



metroplan orlando  
A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP



# 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

## Chapter 5 | Community Health and Housing



August 22, 2025

Draft

## WHAT IS IN THIS DOCUMENT?

This chapter of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan is the compilation of technical studies on the impact transportation has on health and housing in the MetroPlan Orlando region. Within this chapter, both health and housing have their own sections that explore best practices, desired outcomes, and next steps. In the development of each section, staff interviewed relevant stakeholders that provided their expertise and insight on how the built environment impacts our community.

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## 5.1 Introduction

As a part of the built environment, transportation is directly linked to the community it serves. Where people live impacts how they get from Point A to Point B and how they travel can impact their health outcomes. This chapter explores the linkage between community health, housing, and transportation, and identifies transportation strategies to aid in the continued improvements to community health and housing.

## 5.2 Community Health

Our transportation system affects more than just how we travel from place to place; it also impacts the health of our communities. By planning and designing safe and accessible transportation networks, we can provide a built environment that makes it easier for Central Floridians to live healthy lifestyles. The purpose of this section is to integrate the work of the 2022 MetroPlan Orlando Health Strategic Plan, as well as findings and recommendations from the Literature Review and Stakeholder Engagement into the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

### 5.2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was conducted by examining the connections between transportation and **Community Health** in the Central Florida region. Key documents reviewed include the MetroPlan Orlando Health Strategic Plan, Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs) for Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties, publications by the Health Council of East Central Florida, Second Harvest annual report, Age-Friendly Action Plans for Osceola County, City of Orlando and City of Longwood, PLACES data from the CDC, and policy guidance from the American Lung Association and the American Heart Association.

In addition, CDC PLACES data was used to create maps that show geographic distribution of six chronic diseases (asthma; high blood pressure; diabetes; coronary heart disease; obesity; and high cholesterol) within the MetroPlan Orlando footprint of Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties. The analysis was performed at the county-level (comparing each census tract to its county's mean) and the regional-level (comparing each census tract to the average of the entire three-county MetroPlan Orlando region).

- Asthma is highly prevalent around the dense urban areas within the MetroPlan Orlando footprint, including Sanford, West Orange County (Apopka, Ocoee, and unincorporated areas), Kissimmee, and St. Cloud. When analyzed at the Regional-level, asthma has a very high prevalence in West Orange County (Apopka, Ocoee, and unincorporated areas), primarily along SR 50 and US 441.
- Coronary heart disease follows a similar pattern as Asthma at the County-level. There are greater pockets of high and very high prevalence at the Regional-level analysis in northwest Orange County along SR 429, and in census tracts surrounding Kissimmee and St Cloud.
- Diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity prevalence are similar to census tracts exhibiting high and very high prevalence of asthma and coronary heart disease for both the County and Regional-level analyses.
- High cholesterol is highly prevalent through unincorporated parts of Seminole, Orange, and Osceola Counties in the Regional-level analysis. This is generally not observed in analysis of other chronic diseases.

To see this information represented on a map of the region or to see which census tracts had the highest prevalence, please refer to Appendix F.



## 5.2.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

MetroPlan Orlando conducted two virtual stakeholder meetings to discuss existing conditions, trends, and potential recommendations related to health in transportation planning. Participants included representatives from the following organizations:

- American Lung Association (ALA)
- American Heart Association (AHA)
- City of Orlando Mayor's Committee on Livability and Healthy Aging
- Health Council of East Central Florida (HCECF)
- Florida Department of Health (DOH) Orange, Osceola, and Seminole County offices
- Well Florida Council
- Osceola County Chamber of Commerce

During the first meeting, stakeholders provided input on the existing conditions, trends, challenges, metrics, targets, and provided preliminary recommendations for improving health through transportation planning. They discussed a general lack of public awareness or encouragement for public transit and alternative transportation options like 'reThink Your Commute' (FDOT's Commuter Services Program). The attendees also discussed the increasing need for transit shelters due to heat concerns, and the importance of regional transit hubs with air conditioning.

