



2 COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Sarasota-Manatee region is experiencing significant growth. Residential and commercial development is increasing to the east of I-75 and redevelopment in cities is a major focus. Regional transportation mobility and connectivity has become a concern with the increased population growth and expanding commercial areas, as well as the increasing challenge of providing sufficient attainable housing for the area's teachers, firefighters, police officers and service industry workers, among others. This section of the plan aims to provide a complete community context for the 2030 LRTP.

Throughout the region, development trends are generally moving eastward away from the coastline and the historic center of development along the US 41 corridor. Residential growth demands are converting agricultural lands at a fast pace. There is a widening land use dichotomy in both counties, in which growth pressures east of I-75 and in the North Port/Englewood area continue largely unabated, while local governments and economic development interests are pushing to revitalize and invest in the traditional core communities along the US 41 corridor. Bradenton, Palmetto, Sarasota and Venice are involved in substantial redevelopment and infill initiatives, which are primarily focused on attracting higher-end residential living to the downtowns, enhancing the character around the college/universities and cultural centers, or converting aging industrial and retail land uses into mixed commercial activities. This parallel trend has major implications for the area's transportation system, including investment decisions to be made by the MPO.

2.1 REGIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

The West Central Florida Region has experienced an intense level of growth as the area's natural beauty, cultural amenities, regional access and expanding economic opportunities attract retirees, students, professionals and service industry workers. This region grew by more than half a million residents from 1990 to 2000, and continuing growth is projected to add nearly a million and a half more people by 2030 according to the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR).

Manatee County's population increased from 1990 to 2000 by 24.7 percent, according to the U.S. Census. By 2004, the population had increased another 13 percent to 298,769 persons. The average annual growth rate was 2.97 percent, almost twice the average annual growth rate for Florida, which is 1.8 percent. The number of transportation disadvantaged individuals is growing, which creates a higher demand for public transportation services.

Sarasota County experienced slightly lower growth rate in the 1990s than Manatee County, with a population increase of 17 percent from 1990 to 2000. By 2004, the population had increased another eight percent to 2004. The average annual growth rate was 2.05 percent. The county's population is projected to increase between seven and nine percent from 2004 to 2008. As is the case in Manatee County, there is a large number of transportation disadvantaged individuals that need public transportation services.

The regional growth was fueled not only by retirees, but also by the fact that the growth in employment was nearly double that of population growth, indicative of a strong local economy. This has created a



strong pressure to develop east of I-75 and in northern Manatee County. The dwindling supply of available land in the western parts of the urbanized area has fueled the phenomenal growth within the I-75 corridor and the city of North Port in particular.

Nearly all of the relatively inexpensive available land in the Sarasota/Manatee region is east of I-75 and in North Manatee County. There is still plenty of vacant or available land north of Palmetto in Manatee County, east of I-75, in South Sarasota County east of Venice and throughout rapidly developing North Port. These areas will absorb the majority of the projected regional growth due to these large contiguous and available land parcels, including continuing conversion of agricultural lands to housing and retail development. In the past five years the region has seen development cross I-75 and watched the list of proposed Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) and smaller residential developments in this area grow. The unincorporated eastern regions of Manatee and Sarasota Counties will absorb the majority of incoming residents as well as places of employment. This will require significant transportation investments. Figure 2-1 and Figure 2-2 show the areas in the region that are expected to have the greatest population and employment growth through 2030. The additional residents are projected to be absorbed primarily in the following areas:

New development in North Manatee County, near the I-275/I-75 interchange;

East of I-75 in both counties;

North Port and South Sarasota County;

Downtown redevelopment areas through denser housing types such as condominiums, and

Moderate growth throughout the remainder of the region.

2030 projections derived from local government comprehensive plans indicate that employment growth will not be as spread out, but concentrated in the most densely urbanized areas and around transportation corridors and hubs, such as the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, interchanges on I-75, Port Manatee, and potentially the new village activity centers in the East Sarasota County, Venice and North Port areas.



2.1.1 GROWTH FORECASTS

The Needs Assessment analysis was completed according to the population and employment Trend Scenario developed during the 2030 LRTP process. The University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) produces county population forecasts, which are accepted statewide as population control totals for use in MPO Long Range Transportation Plans. The BEBR gives a low, mid-range and high population forecast by county for 2030. Generally, most MPOs use the mid-range forecast as their countywide population control total, although adjustments are possible based on local conditions. A ratio of jobs to population from the 2000 base year is used as a basis for the 2030 employment control total forecasts, with adjustments made, as appropriate, based on trends. Based on development trends and anticipated regional growth, the MPO's LRTP Steering Committee agreed to use the median between BEBR's mid-range and high forecast as the Trend Scenario for Sarasota/Manatee Counties. Using this projection, by 2030, the Sarasota-Manatee region is expected to grow from nearly 600,000 residents in 2000 to just under 1 million residents, a 70 percent increase overall.

Using those projections, North Port will become the largest city by 2030. Palmetto will have the highest percentage growth of any Manatee County municipality. Concerns expressed by North Port that the Trend Scenario projections do not adequately reflect the city's growth potential have been addressed in this Needs Assessment by developing a High Growth Scenario. The High Growth Scenario reflects North Port's potential build-out population to about 150,000 (versus 80,000 using the Trend Scenario). There were other changes in the High Growth Scenario reflecting Eastern Sarasota County and Manatee County, but the modifications made in North Port were the greatest. For transportation needs in South County, both the Trend Scenario and the High Growth Scenario were evaluated for impacts on the transportation system.

The current spatial mismatch of employment and residential centers is not expected to change significantly, with roughly the same percentages of residents commuting significant distances each day to work. Travel patterns may change somewhat as non-residential development shapes the I-75 corridor, but travel demand is still largely expected to flow into the downtowns and beaches. If current land use trends are followed, the majority of growth will occur along the I-75 corridor. These two factors indicate that I-75 and other north-south roads will bear the majority of the burden of increased growth. There are a limited number of continuous north-south roads, placing additional strain on the few that go through.

