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**METROPLAN RELEASES 2016 ECONOMIC REVIEW AND OUTLOOK
Cybersecurity**

LITTLE ROCK, AR, January 9, 2016 — Metroplan announces the release of the *2016 Economic Review and Outlook*, chronicling economic trends for the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

This edition of the *Metrotrends Economic Review and Outlook* takes a look at **cybersecurity** in Central Arkansas.

Cybersecurity is one of the fastest-growing businesses in the U.S. (and world) economy. The Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway MSA has the *highest* share of cyber-security jobs of *any metro area in the country*. Central Arkansas has nearly nine times as many jobs in this sector as the national average, in comparison to total jobs. This issue discusses challenges and opportunities for security analyst jobs in Central Arkansas. First 72 Cyber, a startup firm based in Little Rock that focuses on corporate cybersecurity, offered some insights.

This issue also examines the Central Arkansas economy:

- Regional economic growth remains slow but steady in late 2016. Over the past year growth in the local business and professional services sector outpaced the U.S. average. Other areas of local strength have included retail trade, transportation, utilities, education and health services.
- While job growth has been modest, unemployment has fallen to historic lows. The region's low unemployment rate has been accompanied by rising labor force participation.
- The Venture Center is helping aspiring entrepreneurs meet their goals and get their businesses started. Venture Center-supported startups have raised a combined total of \$19 million in seed capital since 2013.
- Retail sales are changing as E-commerce gains ground over brick-and-mortar stores. Internet sales are projected to average over 10% of all sales by 2020. In Central Arkansas, Lonoke County showed the fastest retail growth from 2007-2012 at 11%.
- Other articles include:
 - Regional manufacturing GDP grew 13.4 percent 2010-2015, besting U.S. manufacturing GDP growth. Data suggests local manufacturers have driven productivity at almost three times the U.S. rate over the past five years.
 - New housing stayed in slow-growth mode during 2016.
 - Total construction activity was down in 2015, with the exception of Benton, where recent construction includes a large apartment complex, the Benton River Center and a Boys and Girls Club.
 - Economic Outlook 2016

Read the full publication by visiting: <http://metroplan.org/sites/default/files/EconomicReview2016.pdf>

Metroplan publishes *Metrotrends* twice yearly. The spring edition is the *Demographic Review and Outlook*; the winter edition is the *Economic Review and Outlook*. All articles, tables and figures are available for republishing with credit. This issue is available as a PDF or paper copy from Metroplan.

Metroplan is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the four-county region of Faulkner, Lonoke, Pulaski and Saline counties. It is a voluntary association of local governments that has operated since 1955.