During the second meeting, stakeholders ranked the preliminary recommendations into high, medium, and low priorities. Recommendations were grouped using the five goals of the MetroPlan Orlando Health Strategic Plan:

- Supporting Healthy Lifestyles
- Implementing Healthy Transportation Infrastructure
- Providing a Safe Transportation System
- Improving Health Care Access through Transportation
- Integrating Community Health into Transportation Decision Making

## 5.2.3 HEALTH DESIRED OUTCOMES

The desired outcomes presented below (Figure 5-1) represent a combination of findings from the Literature Review, recommendations made by health stakeholders, and the recommended goals, objectives, strategies and actions of the 2022 MetroPlan Orlando Health Strategic Plan. Strategies to achieve these desired outcomes were also created and a full list of potential strategies can be found in Appendix F.

All health desired outcomes and strategies are aligned with the Community Goal of the 2050 MTP: *“Enhance the health and vitality of our region’s communities and environments.”* Additional information about the Community goal and associated objectives can be found in Chapter 2 of the 2050 MTP.

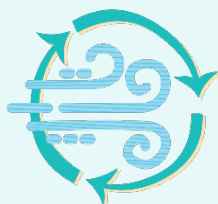


Figure 5-1 | Health Desired Outcomes



### Supporting Healthy Lifestyles

- Increase usage, safety, availability, and attractiveness of **active travel**.
- Increase access to opportunities for **physical activity** at recreational and leisure facilities.
- Improve opportunities for people to **access nutritious foods**.
- Directly **engage community members** on transportation and health.



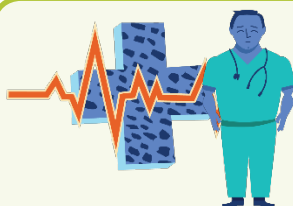
### Implementing Healthy Transportation Infrastructure

- Reduce exposure to transportation-related **air and noise pollution**.
- Mitigate **heat exposure** and heat-related illness for users of the transportation system.



### Providing a Safe Transportation System

- Reduce the number of **motor-vehicle crashes**.
- Reduce the number of **pedestrian and cycling injuries**.
- Plan with **crime reduction** strategies in mind.



### Improving Health Care Access through Transportation

- Improve physical access to **primary health care** services and routine **preventative care**.
- Improve physical access to **mental health** services.
- Improve physical access to **dental care** services.



### Integrating Community Health into Transportation Decision Making

- Provide a transportation system that **serves the full community's transportation and health needs**.

### 5.2.3.1 SUPPORTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Taking steps to support a culture of active and healthy lifestyles will help the people of Central Florida maintain healthy weight, reduce chronic disease, and improve mental health. Desired outcomes for this goal include:

- Increase usage, safety, availability and attractiveness of active travel.
- Increase access to opportunities for physical activity at recreational and leisure facilities.
- Improve opportunities for people to access nutritious foods.
- Directly engage community members on transportation and health.

Active transportation facilities, such as sidewalks, bicycle paths, and trails, encourage physical activity and non-motorized trips. Increased physical activity reduces the prevalence of chronic diseases, such as obesity and high blood pressure.

Micromobility provides an alternative to single occupant vehicle trips, which can improve air quality and contribute to better public health. Micromobility may provide better accessibility options for no-vehicle households and people who cannot access traditional fixed transit services.

A lack of access to healthy and affordable food options can contribute to poor health outcomes. People who live within low-income, low-access (LILA) food areas and are more than one-half mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (formerly known as “food deserts”) face challenges preparing and eating a healthy diet.

### 5.2.3.2 IMPLEMENTING HEALTHY TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Investing in a transportation system that minimizes pollution and provides protection from extreme weather will lead to better health outcomes for the people of Central Florida. Exposure to extreme heat, particularly for the elderly, is a concern for the region. Desired outcomes for this goal include:

- Reduce exposure to transportation-related air and noise pollution.
- Mitigate heat exposure and heat-related illness for all users of the transportation system.