The implications of the growth forecast are that the region is generally continuing to disperse outward, making it increasingly difficult to serve such development efficiently with the region's transportation system. Although growth rates are high in eastern and southern areas, overall densities are generally quite low. Despite redevelopment initiatives in all three of the region's major downtown centers as well as Palmetto and along the Tamiami Trail, the trend indicates new commercial or mixed-use town centers will continue to compete with traditional downtowns for market share of retail and office development. Residential development east of I-75 and throughout the I-75 corridor means that commuting patterns are likely shifting toward a north-south direction as the historic pull of downtown Bradenton and downtown Sarasota lessens for commuting traffic. The beaches will be a continuing draw for visitors, tourists and local residents alike, but reverse commuting (west to east) and inter-county commuting are expected to have a more pronounced influence on transportation investments in the future.



2.1.2 DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT AND URBAN VILLAGES

As development has spread east of I-75, Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) and plans for walkable urban villages have become increasingly common. Landowners are taking advantage of the large swaths of inexpensive agricultural land available for conversion to development. Currently, there are 12 DRIs in Manatee County and 14 in Sarasota County. One example is Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, one of the area's largest land holdings stretching along much of eastern Manatee County into northern Sarasota County that includes several DRIs. The most well known DRI in that development is Lakewood Ranch, a large mixed-use development east of I-75 that runs from SR 64 south to Fruitville Road in Sarasota County. It is estimated that Lakewood Ranch will eventually be home to more than 70,000 residents with a large employment and retail town center. A hospital, medical college and community college have already been built, and other retail aspects of this project are continuing to evolve. This project is just one of many of the large, mixed-use DRI projects occurring in central and eastern Manatee County. Another large DRI in this area is the Northwest Sector DRI. Four thousand housing units are planned as well as a substantial amount of commercial and office. This development alone is estimated to generate 43,000 trips per day when completed. Sarasota County also has a number of villages approved east of I-75 as part of its 2050 plan for comprehensive resource management. These will create clusters of retail and job centers surrounded by residential development. The nodes aim to decrease transportation and growth pressures by concentrating development and decreasing the length of trips needed for work, school and shopping. These developments are indicative of the pull of the I-75 corridor and the desire for regional access that will largely shape the Sarasota/Manatee region's transportation needs into the future.

2.1.3 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing affordability is a major concern of many residents, community leaders and local governments in the Sarasota Manatee area. The area has seen the highest increase in median housing prices in the nation over the past year. Many areas of Bradenton, Palmetto, Venice and Sarasota have become too expensive for residents such as police officers, school teachers, service industry workers and those in a number of other occupations to afford homes close to work. North Port, the eastern portions of the two counties, and even areas farther out, have begun to absorb the new "workforce" housing required for this income group. With increased impact fees and the rising cost of homes, even North Port is unlikely to remain affordable for long. The issue of affordable and attainable housing will only continue to increase in importance as more expensive homes are built in the undeveloped areas of the counties and as the service industry continues to expand.

As residents continue to move further out to find relatively affordable housing they will need to travel further to jobs in Sarasota, Bradenton, Palmetto, along the island beaches or to the higher-paying jobs in Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties. Transportation infrastructure will need to be improved to accommodate the increase in employment-related traffic. The trend throughout the West Central Florida region is towards inter-county commuting, with more than a quarter of Manatee County residents and nearly 15 percent of Sarasota County residents working in another county in 2000. Both represent increases over 1990 data. In addition, the percentage of these households without a vehicle has increased by 16.5 percent in Sarasota County and 19.5 percent in Manatee County from the 1990 to the 2000 Census. Currently, about six percent of all households are without a vehicle. These households will require



improved access to transit, not just wider roads as they move further from their place of employment due to the high cost of housing.

2.1.4 REDEVELOPMENT

Growth trends in the Sarasota/Manatee region are pulling in two different directions. Partly in reaction to the eastern growth pressures, each of the urbanized core areas, including downtown Bradenton, Sarasota, Palmetto, and Venice, have focused on redevelopment and infill development strategies to sustain their economic and residential vitality. These areas, as well as the corridors linking them such as US 41, are experiencing a decreasing number of vacant or available properties for new development. This forces a portion of the additional job or population growth in these centers to occur through redevelopment. However, there still exist sizable areas available for development south of central Bradenton and north and west of central Palmetto. These areas will see increased development as land becomes scarce. It is projected that downtown Bradenton will see an increase of 13,000 jobs and 16,000 residents over the next 25 years. Similarly, the urban core of Sarasota will also see an increase of nearly 15,000 jobs and 17,000 residents. The most significant downtown redevelopment and infill, in terms of percentage increase, is downtown Palmetto which is expected to see both its population and employment double in this same period.

Another critical redevelopment area is the US 301 corridor near the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport. This area between the two cities contains significant available areas for industrial, commercial and – potentially – residential development. Unlike other parts of the region, the area along US 41 and US 301 has reasonably good street connectivity and access, which makes it more accommodating for growth and redevelopment than other parts of the region, particularly those east of I-75 and north of the Manatee River. Due to the rising demand for land in the next 25 years, this is an area that remains appropriate for industrial and employment-based land uses. As this area near the airport becomes both a regional employment center and more densely populated, the surrounding road system will require additional investment and/or bus frequencies improved.

2.1.5 EMPLOYMENT SUMMARY

Ensuring economic vitality is a key factor in the development of the Sarasota/Manatee Long Range Transportation Plan. Freight and worker accessibility, intermodal connections and public transportation availability all play a role in how transportation supports the economic centers of activity in the two counties. Using employment, population and land use data from 2000, a number of employment centers can be identified throughout the Sarasota/Manatee region. Employment centers generally can be identified through land use categories, and from socioeconomic data showing areas that include a large number of jobs relative to housing units. Such centers are typically located around highway interchanges, downtown areas and at major cross-roads with good highway access. These centers are the economic engines of a region and include sufficient density of employment and job growth potential to support investments in regional accessibility and commuter-based transportation strategies.

