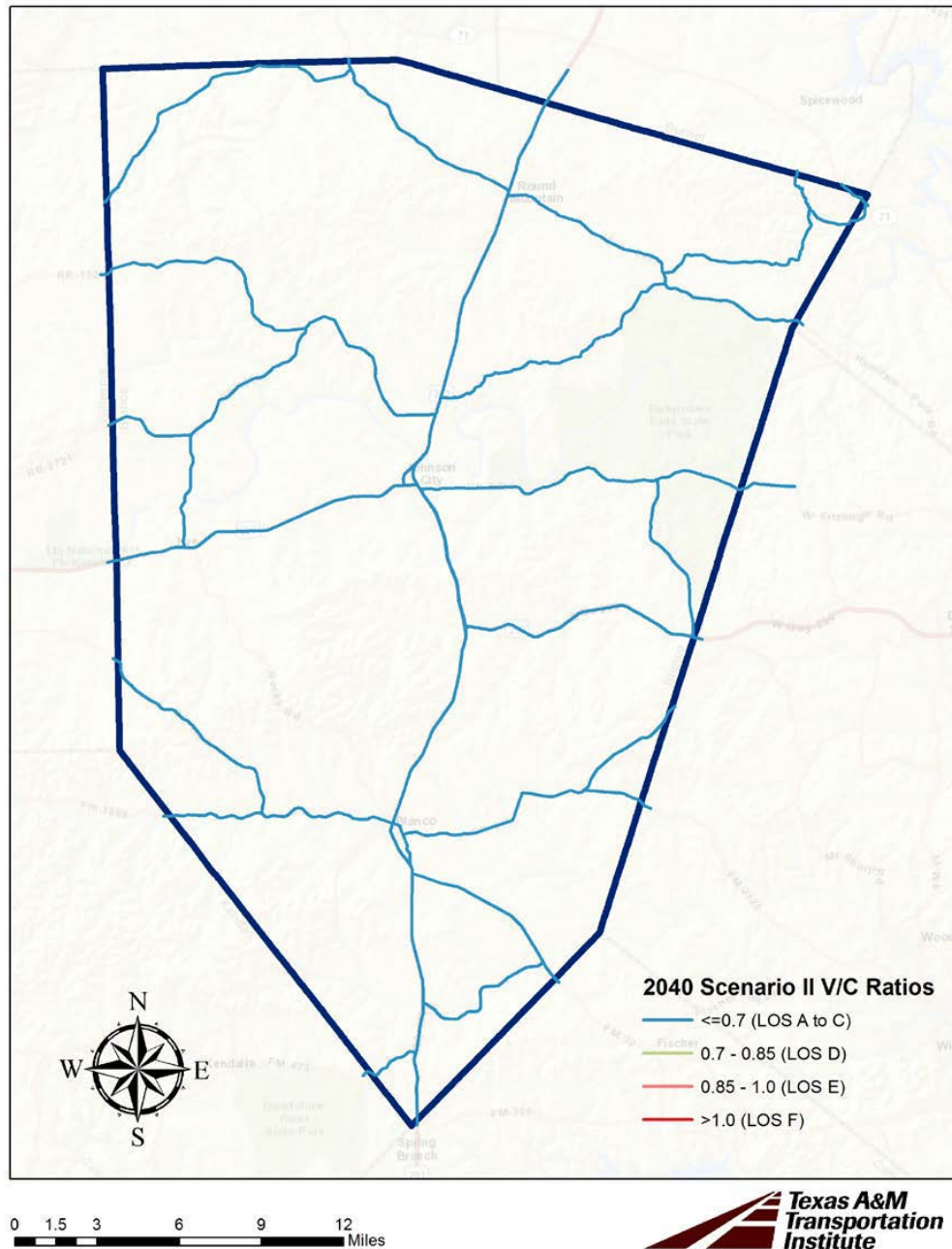


Figure 5.5. Blanco County Model Traffic Volumes and LOS—Scenario II: Improved US 281.

Chapter 6—Transportation and Economic Development Plan

6.1 The Public Involvement Process

Development of the Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan always had a primary guiding principal: to be developed by Blanco County, for Blanco County. From the start of the project, the need for community outreach was recognized, and a process was developed.

Advisory Committee

An advisory committee was appointed by the Blanco County Commissioner's Court to guide the planning process, share information, and implement the public involvement plan. The committee met regularly throughout the development of the Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan. As an extension of the advisory committee, a focus group was established to solely concentrate on economic development issues and strategies (refer to Chapter 3), which were integrated into the plan to provide a more comprehensive transportation blueprint for the county.

The advisory committee was comprised of county residents, elected officials and administrators from the cities of Blanco and Johnson City, local business owners, independent school district representatives, PEC delegates, and local economic development corporation (EDC) and chamber of commerce representatives.

The advisory committee was tasked with providing oversight for the planning process and ensuring that the community's vision was reflected in the final plan. The committee completed the following activities:

- Developed study goals.
- Provided background on development patterns, trends, and future needs for member organizations.
- Provided comments on the public involvement plan.
- Provided feedback on public information materials prepared for public meetings and outreach events.
- Provided feedback on or vetting of assumptions, such as the allocation of future population and employment growth within the county.
- Participated in mapping exercises to identify issues and to propose recommendations for transportation improvements.
- Reviewed and provided comments on the draft plan.
- Developed and supported the final plan adoption process.

Members of the advisory committee included:

- Bob McClung, City of Blanco, Mayor Pro Tem.
- Candy Cargill Wenzel, Hill Country Real Estate.
- Matthew Zuehl Hernden, Blanco ISD, Board Chair.
- Ralph J. de Leon, Blanco Country Inn.
- Bret Perrenond, Becker Vineyards.
- Jasmin Arpin, The Preserve at Walnut Springs, Marketing Director.
- Maggie Smith, Blanco EDC.

- David Dockery, Johnson City, Administrator.
- Ralph Moss, Johnson City, Mayor.
- Tessa Doeberman, PEC, Economic Development.
- Lyle Nelson, CARTS.
- Mike Yerrington, Citizen.
- Larry Hauptrief, Johnson City P&Z.
- Howard Lyons, TxDOT Area Engineer.
- John McClintock, Citizen.
- Dawn Capra, Citizen.
- David Shanley, Superintendent, Johnson City ISD.
- J. T. (Jack) Twilley, Citizen.
- Retta Martin, Blanco Streetscape Committee.
- Joe Stewart, Century 21 Realtors.

Blanco County Questionnaire

As noted, a specific goal of the Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan included gathering residents' opinions and thoughts about the future growth of Blanco County. In May 2013, 182 Blanco County residents completed the Blanco County Questionnaire. The questionnaires were received through a Web page and paper copies distributed in public meetings, local community facilities, and businesses. **Appendix A** includes a summary of the results, which were used in developing transportation and economic development proposals for the plan.

Public Meetings

In addition to gathering input through the questionnaire, two public meetings were held to inform residents about the status of the plan and provide them an opportunity to comment on the work thus far. The first meeting, held April 25, 2013, at the PEC Auditorium in Johnson City, presented information to the public about the existing conditions in Blanco County and kicked off the questionnaire process. A total of 24 people attended this public event. At the meeting, the attendees had the opportunity to view several exhibits including:

- TxDOT Functional Classification Map—provided the functional classifications of major roadways in Blanco County.
- 2005 Annual Average Daily Traffic—provided counts that would be used for the base year (2005) traffic modeling.
- Percent Trucks Map 2009—provided percent of truck traffic utilizing the state roadway system.
- TxDOT Roadway Projects for Blanco County 2013–2015.
- County Topology/Hydrology Maps.
- Crash Injuries and Fatalities 2007–2012.
- Blanco State of the County Display—provided population and employment projections, commuting patterns, and tourism statistics.
- Population and Employment Allocation Maps—based on advisory committee exercise results.
- Identified Roadway Mobility and Safety Issues Maps—based on advisory committee exercise results.
- Identified Economic Development Issues Map—based on focus group input.

A public comment station was set up for the meeting to allow the attendees an opportunity to receive and complete the questionnaire. An exercise map of Blanco County was also available where residents could comment on the transportation and economic development issues identified by both the advisory committee and focus group. Several comments were collected on the map.

The second public meeting was held September 26, 2013, at the Old Blanco County Courthouse in the city of Blanco. Approximately 20 people attended this meeting. The same exhibits as the April meeting were on display along with additional exhibits including:

- Population and Employment 2005 Map.
- Projected Population and Employment 2040 Map.
- Existing Volume/Capacity (TTI Model) Map.
- Projected Volume/Capacity 2040 (TTI Model) Map.
- Existing Daily Traffic Volumes (TxDOT 2011) Map.
- Collisions (2009 & 2010) Map.
- Proposed Transportation Safety Improvements Map—based on advisory committee and public recommendations, and TxDOT projects.
- Proposed Thoroughfare Improvements Map—based on advisory committee and public recommendations, and TxDOT projects.
- Proposed Bicycle/Pedestrian, Tourism Signage and CARTS Improvements Map—based on advisory committee, focus group, public, and CARTS recommendations.

At this meeting, a presentation was made that provided an overview of the advisory committee and public involvement process, population and employment projections through 2040, modeling results, recommended transportation improvement projects for the county, economic development recommendations, and next steps for the final plan review and approval process. At this meeting, copies of the first draft plan were made available to the attendees for their review. Comment forms were also distributed at the meeting to garner further citizen input and to assess the project priorities of the attendees.

As a follow-up, the draft plan was updated to include the additional comments and recommendations provided by the citizens that attended the second public meeting. To further expand the opportunity for community input, presentations of the revised draft plan were made to the Johnson City Council on November 5th, and the Blanco County Commissioner's Court and the Blanco County City Council on November 12th.

6.2 Infrastructure Needs Assessment

An integral part of developing an effective plan is assessing the needs of the county. The transportation requirements of the county may also differ depending on one's perspective. Municipal, county, and TxDOT technical staff may recognize needs differently than the general public. To ensure a comprehensive needs assessment, the Blanco County Commissioner's Court carefully selected the advisory committee members to represent a broad spectrum of county residents with diversified areas of expertise and knowledge. The advisory committee, with input from citizens that attended the public meetings, developed a list of recommended transportation improvements along with suggested economic-development-related enhancements, as shown in **Table 6.1**.

The transportation model provides valuable information about how the system will operate as various improvements are made or not made. Using the no-build scenario (see Chapter 5), planners can see where the worst conditions occur. Inputs into the model can also be adjusted and will result in different outcomes. For example, an increase in truck traffic percentages will produce a different result than using passenger auto inputs. As conditions change, the model can be updated to reflect that change. As the population and employment of Blanco County grows, more schools will be built, more goods will be transported, and more business will be conducted within the county. To maintain economic vitality as well as the quality of life of citizens, the transportation plan must be updated.

Moreover, the transportation model shows which roads will need expansion in the future. This allows the county to proactively plan for growth and expansion. The county may require

developers to donate ROWs. This plan gives the Commissioner's Court the authority to do so. Identifying infrastructure needs assures that environmental quality concerns can be avoided or mitigated when planning future transportation improvements.

6.3 Recommended Transportation and Economic Development Improvements

The proposed improvements, as shown in **Table 6.1**, were categorized as follows: TxDOT planned projects for Blanco County, advisory committee (AC)/public recommended projects, and CARTS recommended transit service improvements. Then under each of these major categories, the planned and proposed improvements were listed according to the following project classifications:

- Roadway Repairs/Replacements.
- Roadway Expansions/Operational Improvements.
- Safety-Related Improvements.
- Pedestrian and Other Infrastructure Projects.
- Tourism Signage Enhancements.
- Transit Service Improvements.

Within each section of **Table 6.1**, a specific location is described, the identified issue is explained, a planned or proposed improvement is offered, and, frequently, an additional comment is included to cross reference to another related proposal or to clarify jurisdictional responsibility for the recommended project.

Table 6.1. Blanco County Recommended and Planned Transportation and Economic Development Improvements.

SOURCES OF RECOMMENDED AND PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS			
<i>Blanco County Advisory Committee appointed by the Blanco County Commissioners Court</i>	<i>Citizen Input from the April and September 2013 Public Meetings in Johnson City and Blanco, and Questionnaire Results</i>	<i>TxDOT Austin District Planned Roadway Projects for Blanco County 2013–2015</i>	<i>Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS)</i>

TXDOT PLANNED ROADWAY REPAIRS/REPLACEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	TXDOT PROJECT LET YEAR
(a) US 281 (Burnet Co. Line to US 290 in Johnson City)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Mill, seal, & overlay	2013
(b) RM 2721 (FM 1320 to Gillespie Co. Line)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Level-up & seal coat	2015
(c) SH 71 (northeast corner of Blanco Co.)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Seal coat	2014
(d) US 281 (Comal Co. Line to just south of FM 32)	Roadway surface maintenance issue	Level-up & seal coat	2015
(e) US 290 at Rocky Creek	Bridge condition and design	Replace bridge & approaches	2013

AC/PUBLIC RECOMMENDED ROADWAY REPAIRS/REPLACEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	OTHER COMMENTS
(a) US 281 south side of Johnson City	Left turn and southbound maneuvering for businesses	Reconfigure median design and access points	Johnson City and TxDOT coordinated project
(b) US 281 & FM 32	Difficult intersection/poor design	Redesign intersection to improve crossover flow	Refer to TxDOT Expansions (a) US 281; TxDOT project
(c) SH 281 and 4th Street in Downtown Blanco	Can't turn right by PEC Building—too tight for trucks	Reconfigure street design to allow right turn maneuver for truck traffic	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project

TXDOT PLANNED ROADWAY EXPANSIONS/OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	TXDOT PROJECT LET YEAR
(a) US 281 (FM 32 to Loma Ranch Rd)	Traffic congestion/mobility problems	Upgrade to Super 2	2013
(b) RM 2766 (FM 3232 to US 281 in Johnson City)	Inadequate pavement width (primary road access to Pedernales Falls State Park from Johnson City)	Provide additional paved surface width for shoulders	2015
(c) RM 3232 (FM 2766 to US 290)	Inadequate pavement width (primary access road to Pedernales Falls State Park from US 290)	Provide additional paved surface width for shoulders	2015

AC/PUBLIC RECOMMENDED ROADWAY EXPANSIONS/OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	OTHER COMMENTS
(a) US 281 south of Blanco River, south of first traffic light	Congestion due to reverting from two lanes to one lane	Construct four lanes past intersection of US 281 and FM 32	Refer to TxDOT Expansions (a) US 281; TxDOT project
(b) US 281 through the city of Blanco	Slow traffic and congestion through the city	Study the traffic mobility and economic impact of constructing a US 281 Bypass on the east side of Blanco	Refer to AC/P Expansions (e) US 281—redesign and upgrade of US 281 may alleviate the need for a bypass; City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(c) FM 306 and FM 473	Lack of access between FM 306 in Kendall County and FM 473 in Blanco County	Provide connector road between FM 306 and FM 473	Blanco County and TxDOT coordinated project
(d) US 281 (Burnet Co. Line to US 290 in Johnson City)	Traffic flow and left turn problems	Reconstruct US 281 to four-lane divided highway	TxDOT project
(e) US 281 (US 290 to Comal Co. Line)	Traffic flow and left turn problems	Reconstruct US 281 to four-lane divided highway	TxDOT project
(f) US 290 (Gillespie Co. Line to S Avenue G in Johnson City)	Access and left turn problem for wineries and inadequate roadway width	Reconstruct US 290 to four-lane divided highway	TxDOT project
(g) US 290 (US 281 to Hays Co. Line)	Left turn problems and narrow bridges (two) over McCall Creek	Reconstruct US 290 to four-lane divided highway and replace bridges	TxDOT project
(h) US 281 and US 290 south of Johnson City	Interchange problems and the traffic conflicts between US 281 and US 290	Construct grade separation (overpass) at US 290 & US 281 S	TxDOT project

AC/PUBLIC RECOMMENDED SAFETY-RELATED IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	OTHER COMMENTS
(a) US 281 North of the Comal Co. Line	Dangerous turns at entry to Lake of the Hills Subdivision	Provide additional turn lane for subdivision as part of proposed upgrade to four-lane divided highway	Refer to AC/P Expansions (e) US 281; TxDOT project
(b) Loop 163 in Blanco	No shoulder on Loop 163	Provide shoulders on Loop 163	City of Blanco project
(c) Main Street (US 281) in Blanco	Traffic on Main Street too fast through town	Conduct traffic speed study to determine appropriate speed limit	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(d) 4th & Pecan in Blanco	No traffic light to regulate traffic flow	Traffic analysis at 4th & Pecan to determine if a traffic light is needed	City of Blanco project
(e) Terri Ln & RR 1623 in Blanco	Increasing traffic problem around high school campus with no traffic light	Traffic analysis at the intersection of Terri Ln & FM 1623 to determine if a traffic light is needed to regulate traffic	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(f) Terri Ln & RR 1623 in Blanco	Conflict issues between pedestrians and traffic, especially during school events at the football and baseball fields	Provide protected pedestrian crossing east of intersection	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(g) Terri Ln & RR 1623 in Blanco	Sun interferes with visibility of school crossing warning signal at high school on RR 1623	Analyze the location and glare factor on the signal light to determine if relocation or technical adjustments will resolve issue	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(h) Rocky Road/7th Street in front of middle school campus in Blanco	Inadequate shoulder width and in some places no shoulder in front of middle school	Provide new shoulder and widen existing shoulder in front of middle school campus	City of Blanco and Blanco County coordinated street improvement project
(i) South of the intersection of US 281 & US 290	Passing lanes too short	Re-evaluate passing lane design to determine if passing lane extension is needed	Refer to AC/P Expansions (e) US 281; TxDOT project
(j) US 290 and US 281 intersection between Blanco and Johnson City	Inadequate directional signage for US 290 Eastbound	Install additional directional signage on US 281 far in advance of intersection with US 290	TxDOT project
(k) FM 165 at border between Hays & Blanco Counties	Blind hill causes frequent accidents at driveways	Provide warning signage along FM 165	TxDOT project
(l) US 290 at border between Hays & Blanco Counties	Cedar growth creates poor visibility and leads to accidents (maintenance issue)	Periodic trimming of cedars along right-of-way to improve visibility	Programmed TxDOT maintenance
(m) US 281 through Johnson City (starting at 281 Loop Rd N)	Speed of traffic too high, lots of truck traffic	Conduct traffic speed study to determine appropriate speed limit	Johnson City and TxDOT coordinated project
(n) US 290 through Johnson City	Speed of traffic too high, numerous accidents	Redesign road with traffic-calming elements to slow traffic down	Johnson City and TxDOT coordinated project

AC/PUBLIC RECOMMENDED SAFETY-RELATED IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	OTHER COMMENTS
(o) US 281 and RR 1323	Poor nighttime visibility where you turn	Install street lighting and/or reflective markers to clearly show intersection at night	TxDOT project
(p) RR 1323 to RR 1320	Inadequate warning signage for quarry entrance for traffic	Provide warning signage for quarry entrance	TxDOT project
(q) Cypress Mill Rd and 3M Ranch Rd	Inadequate warning signage for new subdivision entrance for traffic	Provide warning signage for new subdivision entrance for both east and westbound traffic	Blanco County project
(r) US 281 north of Stribling Rd	No shoulders	Provide shoulder along US 281	Refer to AC/P Expansions (d) US 281; TxDOT project
(s) US 281 northward from Blanco River through Blanco	Traffic speed too high	Construct traffic-calming features (islands, medians, etc.) on US 281	Refer to AC/P Expansions (b) US 281 and AC/P Expansions (e) US 281; City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(t) FM 1623 and River Run in Blanco	Blind spot on River Road for oncoming eastbound traffic; excessive speed on FM 1623 eastbound before River Road	Identify source of blind spot to determine remedy; conduct traffic speed study on FM 1623	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(u) 13th and US 281 in Blanco	Inadequate school zone warning signage	Provide more visible signage for elementary school traffic zone	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(v) US 281 & 163 Loop northbound to Blanco Ave	Excessive speed of traffic	Conduct traffic speed study to determine appropriate speed limit	Refer to AC/P Safety (s) US 281; City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(w) US 281 in Blanco at 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 10th, 11th, and 13th Streets	Only one protected pedestrian crossing on US 281	Provide more protected crossings and provide safety islands for pedestrians	Refer to AC/P Safety (s) US 281; City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(x) FM 1323	Cattle guards impede traffic flow	Remove cattle guards from roadway	TxDOT project
(y) County locations: RM 1320 at Pedernales River, RM 2766 at Deer Creek, RM 2766 at Rough Hollow, RM 962 E at Cypress Creek, RM 165 at tributary to Blanco River, RM 1320 at Grape Creek, RM 962 W at N Cypress Creek	Low-water crossings that land lock several residents during heavy rainfall events	Eliminate low-water crossings; elevate and reconstruct roadway sections	TxDOT project in coordination with Blanco County

