Stakeholder Roundtables Summary
December 2011

In December 2011, a series of five stakeholder roundtables was conducted for the Connect Cobb Alternatives Analysis. The purpose of the roundtables was to gain insight from community members, planning partners, key stakeholders, special interest groups, elected and appointed officials, and agency staff about the study's purpose, need, goals and objectives as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate the study's alternatives.

The individual roundtables were organized by topic and included transportation and air quality, land use, economic development, environment, and financial. Over eighty attendees participated in the roundtables, many attending more than one or even all five. A broad cross-section of stakeholders was achieved with representation from the general public; local, state and regional agency staff; the business community; environmental groups; civic organizations; and advocacy groups. The following table lists the details for each roundtable. All roundtables were held at Cobb County Department of Transportation.

Topic	*Date and Time*	*Number of Attendees*
Transportation and Air Quality	December 6, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	43
Land Use	December 6, 2011 6:00 -7:30pm	30
Economic Development	December 8,2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	29
Environment	December 8, 2011 6:00 – 7:30pm	19
Financial	December 13, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	21

Upon arrival at the roundtables, attendees signed-in, were offered an information folder and asked to select seating in at a six-person group table with a facilitator. Each roundtable began with a short presentation directed at the entire audience, followed by a breakout group exercise. See attached documents for agenda and handouts for each roundtable.

In the breakout exercise, attendees were asked their thoughts on the draft goals and objectives, specifically how well they reflected the issues in the study area and if any pertinent statements had been left out. Next, attendees were asked to discuss the draft purpose and how well the statement married with the goals and objectives. A facilitator guided the conversation, and a recorder documented the verbal comments. The following summaries detail the collective conversations compiled from each table at the individual roundtables. Also included are comments submitted by attendees after review of the summary notes.

Economic Development/Redevelopment Roundtable
Stakeholder Comments
December 8, 2011

General Discussion

- The #1 issue is congestion. Economic Development is important and should be considered but not above providing time affective alternate for suburban commuters.
- Public/private partnerships could be focused at stations
- Give options for diverse types of housing
- Take a hard look at old retail and small acreage; opportunity for redevelopment
- Consider trees, storm water runoff, parking
- Potential for local development codes to allow for Economic Development
- Transit at major centers makes sense; not a lot of stops
- Examples of Economic Development: Charlotte, Phoenix, Fairfax/Dulles
- Medical growth (Kennestone)
- Looking for a high concentration of high tech industries
- Transit currently has a lack of options; starting to fall behind
- Areas that are growing (i.e. North Fulton) could become stagnant
- Focus Economic Development into nodes that the community wants
- Halo effect
- Transportation discussion focused on Cobb residents using transit to commute <u>from</u> Cobb County. Economic development could also allow more people to commute <u>in</u> to Cobb County.
- The ultimate result will be more people living <u>and</u> working along the transit corridor.
- Adding job growth to Cobb has a greater economic impact to the County without all the demand for services as with residential growth.
- US 41 corridor is overbuilt for retail. Transit could help with access to jobs.
- Much development along US 41 is older and ripe for redevelopment.
- How does mode relate to economic development?
    - Commuter rail along CSX is likely <u>very</u> difficult due to ownership and freight traffic
    - Economic development potential along CSX is more limited than other modes.
    - BRT economic development requires dedicated lane of right-of-way to be "permanent". Could also be a stepping stone to future upgrades.
- Land use planning, comprehensive planning and development regulations. Need to be consistent with overall concept.
- From an economic development perspective, the greatest benefit will be seen by building transit along US 41, versus I-75. Transit in/along I-75 mostly benefits long commutes. This general corridor might really deserve a two-prong approach → I-75 <u>and</u> US 41.
- Commutes to downtown Atlanta will benefit most to travelers from the north of Marietta.