Figure 2-3 shows the areas in the region that meet a basic definition of an employment center by having a minimum of five jobs for every household, based on 2000 census and employment data. These centers are key intermodal hubs in the region that need effective transportation strategies to help ensure the economic



success of the region. Access management, improvements to parallel corridors, and operational and intersection improvements are a few ways to enhance the surrounding road network serving these centers. In addition, improvements in public transportation service can provide greater worker accessibility to and from these centers.

Sarasota-Manatee region includes six regionally significant employment centers. They include Port Manatee, downtown Bradenton, the industrial area of Tallevast Road and US 301 near the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, downtown Sarasota, the intersection of Fruitville Road and I-75, and the interchange of I-75 and Jacaranda Boulevard, site of Sarasota County's largest private employer, PTG Industries. Port Manatee is an employment and intermodal center that is expected to double in capacity over the next 10 years, which will have a significant economic as well as surface transportation impact on the entire region. Several new developments are underway in downtown Bradenton and downtown Sarasota, which will bring more residential development into these employment centers, helping to generate more of a demand for multimodal transportation investments. Employment accessibility needs to be considered when establishing transit routes or service enhancements, making new road connections, and increasing road capacity.





2.1.6 FOCAL POINTS AND TRANSPORTATION HUBS

A primary goal of the 2030 LRTP is to encourage better connections among all modes between current key focal points in the region such as downtowns, employment centers, freight hubs, transit centers, and regional/community business districts. The beaches are an important focal point, not only for the large number of visitors they attract, but also for the thriving service industry that employs many Sarasota and Manatee County residents. Connections between the islands and the mainland hubs are critical.

Each community in the region has multiple community focal points where neighborhood residents go to work or to shop. The majority of these exist in the more dense downtown centers, along principal intersections or near other important transportation hubs.

Existing economic focal points include the following:

- Downtown or community centers in Sarasota, Bradenton, Palmetto, Venice and North Port
- Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport
- Port Manatee
- Beaches
- Primary intersections at major thoroughfares and commercial districts

The traditional freight hubs and industrial and employment focal points in the region have been along US 41 and US 301, as well as important east-west corridors such as University Parkway, Fruitville Road, Clark Road, SR 70, and SR 64. This began to change with the completion of I-75 in the 1980s. The interchanges along the interstate have attracted significant industry and created important job centers well to the east of the traditional city centers. This development pattern change has created new emerging focal points in the region.

Emerging focal points include the following:

- I-75 interchanges and associated business centers
- New DRIs such as Gateway North, Taylor Ranch, Lakewood Ranch, etc.
- Planned villages in East Sarasota County
- North Tamiami Trail educational and cultural corridor (redevelopment).