AC/PUBLIC RECOMMENDED SAFETY-RELATED IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	OTHER COMMENTS
(z) US 281 between Rockin J Ranch/Vaaler Golf and Landon's Crossing	Dangerous turn and merge area at subdivision entries	Provide additional turn lane for southbound US 281 traffic; adjust merge area going northbound on US 281 in front of Landon's Crossing	Refer to AC/P Expansions (e) US 281
(aa) US 281 and Blanco Ave in Blanco	Inappropriate location of directional signage	Move merge sign in front of traffic light at Blanco Ave; paint merge arrows on pavement after bridge also for southbound traffic	City of Blanco and TxDOT coordinated project
(bb) US 290 in Johnson City from N Ave J to N Ave C	Visual obstruction created by utility poles on both sides of US 290	Conduct feasibility study and cost analysis of relocating utility lines and/or placing them underground	Johnson City project in coordination with PEC and TxDOT
(cc) N Nugent Ave from US 281 to US 290 in Johnson City	Excessive truck traffic; N Nugent is not designed to handle 18-wheelers	Conduct truck traffic study to determine if restrictions should be implemented	Johnson City project
(dd) US 290 and Nugent Ave, Avenue G, N LBJ Dr and Avenue C in Johnson City	Inadequate number of protected pedestrian crossings along US 290	Provide protected pedestrian crossings at the designated locations	Johnson City and TxDOT coordinated project
(ee) US 290 and Avenue F in Johnson City	Excessive speeding in order to get through traffic light at Nugent Ave	Install warning/caution light at Avenue F in order to slow traffic as it approaches Nugent Ave intersection	Johnson City and TxDOT coordinated project

TXDOT PLANNED SAFETY-RELATED IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	TXDOT PROJECT LET YEAR
(a) RM 2766	Damaged and inadequate guardrail along roadway	Guardrail & safety, treat fixed objects	2015

AC/PUBLIC RECOMMENDED PEDESTRIAN AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	OTHER COMMENTS
(a) US 281 bridge over Blanco River	No sidewalks for pedestrian and bicycle traffic	Reconstruct/replace bridge to include sidewalks	Refer to AC/P Expansions (e) US 281
(b) US 281 through Blanco	Partial and incomplete sidewalks along US 281	Construct/reconstruct ADA-compliant sidewalks along both sides of US 281	Refer to AC/P Expansions (e) US 281 and AC/P Pedestrian (f) Downtown Blanco Square
(c) US 290 through Johnson City	Partial and incomplete sidewalks along US 290 in Johnson City	Construct/reconstruct ADA-compliant sidewalks along both sides of US 290	Refer to AC/P Expansions (f) US 290 and AC/P Safety (n) US 290 through Johnson City
(d) County locations: FM 1623, FM 1888, FM 1323, FM 2766, and FM 165	No designated bicycle lanes and no route signage	Officially designate roadways as bicycle routes, providing directional and safety signage; analyze current bicycle traffic volume to determine the feasibility of providing bicycle lanes	Blanco County coordination with TxDOT
(e) Downtown Blanco & router to schools (FM 1623 and 13th, 11th, 7th Streets and Mesquite and Cherry Streets)	No sidewalks and bicycle lanes	Add sidewalks and bicycle lanes on primary router to schools	City of Blanco project with TxDOT participation on FM 1623
(f) 4th & Pecan/S, N, and E side of Blanco Square	Inadequate sidewalks and pedestrian crossings; excessive traffic speed	Implement Blanco Streetscape Plan: redesign the corner of 4th & Pecan Streets, reconstruct ADA-compliant sidewalks and crosswalks on the E & S side of the square, and calming of US 281 traffic on the west side of the square (refer to Appendix B)	City of Blanco project in coordination with TxDOT; refer to AC/P Pedestrian (2) US 281 through Blanco; AC/P Expansions (5) US 281; AC/P Safety (23) US 281 in Blanco and AC/P Safety (19) US 281 Northward from Blanco River
(g) Downtown Blanco	Inadequate visitor parking for downtown	Provide designated visitor parking area with convenient pedestrian access to downtown businesses	City of Blanco project
(h) Downtown Johnson City	Inadequate visitor parking for downtown	Provide designated visitor parking area with convenient pedestrian access to downtown businesses	Johnson City project
(i) Downtown Johnson City	Sidewalks in poor condition	Replace/reconstruct ADA-compliant sidewalks throughout courthouse square and southward toward US 290	Johnson City project
(j) FM 1623, FM 1888, FM 165, FM 2766, and US 281	No public viewing areas of the Blanco and Pedernales Rivers	Conduct a feasibility study of constructing scenic viewing areas with driveway access and signage	Blanco County and TxDOT coordinated project
(k) West side of US 281 between Blanco State Park and Yett Park in Blanco	No pedestrian connection between the two parks	Develop a hike and bike trail connecting the two parks	City of Blanco project in coordination with TxDOT (ROW)

AC/PUBLIC RECOMMENDED TOURISM SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT	OTHER COMMENTS
(a) US 281, US 290, and other roadways	TxDOT removal of historical markers and closing of picnic areas where markers were located	Clarify TxDOT's policy for picnic area closures and relocation of historical markers; provide greater opportunity for local input into the process	TxDOT closed picnic areas that were being used for illegal dumping or criminal activities and relocated historical markers in coordination with local historical commissions
(b) US 290 west of Johnson City	No signage for new wineries/vineyards	Provide updated directional signage for wineries and vineyards	Refer to AC/P Expansions (f) US 290; coordination with TxDOT
(c) US 281, US 290, and RR 2766 leading into Johnson City	No signage to direct visitors to Downtown Johnson City	Install wayfinding signage on US 281, US 290, and RR 2766	Johnson City project in coordination with TxDOT
(d) US 281 north and south of Johnson City	Minimal destination signage for Johnson City	Construct new gateway signage feature with landscaping on the north and south side of Johnson City on US 281	Johnson City project in coordination with TxDOT (ROW)
(e) US 281 north and south of Blanco	Minimal destination signage for Blanco	Construct gateway signage feature with landscaping on the north and south side of Blanco on US 281	City of Blanco project in coordination with TxDOT (ROW)
(f) US 281 and RR 165 leading into Blanco	Minimal signage to direct visitors to Downtown Blanco	Install enhanced wayfinding signage along US 281 and RR 165	City of Blanco project in coordination with TxDOT

CARTS RECOMMENDED TRANSIT SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS			
LOCATION	ISSUES	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	OTHER COMMENTS
(a) Blanco	Inadequate intercity bus service	CARTS flag-stop interurban transit facility (refer to Appendix C)	Centrally located site off US 281; coordination with the City of Blanco and TxDOT
(b) Johnson City	Inadequate intercity bus service	CARTS flag-stop interurban transit facility (refer to Appendix C)	Site near the confluence of US 290 and US 281; coordination with Johnson City and TxDOT

COMMENTS ON DRAFT BLANCO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN RECEIVED VIA EMAIL		
PLEASE TELL US ANY IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD RECOMMEND TO THE DRAFT PLAN	WHAT ARE YOUR TOP RECOMMENDED PROJECTS?	DATE RECEIVED
Boulevard on 281 through Blanco—for safety, calming, improved crossing. No bypass in Blanco—maybe a truck route. Improvements for bicycles on 165. Safe ADA sidewalks around the square in Blanco. More protected crossings of 281 in Blanco.	Boulevard on 281 thru Blanco. Streetscape in square area.	Sept. 26, 2013
Turn lane for Southbound 281 traffic between Rockin J Ranch/Vagler Golf and Landon's Crossing. Change merge area going Northbound 281 in front of Landon's Crossing. Move merge sign in front of light at Blanco Avenue/Paint merge arrows after bridge here also, for southbound traffic.	Do not bypass City of Blanco, in addition, slow traffic earlier before coming into town.	Sept. 26, 2013
Recommend clarity in synergy between transportation improvements and economic development. I.E. improves traffic flow/pedestrian flow in, for example, downtown areas enhances & improves economic potential of existing and future businesses.	1. Safety: Blanco to Pecan (per Blanco Streetscape Plan). 2. Ped Tourism & Transit: Blanco—historic shoulders: slow traffic. 3. Thoroughfare: 'Calm' US 281 thru Blanco traffic, i.e. Islands, brick.	Sept. 26, 2013
p. 29 of the draft plan—Major Arterial Urban (US 281 in downtown Blanco). The sentence should be modified to indicate that its only one block (between 3rd and 4th Streets) that has sidewalk. Figure 2.9 and 2.10—I don't think the city boundary lines are correct especially along the River (?River Run) and around the Middle School. Please change the name of the road intersecting with 1623 to River Run (not River Road) in the list of problem intersections.	Safe walking and bicycling (sidewalks) to Schools, Rebuilding the 281 bridge across the Blanco River with sidewalks, Slowing of traffic through Blanco.	Oct. 7, 2013
Very comprehensive study. Bypassing Blanco would be disastrous to the economy & lifestyle of Blanco.		Oct. 9, 2013
1. Main Street (US 281) through Blanco needs protected pedestrian crossings particularly at 3rd, 7th, and to the library. A four lane divided roadway would provide pedestrian safety islands and allow easy crossing most of the time. Traffic lights could be added later if needed. 2. Safe, ADA sidewalks are needed around the square on both sides of the street. 3. Safe ADA sidewalks are needed on both sides of Main Street throughout the town in Blanco. 4. Improvements for bicyclists are needed throughout the county. 5. Public transportation should be developed/expanded. 6. Hwy 281 Blanco River bridge needs to be replaced with walkways on both sides.		Oct. 10, 2013
COMMENTS ON THE NOVEMBER 2013 DRAFT PLAN		
<p>Sorry for the delay in getting my response to you. I would have scanned and sent the form, but my handwriting is atrocious.</p> <p>Following are my thoughts: First, on page 44 and on pg. 55 regarding workers who work from home, I feel more emphasis needs to be put on this group. Time Warner and GCTV are both working to bring fiber to the area. Actually, Time Warner already has a foothold in JC because they supply fiber to PEC, JCISD, and the medical facilities. More people working from home means less traffic on the highways and provides those who wish to live outside the major metro areas of Austin and San Antonio an alternative place to live with the plus of being able to work from home.</p> <p>This may also increase the demand for college courses available online from major universities like Texas Tech, A&M and UT.</p> <p>On page 48, the plan refers to wineries and vineyards. I think an emphasis needs to be placed on providing a "hub" for the wineries, like a visitors' center, coupled with a drop off and pick up point for winery tour buses and limousines. It's expensive to rent a limo out of Austin to drive to JC, but if a "hub" is provided from where limo and bus services can operate, the cost for these services will drop while the use increases. Or so I would hope.</p> <p>A public transportation "hub" could also support a pick up and drop off point for CARTS (page 30, pg. 49). If CARTS had a "home space" so to speak, they may be able to offer a wider variety of options regarding their routes. This could be located in the same area as the tourism vehicles.</p>		Nov. 17, 2013

<p>On pages 50 and 51, you speak of retail growth. I think first, retail needs to pinpoint the needs of current residents. For example, small retail shops that provide clothing needs like shoes, jeans, etc. at a reasonable price. Also, perhaps, a small sporting goods store (Hibbets, for example) to provide athletic gear for school sports, little league and all the club sports in the area.</p> <p>A major safety concern is the use of the Spur (the turn off 281 onto Nugent that connects 281 to 290) by 18 wheelers. I believe this should be off limits to 18 wheelers. It takes them right past our community park and high school though to downtown where the road is very narrow. The trucks jump the curb in order to make the right turn onto 290W.</p> <p>Also, we need a crosswalk button on the light at 290W and Nugent between the future Science Mill and Black Spur Emporium. Pedestrians will cross over that area whether or not there is a crosswalk. I believe TxDOT is working on this issue. A blinking caution light at Ave. F and 290 may also serve to slow traffic. Business owners have complained that vehicles start picking up speed once they pass Ave. F in order to make the light at Nugent because they know right after that light, the speed limit starts to increase.</p> <p>As far as pedestrian tourism, the sidewalks that belong to TxDot need to be maintained. Right now we have weeds and cracks in them that serve as tripping hazards. The crosswalk issue falls into this category as well.</p> <p>I think that's it. Please contact me if you have any questions. [signature redacted]</p>	
<p>I very much enjoyed your CAPCOG presentation at the Blanco City Council meeting last week. I deeply regret not having been able to participate in the public input sessions you conducted earlier and fervently hope this last minute email might add something of value to your final report. I'm afraid I am unable to properly categorize my suggestions and beg your indulgence. Please accept this hastily composed input in the constructive manner in which it is offered.</p> <p>Catch Phrase for Blanco County: "Blanco County: The Texas Hill Country as it Used to Be." Alternate: "Blanco County: The Texas Hill Country as it Once Was." Both these phrases hearken back to the rural heritage of Blanco County, a heritage of which residents are justly proud. Urban dwellers from nearby cities, wanting to recapture some of the nostalgia of Hill Country days gone by, can come to Blanco County for a taste of what once was and, at least here, lives on still.</p> <p>Initiatives to Support Economic Development in Blanco County:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. River Views. The Blanco River and the Pedernales River are valuable natural resources that should be exploited for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. The Blanco River, particularly, has potential in this regard. The river from approximately 1 mile east of Blanco until the FM 1888 split off FM 1623 approximately 5 miles west of Blanco is stunning in its beauty largely because of the many dams on the river and the proximity of the river to the highway. Unfortunately, for much of this stretch, the river cannot be seen from the road because of dense vegetation along the river bank. Much of this vegetation is necessary to maintain the riparian health of the river but much could be thinned (not clear cut to the ground) to open views of the river from the highway. While this would have to be done carefully, it could be done and would provide an instant tourist attraction. 2. River Access. Blanco County, unlike neighboring counties, has chosen to restrict access to its rivers at county road crossings. "No Parking" signs line the county roads for up to a quarter mile on either side of many if not most of the river crossings. All Texas rivers have public access to all areas where the bank is at least 30' wide regardless of the amount of water in the river or stream. Blanco County actively discourages this. Rather than restrictive "No Parking" signs at river crossings, Blanco County should construct parking spaces and picnic areas. This would create instant tourist attractions. Of course there would be problems, principally litter containment but, with careful planning and proper management, this could be overcome. 3. Access Trail to Yett Park in Blanco. Yett Park, owned by the Blanco Chamber of Commerce, is physically separated from the city. One must travel down Hwy 281 to reach the park. Access would be enhanced if a 30' wide trail was acquired running down the fence lines between Blanco State Park and Yett Park. Such a trail would open Yett Park up to hikers, bicyclists, horseback riders, and horse drawn carriages. This would lead to greater utilization of the park and better integration of Yett Park activities into the everyday life of Blanco. Additionally, there would be scope for commercial activities to develop that would exploit the trail such as horse and carriage rentals, bicycle rentals, etc. 4. Hiking/Horseback Trail between Johnson City and Blanco. A 30' wide trail could be developed running along the fence lines of properties on the west side of Hwy 281 between Johnson City and Blanco. Such a trail would open up a variety of outdoor recreational activities along the trail and at both trailheads. Blanco's Buggy Barn complex on the north edge of town comes to mind as a possible trailhead. Such a trail could eventually be expanded into a network of fence line trails throughout the county. With such an infrastructure in place, Blanco County could gain a reputation as an outdoor recreation destination within easy distance of urban centers. 	<p>Nov. 18, 2013</p>

5. Pocket Parks. In addition to the River Access Parks mentioned above, Blanco County could create small "Viewpoint Parks" at various locations throughout the county where the view is truly outstanding. Locations that jump to mind is the view west across the wide Blanco Valley from FM 165 at the Divide; the view of the Little Blanco headwaters area from the Kendalia Road just north of the Divide; and the view of the Blanco River from the intersection of FM 1623 and FM 1888.

6. Tex-Americana Music. There is an emerging sub-culture of local musicians in Blanco County that could be developed into a vibrant musical "scene" that could attract tourists from nearby urban areas who seek music "from the roots" of the Hill Country. If properly encouraged, this repository of underutilized talent could be yet another draw for the county.

7. Annexation and the Blanco By-Pass. Despite the protestations of some in the community, it is inevitable that there will eventually be a bypass around Blanco, most likely on the east side of town. In order for the City of Blanco to have a "seat at the table" when this project comes about, it is essential that the highway run through the city limits of Blanco. The way to ensure that is to annex land along FM 165 east of town to a distance beyond which the bypass likely would not go. The City and the Chamber of Commerce need to initiate forward planning to assess the impact of the bypass on Blanco and ways to turn the potential negatives into positives for the community.

8. Emergency Room in Blanco. One of the biggest inhibitors to development of southern Blanco County as a retirement destination is the lack of a true emergency room. While the EMS does an outstanding job, it is not an Emergency Room. Development of a small emergency room facility would do much to allay fears of being 45 minutes away from skilled emergency care and facilities.

9. Visionaries in Preservation Action Plan. I may have missed this in my very quick review of the Draft Blanco County Plan but I did not see any reference to the Visionaries in Preservation (VIP) Action Plan done in the City of Blanco in 2007. This plan, facilitated by the Texas Historical Commission, was over a year in development and appears to overlap many of the aspects in the current draft Blanco County Plan. The number one issue of importance to those participating in the public input to the VIP plan was "Preservation of Blanco's Rural Heritage." The number two issue, directly related to the first, was "Preservation of Blanco's Nighttime Skies." There were several other salient issues addressed in the plan that have potential impact of the Blanco County Plan. Considerable work has been done to bring the goals elaborated in the VIP Action Plan to fruition and it would appear to be prudent to take these ongoing efforts into consideration in any economic development plan for the county.

With that, I will conclude. Realizing that I have come to the discussion literally at the last hour I remain hopeful that my input might be of some benefit in making the Blanco County Plan as useful as possible. Should further input be desired, there are several other Blanco County citizens with whom I have relationships who would, I'm sure with the proper encouragement, be eager to share their thoughts.

