

Central Arkansas Livability Index



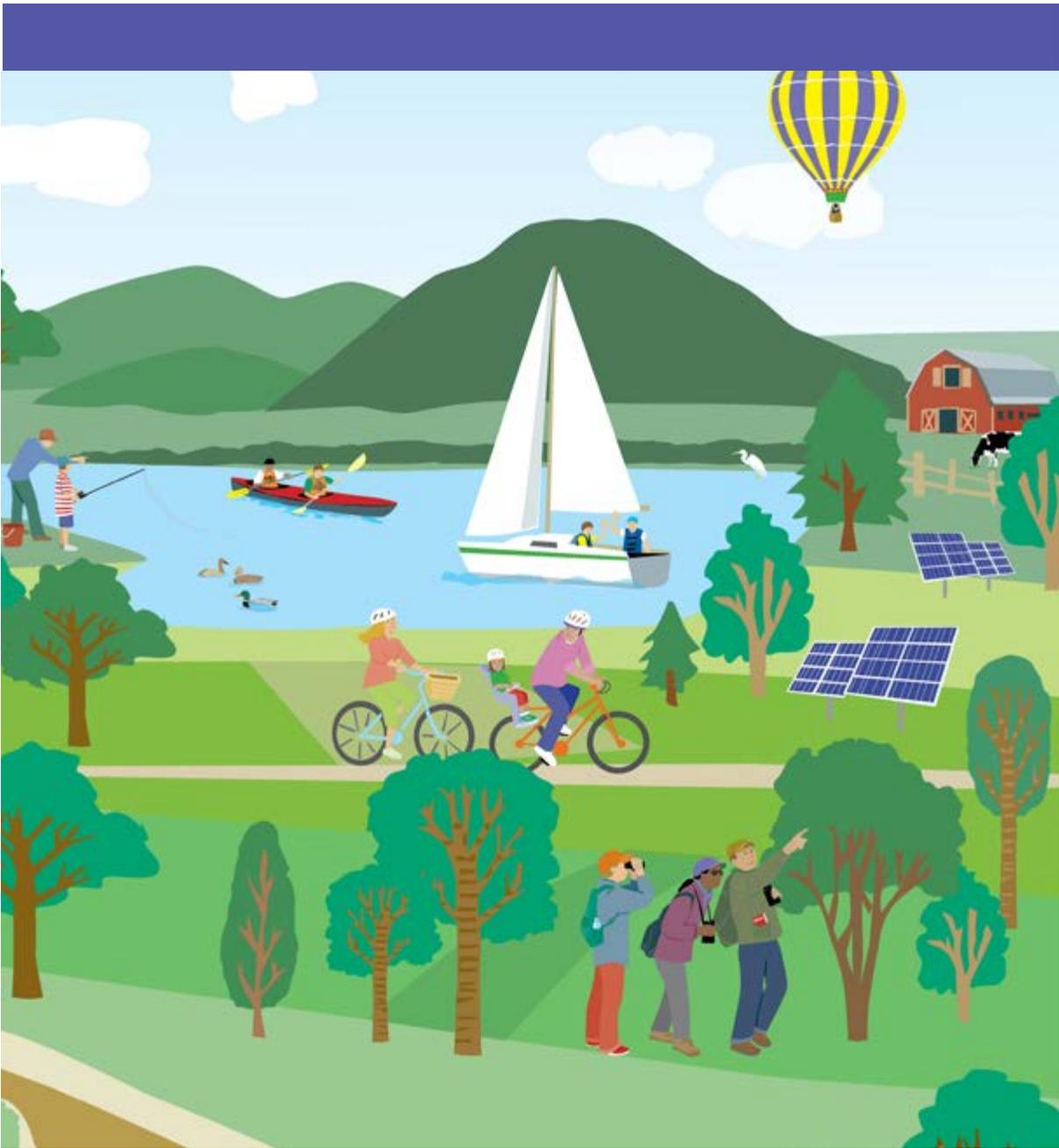
December, 2014



**IMAGINE
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS**
Plan Smart. Live Smart.



METROPLAN
SMART PLANNING MAKES SMART PLACES.



The Central Arkansas Livability Index

WHAT IS THE LIVABILITY INDEX

The Central Arkansas Livability Index (the Index) is part of the *Imagine Central Arkansas* long-range transportation and sustainability plan. The Index is highlighted by three broad themes: Opportunity, Enterprise, and Culture, and eight more specific topic areas that address housing, transportation, health/safety, environment/energy, economy, education, interaction/diversity, and the outdoors. Forty-six indicators, identified as critical components of livability, will help the region measure its progress toward meeting the vision, goals and objectives of *Imagine Central Arkansas*.

WHY LIVABILITY IS IMPORTANT

Central Arkansas faces numerous challenges but has unique assets that can help improve quality of life for its residents. The Index is integral in recognizing trends that impact our region's livability, and can help us respond to these changes. Moving forward, the Livability Indicators will help the general public and stakeholders identify the need for new projects and/or determine the progress of the region toward plan implementation.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Index is one of the deliverables to satisfy a sustainable communities grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in addition to the Fair Housing Equity Assessment and the 2040 Plan. The information in the Index report was either created or compiled by Metroplan staff from in-house data and various other sources. The selected criteria were guided with input from the Regional Planning Advisory Council (RPAC), the Imagine Central Arkansas Partners (ICAP), CEOs for Cities, and numerous outreach initiatives throughout the community from 2012 to 2014.

Metroplan joined CEOs for Cities in 2014. The list of 52 CEOs for Cities metro areas is included at the back of this document.

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Opportunity

- Housing
- Transportation
- Health and Safety
- Environment/Energy

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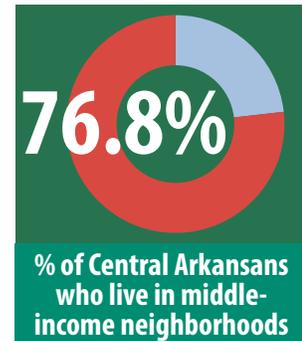
Housing

1. *Moving on Up: Economic Integration*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of population living in middle-income neighborhoods (census tracts where the median family income was between 75% and 150% of the metropolitan average).

