

DEMOGRAPHIC AND LAND USE TRENDS

Relationship of Land Use and Development to Transportation

Rural counties throughout the Commonwealth and the Thomas Jefferson region are working either to seek new economic growth and diversification or to balance growth while striving to preserve the rural character of the landscape. Most of the land in these counties is in agricultural or forested use, with more intensive land use in the towns and village centers, typically at the intersection of two roadways. There is a broad spectrum of the amount of growth and land use changes occurring throughout the Commonwealth and the Thomas Jefferson region, based particularly on proximity to urban areas. Many of the rural counties are trying to direct any new

growth towards existing towns, village centers, or service districts in order to provide services and to continue to address the needs of residents as well as maintain a general agricultural setting. As the population fluctuates, either through in- or out-migration or shifting within the region, the needs of the communities - including education, health care, social services, employment, and transportation - shift and fluctuate as well.

Land use and development changes that particularly affect transportation in rural areas include, but are not limited to, school consolidation, loss or gain of a major employer, movement of younger sectors of the population to more urban areas, retirement community development, and growth of bedroom-community developments.

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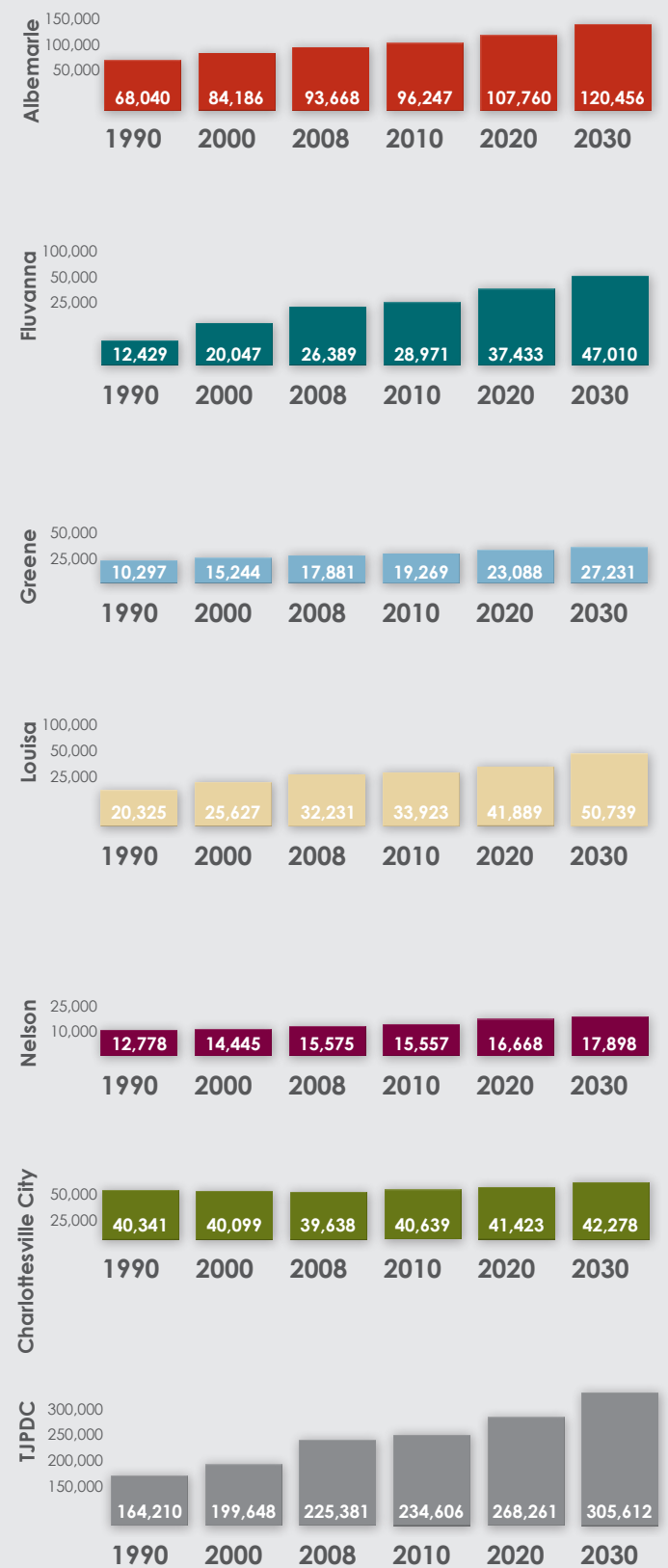
During the UnJAM process, socio-economic factors that have created the existing condition of the transportation system improvements were reviewed. This included data on income, education, household size, health issues, and other demographic statistics. In each locality there has been an increase in household income and a decrease in household size over the past decade (TJPDC, 2004). There has been a decrease in vehicles per household in the MPO study area, and an increase in the rural areas, signaling a greater demand for regional travel and dispersed growth patterns. More importantly, except for the City, the number of workers driving alone to work increased significantly for all localities. Reviewing these trends, the increased travel demand that is placed on the transportation network is apparent.