Thank you. Mr. Sweeney, for your attention and consideration.
[signature redacted]

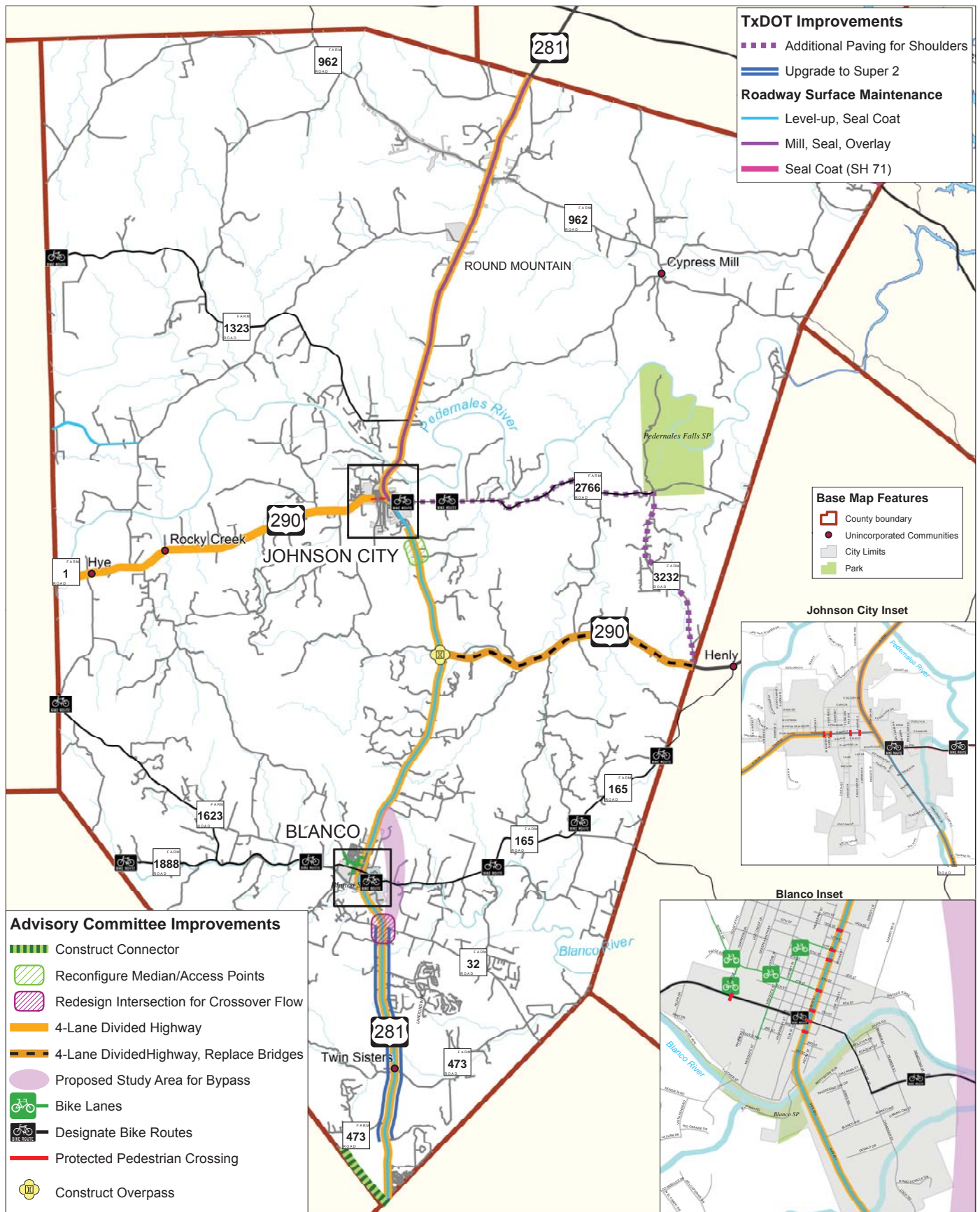
6.4 Visualization of the Blanco County Plan

In an effort to visualize how the recommended improvements would create a comprehensive strategic plan for the future growth and development of Blanco County, three maps were designed that summarize the proposed transportation and economic development initiatives of the public involvement process on the following pages:

Figure 6.1: Proposed Thoroughfare Improvements Map

Figure 6.2: Proposed Transportation Safety Improvements Map

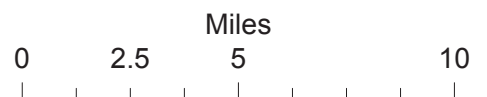
Figure 6.3: Proposed Pedestrian/Bicycle, Tourism and Transit Improvements Map



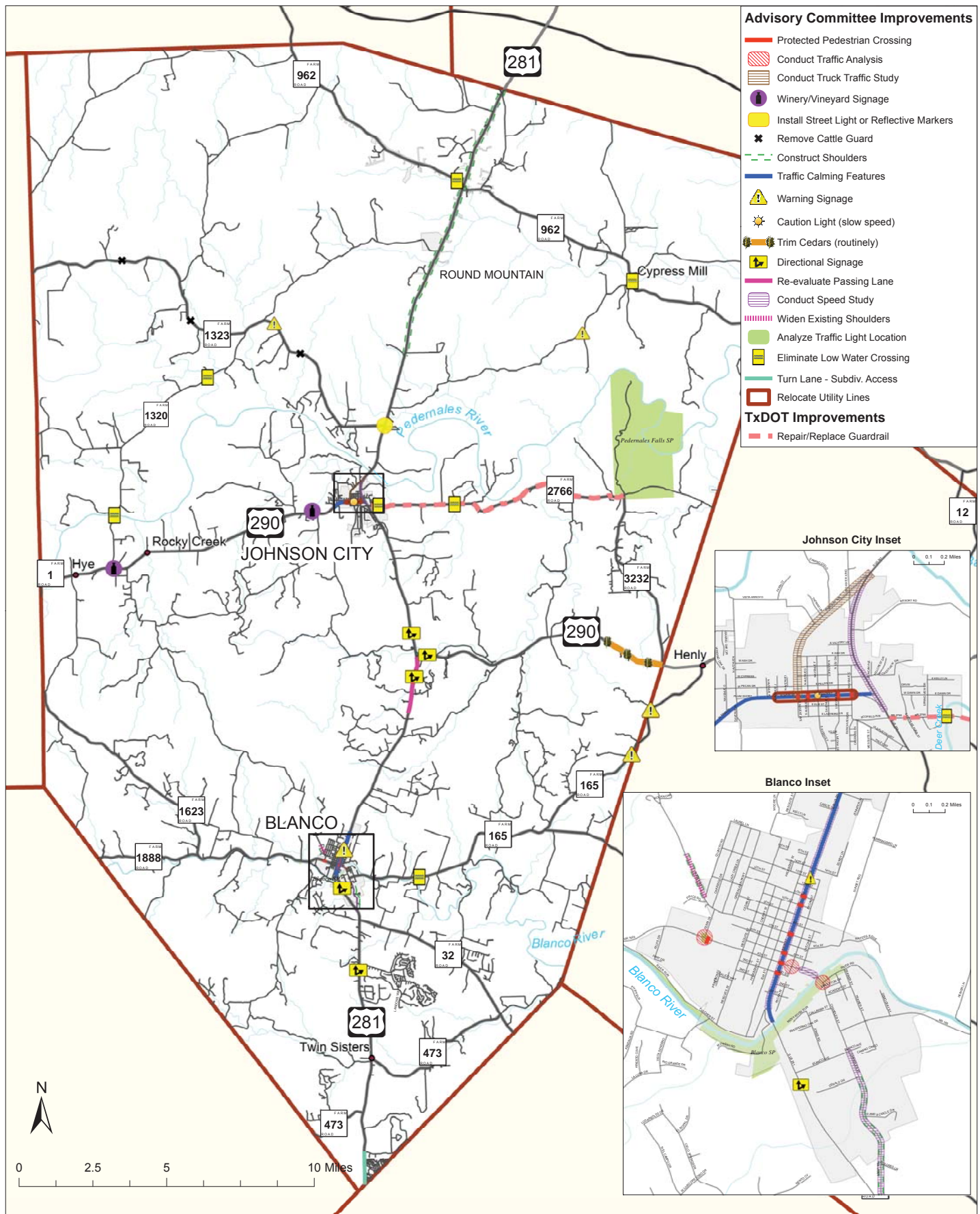
Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan

Proposed Thoroughfare Improvements

TxDOT and Advisory Committee Recommendations
Figure 6.1



This map was produced on December 2, 2013. For additional information, contact the CAPCOG GIS department at (512) 916-6000 or online at www.capcog.org.
Disclaimer:
The Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) provides this map and data "as is" and assumes no liability for its accuracy or completeness. This map is intended as a representation of the data being presented and is in no way intended to be survey grade information. This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or survey purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.



Blanco County

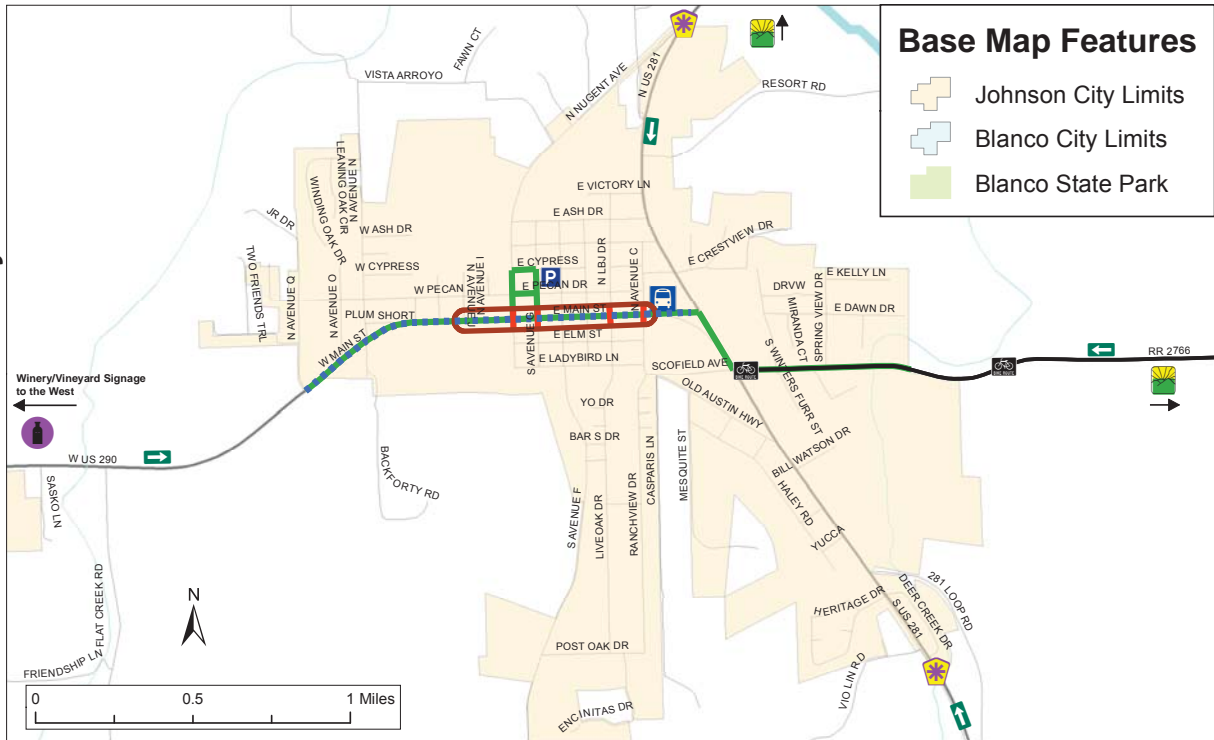
Transportation and Economic Development Plan

Proposed Transportation Safety Improvements

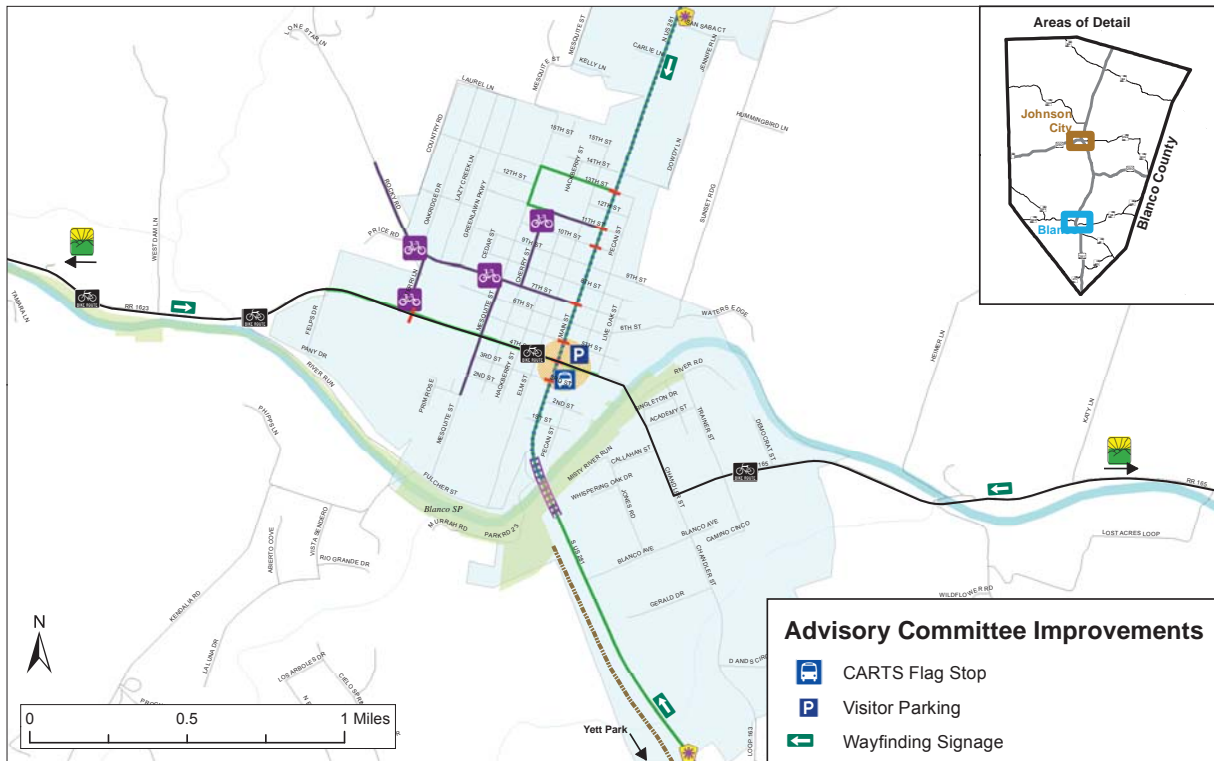
TxDOT and Advisory Committee Recommendations
Figure 6.2

This map was produced on December 2, 2013. For additional information, contact the CAPCOG GIS department at (512) 916-6000 or online at www.capcog.org.
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Johnson City



Blanco



Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan

Proposed Pedestrian/Bicycle, Tourism and Transit Improvements Advisory Committee Recommendations Figure 6.3

This map was produced on December 2, 2013. For additional information, contact the CAPCOG GIS department at (512) 216-6800 or online at www.capcog.org.

Disclaimer: The Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) provides this map and data "as is" and assumes no liability for its accuracy or completeness. This map is intended as a representation of the data being presented and is in no way intended to be survey grade information. This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or survey purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

Advisory Committee Improvements

- CARTS Flag Stop
- Visitor Parking
- Wayfinding Signage
- Gateway Signage/Landscaping
- Reconstruct Bridge w/Sidewalks
- Winery/Vineyard Signage
- Implement Streetscape Plan
- Traffic Calming Features
- Construct Sidewalks
- Pedestrian Crossing
- Relocate Utility Lines
- Designate Bike Routes
- Bike Lanes
- Hike & Bike Trail
- Scenic Viewing Area

Chapter 7—Recommendations and Plan Implementation Strategies

7.1 Findings and Recommendations

The Blanco County Transportation and Economic Development Plan process produced a transportation demand model that will provide valuable information to Blanco County. The model was instrumental in developing the initial project list and ultimately in the projects that were included in the model run scenarios. The scenarios that have been modeled have produced this comprehensive plan. The priority of their implementation may change over time as conditions change and funding becomes available. To keep the plan relevant, it should be reviewed periodically. How often this occurs will be dependent on how often conditions in Blanco County change.

7.2 Project Prioritization

The transportation model that was developed (see Chapter 5) provided information about how the transportation system would operate in the future if no improvements (no-build scenario) were made. These data along with candidate projects from CARTS and the TxDOT County Blanco area engineer produced the list of 11 current projects. Projects were discussed between the public and the advisory committee meetings, and 51 proposals were submitted.

Project prioritization may be based on a needs assessment of the entire county. TTI conducted a series of interviews with Austin-area TxDOT engineers and planners to gather their perspectives on how corridors and projects are currently prioritized and what useful criteria could be used to consider in the future. These meetings allowed discussion of any pertinent information but were generally organized under the following four discussion points:

1. What criteria do you currently use to prioritize added-capacity projects?
2. What criteria do you currently use to prioritize operational improvements?
3. What criteria do you think could be useful to use for prioritizing added-capacity projects?
4. What criteria do you think could be useful to use for prioritizing operational improvements?

The following section compiles notes from these interviews into five broad categories: (a) existing criteria for added-capacity projects, (b) existing criteria for operational projects, (c) desirable criteria for added-capacity projects, (d) desirable criteria for operational projects, and (e) opportunities for improving coordinated planning.

Summary of Meetings—Existing Criteria for Added-Capacity Projects

The most commonly mentioned criteria for prioritizing added-capacity projects were fatalities and crashes (including pedestrian fatalities), using a crash map to evaluate which corridors need the most attention. After safety, congestion was consistently mentioned as the most often used criterion for evaluating which corridors need added capacity. Congestion was evaluated based on delay cost and AM/PM peak-hour level of service.

In addition to safety and congestion, the corridors where conditions are currently acceptable—based on the above two metrics—but have a lot of development currently underway or planned were mentioned as areas where area engineers are aware of, and in some cases are currently in discussions with district cities or counties regarding the future of these corridors. It was mentioned that there is no specific formula or objective review of these metrics. Added-capacity

projects often move forward based on a combination of the above criteria causing a corridor's problems to stand out, a project having been started already, and available funding mechanisms.

Summary of Meetings—Existing Criteria for Operational Projects

Safety issues were the most commonly mentioned criteria for prioritizing operational projects moving forward. Often, these projects are a result of input/complaints from the public (both citizens and the city/county officials) as well as studies conducted by the Traffic Office and prioritized by department of transportation administration. It was mentioned that this process is first-come, first-serve (based largely on funding), and it was likened to the colloquialism “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” For these projects, area engineers trust the local governments to prioritize their own needs. Interviewees explained that many of the operational projects are focused on adding shoulders and sidewalks, and many projects have bicycle implications. Similar to added-capacity projects, it was mentioned that there is no objective criteria used across the board to prioritize operational projects.

Summary of Meetings—Desirable Criteria for Added-Capacity Projects

Interviewees explained that funding is the largest challenge to prioritizing projects. TxDOT will not start working (planning, schematics, etc.) on a project unless there is funding. Projects such as added-capacity projects often are lengthy (especially if there are environmental concerns), and generally the available funding will not be adequate to get an added-capacity project through a five-year process. This causes TxDOT to stray from prioritizing what needs to get done in order to focus on spending the money they have to work on smaller projects that can be completed. This may mean the project that is prioritized is just part of a larger project (with no established plan for when the rest of the project will be completed), or is a less important project that has a more practical price tag (\$2–\$5 million versus \$20–\$30 million). It is for these reasons that many projects may be started but then remain uncompleted years later (sometimes as much as a decade or more).

Given this challenge, interviewees suggested that it may be helpful to sit down each year and develop a point system for each issue/metric (safety, congestion, cost, funding availability, etc.) in order to weigh projects against each other. It was suggested that it would be helpful to prioritize funded and non-funded projects separately. Prioritizing funded projects would help TxDOT better interact with cities and counties who ask why another city or county is getting a project and they are not. Interviewees admitted that a problem with this process is the level of subjectivity in the scoring/weighting of projects/issues.

Developing a need-based system was also mentioned. Interviewees mentioned that the data used to rank the most congested corridors are helpful but need to be averaged every three years as opposed to annually. In addition, it was mentioned that delay cost is a good metric to use to prioritize added-capacity projects, but it will always make the extremely large projects such as I-35 rise to the top of the list, and those big projects are cost prohibitive.

Summary of Meetings—Desirable Criteria for Operational Projects

Interviewees consistently mentioned that prioritizing operational projects needs to be a collaborative process among all of the players in the region (cities, counties, smaller municipalities). It was mentioned that this type of collaboration has been attempted in the past with some success, but inconsistent attendance by all of the stakeholders made this process less effective as time progressed.

The importance of having everyone at the table in order to balance the needs among the entire district was mentioned as tantamount to the success of this strategy. Interviewees explained that this process would increase agency efficiency and could potentially decrease project costs as

area engineers, police departments, and traffic professionals are more aware of and are more able to coordinate with other projects being worked on within the district. A ranking system was also mentioned as having the potential to help prioritize operational projects. It was explained that there is much data currently used to make decisions regarding operational projects (crash data, pavement condition scores, fatalities, volume, level of service, safety index, public reception, etc.), and it would be helpful to weigh all data in order to rank projects so the prioritization process is more comprehensive and less arbitrary.

An example was provided where pavement condition scores were used to prioritize operational improvements, leading to work being done on roads that were not highly traveled and were not a high priority in the region but were still considered a priority to TxDOT. In this case, pavement condition scores were weighted too heavily and the prioritization process did not reflect the true needs of the region. Interviewees noted that if a ranking system were to be established, it would need to balance the needs of the smaller communities as well as larger communities, as it was mentioned that a standard ranking system would likely favor projects in larger counties/cities.