Score: 76.80% (a larger percentage indicates increased economic integration)

Rank: 10 of 52; (Ranking #1 means the area has the greatest percentage of its population living in middle-income neighborhoods)



Median household income is used as a barometer for regional prosperity. This indicator shows how economic prosperity and opportunity is spreading throughout a population. Areas with higher median household incomes typically have lower rates of unemployment and a more educated populace. Areas with high median incomes also have higher property values and greater disposable incomes. The goal of the region is to expand prosperity and the opportunity it provides to all residents. Increasing median incomes is an indicator that households are moving up economically.

Source: *CEOs for Cities; 2008-2012 American Community Survey*

2. *Overburdened: Cost Burdened Families*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the population which spends 45% or more of household income on Housing and Transportation Costs.

Score: 53.1 % (a lower percentage indicates a smaller financial burden)

Rank: 36 of 43 metros (500,000 to 1,000,000 population)



Housing and transportation costs are commonly regarded as essentials and often take precedence over other important household needs. As the price of fuel and housing increase, many households forgo other needs such as savings and healthcare to ensure that the essentials of housing and transportation are met. These overburdened households are forced to make sacrifices to assure that they have homes and/or apartments and transportation to and from the places of employment.

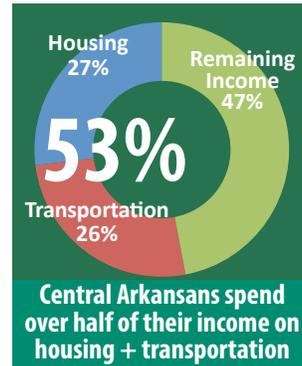
Source: *2002 H + T Affordability Index, <http://htaindex.cnt.org/map/>*

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Average Housing + Transportation Costs % Income

Factoring in both housing and transportation costs provides a more comprehensive way of thinking about the cost of housing and true affordability.

Source: <http://htaindex.cnt.org/fact-sheets/>



3. Expensive Living: Cost of Living

Measure: Indicator denotes the metropolitan area's ranking on the Council for Community and Economic Research (CCER) Cost of Living Index.

Score: 91 (a smaller number means a lower cost of living)

Cost of living is an assessment of the affordability of a city or metropolitan area when compared to others. Cost of Living indexes allow current residents, prospective residents, researchers and employers to compare the costs associated with living in cities that may vary dramatically in size, economies, and resources. Cost of Living indexes allow one to gauge whether an area is becoming more or less expensive to live in over time.



Source: 2013 CCER Cost of Living Index

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Transportation

1. Take a Walk: Walkability

Measure: Indicator denotes the average walk score in three largest cities of the metro area.

Rank: 52 of 52 metros (Ranking #1 means the most walkable metro)

When it comes to moving about the region, residents desire options. Walking provides a great alternative to the automobile. Walking is the cheapest, cleanest, and one of the most healthy methods of transportation. Denser land development that is mixed with homes and businesses connected by sidewalks and trails can provide an environment that encourages residents to take a walk and enjoy the region's sights. Sidewalks are essential to the development of a viable transit system as well. Central Arkansas must continue to invest in pedestrian infrastructure and develop in a way that accommodates pedestrian traffic.

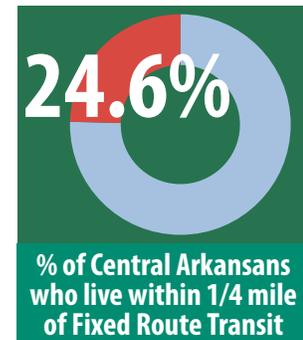


Source: Walk Score, http://www.walkscore.com/AR/Little_Rock

2. Wheels on the Bus: Access to Transit

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the population living within a quarter mile of Fixed Route Transit.

Score: 24.60% (higher percentage indicates increased community accessibility to public transit)



On a personal level, public transit provides choice, saves money, and connects us to important resources. On a regional level, public transit fosters compactness, revitalizes commercial corridors, lowers traffic congestion, increases property values, diminishes our reliance on fossil fuels, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and allows employers' access to larger potential workforces. As the wheels on the bus go round and round, access to regional resources and opportunities are expanded for an increasing numbers of residents.

Source: Metroplan GIS and CATA

3. Personal Mileage: Personal Travel (VMT)

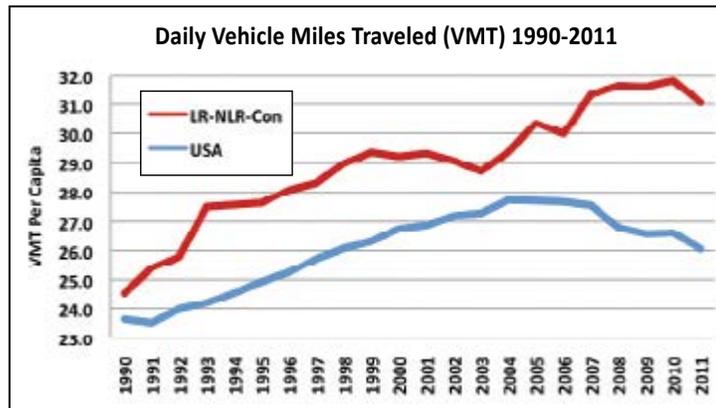
Measure: Indicator denotes the average daily vehicle miles travelled per person in the metropolitan area.

Score: 38.9 per capita/miles per day (a lower number is better and indicates shorter trips, less fuel usage, and increased compactness and connectivity).

Rank: 52 of 52 (Ranking #1 means the least amount of vehicle miles traveled)

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As suburban areas expand, so does the personal mileage of residents. Increasing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) increases commute times, fuel expenditure, and air pollution. A commitment to decreasing VMT is therefore a commitment to promote more dense housing patterns, mixed-use development, public transit, a healthier environment and active modes of transportation.