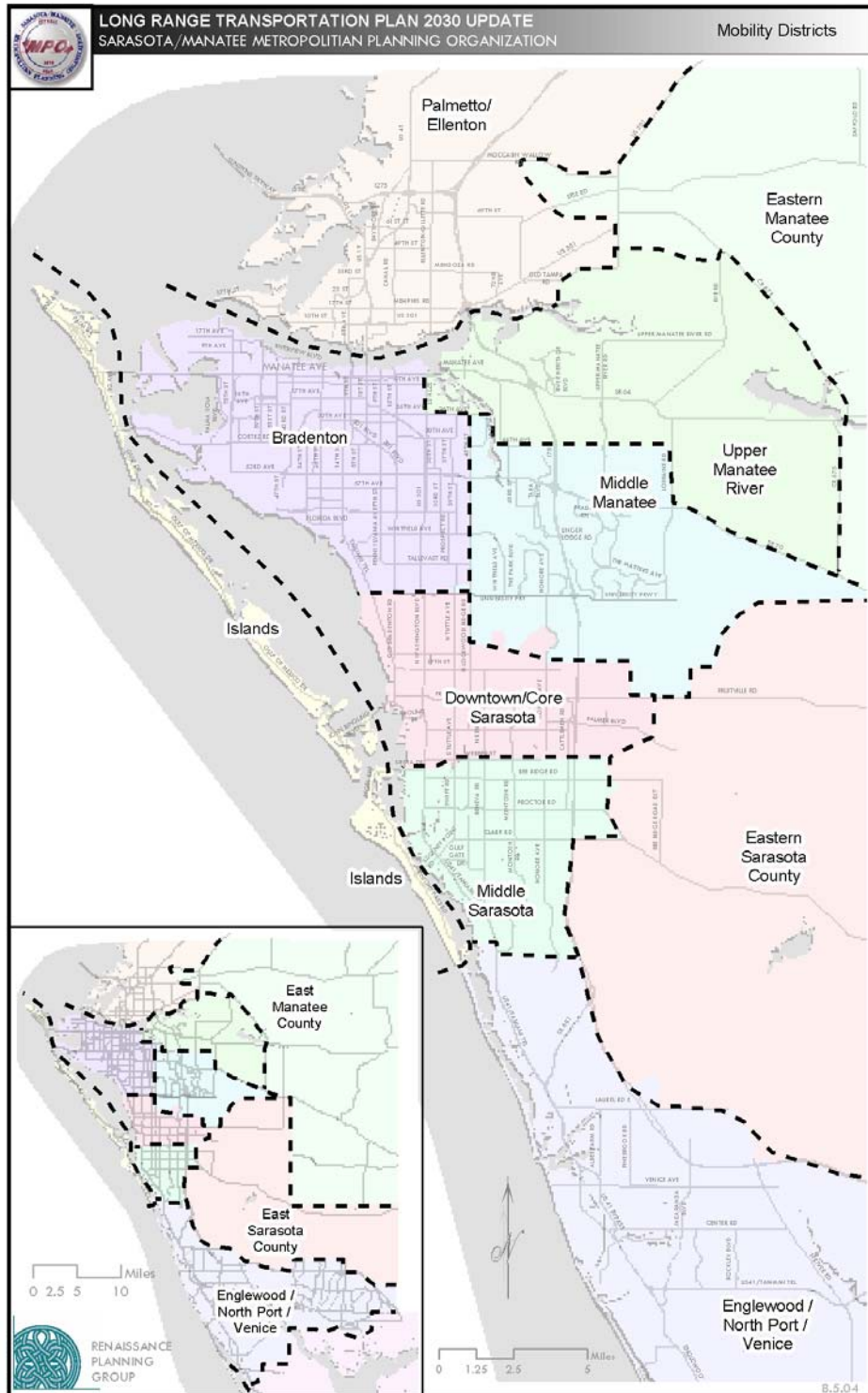
2.2 MOBILITY DISTRICT PROFILES

To guide the development of the 2030 LRTP, the MPO planning area was organized into 10 series of mobility districts covering Manatee, Sarasota and a portion of Charlotte County. In creating the plan, the districts have been used as an analysis tool and framework for public involvement. The districts help to structure the planning process and identify key issues, opportunities and challenges within different geographic areas, reflecting unique travel sheds and the region's diversity. An in-depth community profile was written for the entire region including a report on each identified subregion. This research established a strong basis for building a regional plan that reflected the area's history, diversity, and vision. The community profile identified regional transportation, land use and socio-economic conditions and trends within the Sarasota/Manatee region likely to influence the transportation system and its needs through 2030. A summary of findings for each mobility district profile is provided below. The entire Community Profile report may be obtained on request from the Sarasota/Manatee MPO.

The 10 mobility districts include Palmetto/Ellenton, the Bradenton area, Eastern Manatee County, Upper Manatee River, Middle Manatee, Downtown/Core Sarasota, Islands, Eastern Sarasota County, Middle Sarasota and Englewood/North Port/Venice. The boundaries for each district are not formal or official dividing lines, and are only used to help the study team summarize and gain insights into local transportation issues and needs. Figure 2-4 shows the boundaries for each mobility district.



Figure 2-4: Sarasota-Manatee Region

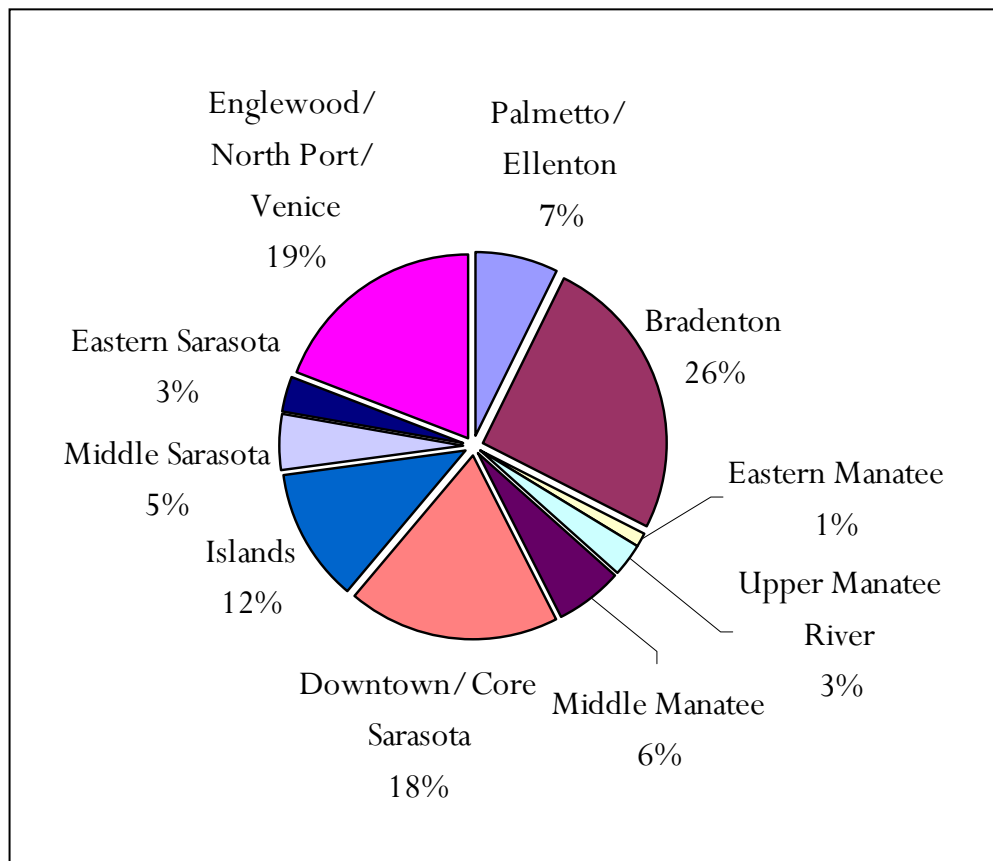




2.2.1.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 2-5 summarizes the percentage of the region’s population by mobility district. The Bradenton area mobility district has the highest percentage of people at 26 percent. Englewood/North Port/Venice is the next highest at 19 percent. Eastern Manatee had the lowest percentage of people at one percent.

Figure 2-5: Population Percentage by Mobility District



Source: 2000 US Census.

Table 2-1 summarizes 2000 demographics by mobility district. The Islands mobility district has the highest percentage of elderly at 43 percent. The Palmetto/Ellenton mobility district has the highest number of African American and Hispanic population at about 13 percent and 14 percent, respectively. The Middle Manatee mobility district has the lowest number of people who drive alone to work at about 74 percent. The Downtown/Core Sarasota mobility district has the highest number of people who have 0-1 vehicles available per household at about 33 percent, implying a greater reliance on, and potential use of, public transportation or carpooling. The Downtown/Core Sarasota mobility district also has the highest number of unemployed people at 2.5 percent.