Summary of Project Costs

Table 7.1. Blanco County Recommended and Planned Transportation Improvements.

TxDOT Roadway Repair Suggested Cost Estimates						
Highway	Location	Existing Lanes	Proposed Lanes	Length (Miles)	Planned Improvements	TxDOT Suggested Cost Estimate
US 281	Burnet County Line to US 290 at junction in Johnson City	2	4	15	Reconstruct to 4-lane divided	\$115 million to \$155 million
US 281	US 290 to 1.5 miles north of RM 1623	2	4	6.3	Reconstruct to 4-lane divided	\$50 million to \$65 million
US 281	RM 32 to Comal County Line	2	4	9	Reconstruct to 4-lane divided	\$70 million to \$95 million
US 290	Gillespie County Line to S Avenue G in Johnson City	4	4	10.3	Reconstruct to 4-lane divided	\$80 million to \$105 million
US 290	US 281 to Hays County Line	4	4	9	Reconstruct to 4-lane divided	\$70 million to \$95 million
US 290	At US 281	4	4		Construct grade separation	\$13 million to \$15 million
All RMs	Various locations	2	2		Add shoulders and turn lanes at select locations	No cost estimate
RM 1320	At Pedernales Rivers	2	2	0.1	Construct improvements to eliminate low-water crossing	\$0.85 million to \$1 million
RM 1320	At Grape Creek	2	2	0.1	Construct improvements to eliminate low-water crossing	\$0.48 million to \$0.5 million
RM 2766	At Deer Creek	2	2	0.1	Construct improvements to eliminate low-water crossing	\$0.3 million to \$0.4 million
RM 2766	At Rough Hollow	2	2	0.1	Construct improvements to eliminate low-water crossing	\$0.48 million to \$0.5 million
RM 962	At Cypress Creek	2	2	0.1	Construct improvements to eliminate low-water crossing	\$0.43 million to \$0.5 million
RM 962	At North Cypress Creek	2	2	0.1	Construct improvements to eliminate low-water crossing	\$0.43 million to \$0.5 million
RM 1320	At Tributary of Blanco River	2	2	0.1	Construct improvements to eliminate low-water crossing	\$0.3 million to \$0.4 million

7.3 Possible Funding Sources

This section of the development plan presents basic material covering funding sources for transportation programs and discusses traditional transportation funding sources, such as fuel taxes, property taxes, and sales taxes. Newer, more innovative funding mechanisms such as pass-through financing and regional mobility authorities are also discussed.

Funding Availability and Opportunities

Blanco County is adjacent to but not part of the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and does not belong to any other MPO. Therefore, transportation funding programs that are administered through or with the cooperation of an MPO will not be eligible for use in Blanco County. Should Blanco County join CAMPO in the future, funding opportunities through the MPO should be considered.

However, in addition to CAMPO, there are a variety of funding opportunities from regional planning partners and stakeholders. CAPCOG provides regional planning support to Central Texas counties, including Blanco County. The Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CARTPO) is a branch of CAPCOG that works for rural transportation planning and funding. CARTPO serves as a forum for elected officials to come together on transportation issues to recommend changes in policy and practice, advocate for legislation, recommend regional priorities, direct certain planning and data initiatives, oversee the federally prescribed local consultation process, and collaborate with CAMPO. CARTPO and TxDOT often work together in planning and funding transportation projects.

There are funding opportunities from state planning organizations as well. TxDOT has many ongoing and planned projects for the county. The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) has the ability to issue bonds for transportation projects. Federal and state spending programs are also available.

Fuel Tax

The fuel tax is the most common source of transportation funding at the state and federal level. The current federal fuel tax on gasoline is \$0.184 per gallon, and the state tax is \$0.20 per gallon. For diesel fuel, the federal tax rate is \$0.244 per gallon, and the state tax is \$0.20 per gallon. Of the \$14.2 billion in revenues for the Texas State Highway Fund in 2007 and 2008, 81 percent came from fuel tax revenues. This \$14.2 billion includes federal reimbursements and the highway portion of the state's motor fuel tax. Federal fuel taxes are remitted back to the states through various programs using allocation formulas that are based on several factors, which vary depending upon the program.

In Texas, 25 percent of the state fuel tax is dedicated to public schools by constitutional amendment.

Local Sales Tax

Local sales taxes are widely used in other parts of the country for the funding of transportation projects. In addition to the fact that revenues are fairly consistent and predictable from year to year, they have the added advantage of being inflation sensitive when applied as a percentage of the cost of the goods being purchased. They are relatively easy to administer, especially in situations where they can be piggybacked on a state sales tax. The major drawback to these types of taxes as a revenue source for transportation projects is that it is not possible to link the use of the transportation network with payment of the tax.

In Texas, the state imposes a sales tax of 6.25 percent per purchase and allows local taxing jurisdictions, such as cities and counties, to impose an additional 2 percent combined minimum on top of the state rate for a maximum sales tax of 8.25 percent. In 2011–2012, Blanco County utilized a sales tax of 4.95 percent for revenue generation.

Vehicle Registration Fees

Vehicle registration fees are a substantial part of transportation financing in the state, accounting for an estimated 14.8 percent of revenue to be deposited into the Texas State Highway Fund in the 2008/2009 biennium. County and municipal governments are free to impose such fees for the funding of transportation and other programs within their jurisdictions. Such fees are stable revenue generators from year to year and require minimal additional administrative expense. They are generally perceived as a user-based tax, even though the assessment is not made on a trip-by-trip basis. Depending on how often assessment rates are adjusted, vehicle registration fees are likely to be insensitive to inflation and decline in purchasing power.

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts estimates that the state took in \$2.4 billion in motor vehicle registrations for fiscal year 2012–2013, not counting deductions from county governments. These fees are collected at the county level, and each county retains the first \$60,000 collected and receives an additional \$350 for each mile of county road maintained by the county up to 500 miles. The Texas Constitution prohibits revenues from vehicle registration fees to be used for purposes other than acquiring rights-of-way; constructing, maintaining, and policing public roadways; or administering laws pertaining to the supervision of traffic and safety on public roadways.

Blanco County received \$300,000 in vehicle registration revenues for fiscal year 2011–2012 and an add-on fee of \$100,000 for the same year.

Property Taxes

In Texas, local governments, such as counties, school districts, cities, and special purpose districts, are authorized to levy property taxes. The value of appraised property is determined by each county's appraisal district. Property taxes are among the most common in the state, accounting for 46.4 percent of all taxes collected within the state in 2006 according to the Texas State Comptroller of Public Accounts. School districts collect the most in property taxes each year, accounting for 58.8 percent of property taxes collected in the state in 2006 compared to 15 percent for cities, 15 percent for counties, and 11.2 percent for special districts.

The largest portion of revenues for the City of Blanco comes from sales tax revenue, which accounted for 27 percent of city revenues in the city's 2010–2011 budget; for Johnson City, the total was 17 percent. The majority of Blanco County's revenues come from property taxes, bringing in \$3,100,000 and accounting for 61.3 percent of budgeted revenues in the 2011–2012 fiscal year.

Rural Improvement Districts and Special Assessment Districts

Special assessment districts are often employed in areas that stand to realize a substantial increase in property values because of various improvements in the area. They work especially well if the group receiving benefits from the new program is clearly defined. Revenue may not be certain and predictable in situations where the public has the option of protesting or preventing funding. Generally, the costs associated with the district are paid for by residents within the district. Most special assessment district levies are placed on the value of property, usually per \$100 valuation.

Revenues collected by these districts are not used for transportation-related programs.

Regional Mobility Authorities

Proposition 15, a constitutional amendment approved by Texas voters in 2001, allows for the creation of regional mobility authorities (RMAs) for the purpose of constructing, maintaining, and operating toll facilities. As political subdivisions formed by one or more counties, RMAs allow more transportation development to occur at the local level. Formation of an RMA can be requested by one or more counties with the submission of a resolution by the requesting parties' county commissioners court and a statement on how the RMA will improve mobility in the region. Each request must also identify proposed transportation projects, contain an agreement to obtain necessary environmental permits, list any other RMA projects being considered, and establish criteria for determining the geographic makeup and appointment processes for board members. RMA formation requests must be approved by the Texas Transportation Commission.

In general, RMAs possess the same powers as the Turnpike Authority Division of TxDOT, but they operate at the local level. This provides local governments with more control over transportation planning, provides additional funding for transportation projects, and allows projects to be developed faster. Their scope of influence includes turnpikes, roadways, and systems of facilities; passenger and freight rail systems; ferries; airports; pedestrian and bicycle facilities; intermodal hubs; automated conveyors for freight movement; border crossing inspection stations; public utility facilities; and air quality improvement initiatives. They possess bonding authority and are authorized to maintain a revolving fund, acquire and/or condemn property, enter into contracts with other states and Mexico, borrow money, apply for grants and loans, and seek other sources of revenue with the exception that funds from the state general revenue fund or state highway fund may only be used on turnpikes and road projects. They may also enter into comprehensive development agreements.

One tool that is particularly useful for RMAs in developing transportation projects is the ability to issue revenue bonds. Title 43, section 370 of the Texas Administrative Code grants RMAs the authority to issue tax-exempt revenue bonds for a term not to exceed 40 years. These bonds may be repaid from any financial source available to the RMA with the exception of revenues from a project that is not a part of the system for which the bonds were originally issued. Bonds issued by RMAs are not the debt of the state or counties within the RMAs' jurisdiction. RMAs may also seek funding from the Texas Mobility Fund, a funding source supported by transportation-related fees. The Texas Transportation Commission is authorized to issue up to \$3 billion in bonds from the fund, which may be used to finance construction or improvements to state highways, public-owned toll roads, and other transportation projects. Funding from the State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) is also available to RMAs. SIB funds are typically available for projects that are on a state highway system and included in the state transportation improvement plan..

The RMA responsible for Blanco County is the CTRMA.

Pass-Through Financing

In pass-through financing, the state enters into a partnership with a private developer, toll-way authority, mobility authority, or local or county government for development of a roadway on the state highway system. Under such an agreement, the entity applying for pass-through financing agrees to finance, construct, maintain, and/or operate the facility. After the facility opens, TxDOT makes periodic reimbursements to the partnering entity based on the volume of traffic on the facility. Pass-through financing is sometimes referred to as "shadow tolls," in that revenue is generated for the developer by users of the facility, except that in this scenario, TxDOT pays for all tolls. This partnering shifts some of the risks associated with revenue from traffic volumes onto the developer and may encourage expedited implementation, as the sooner a roadway is open, the sooner the developer can begin recouping costs. Pass-through financing may be especially useful in areas that require transportation improvements but tolling is not politically or socially feasible, as users do not experience the time delays or out-of-pocket expenses associated with

conventional tolling. Pass-through financing may also be beneficial in the reconstruction or upgrading of projects and can provide a significant incentive for developers to provide high levels of quality service in such situations.

Pass-through financing has recently been approved for several projects in Texas. Within the Austin District of TxDOT, pass-through financing has been approved for projects at IH-35 and SH 29, the 183A toll facility, US 79, FM 1660, and RM 2338. Pass-through financing has also been approved for construction activities on FM 3407, FM 110, RM 12, and FM 1626 in Hays County.

Federal Spending

The Highway Trust Fund (HTF) is the primary funding source for most federal transportation programs. The HTF is composed of two elements: the Highway Account, which funds highways and intermodal programs, and the Mass Transit Account (MTA), which provides federal funding for public transportation projects. The HTF itself is funded with fuel tax revenues, which are remitted back to the states based on allocation formulas that vary depending on the program from which the funds are being allocated.

Federal funding for transportation projects is done by apportionment, which utilizes formulas to determine what each state will receive. The formulas take into account several factors, depending on the program, and a score is generated that determines what each state's share will be.

State Spending Programs

The federal fuel tax accounts for \$0.18 of the \$0.38 collected on each gallon of gasoline. These revenues are remitted to the federal government, where they are apportioned back to the states through various formulas, which have already been discussed. They are then deposited directly into the state highway fund upon receipt. The majority of these funds take the form of reimbursements for highway planning and construction expenditures. The remaining \$0.20 paid on each gallon of gasoline purchased is the state fuel tax. It is remitted to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, where it is deposited in the state's general fund.

One percent of the gross state fuel tax revenues collected is retained by the Comptroller's Office for administration and enforcement of motor fuel tax laws, and 25 percent is taken out and deposited into the Available School Fund. The remainder is deposited in the Texas State Highway Fund. State funding is often designated for on-system or off-system roadways. Off-system roadways are roadways that are not part of the state highway system and are not maintained by TxDOT, such as city streets and county roads. On-system roadways are roadways that are designated as being part of the state highway system and are usually maintained by TxDOT. State funding of transportation projects is done through the state highway fund, which is comprised primarily of fuel tax revenues.

Transit Programs

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) authorizes the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to support locally planned and operated public mass transit systems. According to FTA, fare-box revenues account for only about 40 percent of public transit system operating costs, so transit systems must generally rely on additional funding from federal, state, and local sources as well as private investment. Federal funding for transit in 2007 was nearly \$9 billion, most of which came from fuel tax revenues and general fund appropriations. Since 1997, 2.86 cents on every gallon of federal fuel taxes collected has been dedicated to the MTA. Funding from state and local authorities may come from numerous sources including sales taxes, property taxes, income taxes, and direct transit system taxing authority.

As is the case with state highway programs, TxDOT transit programs receive a large percentage of funding from federal sources. This funding is in turn awarded in the form of grants that typically require matching funds, depending on the type of program, to individual transit systems by formulas, which may vary from year to year. TxDOT itself does not own capital equipment and does not provide direct transit services. State and federal funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis, so expenses must be incurred by the provider prior to disbursement by the state or the FTA.

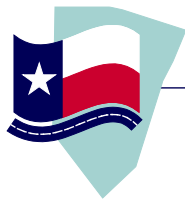
7.4 Implementation of the Plan

As future development occurs within the extra-territorial jurisdictions of Blanco and Johnson City, this plan will provide a blueprint for the future transportation system, which developers will need to consider when planning new communities. There is a direct relationship between land use, economic development, and transportation, and the impacts on the transportation system need to be considered as each new community is built.

As stated in the introduction of this document, the plan is intended to be a tool for the county, the cities, the developers, the chambers of commerce, and the general public as Blanco County continues to grow over the next 25 years. It is particularly important that residents within the county had the opportunity to identify transportation and economic development needs during the development of the plan.

The plan should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to see if the assumptions are still valid. Likewise, if there are jurisdictional changes, the plan should be reviewed to make sure the priorities still make sense or to take advantage of new opportunities.

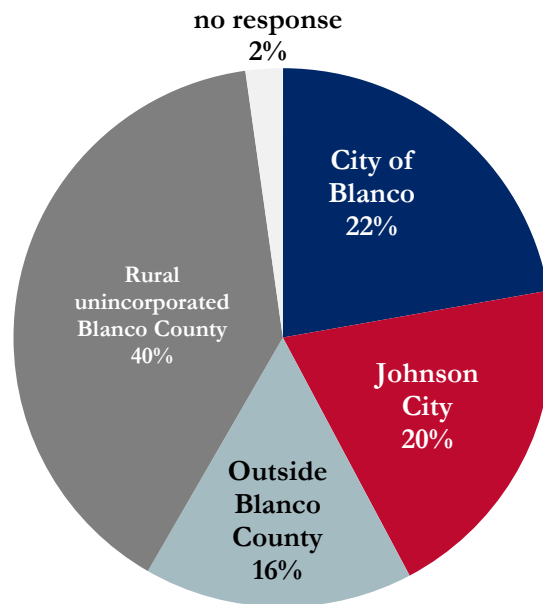
Appendix A – Blanco County Transportation & Economic Development Plan Questionnaire Results

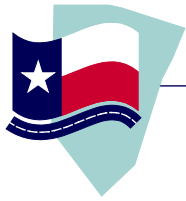


Blanco County Transportation & Economic Development Plan Questionnaire Results

This questionnaire was open for responses from May 5 to May31, 2013. A total of 182 responses were received. Questionnaires were received through a web page and paper questionnaires distributed in public meetings, local community facilities and businesses. Results will be used in developing transportation and economic development proposals in the draft plan. For more information on the questionnaire, contact Greg Griffin, AICP with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute at (512) 407-1111 or g-griffin@ttimail.tamu.edu. For more information on the plan, contact Mark Sweeney with the Capital Area Council of Governments at (512) 916-6030 or msweeney@capcog.org.

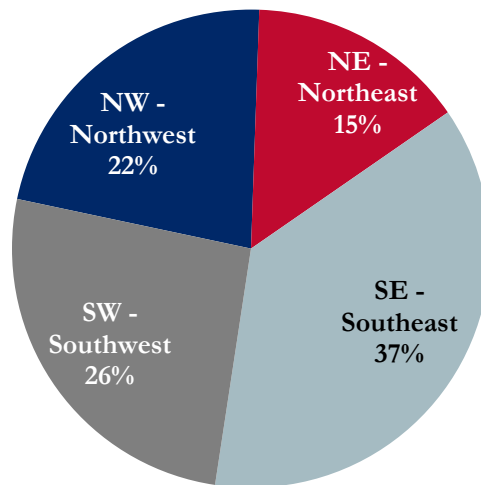
1. What is your primary residence?