Source: CEOs for Cities 51 largest metros plus Little Rock metro, HMPS Data

4. *Let's Ride: Access to Active Transportation*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the population living within a half-mile of a bike route.

Score: 32.70% (a higher percentage indicates increased community accessibility to bike routes)

Access to safe and well-maintained trails and bike routes encourages physical activity, reduces community reliance on automobiles and traffic congestion, promotes communal interaction, and reduces our greenhouse gas emissions. The more we bike or walk, the healthier our community will become...Let's ride.



Source: Metroplan GIS and CATA

5. *High Flying: Access to Air Travel*

Measure: Indicator denotes the regional airport's ranking in the FAA's ranking of United States airports by enplanements (the number of passengers).

Score: 1,111,381 passengers (a higher number indicates greater airport use)

Rank: 84 of 153 airports (Ranking #1 means the greatest passenger volume)

As the popularity of air travel increases, the availability of air travel becomes an important indicator of connectivity, tourism, and economic growth. Increasing numbers of flights, growing numbers of connections to hubs and major cities, and gains in passenger traffic are commonly regarded as measures of positive growth in metropolitan areas. High flying commercial flights bring tourist dollars and allow business travelers access to other markets.

Source: Federal Aviation Administration, Enplanements -2012

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6. *Congested: Traffic Congestion*

Measure: Indicator denotes the Extra travel time the average commuter/driver spends in traffic each year.

Score: 26 hours (a lower number indicates less traffic congestion)

Rank: 71 of 101 metros (Ranking #1 means the least traffic congestion)



The expansion of the post-World War II suburb, the creation of the interstate highway system, and the dominance of the personal automobile were all catalysts which helped to create congested roadways. As our cities expanded and our commutes lengthened, the potential for delays, bottlenecks, and traffic jams grew. Today we spend hours of delay a year suspended in traffic, longing to reach our intended destinations. Congested roadways increase fossil fuel consumption and substantially contribute to the amount of greenhouse gases in the air.

Source: Texas A & M Transportation Institute, Congestion Index

7. *Choice Riding: Non-Poor Transit*

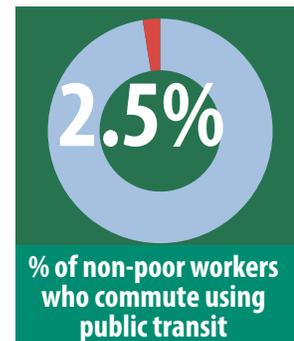
Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of non-poor workers that reported having commuted on public transit.

Score: 2.50% of metropolitan non-poor workers (a higher number indicates greater use by choice riders)

Rank: 50 of 52 (Ranking #1 indicates more choice riders use public transit)

Central Arkansans imagine a region where transportation options go beyond the traditional automobile dependent culture. Transit use contributes to the interaction of our citizens; and therefore, we are especially interested in users that choose to ride transit compared to other modes of travel. To reach our regions vision, the region must attract choice riders by offering a broad and dependable transit service that connects efficiently to jobs, service centers, and entertainment districts.

Source: CEOs for Cities



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8. Barge In: Water Transportation

Measure: Indicator denotes the tonnage of cargo that is shipped through the Little Rock Port Authority.

Score: 750,000 tons of cargo (a higher number indicates greater use of port)

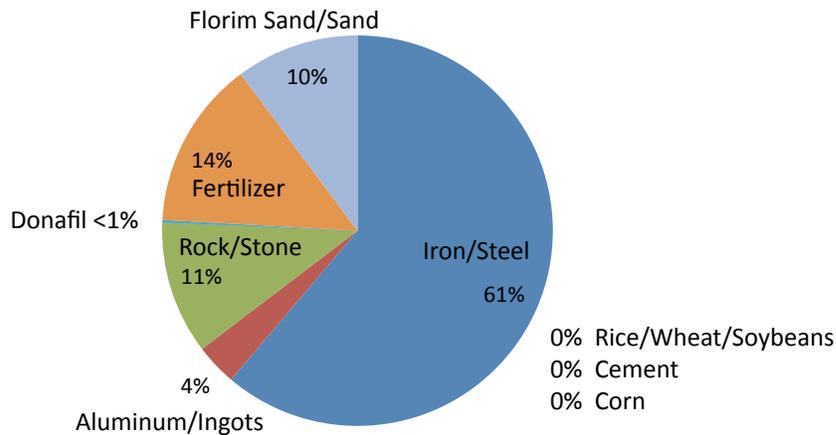
Central Arkansas' economy is often measured by the volume of goods that is imported and/or exported. Cargo moves throughout the region on highways and railways, but some cargo is shipped, less expensively, down the Arkansas River. Connecting our freight to the larger world market is vital to the health of our region; and ultimately, the opportunities it provides for residents. By expanding our river transportation system and emphasizing a multimodal commercial transportation approach, the region encourages the development of new industries, creates more jobs, and provides greater economic opportunities for existing businesses while it increases the volume of goods the region imports and exports.