The transportation sector is a major contributor to mobile-source emissions, and air pollution contributes to chronic diseases such as asthma. Noise pollution can affect learning, sleep and mental health. Transportation projects should not contribute to the maximum extent feasible, additional air and noise pollution to vulnerable populations that are impacted by chronic disease.

Exposure to extreme heat can result in unsafe conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. This problem can be exacerbated by land use factors, such as lack of shade or green space, resulting in higher temperatures than those in communities with shade and green space.

### 5.2.3.3 PROVIDING A SAFE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Providing a safe transportation system is essential for the people of Central Florida. The region's goal of Vision Zero, zero transportation deaths and injuries, means reducing crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists— the most vulnerable roadway users. Desired outcomes for this goal include:

- Reduce the number of motor-vehicle crashes.
- Reduce the number of pedestrian and cycling injuries.
- Plan with crime reduction strategies in mind.

Transportation systems cross jurisdictional boundaries and neighborhoods. Providing a safe transportation system for all users requires coordination with a wide set of stakeholders that represent all aspects of the region.

#### 5.2.3.4 IMPROVING HEALTH CARE ACCESS THROUGH TRANSPORTATION

Some populations in the region do not have adequate access to health care services, including medical, mental, and dental health. MetroPlan Orlando's 2024 Regional Transportation Survey found that nearly one in four (25%) respondents had skipped or missed a doctor's appointment in the past year because they did not have reliable transportation. Desired outcomes for this goal include:

- Improve physical access to primary health care services and routine preventive care.
- Improve physical access to mental health services.
- Improve physical access to dental care services.

Some residents, particularly seniors and those without access to personal vehicles, need expanded mobility options to access health care services. Community engagement is a critical method for understanding the underlying challenges and barriers associated with health care access. This process can identify unique health care access needs within the region.

#### 5.2.3.5 INTEGRATING COMMUNITY HEALTH INTO TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING

Health outcomes and opportunities should be accessible to all members of the regional. By using community surveys and analyses, potential areas of limited access or concerns for the region's access to healthcare due to higher rates of chronic diseases would be evaluated, the results of which would be incorporated and considered during transportation decision-making as future transportation projects are planned or programmed. Desired outcomes for this goal include:

- Provide a transportation system that serves the region's transportation and health needs.

By formally adopting health-focused planning strategies, including the Planning and Analysis of Transportation and Health Strategies (PATHS) Framework, MetroPlan Orlando will consider public health in all transportation decisions.

### 5.2.4 NEXT STEPS FOR HEALTH PLANNING

Through formally incorporating health planning in the 2050 MTP, MetroPlan Orlando will be able to build upon regional efforts to promote coordination between health and transportation planning partners. Following adoption of the 2050 MTP, MetroPlan Orlando will continue to work with regional health experts as well as planning professionals and local partners to explore strategies to continue to incorporate health into transportation planning. The strategies are summarized in the following sections, and a full list of strategies under consideration and an evaluation matrix can be found in Appendix F.

#### 5.2.4.1 HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

The following health-related factors may be considered by MetroPlan Orlando during the review of transportation projects and programs. Projects and programs that promote improved public health, consistent with the Health Goals, Objectives, and Strategies, will be considered, particularly if the project or program addresses a documented issue in census tracts with high prevalence of chronic diseases.

- The chronic disease maps should be consulted during the review and prioritization of proposed transportation projects during the 2050 MTP process so that the information is carried forward into the Prioritized Project List (PPL) process. The PPL includes all upcoming highway, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, aviation, and other transportation-related projects that have been deemed cost feasible in the near term but may still have unfunded phases. The PPL shows which projects are next in line for federal and state funding.
- MetroPlan Orlando will continue to work with planners, engineers, elected officials, and health professionals to consider and mitigate potential disproportionate transportation impacts to areas that are overburdened with poor public health.