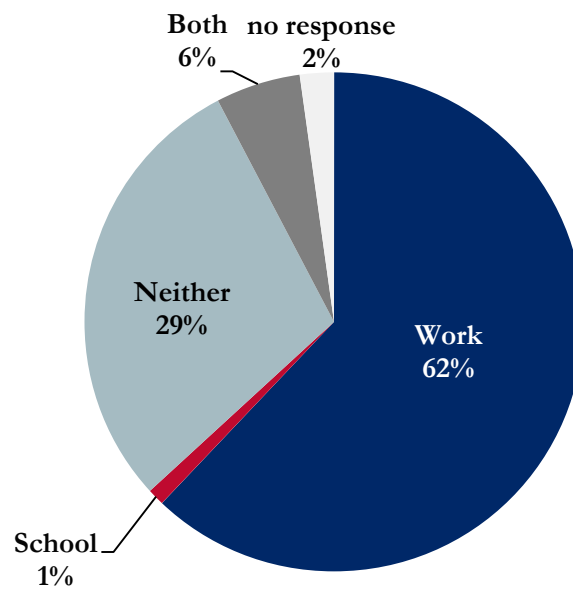


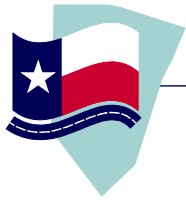
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2. If rural area, please specify which area of the county in which you live



3. Do you commute to work or school?

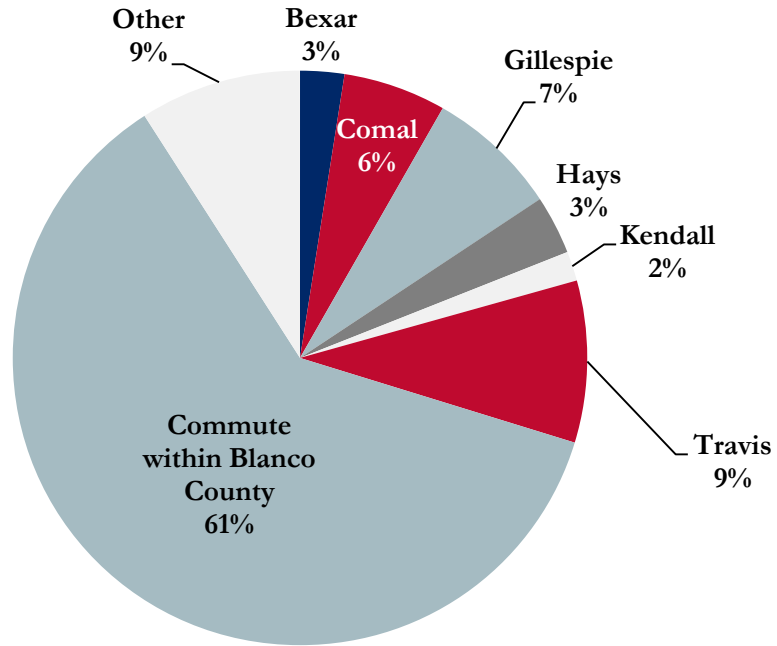




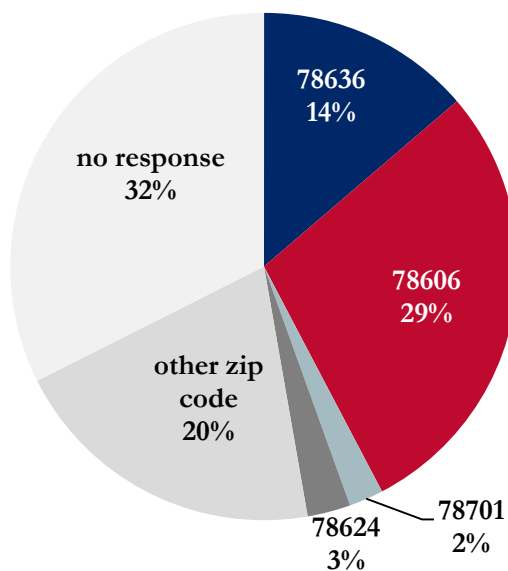
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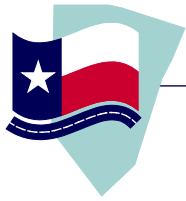
Transportation and Economic Development Plan

4. To which county do you commute?



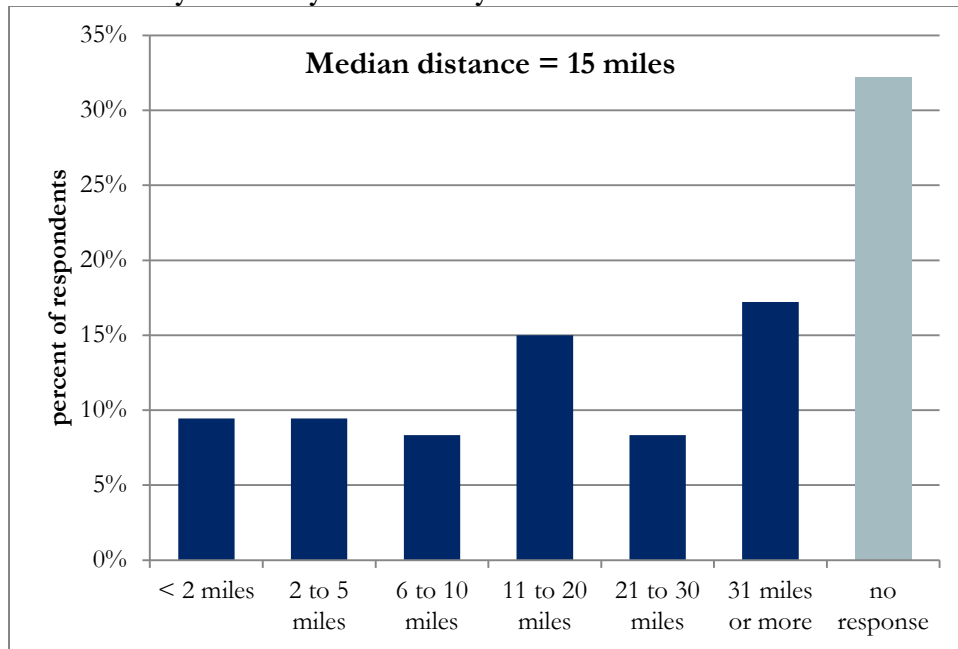
5. To further clarity, to which zip code do you commute?(If you do not know the zip, please state the city or town name)



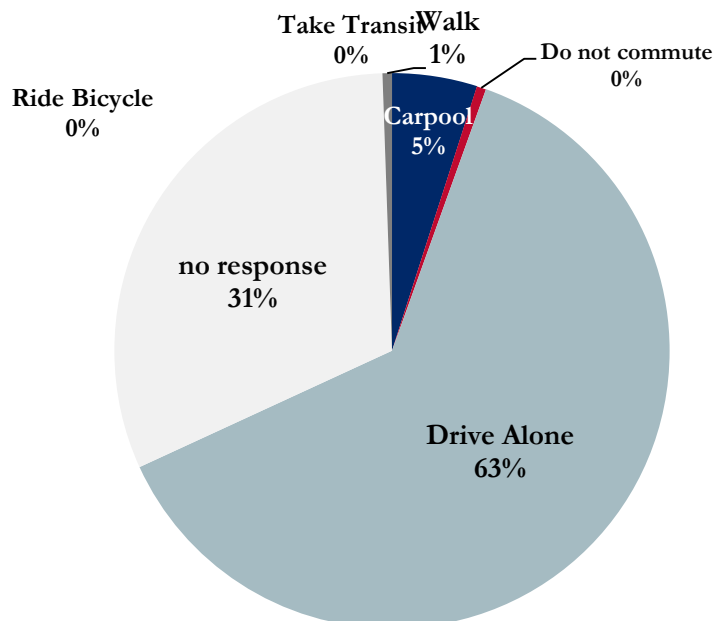


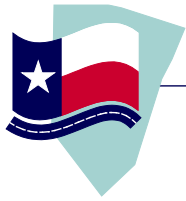
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6. How many miles is your one-way commute to work or school?



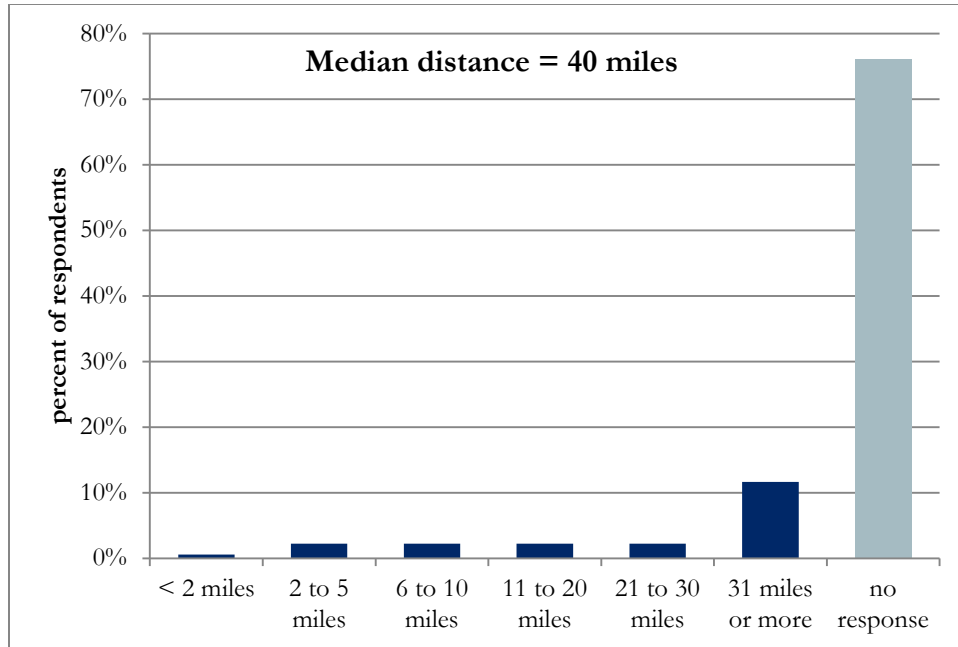
7. How do you make your commute the majority of the time?

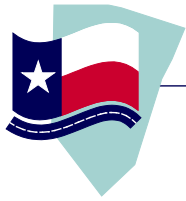




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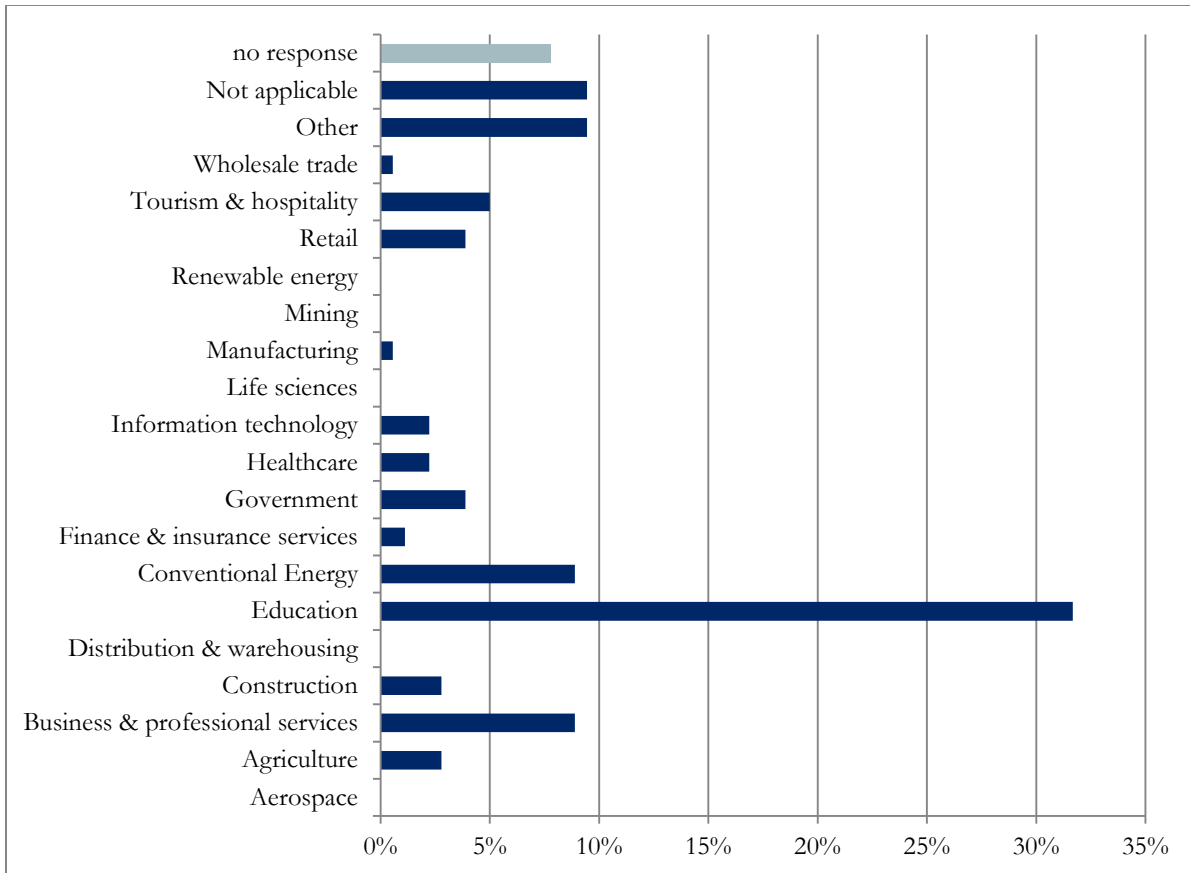
8. If you do not commute for work or school, how many miles do you typically drive in a single day for other trips such as shopping?



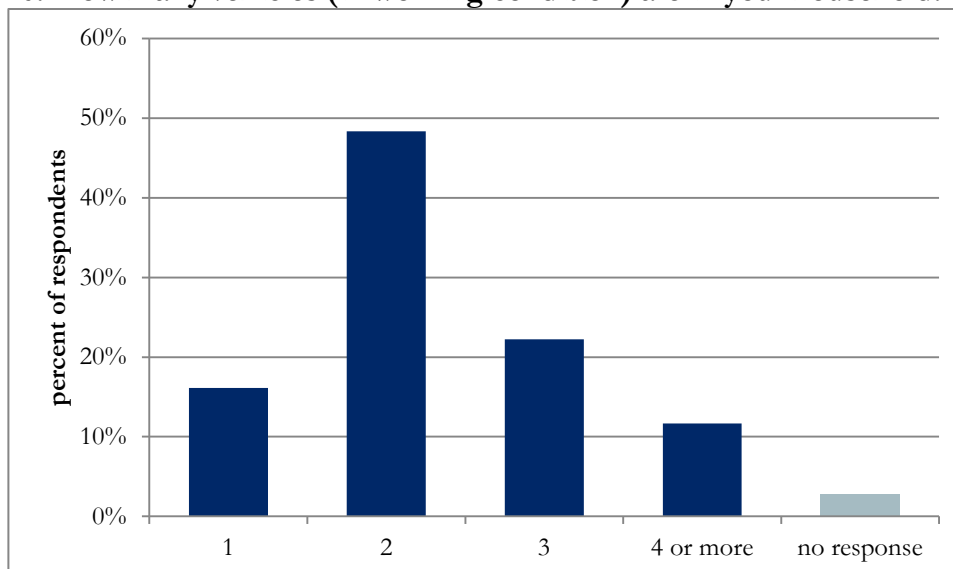


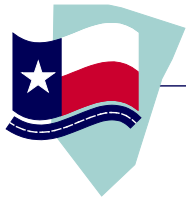
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9. Which best describes the primary industry focus of the company you work for?



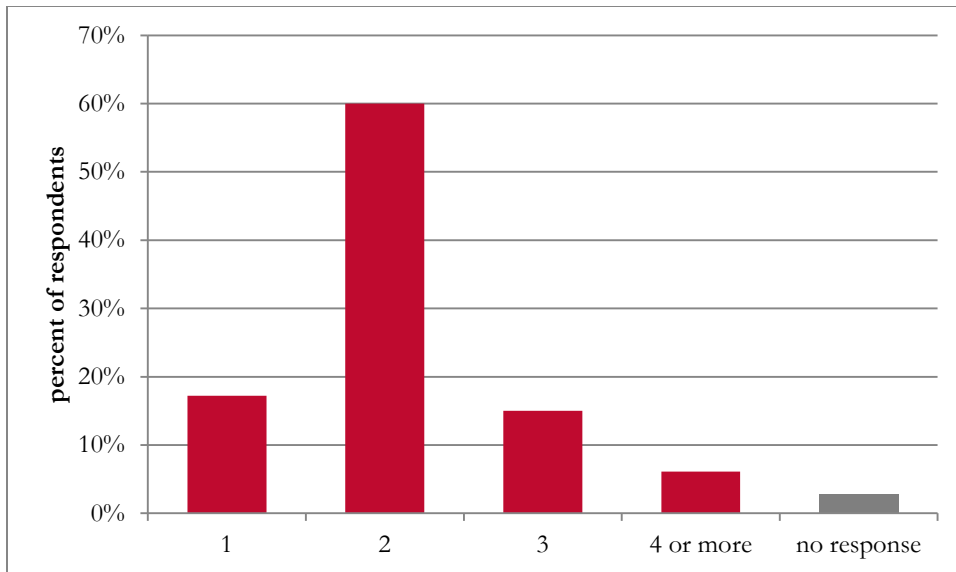
10. How many vehicles (in working condition) are in your household?



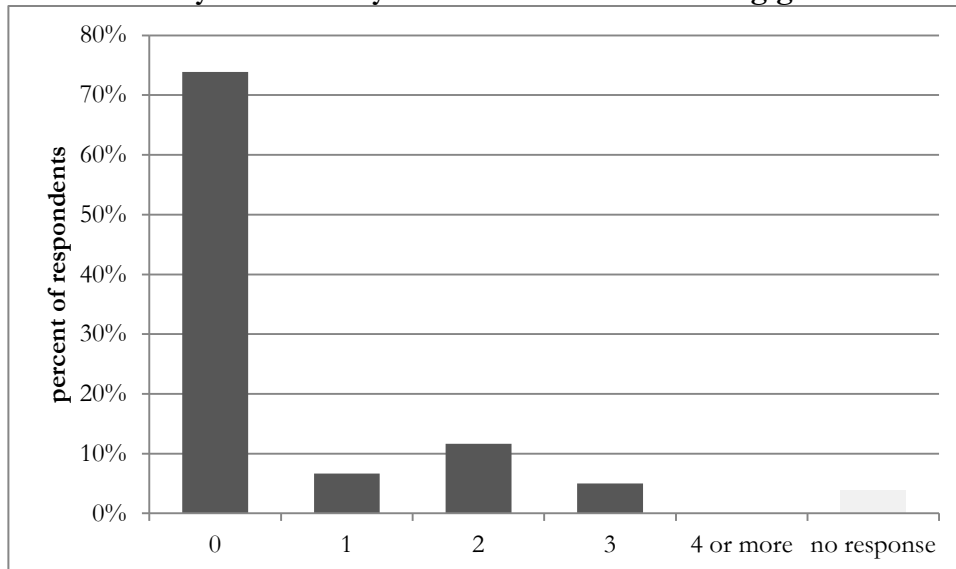


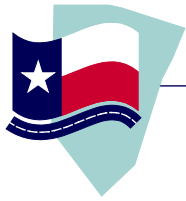
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11. How many licensed drivers are in your household?



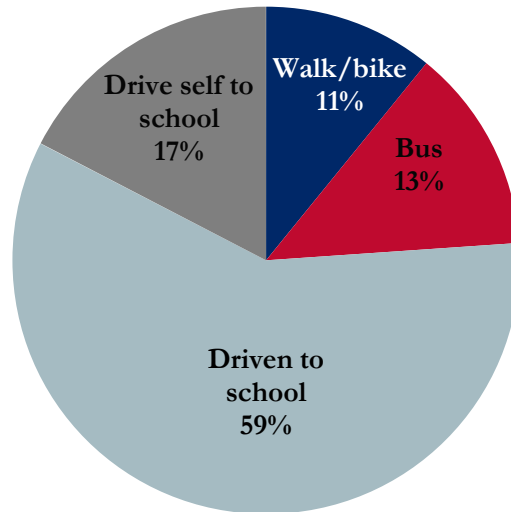
12. How many children in your household are attending grades K-12 in Blanco County?