- Where does the money come from to develop near stations? What about money for other infrastructure improvements near stations? (i.e. streets, utilities, parks, etc.) Perhaps a TAD of TIFIA is necessary. These could be setup in nodes near stations or CID's.
- Perhaps LRT could have both local and express service?
- Concept planning should consider displacement of existing businesses – they are important to the local economy.
- Define transit investment
    - It's an issue of more commercialization in a residential area- will bring high density
        - Will the focus be on a building business/economic development or quality of life?
        - Question is whether the emphasis is Cobb as an economic hub (job/business creation) or continuation of today as a bedroom community.
- Potential for economic development is greater down US 41
- BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure)- also a concern, great for a potential transit stop
- Franklin/Delk LCI: if a station is a Delk, job creation would be enhanced in this corridor and enhanced linkages to SPSU, Life and Dobbins
- There is support for transit, but not in certain areas (cited Atlanta's Piedmont Hospital, Collier Road area and how nice it is). There was concern for the area once you cross the river going south on US 41
- Cumberland has lost companies wanting to relocated or stay due to lack of transit
- Transit would promote conventions and sporting events (i.e. City of Marietta's Aviation Park and KSU's soccer stadium)
- Brain Train – KSU to Life to SPSU to Georgia Tech and Georgia State
- Perimeter is the #1 largest suburban office market, Cumberland is #2. Town Center is high on the list
- Walkability to area has economic impact on people's housing choices; especially young people and seniors
- Hospitals are necessary for continued economic development – a draw for where people choose to live
- More young professionals live in midtown; attract them to come out to work or come out to events
- Much discussion of positives and negatives of many stops vs. just a few stops. Pros and cons of both.
- HOT lanes will connect to Akers Mill Road so BRT could work on that and zip through
- Park and ride lots are very necessary with respect to density – Perimeter's lots are full so people just take their cars.
- Location of park and ride lots are important, could be a safety issue if near high speed ramps
- Don't want to take away from downtown areas in the cities, these are another alternative, not competition for economic development opportunities
- Transit would afford small town communities, which attract people, to still have it both ways, preservation of community in their home town and accessibility to jobs in the city.
- There needs to be a balance of number of stops and efficiency of travel time

Comprehensive List of Comments Received Regarding the Proposed Need and Purpose Statement:

"This Alternatives Analysis will focus on public transportation improvements that can best serve future demand, by building an integrated regional network that can support existing and future needs in the Northwest Corridor."

- Mirrors what came out of Concept 3
- May want to add something about the corridor's congestion ranking - from a listing of bad bottlenecks in the US. Also, the corridor is home 3 Fortune 500 Corporations – Home Depot, Genuine Parks, Coca Cola Enterprises.
- Include statement about importance of clean transportation alternatives. Prefer CNG/light rail over diesel.
- Clarification
    - Reduces Traffic Congestion
    - Sustainable Financially
    - Optimize trip time
    - Corridor Development
    - Interface with future regional transit networks while reducing travel times versus the no-build condition.
- There is nothing about cost effectiveness or accommodating bicycles and pedestrians
    - Planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities will help access to potential transit stations.
- Need to add Health Systems, this is a very important component
- Need to incorporate minimizing adverse environmental impacts into the need and purpose
- With regards to financial aspect of the Need and Purpose Statement
    - The primary objective is that this needs to be as cost effective as possible.
    - The secondary objective needs to include that the project be financially realistic to build/operate.
- Clarification
    - The P3 project should be included in analysis
        - It can be utilized for BRT
        - There would be a seamless integration for long distance and corridor commuting

Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Ron Sifen

From: Rsifen@aol.com [mailto:Rsifen@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 20, 2011 2:02 AM
To: hansen-dederick@sycamoreconsulting.net
Subject: Re: Connect Cobb Roundtables Summaries

Hi Kristine. I am requesting that this email be included in the official comments for this Alternatives Analysis study.

I have reviewed the meeting summaries from all 5 AA Roundtables, and I am alarmed at several omissions.

It is my understanding that the purpose of the 5 Roundtable sessions was to obtain and document public input. It is my understanding that the discussion summaries should include and document all comments, and not

selectively omit or alter any comments, nor target certain types of comments for omission. Accurate consolidation would have been acceptable. Outright omission is unacceptable, and is evidence of bias.

I made the following comments during these Roundtables, and these comments should have been included in the meeting summaries. In most cases, there was extensive discussion about these points, so it is surprising that these points are completely omitted from the summaries of various Roundtables.