Photo credit: Little Rock Port Authority

Source: Little Rock Port Authority

TOTAL COMMODITY SHIPMENTS BY PERCENT MCCLELLAN-KERR ARKANSAS RIVER NAVIGATION SYSTEM 2014



Source: CARTS Annual Report 2014

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Health and Safety:

1. Crime Watch: Crime Rate

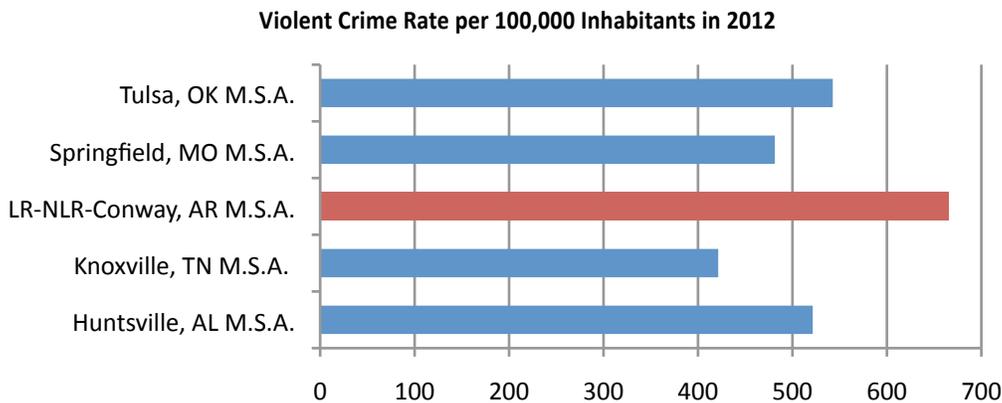
Measure: Indicator denotes the number of incidents of violent crime in the metro area per 100,000 residents.

Score: 665 per 100,000 residents (a lower number indicates safer region)

Rank: 38 of 52 (Ranking #1 means least violent crime rate)

Crime is often a precursor to community decline. Crime discourages commercial and residential investment, reduces property values, erodes the bonds of community by reducing connectivity, and is a factor in the concentration of poverty. Reductions in violent crime rates promote healthy sustainable neighborhoods, commercial investment, and connectivity among neighborhood residents.

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Report (UCR), 2012

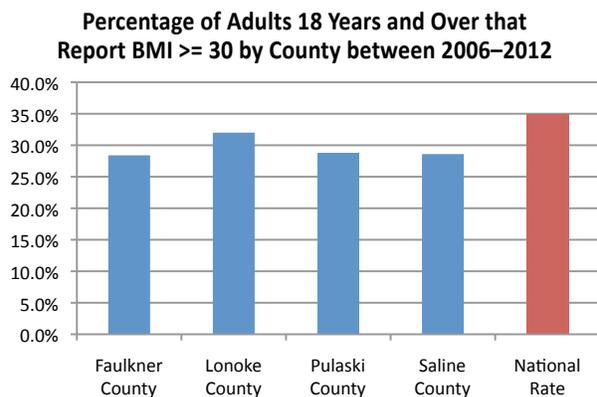


2. Living Large: Obese Population

Measure: Indicator denotes the estimated percentage of the regional population that is obese (Body Mass Index equal to or greater than 30).

Score: 28.07% (a lower percentage indicates fewer obese residents)

Expanding waistlines have been correlated with reductions in life expectancy and the increased likelihood of high blood pressure, diabetes,



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sleep apnea, and heart disease. Increases in the rate of obesity also correlate with rising healthcare costs. Lowering rates of obesity makes for a healthier community. Central Arkansas endorses active, healthy lifestyles to prevent obesity.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005 -2010



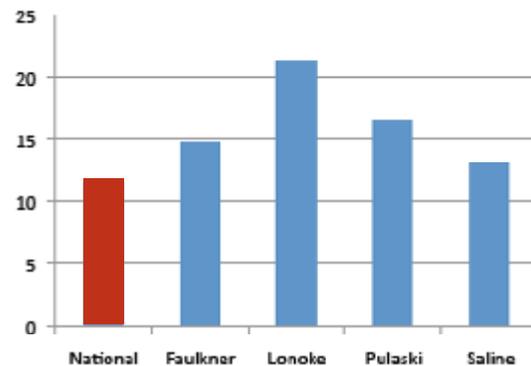
3. Roadway Woes: Roadway Safety

Measure: Indicator denotes the number of roadway fatalities in the metro area per 100,000 residents.

Score: 19.54 fatalities per 100,000 residents (a lower number indicates fewer roadway fatalities)

Traffic fatalities rank among the leading causes of death in the United States. Fast and unsafe driving, alcohol-related accidents, failure to use seatbelts and/or improperly securing car seats for children, and distracted driving (i.e., use of electronic devices) have increased the chances of roadway fatalities. Our roadway woes can be reduced by constructing safer roads, as well as enforcement of safe driving laws.

Motor Vehicle Deaths (Rates per 100,000) Avg. 2008–2010



Source: Arkansas Department of Motor Vehicles, 2012

4. Longevity: Life Expectancy

Measure: Indicator denotes the estimated life expectancy (average number of years a person can expect to live) in the metropolitan area.

Score: 77.3 year average age (a higher average age indicates a longer lifespan)

In recent years, the quality of healthcare has dramatically improved for many in the community. Access to fresh and healthy foods has expanded and the popularity of healthier lifestyles, which include regular exercise, has revived. As a result, life expectancy has lengthened and the aging population optimistically anticipates their extended longevity at a higher quality of life than ever experienced for this group. Communities that experience expansion in life expectancy tend to have higher per capita incomes, higher rates of health insurance coverage, higher levels of education attainment, and lower rates of obesity.



Source: Arkansas Department of Health, 2012

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5. *Life's Too Short: County Health*

Measure: Indicator denotes the estimated collective number of years in life expectancy the region loses due to premature mortality related to a number of analyzed risk factors (example- smoking, percentage of children living in poverty, and access to exercise opportunities).



Score: 8,658 years lost due to premature death (lower the number, healthier the community)

Despite recent gains in life expectancy, many residents in the region do not share in this expanded longevity. Unhealthy lifestyle choices, limited access to healthcare and healthy foods can all reduce years of life expectancy. For those residents that participate in these risky behaviors, live in poverty, or in food deserts, life's too short.

Source: County Health Indicators, 2014 <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

6. *Disability: Disabled Population*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the regional population that is disabled.

Score: 12.55% (a lower percentage indicates a less disabled population.)



For those living with disabilities, living independently and gratifying lives often requires public and private accommodations to meet their special needs. A robust and connected disabled population can be a sign of increased diversity, increasing healthcare quality, and increasing accessibility.

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey

7. *Risky Business: Uninsured Population*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the regional population that has no health insurance.