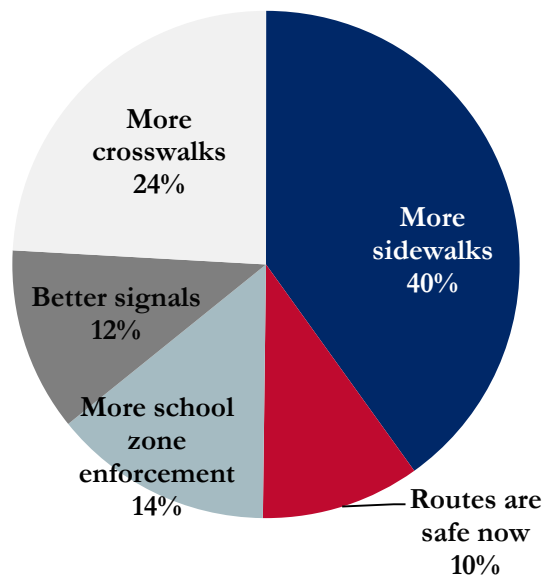


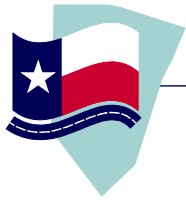
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13. How do they travel to school? (check all that apply)



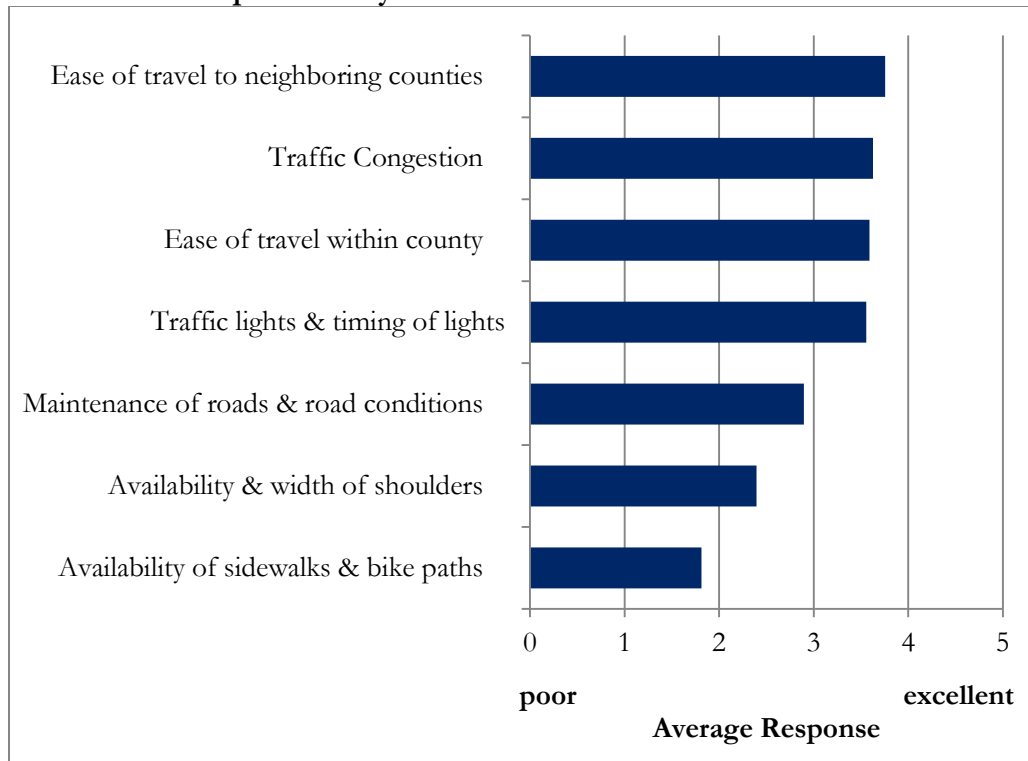
14. How could we make transportation routes to schools safer? (Mark all that apply)

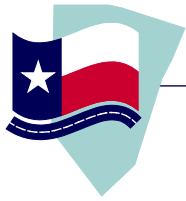




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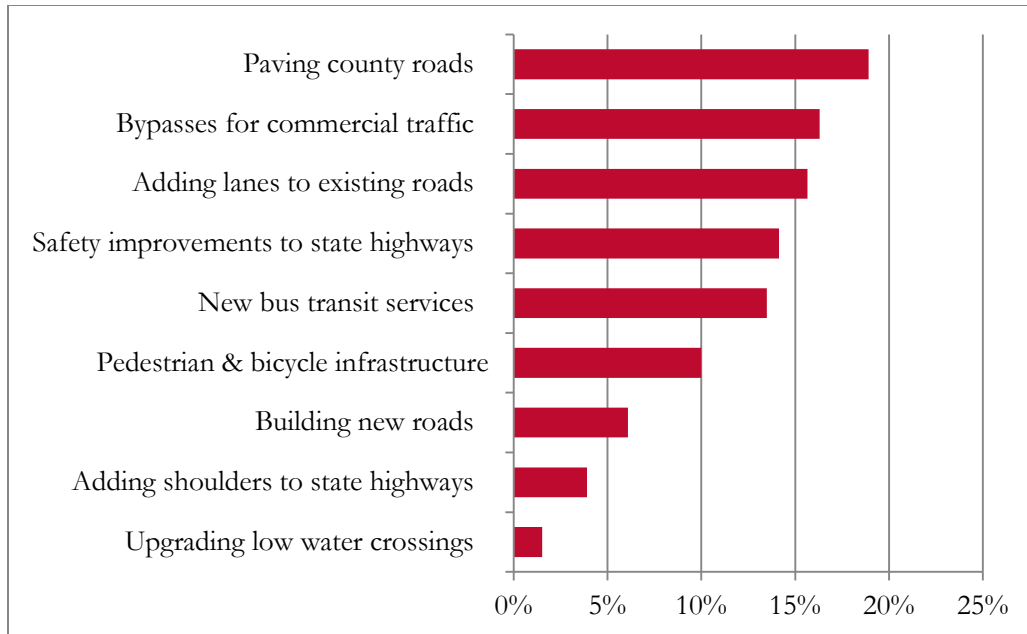
15. Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor & 5 is excellent, please rate the following aspects of the local transportation system.



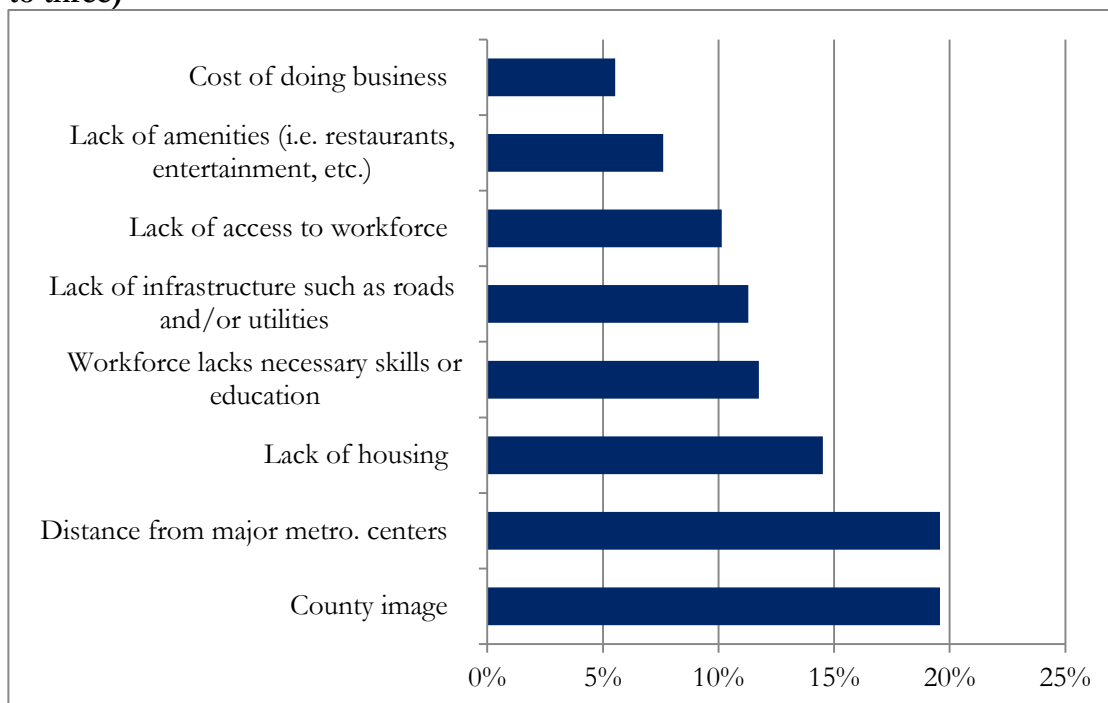


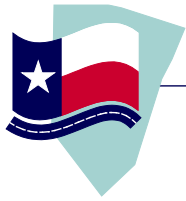
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16. From the list below, check the TOP 3 priorities over the next 10 years



17. What is the biggest challenge to attracting businesses to Blanco County? (Choose up to three)

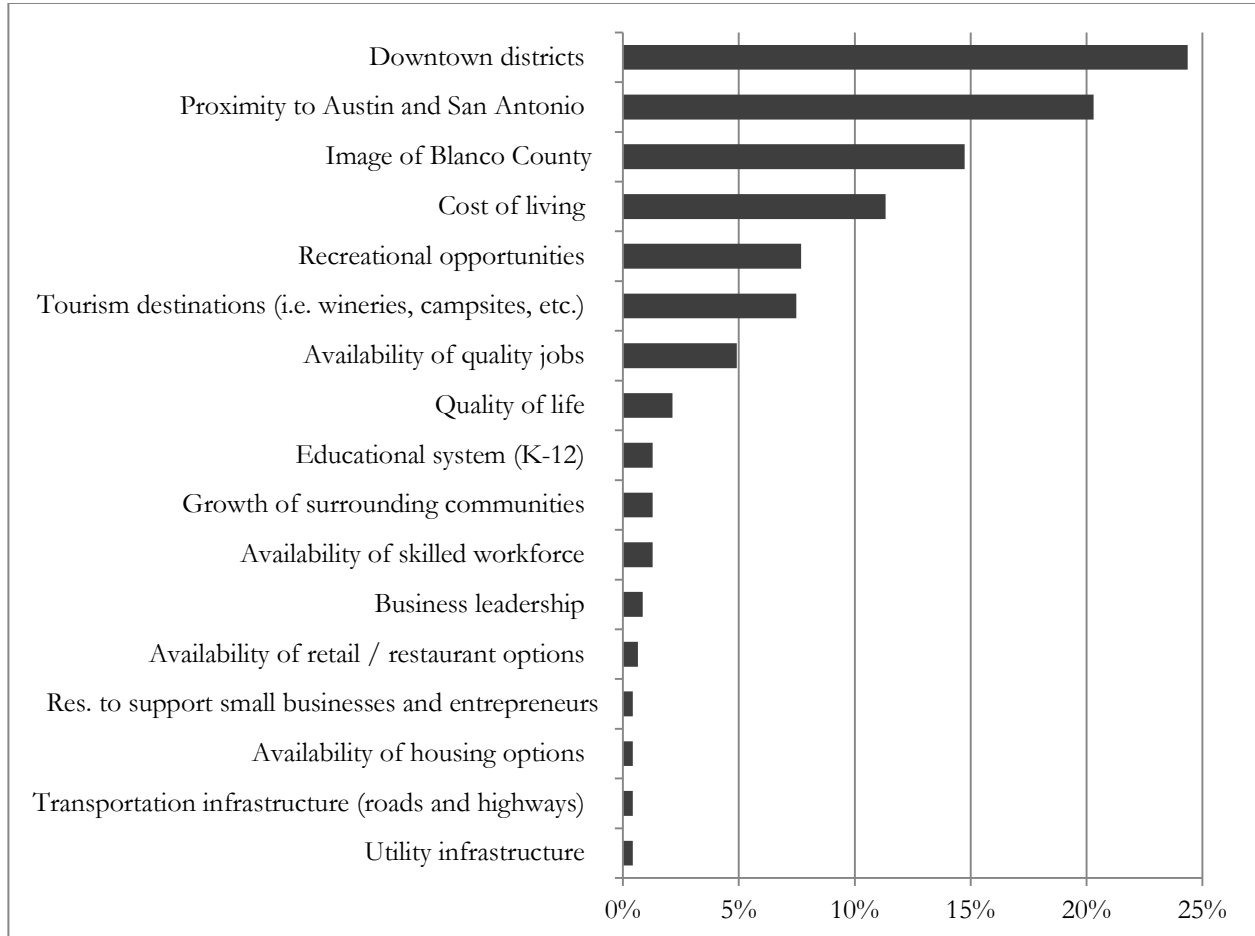


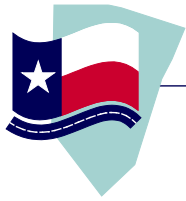


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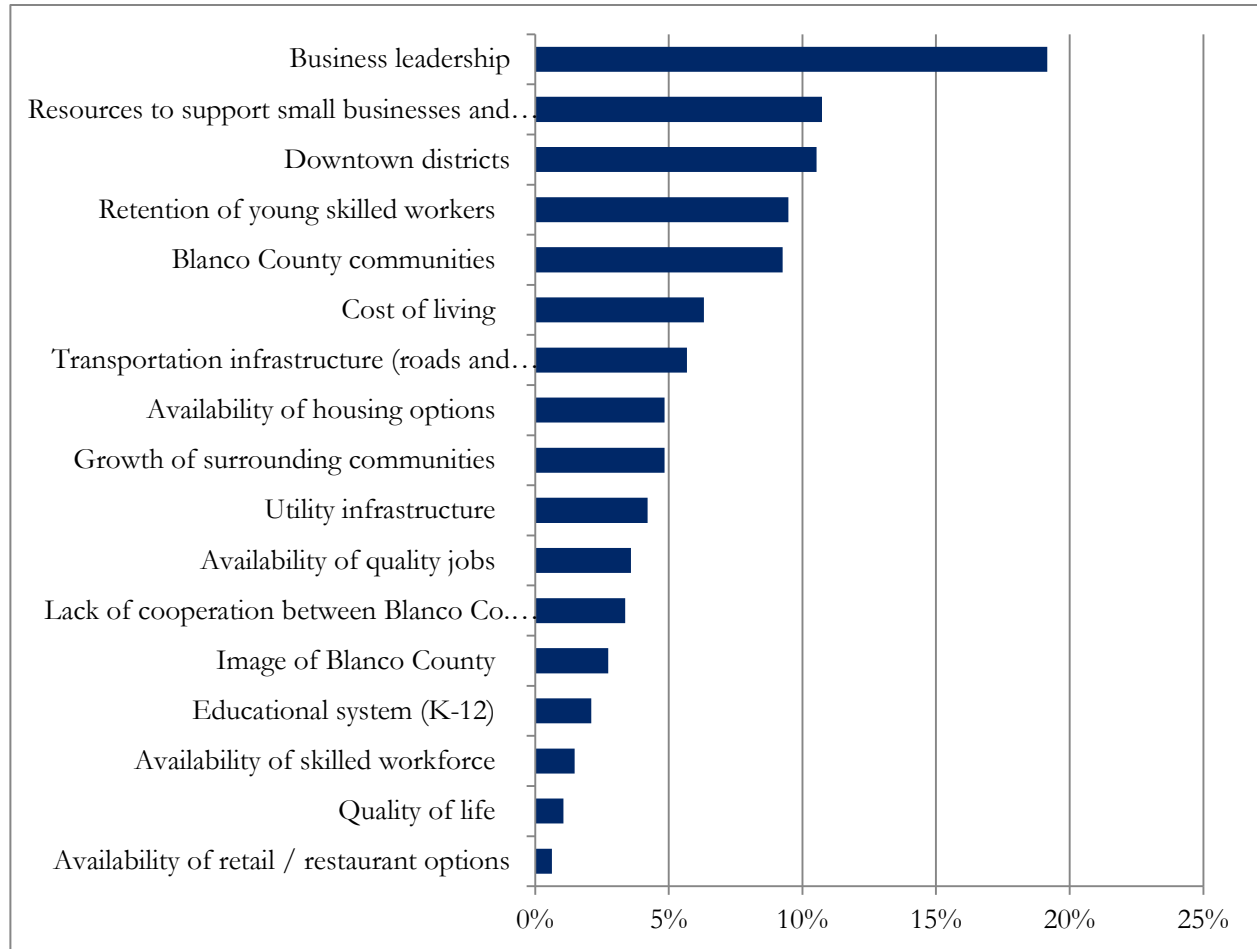
18. What are Blanco County's greatest assets that can contribute to future or continued economic growth?

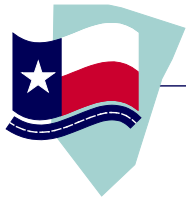




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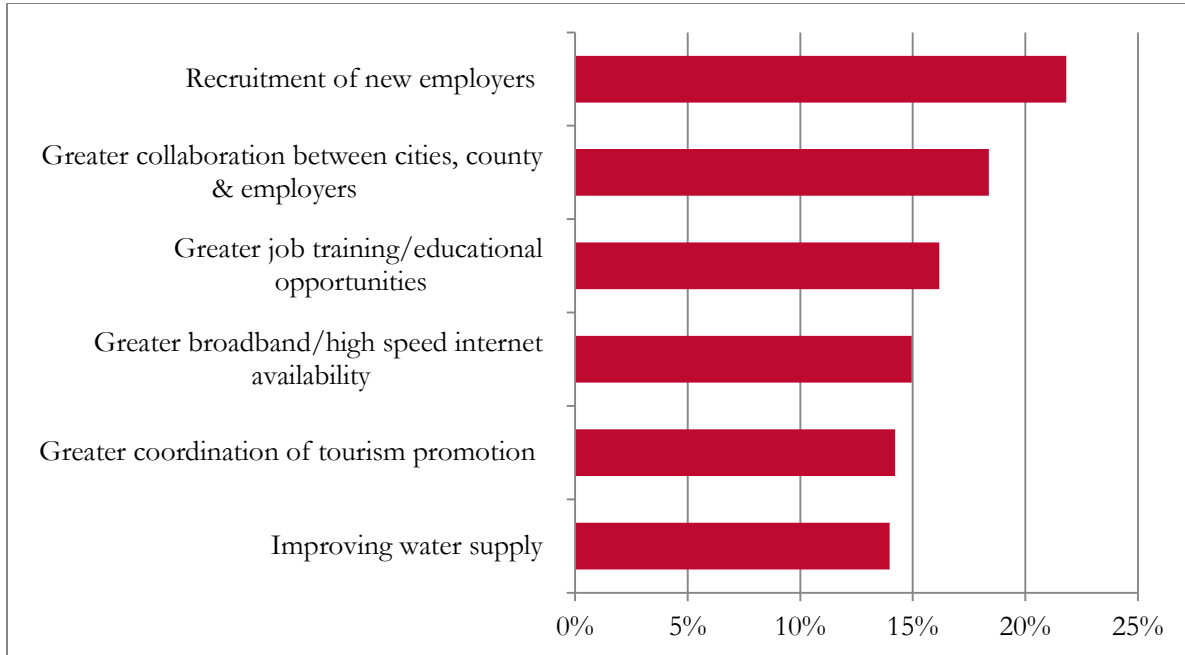
19. What are the most significant challenges facing Blanco County's economic growth potential?



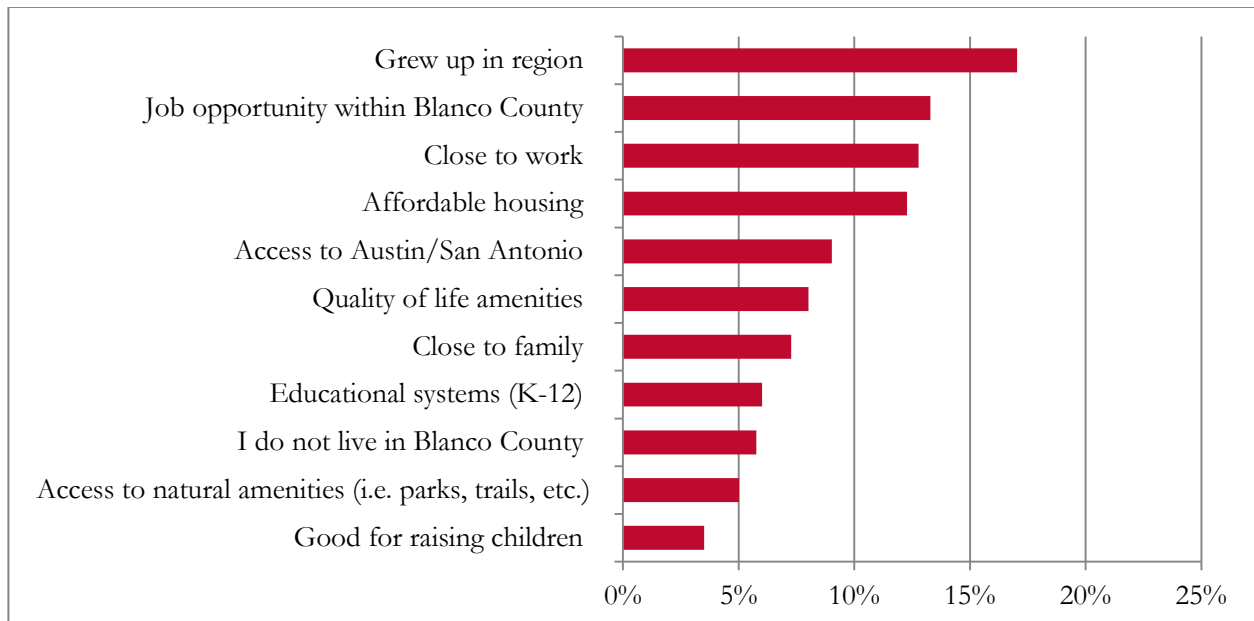


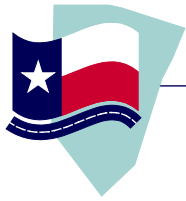
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20. What economic development initiatives would you most like to see occur in the county?



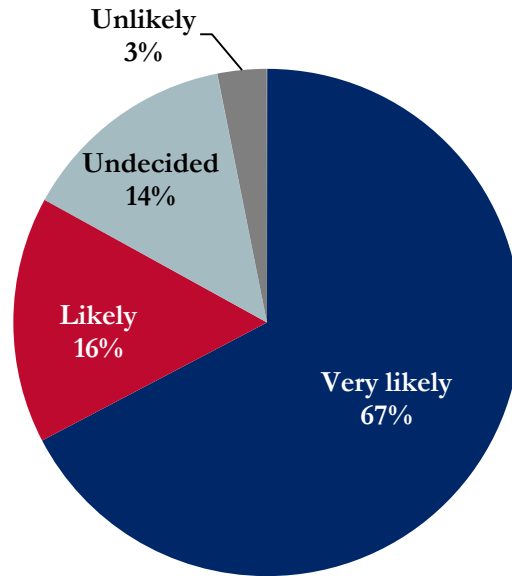
21. What are the primary reasons you have chosen to live in Blanco County?