Table 2-1: 2000 Demographic Summary by Mobility District

MOBILITY DISTRICT	65 YEARS OR OLDER	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC	DRIVE ALONE TO WORK	0-1 VEHICLES AVAILABLE PER HOUSEHOLD	UNEMPLOYED POPULATION
Palmetto/ Ellenton	28.3%	12.6%	14.4%	76.4%	30.1%	1.8%
Bradenton	25.1%	9.1%	9.9%	79.6%	31.9%	2.2%
Eastern Manatee	8.3%	2.3%	13.5%	75.7%	13.9%	1.9%
Upper Manatee River	15.9%	6.8%	4.2%	84.1%	17.7%	1.1%
Middle Manatee	24.6%	1.7%	3.4%	73.8%	19.0%	1.2%
Downtown Core/ Sarasota	26.1%	10.3%	7.8%	79.8%	32.7%	2.5%
Islands	43.1%	0.3%	1.7%	78.5%	27.0%	1.2%
Middle Sarasota	22.8%	1.0%	3.6%	85.1%	20.5%	1.8%
Eastern Sarasota	20.9%	0.8%	3.8%	84.0%	25.6%	1.5%
Englewood/North Port/ Venice	34.6%	1.8%	2.9%	80.8%	26.7%	1.6%

Population unemployed does not include retirees

2.2.2 TRAVEL TIME TO WORK

Table 2-2 summarizes the mean travel time to work in minutes by place of residence. The City of North Port has the longest average commute time in 2000, at about 29 minutes. The City of Longboat Key is the next highest at about 28 minutes. In both cases, the relatively long travel times reflect the lack of jobs located in the area and a predominantly single-use land development pattern. The City of Sarasota has the lowest travel time at 20 minutes, indicating that it has a fairly good mix of housing and jobs.



Table 2-2: Mean Travel Time to Work in Minutes

PLACE	1990 CENSUS	2000 CENSUS
City of Palmetto	18.5 minutes	22.7 minutes
City of Ellenton	18.7 minutes	23.6 minutes
City of Longboat Key	22.4 minutes	28.4 minutes
Manatee County	20.1 minutes	23.3 minutes
City of Bradenton	19.4 minutes	22.7 minutes
City of Sarasota	16.8 minutes	20 minutes
Sarasota County	19.5 minutes	21.8 minutes
City of Venice	16.0 minutes	21.1 minutes
City of North Port	23.7 minutes	28.6 minutes
City of Englewood	22.5 minutes	23.1 minutes

Source: 2000 US Census

2.2.3 TRANSIT SUMMARY

Table 2-3 summarizes the percentage of the population served by transit for each mobility district. This is measured by the population in Census blocks within ¼ mile of a transit route. The Downtown/Core Sarasota mobility district has the highest percentage served at 76 percent, again reflecting the area’s good mix of housing, jobs and retail. However, only 1.2 percent of commuters in the city take public transportation to work. Since most of this area is served by transit there must be other reasons as to why people are not using the system. Some factors could be that service does not efficiently connect people with their work place destinations, there aren’t enough sidewalks or shelters for pedestrians, or that the frequency and hours of the service are not meeting residents’ needs.

The Islands mobility district is the next highest in terms of population served by transit, at 64 percent. This is a bit misleading because a ¼ mile incorporates a lot of the island, but there are parts of the islands that are not served by transit at all. For example, much of Longboat Key is without transit service. The Middle Sarasota mobility district and Bradenton mobility district were the next highest at 59 percent and 56 percent, respectively. The Eastern Manatee and Eastern Sarasota mobility districts had the lowest at 0 percent and two percent, respectively. Three percent of households had no vehicle available to them in Eastern Manatee mobility district. Soon there will be a greater need for public transportation in Eastern Manatee because of the development pressures from the west.



Table 2-3: Percentage of Population Served by Transit

MOBILITY DISTRICT	2000 POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION SERVED BY TRANSIT	NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED BY TRANSIT
Palmetto/ Ellenton	43,490	31%	13,481
Bradenton	168,688	56%	94,465
Eastern Manatee	6,560	0%	0
Upper Manatee River	18,801	22%	4,136
Middle Manatee	26,019	15%	3,902
Downtown Core/ Sarasota	90,144	76%	68,509
Islands	28,466	64%	18,218
Middle Sarasota	79,315	59%	46,795
Eastern Sarasota	9,530	2%	190
Englewood/ North Port/ Venice	118,946	37%	44,010

2.2.4 ISLANDS MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Islands mobility district encompasses the barrier islands along the Manatee and Sarasota County Gulf Coast, including Anna Maria Island, Longboat Key, Lido Key, Bird Key and Siesta Key. Anna Maria Island is comprised of the cities of Anna Maria, Holmes Beach and Bradenton Beach. The City of Anna Maria to the north is mainly residential with some retail shops and restaurants. The Anna Maria Pier is a prime tourist and fishing attraction. Holmes Beach is considered the “business” center of the island. It is made up of single-family residential, multi-family condominium developments, civic, office/commercial and retail. Bradenton Beach, at the southern end of the island, is home to many condominium units, luxurious resorts and gulf front rentals. Coquina Beach stretches along the Gulf shoreline and supports the largest beach parking area on the island. An Island Trolley operated by MCAT offers public transportation service throughout the three island cities, with connections to the mainland. Longboat Key stretches over seven miles between the Gulf of Mexico and Sarasota Bay into both counties.

2.2.4.1 ISLANDS SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- About 43 percent of the population was over 65 years of age and will require special transit services in coming years. This is the highest percentage of retirement-age residents among all 10 mobility districts in the region. The islands are also home to a large seasonal population, many of whom are retirees.
- About 40 percent of the population was employed. Only about one percent were unemployed and over half the population at 59 percent was not in the labor force. Of the population that was employed, almost 79 percent drove alone and nine percent carpooled. Only 0.3 percent used



public transportation to get to work (prior to the initiation of the Island Trolley). Three percent of the population rode a bicycle to work.