Score: 17.86% (a lower percentage indicates less uninsured residents.)



In many households suffering from financial difficulty tough choices must be made in regard to what those families can do without. Many households give up health insurance to meet other financial obligations, which can be a risky business. Families that forgo or can't afford healthcare are particularly vulnerable to financial calamities associated with emergency

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healthcare cost. The uninsured are far less likely to have access to preventative medicine, have regular check-ups, and generally receive their medical treatment in emergency rooms, where it is most expensive.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005 -2010

8. What's Up Doc?: Primary Care Providers

Measure: Indicator denotes the number of primary care providers per capita in the metropolitan area.

Score: 113.33 primary healthcare providers per 100,000 residents (a higher number indicates increased access to medical services)

Access and costs of healthcare are also closely associated with the scarcity of healthcare providers. An abundance of primary care physicians provides greater healthcare options and access. The metropolitan area is home to a medical school and its associated medical and pharmaceutical research being conducted.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Area Health Resource File 2013



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Environment / Energy

1. Fresh Air: Air Quality Index

Measure: Indicator denotes the Air Quality Index score for the metropolitan area, ranking cities by ozone and particle pollution.

Score: 2.1 (a higher number indicates poorer air quality)

Rank: 22 of 72 metros (Ranking #1 means the metro area has the cleanest air).



It is easy to take the air we breathe for granted, but Fresh Air, like other natural resources, is dependent upon our stewardship. A wide array of respiratory illnesses has been attributed to air pollution and although fresh air is essential for healthy lives, the declining quality of our air is frequently overlooked. Long commutes, a negative side effect of urban sprawl, have increased use of fossil fuels; thus, releasing more harmful gases which can jeopardize the air quality. The first step to preserving this resource is recognizing that our living and driving conditions can adversely impact air quality. Central Arkansas must work to reduce toxic gas emissions to secure a healthier future.

Source: Earth Day Network, <http://files.earthday.net/UER/report/cityrank-airbaseline.html>

2. Blowing Smoke: Green House Gas

Measure: Indicator denotes the tons of greenhouse gas produced per capita in the metro area.

Score: 3.009 tons per capita (a lower number indicates less greenhouse gasses produced)

Rank: 43 of 52 (Ranking #1 means lowest rate of greenhouse gas emissions)

Our carbon footprint is chiefly determined from the amount of driving we do; as well as, the electricity used to heat and cool our homes and businesses. As concerns grow over the impact of global climate change, steps will need to be taken to reduce emissions to adapt to the new climate normal. Greenhouse gas effects are not just blowing smoke. Actions should be considered, both locally and regionally, to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.

Source: CEOs for Cities and the Brookings Institute, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2008/6/metropolicy/carbon_footprints.pdf

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3. Living Efficiently: Energy Efficiency

Measure: Indicator denotes total energy expenditure needed to produce a dollar of Gross Metropolitan Product.

Score: 7181 BTU/ per dollar (a lower number indicates increasing energy efficiency)

Regional energy efficiency can be determined by comparing our regional economic output to our total regional energy consumption in a given year. Using this method, energy efficiency can be defined as “getting the maximum economic output, using the least amount of energy.” A trend in private companies has been to build energy efficient manufacturing sites to decrease the amount of packaging and costs associated with creating a product. As Central Arkansas looks to grow the economy, government, business and industry leaders must collaborate to grow the economy responsibly. Education, economic incentives, and an emphasis on green jobs can improve the region’s overall energy efficiency and GMP.



Solar panels at L'Oreal in North Little Rock.



Heifer International headquarters in Little Rock has achieved the highest LEED certification of Platinum.

Source: Energy Information Administration (EIA) and Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

A partial listing of LEED* certified buildings in central Arkansas, 2014

Winrock International	Little Rock	AR Dept of Environmental Quality	North Little Rock
JALR EIT building	Little Rock	NLR Electric Administration Building	North Little Rock
William J. Clinton Presidential Center	Little Rock	Garver Engineers Corporate Office	North Little Rock
Camp Aldersgate Commons Building	Little Rock	Hendrix College Student Life Center	Conway
Green Earth Pharmacy	Little Rock	Caldwell Toyota	Conway
Baldwin & Shell Office Building	Little Rock	Stephens Office Building	Conway
UAMS WPR Cancer Institute	Little Rock	Conway Federal Building	Conway
12th Street Station	Little Rock	UCA Bear Hall	Conway
Pulaski Technical College Culinary Arts	Little Rock	UCA HPER Center Addition	Conway
Hillary Rodham Clinton Childrens Library	Little Rock	Bethel Middle School	Bryant
Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church	Little Rock	Bryant Hill Farm Elementary School	Bryant
Medline	Maumelle	Bryant High School Addition	Bryant
National Wallcovering	Maumelle	Kum & Go Stores	Bryant, Benton, Sherwood, Cabot, LR, NLR
Hurricane Creek Elementary School	Benton		

Source: <http://www.usgbc.org/projects>

*Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

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4. *Far & Wide: Sprawl Index*

Measure: Indicator denotes the ranking of the metropolitan area in regard to compactness and connectivity.

Score: 76.1 (a lower number indicates greater compactness/connectivity)

Rank: 158 out of 221 metros (Ranking #1 is the densest and most connected city)



Our cities have spread out far & wide and new challenges have arisen as a result. Sprawl has limited residents' ability to travel independently from the automobile; it has created an expensive infrastructure and increased land consumption which impacts Central Arkansas' treasured natural environment. Focusing on planning for people, rather than vehicles alone, by redeveloping neighborhoods to include a mix of residences, offices, and amenities close enough to walk to, preserves open spaces, reduces greenhouse gases and increases opportunities for a healthier populace.

Source: Smart Growth America, "Measuring Sprawl 2014", <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/measuring-sprawl>

ENTERPRISE



Enterprise

- Economy
- Education

Economy

1. *Get Paid: Per Capita Income*

Measure: Indicator denotes the average per capita income (total economic activity divided by the total population of the metro area) in the metropolitan area.