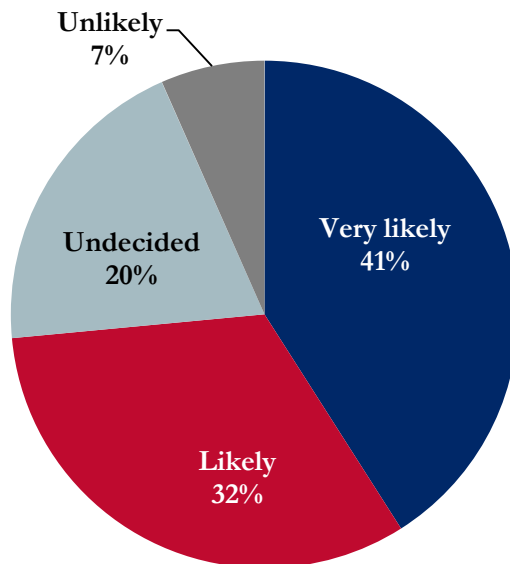


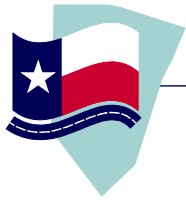
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22. How likely are you to stay in Blanco County over the next five years?



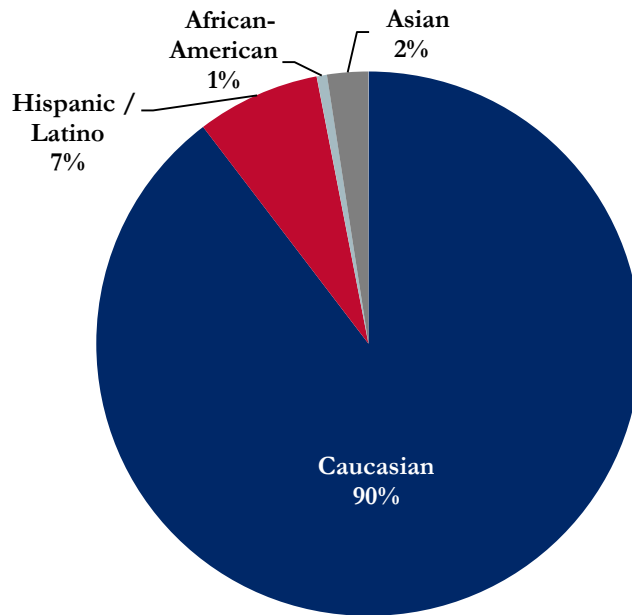
23. How likely are you to recommend Blanco County to others as a place to live?



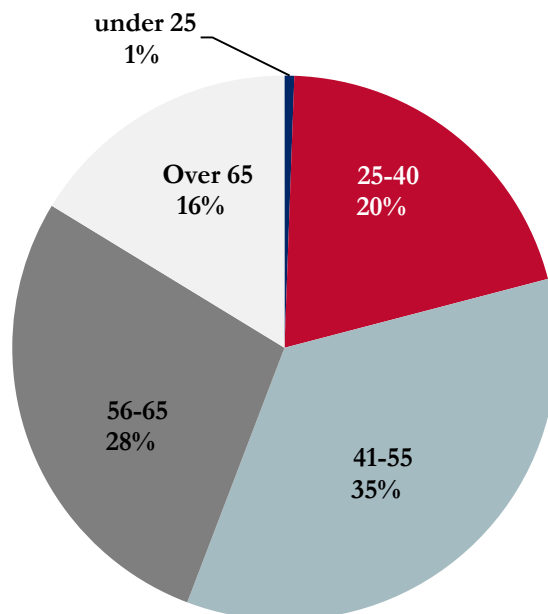


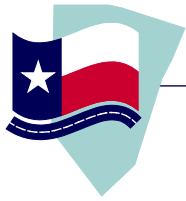
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24. What is your race/ethnicity?

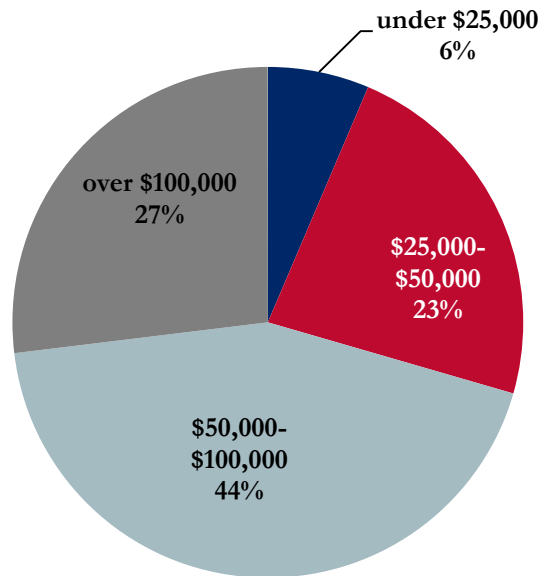


25. What is your age group?



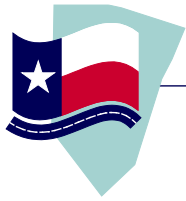


26. What was the combined annual household income of all household members in 2012?



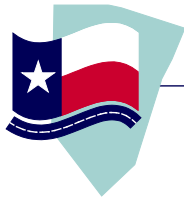
27. What transportation issues not mentioned in this survey do you think are important for the future of Blanco County?

- *clear bushes/ trees at highway intersections - safer, long sight view!*
- *There are several county roads with enough traffic congestion on them to warrant being changes to state maintenance.*
- *Bikes on country roads*
- *Maintenance of city roads within Johnson City. And there are no curbs and few sidewalks improving the looks of neighborhoods in town.*
- *bypass on the east side of Blanco*
- *As it stands now, Blanco County does not have much of a transportation issue, however, if we plan to truly expand, then we need more infrastructure.*
- *It isn't always about roads and transportation*
- *This may not be what this question means, but the placement of the stop signs should not run parallel to the walkways. Traffic should have to stop to make sure there are no pedestrians walking or riding through the intersections. ie: From the High School to the other schools!*
- *We need more highway lanes and over and under passes to accomidate commuters*
- *access to enter Highway 281 and Highway 290 from the side streets is becoming increasingly difficult. Traffic continues to increase and visibility continues to decrease. Cars parked on the highway of Highway 290 in Johnson City makes entering the highway even more difficult. These highways have become a major route for 18 wheelers.*
- *H.O.V. Lanes*
- *Bus*



27. What transportation issues not mentioned in this survey do you think are important for the future of Blanco County?

- *Divided Hwy (281 S of Blanco)*
- *Walkability; alternative transportation*
- *Hire competent professional people/companies to do our road improvement.*
- *City streets of Johnson City and Blanco in some parts are too narrow and have NO sidewalks...not safe for the children or cars when turning corners-near mishaps all the time.*
- *City streets are crumbling.*
- *Beautification of highways, sidewalks in town to allow people to walk. Signage directing tourists to locations/ activities.*
- *Town of Blanco needs more protected crossing*
- *Truck traffic on 281*
- *Safety & quality of roadway 290 between J.C. & Fredericksburg.*
- *CARTS - need more.*
- *More carts.*
- *Potential subdivisions on County Roads.*
- *Turn lane needed north of 281/290 intersection in Johnson City. Speed indicators on 281/290 corridor instead of speed traps*
- *Critical need for Turn lanes on 290 between Johnson city and Fredericksburg.*
- *Keeping bikers off two lane roads in the hills. I have come close to hitting three different bikers over the years because they ride in the middle of the road & you don't see them when you come over a hill. It is very scary for this to happen.*
- *Speed of traffic through town and 18 wheelers. Cops pull over a few cars, never the big trucks.*
- *The congestion going into Austin and San Antonio effects when or if we go there. Easy access to larger population centers is important.*
- *n/a*
- *Access to transportation for disabled that are rural.*
- *improve safety on 290 and 281*
- *Need more traffic lights to slow down the big 18 wheeler trucks running US Hwy 281*
- *A 24 hour taxi cab service*
- *I think that we need to have a parking area for people that want to come and shop in our town. We have a few wonderful shops but no convenient parking which is a big frustration to people when they visit Johnson City*
- *For Johnson City, we need more street lights along Main St. (Hwy 290) to slow traffic.*
- *stricter speed limits on Ranch Rd. 165. It's a racetrack. No one goes 55 in the 55 speed zone.*

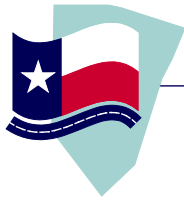


27. What transportation issues not mentioned in this survey do you think are important for the future of Blanco County?

- *Public transport from Blanco to San Antonio or Austin*
- *Keep bikes off of roads with no shoulders. The do not have a licence and they don't pay state taxes and they don't have insurance*
- *transportation for elderly/ shuttle service*
- *lack of transportation*
- *Public transportation to neighboring counties and Austin*
- *Public van service to: Austin, San Antonio, Dripping Springs, Fredericksburg, Marble Falls*
- *move the mailboxes off hwy 281 before someone gets hurt getting their mail.(several mailboxes on bonita at bottom of steep hill)*
- *Making road[s] bigger WILL contribute to more traffic, noise pollution, decreased scenic value. Roads aren't unsafe; its people who drive fast or drunk.*
- *taxi cabs or more carts for help moving aging population*
- *High speed rail hubs from outskirts of San Antonio and Austin*
- *parking and access to square*
- *bike lanes*
- *public transportation*
- *mass transit to larger cities*
- *repair of bumpy roads and improved sidewalks*
- *More Crosswalks: Close 11th from Hwy 281 to College Street*
- *City and county road maintenance needs great improvements*
- *Widen US281 to San Antonio*
- *Bus*
- *widen roads to permit more traffic*
- *Bus service*
- *Destruction of your rural agricultural perperties*

28. What economic development issues not mentioned in this survey do you think are important for the future of Blanco County?

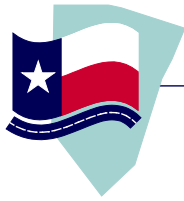
- *place to country western dance-not a huge event center!*
- *lack of coorindation between the Cities of Blanco and Johnson City and the County to move forward in the same direction to promote the County as a whole.*
- *Johnson City Chamber has a reputation to not allow growth. That needs to change and JC needs to accept growth.*
- *Keep the population down.*
- *There are alot of vacant buildings, for example the old Super S building, that are not being used. I am not sure if the cost is too high for these buildings considering the age and condition of them. Perhaps businesses would consider them if there was some incentive to do so. The cost of permits to upgrade them, as well as utilities in a somewhat rundown building make the cost of doing business here higher. And if a business can't*



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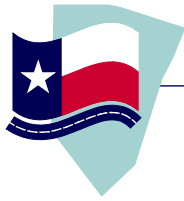
see the potential for growth here as being worth the risk of these costs they will never come.

- *We need to encourage business growth. Elected officials need to see the big picture. They can not continue to restrict growth.*
- *bike and bike trails throughout county*
- *The biggest issue we face is the local governments don't encourage, and in some cases, prevent new business from coming in. There is a small town attitude that is not conducive to bringing in new business. I would say look to Fredericksburg; it is able to keep a small town feel but has better economic growth compared to Blanco County.*
- *Planned development to ensure rural charm is maintained during growth*
- *We need more businesses! The existing buildings need to be affordable to the locals to start up a business. The school needs to provide a better and safer education for all, no matter their abilities. We have a high rate of single parents. More affordable housing is needed for minimum wage paying jobs, and high cost of child care.*
- *We need bigger and better options for groceries and retail establishments*
- *Incubators for Agrito??????*
- *All the road paved and re-paint sign.*
- *Natural settings. Nature walks - parks.*
- *Need more developments that are catered to children - Parks, play scapes, swimming pool, movie theater, learning center etc. There is nothing for children/ kids or families to do without having to travel outside of Blanco County.*
- *Need to bring in chain stores manufacturing*
- *Community support is desperately needed.*
- *Not enough population to promote the counties/ community leader's grand ideas.*
- *Golf course for Johnson City. Women go to the wineries, men go play golf. Can't be a legitimate non-lake, non-coastal tourist destination without a golf course. Also could use additional fast-food restaurants and more visible hotels. Also, for Johnson City to not have high-speed internet in 2013 (low-speed DSL and moderate speed, high-cost satellite doesn't count) while Marble Falls, Dripping Springs, Fredericksburg and Blanco do is unacceptable.*
- *Misguided belief that the county can/ should "stay as it is".*
- *Sustainability. The city partnering with groups and associations for bartering.*
- *City's should use hotel tax for eco devel not for city services.*
- *The need to reach out to potential employers and show them the benefit of doing business in JC/ Blanco/ Blanco Co.*
- *City/ County working with economic development.*
- *OCST - Econ. dev. should not cost tax payers.*
- *Water & sewer infrastructure outside city limits might cause proliferation of stand alone small inefficient systems.*
- *Why do the municipalites own all of the prime retail space?*
- *Small Business Development*
- *We must find a compromise between those that want little or no change in Blanco Co. and those that see the*



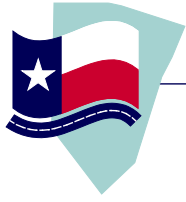
28. What economic development issues not mentioned in this survey do you think are important for the future of Blanco County?

- need for growth and the need to regulate the growth that is coming to Blanco Co.*
- *Providing things to do for teens is important in attracting new families to move here. Supporting programs like YCAP is vital to growth.*
- *Busines friendly tax abatements. Hiring of an Economic Development professional. Updated county and city web sites.*
- *Locals who want to see groth*
- *Lack of economic development support by county government. No input by citizens for major county expenditures. Bad financial decisions by county government.*
- *definite need to promote tourism as an industry, there is much to offer in Blanco County, especially with the winerys and LBJ boyhood home and national park.*
- *I believe we need to improve our sidewalks and parking so visitors will want/feel invited to park their car and walk around. It is like a sidewalk to your home - you showing your guest the way into your home. Large amounts of traffic travel through our county everyday with more on the weekends and we need to caputre them to stay a bit with restaurants & attractions, but they need a place to park and a sidewalk to get there. You have to start at the begining.*
- *I have been here 20 years & I find the original residents don't want growth so they do what they can to keep it out. I really don't have an opinion one way or another as I am retired.*
- *Blanco can't grow until it fixes it's water and sewer plants. The city streets aren't that great either. Need to quit spending money on other stuff and focus on what's important. Say no every now and then.*
- *n/a*
- *Need retail and employers to keep young people*
- *Loop around Blanco so semis don't come through town.*
- *improving town squares and improving utility development*
- *Water supply does not support development of new businesses.*
- *Need a HEB/Walmart type store centrally located between Johnson city and Blanco. Need a Pharmacy like Walgreen. These are facts of life in this 21st century. We all shop at these places now but drive 25 miles and spend our money other counties. The property taxes for businesses are punitive and deters small businesses from venturing. The county tax assessors must be made to care about the survival of small businesses and not taxing them to death. Such short sightedness and indifference puts a drag in the county's ultimate economic development. Need a midscale health care facility that can be centrally located between Johnson City and Blanco and that may also serve Dripping Springs to some extent. These businesses may lay a foundation towards attracting other businesses and will help to keep the next generation from being forced to leave in search of jobs and a better future for their children or after graduating from college lure them back to Blanco county to settle. We must preserve the rural hill country charm but also gracefully step into the 21st century. Given the proximity of Blanco county to Austin and San Antonio a "tucked away in the hills" amusement park would be the ultimate development booster but we need to walk and not be stagnant before we can run.*
- *We definently need to have a sports complex to hold baseball tournaments for our youth. My two boys play and we are always having to travel to towns like Burnet, Mason and LLano because they have better fields and more room to hold tournaments. These tournaments usually last three days which means people coming from out of town to shop in our stores, eat in our resteraunts and lodge here. The more things we can do to have*



28. What economic development issues not mentioned in this survey do you think are important for the future of Blanco County?

- people come to JC and see what its all about would lead to great opportunities.*
- *I am VERY VERY concerned about losing the HILL COUNTRY to development. This issue NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED. Soon we won't have a Texas Hill Country as I remember it as a child and young adult. THAT'S SCARY!!!*
 - *Need better internet services*
 - *recruiting business is imperative providing incentives for new business*
 - *Available resources to help a small business succeed.*
 - *Too many restrictions on business when starting up. Such a sign restrictions.*
 - *We need to encourage small businesses that can pay a decent salary, but not be drained that can come to Blanco. We need quality businesses here and we need to train high school students on the ways to work and not take a handout from the government. Our teens are lazy and do not care about an education or a job when they finish school. Therefore the number of good employees are very few. Children should be tested in 10th grade and sent to a vocational program if they do not have interest in English, math, and sciences.*
 - *slow traffic down in city of blanco - 70 inside city limits is too fast*
 - *all addressed*
 - *Keep Blanco small*
 - *County needs to work with new business -- county stuck in a "history" rut.*
 - *Environmental issues ARE development issues!*
 - *Water is a big issue. concerned with other fast growing communities taking blancos water. install rain water barrels. Issue with no amenities or medical care in blanco county. 281 needs to be all four lanes, not 2.*
 - *I think especially in Johnson City (not Blanco) there is a feeling among powers that be that things are fine the way things are, and view any change as a threat!*
 - *Taxes and lack of affordable business rental space in Johnson City esp.*
 - *to support an influx of new citizens we will need a better supply of h20*
 - *I believe within the next 10 years Austin/San Antonio will be like Dallas/Fort Worth and Blanco County will be where they will meet to do 290/281 in T.*
 - *Need one story condominiums.*
 - *clean streets and well kept yards and houses in town*
 - *jobs and job training for young people under the age of 30*
 - *more landscaping and beautification in Blanco County*
 - *businesses work w/ schools more*
 - *public resources such as educational programs (family planning, nutrition)*
 - *sewer and water upgrades*
 - *more retail and restaurant options, have to travel 20 miles to retail or groceries*
 - *PD that acts on and enforces laws*
 - *job availability*
 - *like the small town feeling*
 - *Movie theatre, HEB, more restaurants like uptown blanco. Chamber members who do not support Blanco ISP*



BLANCO COUNTY

Transportation and Economic Development Plan

28. What economic development issues not mentioned in this survey do you think are important for the future of Blanco County?

- *More job opportunity*
- *Entertainment*
- *Recreation opportunities for children-Pool in Blanco, Movie Theater, playground, Boy's & Girls Club?*
- *Lack of Leadership/Quality? in Johnson City*
- *Keeping our parks & wildlife*
- *Minimize urban sprawl, keep rural and historic/cultural environment*

Appendix B – Streetscape Concept Plan, Blanco, Texas



Current

Corner of 4th Street and Pecan Street Blanco, Texas

The corner of 4th Street and Pecan Street in Blanco is the hub of the Historical Square. Traffic is constant, accidents are increasing. This is where we decided to initially

concentrate our streetscape efforts. Our purpose is twofold:

1. Improve safety for both pedestrians and vehicles, and 2.

Provide an aesthetically pleasing and ADA compliant area in which all would feel safe, secure and satisfied as they travel around and through the Square.



Future

The future state of 4th Street and Pecan brings together the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, history and economics into a safe, aesthetically pleasing, historically accurate, area in which citizens can take pleasure in their surroundings, in which business owners can take advantage of an attractive 'front porch' to their businesses, and to which visitors find ample reasons to return again and again.