#### 5.2.4.2 FUTURE MONITORING AND MEASUREMENT

MetroPlan Orlando will continue to partner with health organizations to obtain health outcome data necessary to determine the effectiveness of any health strategies that have been implemented, with future monitoring and measurement to include the following components as permitted by data availability:

- During each five-year update to the MTP, MetroPlan Orlando should review CDC PLACES data to determine if any census tracts are disproportionately impacted by chronic disease.
- In partnership with community-based organizations or county health departments, conduct the following health surveys, followed by monitoring for each chronic disease(s) within the top five high prevalence census tracts.
- **Prevalence and incidence:** Using CDC PLACES data, monitor prevalence rates over time compared to the average prevalence of other census tracts within the region. Monitor incidence rates of new chronic disease cases over time.
- **Severity:** Using FLHealthCharts data, monitor number of emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to the chronic disease(s).
- **Quality of life:** Using surveys from community-based organizations or county health departments, quantify the number of days missed from work or school due to chronic disease symptoms.
- **Commuting patterns:** Using US Census data, determine average commute time for census tracts impacted by chronic disease. Identify the mode(s) of transportation used for commuting, and determine the exposure to traffic emissions and pollutants during commutes.
- **Data collection methods:** In partnership with county health departments, conduct Health Surveys and questionnaires in census tracts impacted by chronic disease. If available, collect data on wearable health monitors to track physical activity, environmental exposure, and other metrics.
- **Data analysis techniques:** Use statistical analyses, such as the *Healthy Mobility Model*, to identify correlations between transportation factors and chronic disease metrics. GIS analysis can provide spatial understanding of transportation improvements, health and environmental data. Conduct longitudinal studies to track changes over time and evaluate the impact of transportation improvements or targeted health interventions.
- In partnership with county health departments, provide annual reporting on the indicators, measurement assessments, and data sources identified for each Determinant of Health.

## 5.3 Housing

### 5.3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE HOUSING COMPONENT

This section summarizes the **Housing Coordination Process** — a cooperatively developed approach to integrate housing, transportation, and economic development strategies. This process seeks to align regional objectives with local decision-making to address Central Florida's housing and transportation challenges.

By integrating Housing into the long-range planning process, MetroPlan Orlando has undertaken a collaborative and non-prescriptive approach to define its role in the housing discussion. This section presents a framework that allows Central Florida communities to advance shared priorities through strategies that are both regionally beneficial and locally desirable.



#### 5.3.1.1 THE HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION CONNECTION

The location and affordability of housing significantly affect transportation patterns, commute times, and access to economic opportunities. Housing situated far from employment and other activity centers often leads to longer commutes, increased traffic congestion, and higher transportation costs, which collectively reduce quality of life. Conversely, strategic investments in transportation infrastructure can improve housing accessibility by fostering development near employment hubs, transit corridors, and essential amenities.

Transportation decisions directly influence housing availability by shaping land use and market conditions. For example, enhanced public transit options and greater connectivity can incentivize residential growth in underdeveloped areas, making them more attractive for housing development and re-development. This symbiotic relationship underscores the importance of integrated planning.

Though this is the first time MetroPlan Orlando has formally integrated housing in its long-range transportation plan, previous planning efforts have evaluated the impacts of transportation from land use decisions. This section strengthens the coordination between housing and transportation planning by aligning existing methodologies with forward-looking frameworks like FDOT's roadway Context Classification systems.