Score: \$38,899 (a higher number indicates greater economic activity)

Rank: 41 of 52 (Ranking #1 means highest per capita income)

Per capita income measures the economic well-being of metro residents. While most workers are keenly aware of what they personally earn, few consider how the regions' economic well-being affects their local community. This average is frequently used to gauge overall economic health and is a factor of consideration in commercial development. What we get paid correlates greatly to what we can spend, where we can live, and what opportunities are available to us.

Source: CEOs for Cities; the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

2. *Bright Ideas: Entrepreneurship*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the adult population that is self-employed.

Score: 9.10% of metro (a higher number indicates a more entrepreneurial populace)

Rank: 35 of 52 (Ranking #1 means the metro with the most self-employed)



The number of individuals that own their own businesses can be used to gauge the creativity potential of a region. Armed with bright ideas and maverick spirits, these small business owners often bring innovation and change to the region.

Source: CEOs for Cities

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3. Mom and Pop: Small Business

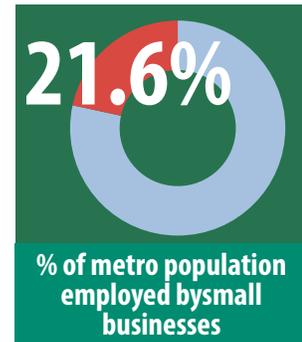
Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of metropolitan population that is employed at businesses with 20 or less employees.

Score: 21.63% (a higher percentage indicates more workers employed by small business)

Rank: 16 of 52 (Ranking #1 means the metro has more of its workers employed by small business)

Mom and pop shops are often viewed as the essence of the “American dream;” a dream shared in Central Arkansas. These businesses act as trend setters and innovators, and add to culture and economy. Small businesses often hire locally and draw curious visitors that favor homegrown products over national chain brands. The intimacy of these businesses offers workers an alternative to the culture of the larger corporation, an option many find appealing.

Source: CEOs for Cities



4. Poverty: Poverty Rate

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of metropolitan households that live at or below the poverty threshold.

Score: 14.3% of metro (a lower number indicates less households in poverty)

Rank: 29 of 52; (Ranking #1 means least percentage of households in poverty)

The true measure of a region should not be based on how well its richest live; but instead, on how well its poorest fare. In recent years, our nation has experienced a rapid expansion and concentration of poverty. This is also true in our region and families living below the poverty threshold are our region’s poorest residents. These families are disproportionately comprised of women, children, and the elderly and depend heavily upon federally subsidized housing and food programs to survive. These families are similarly dependent upon public transit.

Source: CEOs for Cities; 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS)



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5. *That's Productive: Regional Gross Domestic Product per Employee*

Measure: Indicator denotes Gross Domestic Product per worker in the metropolitan region.

Score: \$77,741 per employee (the higher the dollar amount per employee, the higher the productivity)

Regional Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) is a tally of all receipts for goods and services sold or purchased in the region. In other words, it is a measure of the region's flow of capital. When the RGDP is divided by the total number of employees in Central Arkansas, the resulting number shows the amount of revenue generated by each employee in the region. This number can be used to gauge employee productivity – in terms of dollars-- over time, which may help indicate the health of economy. As the RGDP goes up, each employee accounts for more capital. Now, that's productive!

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)



Central Arkansas employs workers in a variety of industries, including manufacturing and construction.

Education

1. High Degree: College Attainment

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the metropolitan population with at least a four-year College Degree.

Score: 26% of metro (a higher number indicates more residents with college degrees)

Rank: 47 of 52 (Ranking #1 means the metro with the largest percentage of its population with degrees held)

As societies around the globe grow increasingly dependent on technology, those communities with concentrations of skilled and highly educated workers are better positioned to attract employers; and generally command higher wages than those communities lacking highly educated workforces. Communities with an educated workforce typically have better performing schools, higher property values, and greater commercial development than those who do not.

Source: CEOs for Cities; 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS)



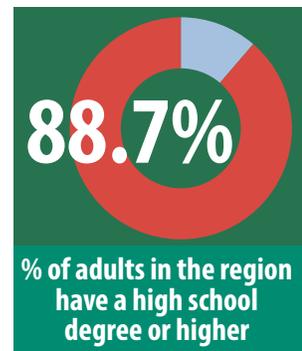
2. Graduated, Educated: High School Graduation

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of population above 18 with High School Degree or Equivalent.

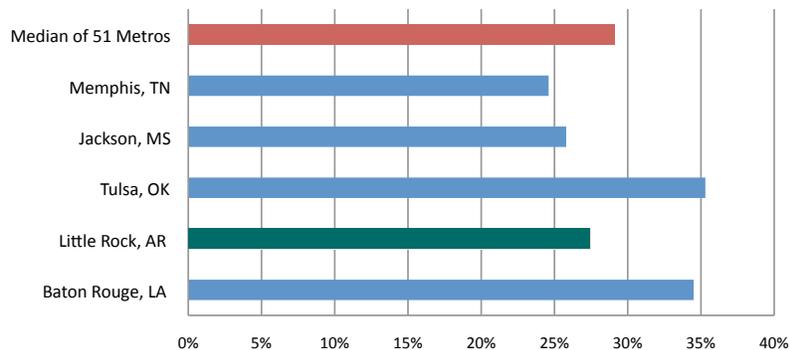
Score: 88.70% of metro (a higher number indicates more residents with HS diplomas)

The high school graduation rate is a baseline measure of overall community “health” and is recognized as a key indicator in regard to an individual’s future earnings potential or per capita income. Individuals without high school diplomas earn less than those that have diplomas and college degrees, are more likely to live in cost-burdened households, and typically have access to fewer opportunities than their more educated counterparts.

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS)



Percentage of Adults 24 or Older with at least a Bachelors Degree



3. *Geeking Out: Creative Professionals*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of metro area workers employed in STEM and Arts.