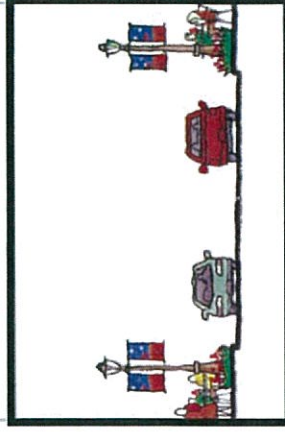


Blanco Streetscape Committee

City Hall
300 Pecan Street
Blanco, TX 78606

~Streetscape~ Concept Plan

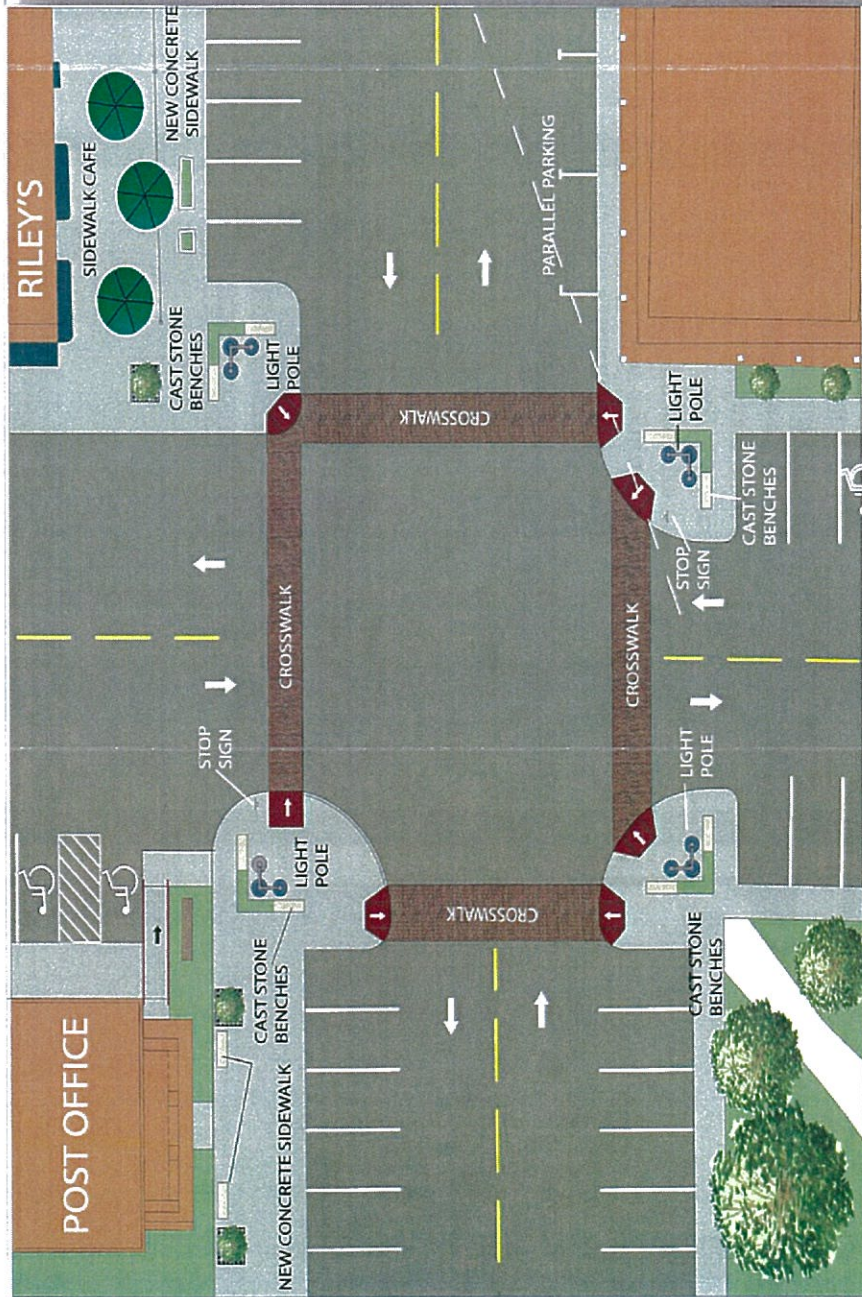
Blanco, Texas



Objectives:



- *Pedestrian Friendly
- *Environmentally Pleasing
- *Traffic Calming
- *Economically Attractive



Conceptual Illustration – 4th and Pecan

The concept of a safe, aesthetically pleasing, pedestrian friendly and traffic-calming Plan will be carried throughout the Historical Square area. The Plan is divided into 3 Phases: 1. Sidewalks and 4th and Pecan Streets, 2. Sidewalks and crosswalks on the East and South side of the Square and, 3. Calming of US Highway 281 traffic on the west side of the Square. Texas

Department of Transportation will play a key role in the success of the project. With their guidance and expertise, we expect the Historical Square to be totally transformed into a safer, friendlier environment upon completion of all three phases of the project. The citizens and City of Blanco will contribute their efforts and resources to the success of the project.

Q&A

How much will the project cost?

Because the project has not been fully scoped to include detailed construction drawings, we do not have an estimate of total costs. However, based on similar projects, we do not expect the total cost to exceed \$1m.

Who will pay for the project?

We're hopeful that TxDot will contribute a significant amount to the overall project given their engineering talent. We expect the remainder of the cost will be funded through grants, donations and in-kind contributions.

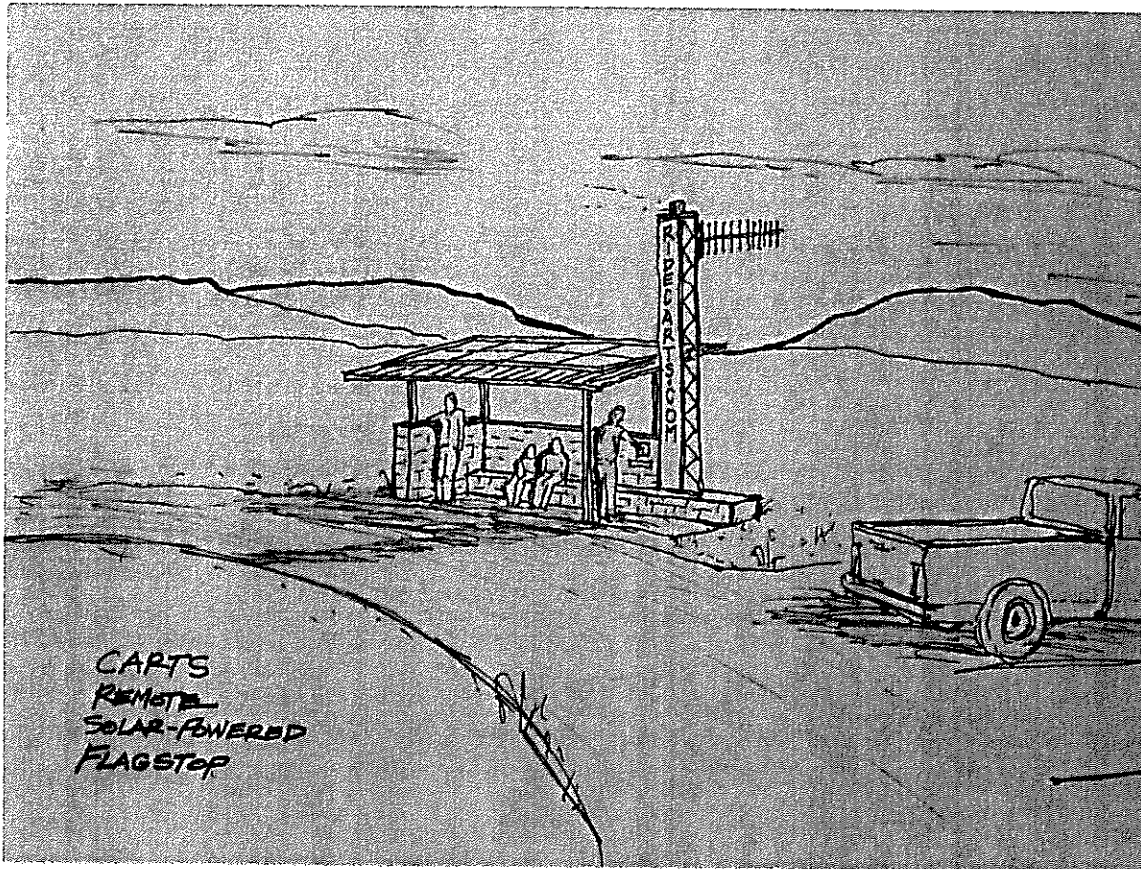
What impact will the plan have on local businesses?

Experience with similar projects throughout the country is that improvements of this kind stimulate and grow the economies of the towns involved. Businesses see more traffic and customers because the towns are more attractive to be in.

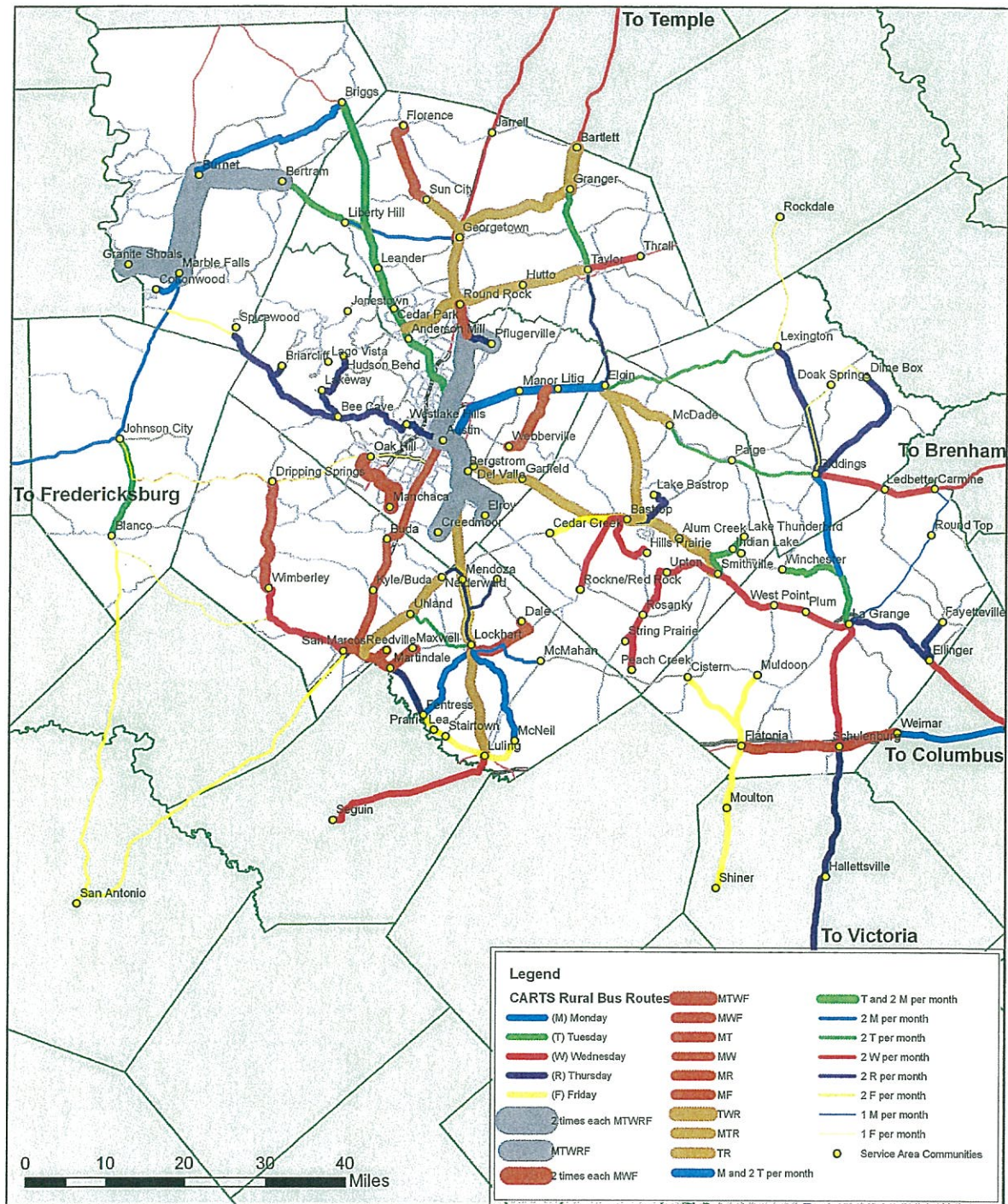
Appendix C – Capital Area Rural Transit System

Plans are afoot to afford CARTS customers improved regional access with predictable city-to-city travel that incorporates CARTS-designed ITS flag-stop facilities in between towns, and in small towns at which an intermodal facility is not yet built or not warranted.

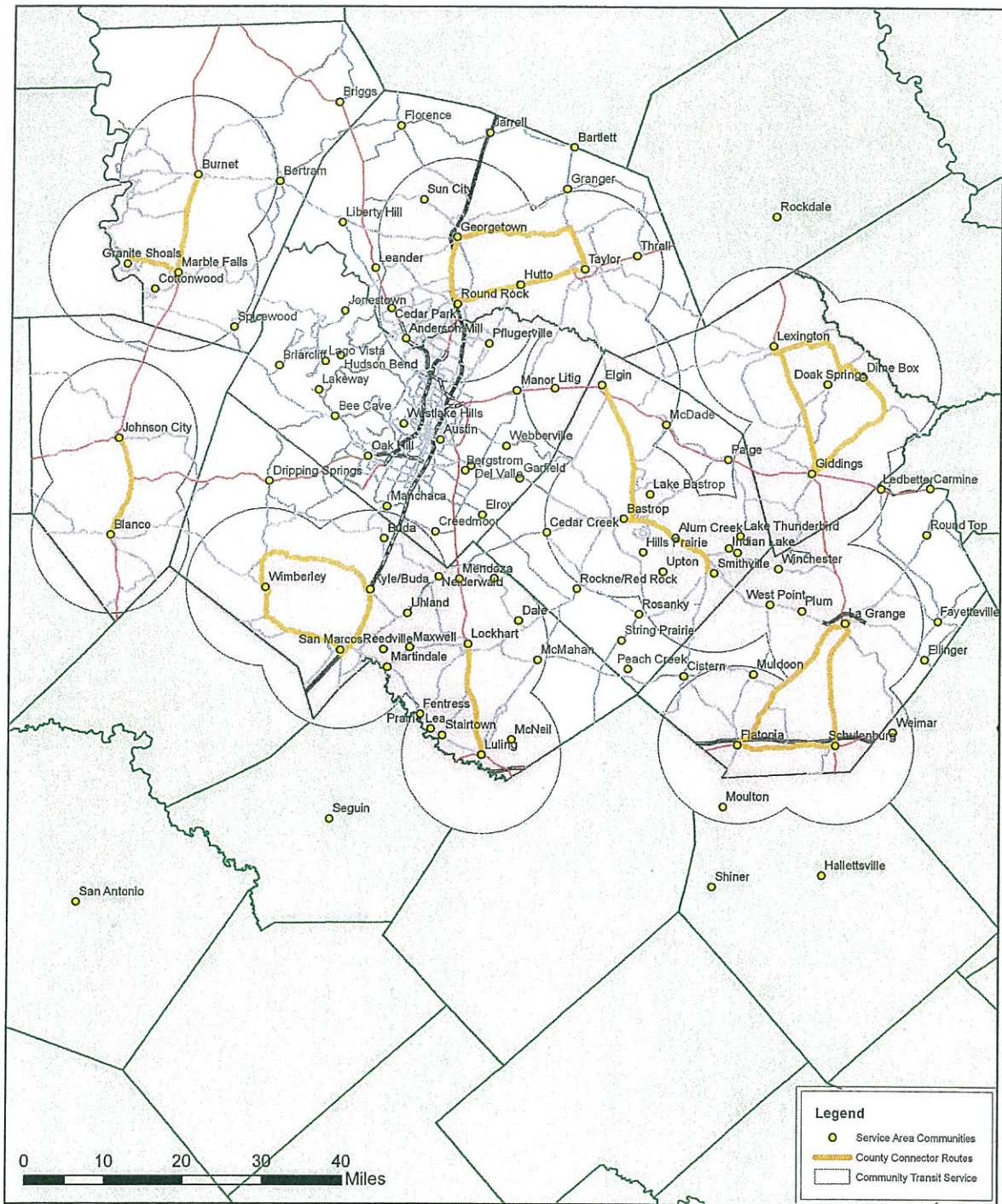
These flag-stops will use the CARTS automatic vehicle location system to both alert the bus of passengers waiting and inform the customer when the bus will arrive. The design of a prototype is planned under this project.



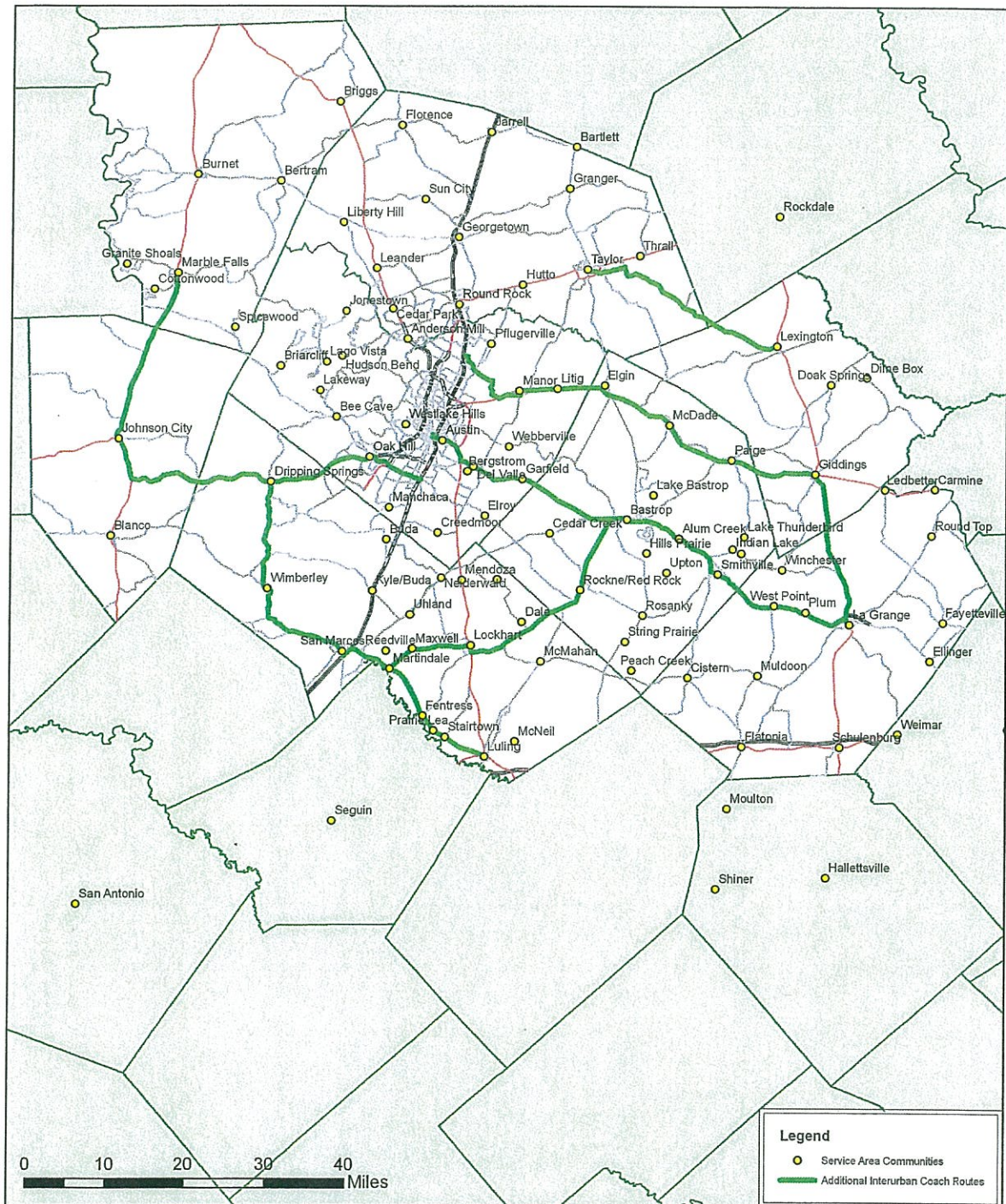
This prototype CARTS flag-stop facility design would be developed to test the feasibility of the ITS features of the service, and to serve as the basis for a standard design for additional facilities that will be incorporated into the modified CARTS regional route structure. Various sizes and configurations of this type of facility would be designed to enable CARTS to have a flexible solution to Inter-City Bus service in smaller towns.



CARTS Existing Community Transit Services.



Community Transit Service and Recommended County Connector Routes.



Recommended Additional Interurban Coach Routes.