### 5.3.1.2 CENTRAL FLORIDA CONTEXT: THE HOUSING CRISIS, ZONING REFORM, AND NEW TRANSPORTATION PLANNING TOOLS

Central Florida, mirroring statewide trends, is experiencing significant housing challenges characterized by high housing costs and an increasing number of individuals who are cost-burdened or experiencing homelessness. Both the State of Florida and local governments are implementing various initiatives to address these challenges, including zoning reform. Zoning reform refers generally to the update of land-use regulations to better align with current economic, environmental, and quality-of-life objectives. The Live Local Act represents a state-level zoning reform which preempted certain local regulations and created an optional tax break for housing that includes affordable units. Many communities within Central Florida have begun implementing local zoning reforms. The need for zoning reform has support from organizations such as the American Planning Association, Urban Land Institute, and AARP. By updating zoning regulations, local governments can create more flexible and responsive land-use policies that can accommodate the region's growing population and housing needs.

Coordinating zoning reforms and other housing strategies with transportation planning is essential. Many local governments throughout the region and state have adopted or are exploring new approaches to this coordination, including Mobility Plans, local road Context Classification systems, and comprehensive approaches to urban corridor improvements. Promoting the use of these context-sensitive planning tools is a vital aspect of implementing housing strategies.



### 5.3.2 HOUSING COORDINATION PROCESS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement was a crucial component of the housing coordination process. Between June and August 2024, three stakeholder meetings were held with representatives from local governments, housing authorities, non-profit organizations, regional agencies, and academic institutions.

- **Meeting 1:** Participants included the MetroPlan Orlando project team, representatives from the City of Orlando, AARP Florida, Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, and Osceola County. Discussions focused on challenges like the housing affordability crisis, the need for diverse housing options, and the importance of connecting housing to transportation. Ongoing initiatives such as advocacy for missing middle housing and promoting Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) were highlighted. Goals included facilitating zoning reforms and strategically locating affordable housing near transit.
- **Meeting 2:** Attendees included representatives from the MetroPlan Orlando project team, City of Orlando, Orlando Housing Authority, Orlando Neighborhood Improvement Corporation, and the Florida Housing Coalition. The focus was on balancing regional growth with equitable access to housing and mobility. Identified challenges included insufficient public transit and the combined burden of housing and transportation costs. Proposed solutions involved leveraging transportation hubs for affordable housing and expanding bike-share programs. The Creative Village project was cited as a successful example of integrating affordable housing with transit options.
- **Meeting 3:** Meeting attendees included representatives from the MetroPlan Orlando project team, AARP, and East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. The participants emphasized the needs of older adults and vulnerable communities. Key points of discussion included the importance of universal design in housing, educational outreach on transit services, and developing safe, accessible transportation options for aging populations.

Key takeaways from these meetings included:

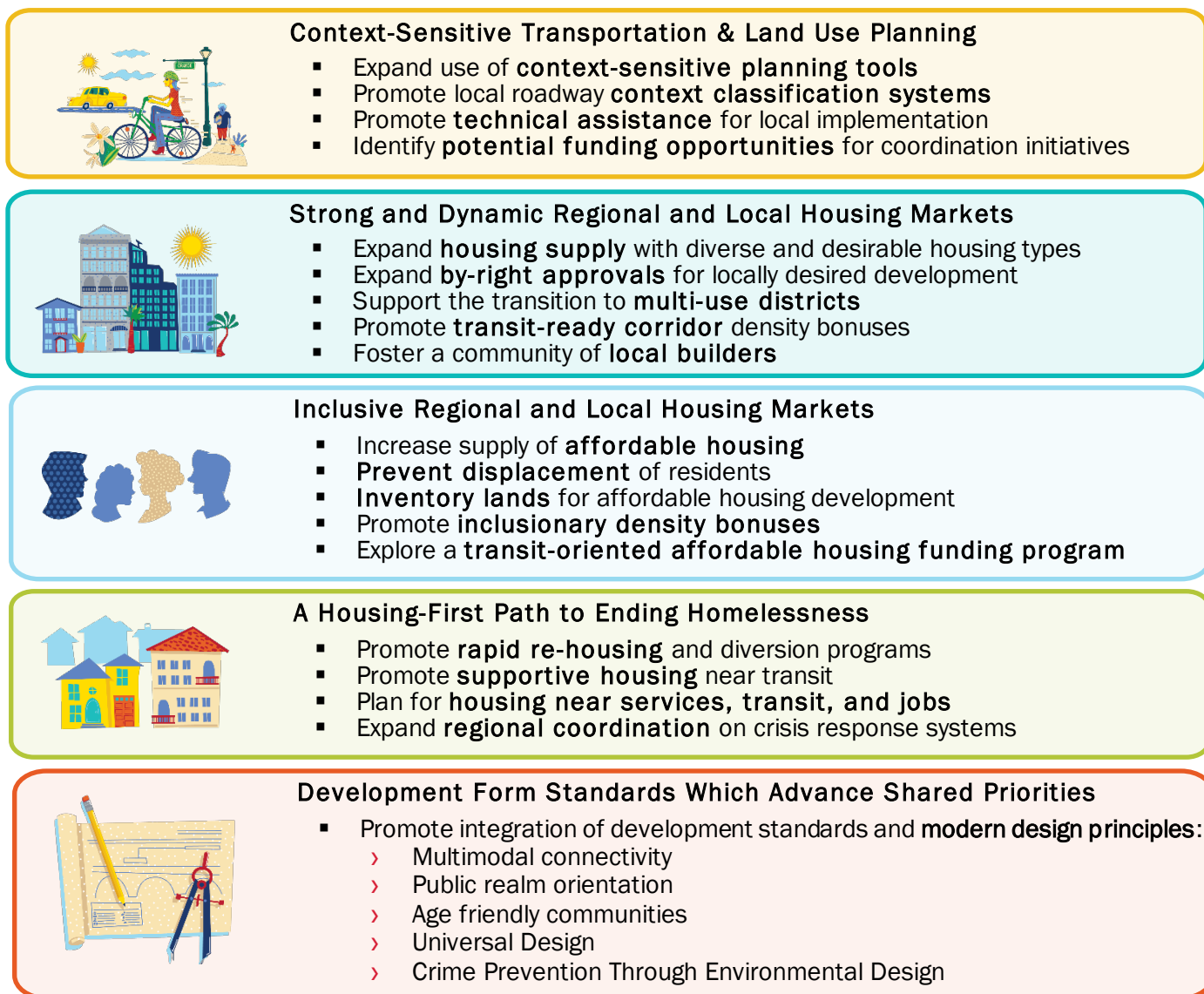
- The high cost of housing is a significant issue to many stakeholders.
- A strong need exists to **coordinate housing development with transportation infrastructure** to address affordability and accessibility challenges.
- Locating **affordable housing near transit and employment centers** is crucial, though high land costs and funding constraints present challenges.
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is vital for creating communities with **access to housing and transportation**. Successful local examples reinforce potential benefits.
- Necessary **zoning reforms and comprehensive planning** should support TOD and mixed-use development.
- Addressing the needs of older adults, low-income households, and individuals experiencing homelessness is essential for creating inclusive communities.
- Expanding public transit services and implementing solutions like car-share and bike-share programs are critical to reducing residents' combined housing and transportation costs.

### 5.3.3 HOUSING COORDINATION PROCESS DESIRED OUTCOMES

The desired outcomes reflect areas where housing and land use policy intersect with the transportation planning process. While MetroPlan Orlando does not set land use policy, the agency has an interest in how land use and development trends influence regional mobility, economic development, and infrastructure planning. These outcomes help frame discussions on how transportation investments, planning frameworks, local policies, and regional coordination can support more connected, accessible, and economically viable communities. By recognizing these aspirations within the 2050 MTP, MetroPlan Orlando aims to foster a stronger connection between housing and transportation planning while respecting local government decision-making authority.

The list of desired outcomes is found in Figure 5-2.