- About 66 percent of the housing units in the Islands were occupied, which is significantly lower than region-wide occupancy, at 81 to 82 percent. The lower occupancy is likely due to the Islands' seasonality.
- Emergency evacuation remains a serious issue. With more than 71,000 residents living on the islands and many seasonal visitors, the threat of a hurricane or other major event requiring evacuation places tremendous pressure on the region's transportation system.
- The Sarasota/Manatee MPO has conducted a water taxi feasibility study to determine if water-based transportation could be an effective part of their multimodal transportation system. It found that a water taxi system public private partnership would extend the connectivity of the street network, which would alleviate some traffic congestion, and improve the current parking situation.

2.2.5 ENGLEWOOD/NORTH PORT/VENICE MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Englewood/North Port/Venice Mobility District is located within Sarasota and Charlotte Counties. The district is generally located west of I-75 from Osprey south to the Sarasota County line. It also includes Englewood and the intersection of El Jobean Road and US 41 in Charlotte County.

2.2.5.1 NORTH PORT

Located just 20 minutes from the Gulf of Mexico, North Port is the state's third-fastest-growing city and the state's fifth largest city in land area. A major challenge is the community's goal of maintaining rural living in an urban setting amid significant growth. The increase of residential development is outpacing transportation improvements and roadway connections. This reflects the city's growth in families due to the relative affordability of single family housing compared with the rest of Sarasota County. Much of North Port is residential, with relatively little employment or commercial uses. The community enjoys relatively good regional accessibility, with two interchanges at I-75.

2.2.5.2 VENICE

The City of Venice is located in Southwest Florida on the Gulf of Mexico, midway between Tampa and Ft. Myers. Venice became known as the City on the Gulf because it is one of the few cities on the west coast of Florida that occupies a coastal area with no barrier island. What is now referred to as the "Island of Venice" was created in 1967 when the Army Corps of Engineers completed the Intracoastal Waterway through the city. Venice has the state's highest median age at 68, signifying a large retiree population; however, the city is also home to Sarasota County's largest private employer, PGT Industries. The city is undergoing a major redevelopment effort and roadway construction activity with the US 41 Bypass project and bridge improvements.



2.2.5.3 ENGLEWOOD

Englewood is located on the Englewood-Cape Haze Peninsula, which is bordered by Lemon Bay and the Myakka River. The peninsula is part of the Charlotte Harbor Estuary System and the barrier islands border the Gulf of Mexico. Englewood is unincorporated and stretches from South Venice and North Port in south Sarasota County to the Myakka River in Charlotte County. A major transportation project is the Englewood Connector, which is intended to ease hurricane evacuation and provide an improved north-south alternative to US 41.

2.2.5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- About 35 percent of the population was over 65 years of age and will require special transit services in coming years.
- A majority of parcels in the Englewood/North Port/Venice area is classified as Rural at 54 percent or 94,400 acres. The next highest classification is Conservation at 32 percent.
- Sarasota County is currently working on implementing the Nokomis Center Revitalization Plan. The plan recommends recreation, environmental, transportation, sidewalks, neighborhood protection and historic preservation. The plan also includes a local historic district in the area of Nippino and Pocono Trails. The County is also working on the Osprey Center Revitalization Plan to revitalize Osprey Village and the South Venice Community Plan that provides framework for preservation, revitalization and long term development of South Venice.
- North Port is considered a young city. To date, only 15 percent of the land is developed. There are a few neighborhood associations, and neighborhood concerns are addressed through the Planning and Zoning Department. The policies in North Port's Comprehensive Plan address neighborhoods for new development. The challenge is to protect stable neighborhoods as development and infill occur around them.
- North Port is considered the most affordable place to live in Sarasota County, yet land prices are rapidly increasing.
- There is a lack of interconnected north-south corridors. The only ones are US 41 and I-75. The LRTP update should look at establishing more connections to relieve pressure on the major facilities and provide options in the event of emergencies or road closures due to crashes.
- The LRTP update should address the relative lack of transit service in Venice, Englewood and North Port, and ways to fund expansion of service if so desired. Although SCAT service exists, it is generally infrequent and limited to a small service area. An express route running from the North Port/Venice area to Sarasota was discontinued after a three year trial and replaced by a vanpool program. Charlotte County does not offer fixed route public transportation.
- A new Wal-Mart distribution facility is located at the edge of Sarasota/Desoto/Charlotte Counties along US 17 and is expected to generate a substantial amount of truck traffic. Additional distribution facilities for other major retail chains have are possible for the same area. Because of a



lack of population in the area, it is expected that a substantial share of the new workers will come from North Port, Charlotte County and even Lee County.

- Sarasota County has plans for a \$3.6 million project which will preserve and restore a 75-year-old depot. The project is called Venice Depot Rehabilitation Project and it will be used as a multipurpose public-use facility.

2.2.6 DOWNTOWN/CORE SARASOTA MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Downtown/Core Sarasota mobility district is located primarily south of University Parkway to 17th Avenue, east of Sarasota Bay, north of Webber Street and north of Bee Ridge Road.

2.2.6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Twenty-nine condominium developments are expected in downtown Sarasota over the next six years. They promise to lure about 5,000 new residents, comprised mostly of retirees, semi-retirees, speculators and 40- and 50-somethings. Condominiums are encroaching north along US 41 toward the county line.
- About 26 percent of the population was over 65 years of age and will likely require special transit services in coming years. Of the population that was employed, almost 80 percent drove alone and 11 percent carpooled. According to the 2000 Census, only 1.2 percent or 561 persons took public transportation to work.
- The City of Sarasota adopted a Downtown Master Plan in 2000 to revitalize the area with a stronger pedestrian focus and plan for growth. The plan intends to connect the Downtown to the Bayfront, provide a system of walkable streets, provide a balanced transportation system, provide facilities and special amenities in support of walk-to-town neighborhoods, encourage civic improvements and allow strategic, pragmatic implementation. Downtown land use activity includes upscale high-density residential growth along US 41, a high density/mixed use development on Coconut Avenue, and a new grocery store.
- Sarasota has a Hope VI housing program and a designated Enterprise Zone bordered by Myrtle Street to the north, Leonard Reid Avenue to the east, 10th Street to the south and N. Tamiami Trail to the west. Both are promoting higher density and New Urbanism design concepts featuring front porches, extensive sidewalks and pedestrian-scale lighting.
- The LRTP update needs to look at ways to support making downtown more pedestrian friendly. Wider roads are not consistent with the City's vision for downtown. For example, neighborhoods north and south of downtown need more walkable streets (sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, lighting), with various forms of transit service to complement new residential and commercial investment.
- Downtown Sarasota has an estimated \$1 billion in construction projects, ranging from commercial to mixed-use to residential development.