Population Trends

Regional population increased by 12.9% between 2000 and 2008. The rate of growth was not distributed evenly throughout the region. Nelson and Albemarle Counties grew the least, 7.8% and 11.3%, respectively, while Fluvanna and Louisa Counties grew by over 25%. However, by absolute numbers, Albemarle and Fluvanna Counties increased the most, by over 20,000 persons each. Population projections for the region exhibit these trends as well. The populations in Nelson County and Charlottesville are projected to grow the least; populations in Fluvanna, Greene, and Louisa counties are expected to increase by more than 50% by 2030.



Total Population Over Time



Source: US Census, 1990, 2000, Weidon 2009; Virginia Employment Commission, 2008.

Population trends have implications for the transportation network of any geographic area. Improvements to the network are needed because mobility and safety are affected by increases in population. In the case of the Thomas Jefferson region, increasing pressure on the network has already resulted in changes to the network such as additional capacity demands on the roadways and additional demand for public transportation and travel demand management services. The region has experienced growth in through traffic along US 29 and I-64. Development pressures from urban growth have also reduced mobility. Finally, access from more rural areas of the region into Charlottesville for commercial and economic purposes has become affected by increased population and development.

Demographic Trends

Disadvantaged population groups were studied in order to determine if there are any gaps or deficiencies in the transportation network that could affect these groups. Disadvantaged groups studied include low-income, minority, elderly, and people with disabilities, as defined by the US Census. In the 2000 US Census, only the City of Charlottesville had a minority population percentage higher than that of the state (29.9%). In 2000, Louisa and Nelson counties and the City of Charlottesville had low-income populations above the state percentage of 9.6%. The portion of the population with disabilities in both Louisa and Nelson counties are above the state percentage of 18.1%. All of the jurisdictions, except for Charlottesville and Greene County, have elderly populations in a higher proportion than the state in 2000 (11.2%).

Transportation Implications

US Census data from 2000 were reviewed at the block group level in order to provide enough detail to assess possible areas of service expansion for fixed-route and demand-responsive transit. Any segment of the population without a vehicle available, which can include elderly, people with disabilities, and low-income groups, are more dependent on responsive transit in a rural area than in urban areas. This is due to the smaller network of transit routes in rural areas when compared to urban areas. The UnJAM 2035 Plan considers all populations and areas in the transportation network planning and decision-making process. It strives to achieve a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the travel needs of all populations in the planning district. Special efforts were also made to reach out to minority and low-income populations



during the public involvement process by advertising and targeting such groups to ensure their inclusion in the process (TJPDC, 2009). Specific projects and concepts in UnJAM, such as enhanced public transportation systems, will have a positive impact on all segments of the population. Connecting neighborhoods will also improve access to services. Bicycle and pedestrian projects will also expand mobility options and provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles.

Specific projects and concepts in UnJAM will have a positive impact on the populations protected by environmental justice.

LEGEND

- Minority
- Low-Income
- Disability
- Elderly

Source: US Census, 2000.
Note: People with disabilities is based on the population over 5 years of age. Low-income is a percentage of the population for whom poverty is determined.

Elderly, Disability, Low-Income, and Minority Populations in the TJ Region