Figure 5-2 | Housing Desired Outcomes





### 5.3.4 NEXT STEPS

The Housing section of the 2050 MTP builds upon stakeholder input and previous regional efforts to promote coordination between housing and transportation planning. Moving forward, implementation efforts will focus on facilitating regional discussions and supporting coordinated local decision-making. While MetroPlan Orlando does not directly implement housing policies, it recognizes the importance of land use and housing accessibility in shaping regional mobility and economic development outcomes.

#### 5.3.4.1 RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LAND USE SUBCOMMITTEE

Moving forward, MetroPlan Orlando will facilitate ongoing coordination efforts to support local governments and regional partners in addressing housing and transportation challenges. To further advance housing and transportation coordination, MetroPlan Orlando will explore the re-establishment of the Land Use Subcommittee (LUSC) within its Technical Advisory Committee process. The LUSC, or a similarly structured working group, would provide a dedicated forum for local governments, regional agencies, and key stakeholders to collaboratively address land use and housing considerations within the transportation planning process. By leveraging the subcommittee model, MetroPlan Orlando can facilitate regular engagement on policy challenges, implementation barriers, and best practices to better integrate housing and mobility strategies across jurisdictions. A list of strategies to be considered was created through the Housing Coordination Process and can be found in Appendix F. The subcommittee's work will be instrumental in guiding ongoing efforts beyond the MTP's adoption, supporting the alignment of local land use planning and regional transportation goals.

- Continue engagement with local governments, regional planning bodies, and stakeholders to explore ways housing considerations can be integrated into transportation planning efforts.
- MetroPlan Orlando will evaluate the potential for re-establishing the Land Use Subcommittee (LUSC) within its Technical Advisory Committee.
- The LUSC would provide a structured forum for local government partners, regional agencies, and experts to coordinate housing strategies and transportation planning efforts.
- The subcommittee's role would be to guide future work beyond the adoption of the MTP, including potential policy recommendations, model policy development, and cross-jurisdictional coordination.
- Additionally, the LUSC could be the forum to explore health-related strategies.



#### 5.3.4.2 DEVELOP AND DEPLOY REGIONAL HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION INITIATIVE

The Housing Element supports the development of a Regional Housing and Transportation Coordination (RHTC) initiative, building upon previous Central Florida housing coordination efforts. The most recent of these efforts was the “Regional Affordable Housing Framework” from 2016 to 2018. Initiated by Orange County in response to affordability issues that continue to challenge Central Florida, this initiative involved Osceola and Seminole counties and the City of Orlando. This effort led to the local adoption of innovative housing policies, such as Orange County’s “Ready Set Orange” pre-approved housing floorplans. The East Central Florida Regional Planning Council led the “How Shall We Grow” initiative from 2005 to 2009 collaboratively developing a shared vision for Central Florida with Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia counties.



- MetroPlan Orlando will work with stakeholders to define the scope and structure of a Regional Housing and Transportation Coordination Initiative.
- The initiative will aim to facilitate knowledge-sharing, best practices, and regional coordination on housing policy and housing-related transportation planning.
- As part of this initiative, the LUSC will encourage local governments to conduct Local Zoning Reform Assessments (LZRA) as a tool to evaluate potential locally supported zoning updates that align with transportation planning objectives.
- MetroPlan Orlando will track LZRA outcomes to help share best practices across jurisdictions, allowing communities to learn from successful policy changes while maintaining local autonomy.

Each of these efforts reflects MetroPlan Orlando’s role as a facilitator of regional discussions, supporting local decision-making while fostering long-term solutions to housing and transportation challenges.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The inclusion of the Community Health and Housing in the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan marks a significant continuation of MetroPlan Orlando's efforts to integrate a holistic approach to regional transportation planning in Central Florida. MetroPlan Orlando will carry forward the work done for both the Health Strategic Plan and the Housing Coordination Process as an ongoing endeavor to address the impact of the transportation system on the region's community health and housing challenges. By fostering collaboration among regional stakeholders, MetroPlan Orlando aims to build upon existing partnerships and develop coordinated strategies that effectively integrate land use and transportation planning for a healthier and more connected region.



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