- Downtown is undergoing a major facelift. The city’s wealth of retired executives and entrepreneurs are fueling growth in the area. However, with this growth, housing affordability continues to be a major issue in Sarasota. The renewed development pressure in and around downtown is driving up prices and rents, thus making it more of a challenge for workers, fixed income retirees and middle income residents to find housing close to their place of employment and daily needs. Despite the growth in downtown, market forces continue limit or preclude housing options in the core part of the community for many younger residents and working-age households with families.
- Suncoast Workforce Board and 21st Century Workforce study are trying to expand the area’s skilled workforce.
- A large proportion of traffic leading to and from the beaches, homes and shops on Longboat Key must traverse through downtown Sarasota via Gulfstream Boulevard, Fruitville Road and US 41. The Ringling Bridge and its access roadways are critical links in the region’s emergency evacuation routes, which presents a challenge given some of the objectives in the City of Sarasota’s Downtown Master Plan and potential growth.
- The City of Sarasota has adopted a Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan for the Newtown Community, which is an historic African American community. This plan hopes to identify commercial businesses that will attract a broad range of consumers to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor, and increase the quality of life for Newtown residents.
- A partnership of local institutions and governments called “The Corridor Group” has initiated a redevelopment study for the North US 41 Tamiami Trail. This study aims to develop a master redevelopment plan that will build on and improve the economic, social, and cultural potential of the corridor.

2.2.7 EASTERN SARASOTA MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Eastern Sarasota County Mobility District is generally located within the eastern portion of Sarasota County east of I-75 from the Manatee County line to the north of I-75. A portion of the City of North Port is included in this mobility district. This mobility district is primarily open space and agricultural land. The Sarasota 2050 Plan proposes several hamlet/village centers where future growth will likely occur, east of I-75.

2.2.7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- About 21 percent of the population was over 65 years of age and will require special transit services in coming years.
- Approximately 93 percent of the housing units in the Eastern Sarasota were occupied, which is 12 percent higher than region-wide occupancy at 81 to 82 percent. Of the total occupied housing units, about 79 percent were owner occupied and 21 percent were renter occupied.
- A majority of parcels in Eastern Sarasota area is classified as Rural at 54 percent or 94,400 acres. The next highest classification is Conservation at 32 percent. The remaining future land uses



include City at six percent, Public/Institutional at five percent, Low Density and Medium Density Residential both at one percent and Water at one percent.

- The amount of growth east of I-75 could create a need for more transit. SCAT does not have any routes in this mobility district.

2.2.8 MIDDLE SARASOTA MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Middle Sarasota Mobility District generally located south of Webber Street, east of the Intracoastal Waterway, north of Preymore Street and west of I-75.

2.2.8.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- About 23 percent of the population was over 65 years of age and will require special transit services in coming years.
- Approximately 91 percent of the housing units in the Middle Sarasota were occupied, which is 10 percent higher than region-wide occupancy at 81 to 82 percent.
- Increased pedestrian and bicycle mobility is needed throughout the area, particularly considering some of the higher speed arterial roadways, like Clark Road, Bee Ridge Road, Proctor Road and Beneva Drive.
- Based on discussions with focus group participants, transit service should be more frequent with longer hours.
- Traffic signals timing and signal locations are perceived by some as a problem. There has been an increasing interest and heated discussions, in some cases, over the conversion of some signalized intersections into roundabouts.

2.2.9 MIDDLE MANATEE MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Middle Manatee mobility district lies within Manatee and Sarasota counties and generally includes the lands to the south of the Upper Manatee River mobility district along SR 70 to a portion of Fruitville Road.

2.2.9.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- About 54 percent of the population was employed. Only about one percent were unemployed and about 44 percent was not in the labor force. Of the population that was employed, almost 74 percent drove alone and ten percent carpooled.
- About 85 percent of the housing units in Middle Manatee were occupied, which is about three percent higher than region-wide, at 81 to 82 percent. Mobile homes only make up almost four percent of the housing stock. Almost 44 percent of the housing stock is in the “other” category.



- A majority of parcels in the Middle Manatee area are classified as Low Density Residential at 26 percent or 11,000 acres and Rural at 25 percent or 10,700 acres. The next highest classification is Medium Density Residential at 23 percent.
- Schroeder-Manatee Ranch is a massive upscale mixed use development that stretches from SR 64 south to Fruitville Road in Sarasota, east of I-75. The associated residential development is expected to have significant impacts on the transportation network.

2.2.10 UPPER MANATEE RIVER MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Upper Manatee River Mobility District is located in eastern Manatee County generally bordered by the Manatee River and Old Tampa Road to the north, CR 675 to the east, SR 70 and 44th Avenue East to the south, and 27th Street East and 51st Street East to the west. The western portion of this mobility district includes part of the City of Bradenton.