Score: 2.30% of metro (a higher number indicates more employed in STEM & Arts)

Rank: 52 of 52 (Ranking #1 means metro has the highest percentage of its workers in "STEM" and "Arts")

We live in a world that is becoming increasingly more technological. Once called "Geeks", the engineers, computer programmers, scientists, and mathematicians required to innovate and manufacture technology are now integral to regional success. Workers possessing these degrees are sought out and recruited, often from other countries, and are used as a gauge of a community's ability to attract High Tech businesses.

Source: CEOs for Cities; Arkansas Department of Higher Education

4. *Young and Restless: Young and Educated*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the metropolitan population that is both between the ages of 25 to 35 and has at least a bachelor's degree.

Score: 4.10% of metro (a higher number indicates more young and educated)

Rank: 38 of 52; (Ranking #1 means the metro with highest percentage of young adults with college degrees)



Change, growth, and innovation in a community are qualities often associated with young professionals. Young professionals easily embrace technology, are willing to approach problems from different perspectives, and have the time and energy to invest in long-term projects or ventures.

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These young and restless millennials shape communities as leaders in their respective fields by creating new businesses and introducing innovative ideas that improve the region's livability.

Source: CEOs for Cities; 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS)

5. **Higher-ed YOU: Regional College Presence**

Measure: Indicator denotes the enrollment and number of degrees awarded at nine public and private colleges and universities in the metropolitan area that offer an Associate's degree or higher.

Score: 42,695 students enrolled (2012); 8,327 degrees awarded (2012) (a higher number indicates increased college education)

Higher education, nine regional colleges and universities, prepare students for their future careers, provide innovation via research, and are frequently the forum for public debate, cultural and arts exchanges, and venues for sports activities. These institutions provide leadership, expertise, and experience to their communities and are often the catalyst for economic development, social change, and community interaction.

Source: Arkansas Department of Higher Education

6. **Benchmarking: School Performance**

Measure: Indicator denotes the estimated average ACT composite test score for high school students in the metropolitan area.

Score: 21.8 average (a higher score indicates better educated students)

Simply providing a high school education means little unless its students are prepared for careers or continued education in college. Central Arkansas desires to be nationally competitive in attracting talent, jobs, and other investments within its boundaries; its success hinges upon its young people. Where talent or skill gaps are found, businesses will relocate to other metro areas. Education is the key that unlocks the region's potential, and nationally administered tests can be a way of benchmarking academic progress.



Source: Arkansas Department of Education, ADE Data Center, 2012 Testing Scores, <https://adedata.arkansas.gov/actreports/>

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7. *Certified!:* Career Readiness Certification

Measure: Indicator denotes the number of career readiness certificates issued in the metropolitan area.

Score: 8850 certificates awarded (a higher number indicates more skilled workers)

Skilled workers are valuable to any employer. To an individual, having a marketable skillset makes it easier to land a job with higher pay and increases chances of upward mobility. For those who do not have the option of taking college courses to increase their skills, training programs, for specific skills needed in today's work environment, are available and offer career readiness certificates. These programs offer a way to keep up with the ever-changing needs of growing fields.



Source: Department of Workforce Services

CULTURE



Culture

- Interaction/Diversity
- Outdoors

CULTURE

Interaction/Diversity

1. *Out & About: Cultural Events*

Measure: Indicator denotes the attendance at concerts, museums, festivals, and cultural events in the previous year divided by the regional population (event attendance per capita).

Score: 2.1 events per resident were attended in 2013 (a higher number indicates greater involvement/interaction of residents)

Culture is undeniably essential to choosing the perfect place to live. Opportunities to get out and about amongst the crowds at a number of different venues and events add to the excitement and help define a sense of place for central Arkansans. These happenings can paint the region as an active place to live, work, and play and attract people and businesses looking for a higher quality of life. Central Arkansas must work to provide its residents with top of the line cultural destinations and events as it strives to improve livability.

Source: Metroplan data; U.S. Census 2010



Photo by Timothy Sitrler for SCM Architects.

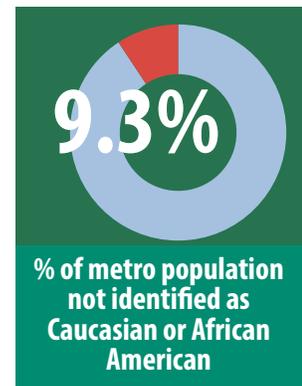
2. *Diverse Faces: Uncommon Ethnicities*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the metropolitan population identified as not Caucasian or African American.

Score: 9.30% of metro (a higher number indicates greater diversity)

There are diverse faces in central Arkansas. The variety allows Central Arkansans to experience different perspectives that can generate unique ideas to enhance the region's culture. It's this diversity that works to attract new residents and businesses to the community. Diversity improves quality of life for everyone.

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS)



3. *iVote: Voter Turnout*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of the metropolitan population that voted in the last General Election (in a governors race election year). (221,970 votes cast out of 421,902 registered voters in the 2014 election)

Score: 52.61% (a higher percentage indicates increased voter participation in local elections)



CULTURE

Voter turnout during local elections can be an important indicator of a resident's investment in the community. General elections center on essential policy and leadership issues, such as infrastructure projects, revenue generation, land development, and new directions, which have noticeable impacts on the region. Increased voter participation can better reflect the region's priorities and expectations. An "I voted" sticker should be a badge staple of every resident during election time. More residents partaking in the political process will increase livability for Central Arkansas.

Source: Arkansas State Attorney General's Office

4. *Helping Hand: Community Involvement*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of residents in the metropolitan area who reported volunteering for a community activity in the past year.

Score: 30.10% (a higher number indicates greater participation in the community)

Rank: 14 of 52 (Ranking #1 means highest participation of residents in volunteer activities)

When residents lend a helping hand, they get to interact with the larger community. Volunteers greatly enhance livability in a community by providing services that most often help those in need, mentoring at-risk groups, or simply becoming hands-on with the growth and development of their community. Volunteerism stimulates social interaction and encourages communication among residents. These interactions are the building blocks of a tightly-knit community that strives for a higher quality of life.