2.2.10.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- A majority of parcels in the Upper Manatee River area are classified as Urban Fringe, at 41 percent or 20,800 acres. The next highest classification is Rural at 32 percent. Manatee County and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) are conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study for the purpose of improving north-south traffic circulation in eastern Manatee County and to evaluate increased vehicular capacity crossing the Manatee River. The Ft. Hamer Bridge crossing is expected to help relieve north-south traffic in the I-75 corridor and accommodate traffic growth in the area.
- The LRTP update needs to address expansion of public transportation. MCAT has only one route in this mobility district, yet explosive growth east of I-75 is driving the need for more mobility options, which may include various forms of transit service.
- Schroeder-Manatee Ranch is a massive upscale mixed-use development that stretches from SR 64 south to Fruitville Road in Sarasota County, east of I-75. The corridors along US 301 and SR 64 are both experiencing a high rate of growth.

2.2.11 PALMETTO/ELLENTON MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Palmetto/Ellenton mobility district generally includes the city of Palmetto and the Ellenton area from Manatee River north to the Manatee County line and from the Gulf of Mexico east to US 301. A number of smaller unincorporated communities, such as Rubonia, also exist within this district. These communities are legacies of Florida's past, with a focus on fishing and agriculture. It will be a challenge to retain their character and sense of identity in the face of massive growth pressures. The City of Palmetto is a pleasant coastal community with easy access to I-75, Tampa, St. Petersburg/Clearwater and Sarasota-Bradenton International Airports and Port Manatee. Port Manatee is a gateway to Florida and eastern US markets for products from Central and South America and the Caribbean. The planned expansion of Port Manatee to meet expected increases in demand for container transportation will have a significant economic and surface transportation impact on Manatee County, as well as the entire region.



2.2.11.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- About 28 percent of the population was over 65 years of age in 2000.
- Approximately 46 percent of the population is employed. Over half of the population is not in the labor force.
- The housing stock was primarily single-family dwellings and mobile homes at 42 and 49 percent, respectively. Multi-family dwellings only make up about eight percent of the housing stock.
- Manatee County and the City of Palmetto were awarded an Urban Infill and Redevelopment Area (URIA) Planning Grant from Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for the Palmetto/North Manatee County Enterprise Zone. The UIRA designation guides planning and redevelopment in the enterprise zone and promotes a well-balanced and vibrant neighborhood.
- Significant growth is occurring along the I-75 and US 301 corridors, which is expected to have impacts on surrounding transportation facilities and land uses. Port Manatee is expected to double in size and capacity in the next 10 years. This is in response to changes in demand that are expected to make the port more attractive in the next five to 10 years (it is the closest Florida port to the Panama Canal), and freight access to I-75 and US 301 is a critical component of that growth.
- According to the MPO's adopted 2025 LRTP, US 41 between Palmetto and Bradenton (the DeSoto Bridge) needs 12 lanes of capacity. This is unlikely to happen given the financial and community impact challenges of adding that much capacity, therefore other transportation options must be explored to help meet this demand

2.2.12 EASTERN MANATEE COUNTY MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Eastern Manatee County Mobility District is generally bordered by CR 675 along the west, the Sarasota County line on the south, Hardee County on the east and Hillsborough County on the north. Myakka City, Parrish and Duette are the primary communities within this mobility district.

2.2.12.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Mobile homes make up about 23 percent of the housing stock. About three percent of households had no vehicle available.
- A majority of parcels in Eastern Manatee area are classified as Rural (82 percent or 247,000 acres). The next highest classification is Conservation at eight percent.
- Manatee County is currently proposing an overlay district for Parrish to guide development. The overlay district will include guidelines for commercial development, rural roadways and greenways and trails.
- Eastern Manatee County is facing increasing development pressures from development to the west. The Eastern Manatee area is largely rural and agricultural land. The trend of agricultural uses are being pushed further east or disappearing altogether. According to the Manatee County Property



Appraiser, approximately 4,000 acres of agricultural land is lost each year to residential development. In 2004, the County is expected to lose 10,000 acres of agricultural land. This trend is beginning to affect agricultural crops such as citrus and tomatoes. In fact, Manatee County has the reputation of being one of the top tomato growers in the nation and is currently a \$600 million market in Florida.

2.2.13 BRADENTON AREA MOBILITY DISTRICT

The Bradenton Area Mobility District is generally located within Manatee County, south of Palmetto and includes properties bordered by the Manatee River to the north, to the west by Palma Sola and Sarasota Bays, north of the Sarasota/Bradenton International Airport and on the east by 45th Street East. It includes much of the City of Bradenton, but also includes some unincorporated areas of Manatee County.

Originally known as the Village of Manatee, Bradenton is the largest Manatee County city with a population of about 50,000. While Bradenton has become increasingly cosmopolitan in character, it has retained a small-town charm that attracts residents and visitors. In 2003, Manatee County's Economic Development Council (EDC) announced that Bradenton is expected to have more than \$72 million in capital investments. The challenge for Bradenton will be to ensure that infrastructure will be able to keep pace with the increasing development while maintaining its historic character.

2.2.13.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- About 25 percent of the population was over 65 years of age.
- Of the population that was employed, almost 80 percent drove alone and 11 percent carpooled with one other person. Only 0.4 percent took public transportation to work.
- Nearly four percent of households had no vehicle available. These households are likely to be dependent on public transportation for their daily needs.
- There are 18 recreational facilities serving the Bradenton residents. These facilities provide a large range of activities and amenities with a total of approximately 258 acres.
- Bradenton is home to numerous businesses, including nationally known Tropicana and Champs Sports. Tropicana is the largest private employer in Manatee County. It also has family attractions, such as the South Florida Museum and Bishop Planetarium.
- Bradenton has a reasonably good existing transit network. MCAT is looking for a downtown facility to use as a new intermodal bus facility/parking garage. One thing that needs to be addressed is their hours of operation and run frequency. In general, buses run until about 6 or 7 PM. This lack of service hours affects ridership.



- Several new developments are underway in this mobility district. Some examples include the downtown redevelopment which is reviving the urban mixed use project along the river, and development of a Promenade in downtown Bradenton that will include three eight-story buildings with a hotel (350 residential units and office/retail space). Dense developments such as these may create more traffic congestion throughout downtown, but will enhance transit opportunities and create a more attractive walking experience.