Source: CEOs for Cities

5. *International Flavor: Non-Native Population*

Measure: Indicator denotes the percentage of metropolitan residents that were born outside the United States.

Score: 4.16% of metro (a higher number indicates greater international diversity)

Diversity stems from people with different backgrounds and experiences, and it's essential for generating fresh ideas to improve quality of life for everyone. Central Arkansans born outside the U.S. enhance the region's international flavor and indicate a degree of diversity. These individuals can offer fresh perspectives, invest in our local economy, or open businesses that reflect a blending of cultures. Engaging these voices so that new ideas can be brought to the forefront works to improve livability for everyone.

Source: U.S. Census 2010



Photo: Young professionals volunteered at the opening of the new Hillary Rodham Clinton Children's Library and Learning Center in Little Rock.



CULTURE

6. *Food for Thought: Restaurant Variety*

Measure: Indicator denotes the number of restaurants in the metropolitan (searched via Yelp.com).

Score: 1564 restaurants (2014) (a higher number indicates greater food choices)

Food is the window into culture in central Arkansas. For enthusiasts, diversity in cuisine comes with an increasing number of restaurant options. The region is host to several flavors representing multiple nationalities from across the globe, and has a budding local restaurant scene also. Here's food for thought; new dining options can also be a testament to a strong economy where the demand for such establishments indicates a strong market willing to spend money on a night out.

Source: Yelp.com



CULTURE

Outdoors

1. Green Spaces: Parks

Measure: Indicator denotes the acreage of parks per capita in the metropolitan area.

Score: .15 acres per capita (a higher number indicates more acreage)

Central Arkansas' bountiful natural spaces are part of its legacy. Public parks are major assets and are often indicated as essential to enhance livability for residents and visitors. Parks give residents a chance to make contact with nature, and provide environments conducive for physical activity. Not only are residents able to enjoy the beauty of these green spaces, parks can mitigate climate, air, and water pollution.

Source: Metroplan GIS Department



2. Fun in the Sun: Sports Recreation

Measure: Indicator denotes the metropolitan area's total acreage of ball fields (baseball, football, softball, golf courses).

Score: 6,695 sq. acres (a higher number indicates more fields)

Sports recreation is an important part of culture in central Arkansas. Sports provide a positive outlet for youth and adults alike and help provide a higher quality of life. Partaking in sports encourages community interaction, keeps kids active in a safe environment, and helps maintain personal health. Participation in sports is inextricably tied to having venues, like ballparks, golf courses, and sports centers, for residents to visit. The region must continue to invest in, and expand, its recreational network so that more residents have an opportunity to have fun in the sun.

Source: Metroplan GIS Department



3. Free Flowing: Waterways

Measure: Indicator denotes the miles of water trails in the metropolitan area.

Score: 27 miles (a higher number indicates more water trails)

Options for outdoor recreation in central Arkansas are limitless.

It feels great to float down a free flowing stream and in Central Arkansas that opportunity is not far away. Within a short driving distance from our urbanized areas, miles of designated water



Photo credit: Pinnacle Mountain State Park

CULTURE

trials await exploration. The metro area is unique for its blend of nature and city life; with lots of water flowing, sometimes frantically, through its boundaries. This unique asset contributes greatly to our quality of life and allows residents to stay active while enjoying the outdoors, and should be used to promote the region to visitors, new settlers, and businesses alike.

Source: Trails.com

4. **Take a Hike: Trails**

Measure: Indicator denotes the miles of paved trails in the metropolitan area per 100,000 residents.

Score: 12.9 miles per 100,000 residents (a higher number indicates more trails)

It's never been a better time to take a hike in central Arkansas. Urban environments that are closely connected to miles of nature trails offer a unique opportunity not found in many of the nation's metro areas. Central Arkansas' beauty can easily be experienced with a quick bike ride or a brisk walk down one of the region's paved trails which moves residents through downtowns, campsites, parks, and over rivers. Trails provide an opportunity for physical activity and a cleaner alternative mode of transportation. In the future, greater emphasis must be placed on connecting people to places by trails.



Source: Metroplan GIS Department

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2014 CEOs FOR CITIES METRO AREAS (52)

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Austin-Round Rock	TX
Baltimore-Towson	MD
Birmingham-Hoover	AL
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy	MA-NH
Buffalo-Niagara Falls	NY
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord	NC-SC
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet	IL-IN-WI
Cincinnati-Middletown	OH-IN-KY
Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor	OH
Columbus	OH
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington	TX
Denver-Aurora-Brownfield	CO
Detroit-Warren-Livonia	MI
Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford	CT
Houston-Sugarland-Baytown	TX
Indianapolis-Carmel	IN
Jacksonville	FL
Kansas City	MO-KS
Las Vegas-Paradise	NV
Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway	AR
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana	CA
Louisville-Jefferson County	KY-IN
Memphis	TN-MS-AR
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach	FL
Milwaukee-Waukesha-Allis	WI
Minneapolis-Saint Paul-Bloomington	MN-WI
Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin	TN
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner	LA
New York-N.-New Jersey-Long Island	NY-NJ-PA
Oklahoma City	OK
Orlando-Kissimmee	FL
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Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale	AZ
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ABOUT METROPLAN

Metroplan is a voluntary association of local governments that has operated by interlocal agreement since 1955. Originally formed as the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission of Pulaski County, Metroplan now has members in five counties of the six-county metro area (see below). Metroplan is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) under Title 23 of the United States Code.

Metroplan serves as the regional voice on issues affecting Central Arkansas, develops transportation plans required by federal law, convenes stakeholders to deal with common environmental issues, and provides information and staff resources to our member local governments, the business community and the public.

The Central Arkansas Regional Transportation Study, or CARTS, is the cooperative effort by the participating communities, transportation providers and many other interested parties to develop a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area.



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