Economic Development Roundtable

(This is the only roundtable where the summary makes any mention of my comments about alleviating traffic congestion, however most of my points were also omitted from this summary. I made these comments at all 5 roundtables, in a context that was relevant to each roundtable.)

The following points were discussed at the Economic Development Roundtable, and should be included in the discussion summary for the Economic Development Roundtable..

* The primary objective of this project should be alleviating traffic congestion.

* I am happy for any economic development that can occur as a result of transit that focuses on alleviating traffic congestion, but economic development objectives should not supercede alleviating traffic congestion.

* This project will cost billions of taxpayer dollars. The only way this is a good investment for taxpayers is if taxpayers get substantial traffic congestion relief for their investment.

* This project cannot contribute to alleviating traffic congestion unless it provides a transit alternative that meets the needs of commuters who currently drive their cars.

* Commuters will not use transit as an alternative to driving unless transit provides trip times that are reasonably competitive with driving.

* Time-competitive trip times cannot be achieved if there are too many stops. More stops results in slower trip times.

- All of the above was discussed at the Economic Development Roundtable, and it should be included in the discussion summary for the Economic Development Roundtable.

Purpose and Objectives statement

* At all 5 Roundtables, when we got to this part of the discussion, I recommended that the statement needed to state that cost-effectively alleviating traffic congestion was a primary objective.

Please also note. This project is already marred by bias. Several Cobb County officials repeatedly declared this would be light rail, before the AA even started. This continued until numerous citizens questioned whether the AA was a sham, and the conclusions had already been predetermined. Even worse, at one point, Cobb almost approved spending millions of dollars to start building a transit station and parking in a specific location, which led to questions as to whether the AA was a sham, and that the conclusions were already pre-

determined, and also raising questions as to whether Cobb was attempting to force the AA to approve what was already being built!!!

If the process is supposed to document all points of view, and all comments and recommendations, then that is what this record should reflect. The summaries should not have all of these selective omissions. The meeting summaries be corrected. And again, I want all of my comments in this email to be included in the official records for this AA study.

Thanks

Ron Sifen

Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Bob Hovey

1. First, and importantly, the title of the minutes is different than the title of the work session documents and objectives. Somehow the word "Redevelopment" got lost. Given the economic realities of the land along the routes being considered "Redevelopment" is key. The footnote title also refers only to "Development Roundtable". Please fix the titles at all the appropriate places.

2. I asked that you add an "objective" to the chart provided under "Support redevelopment plans" to promote the existing Cobb cities. The concept I described on my earlier email was also discussed in this economic context.
Added economic development that was not sufficiently close to existing cities could have the perverse effect of bleeding money, culture, and quality of life from them. Much like the 1960's strip malls dried up the life of the original towns they served, transit led development in the wrong places will lead to empty Cobb storefronts and a reduced tax base in the cities. For your convenience I have copied the earlier Land Use comment.

"Transit development needs to support the existing cities in Cobb. This includes Smyrna, Marietta, Kennesaw, and Acworth directly, and other cities through bus connectors. These cities already have a "sense of place" and infrastructures amenable to the higher densities needed to support ridership. Recent "Live, Work, Play" developments created as islands away from Cobb's existing cities have struggled. For example Ridenour and West Village both have fallen far short of original expectations. Transit stops must be close to and directly support existing cities."

3. The proposed Cumberland station east of I75 will reduce the economic benefit to Cumberland Galleria. This is a bad location for the commuters wishing to go to Cumberland Mall, and office workers accessing Galleria. It will be hard to have enough 12 passenger circulator busses to unload a modern rush hour Light Rail train. And there will be a wait to make the switch no matter how you do it. A station east of I75 destroys the potential to walk from the AA train/bus to work or shopping. The station should be in the current Akers Mill shopping center (redeveloped of course), across from Men's Wearhouse. (PS. The currently proposed station location likely puts the tracks in the Chattahoochee National Park).

Economic Development/Redevelopment Roundtable
Stakeholder Excercise
December 8, 2011

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS TO ASK:

1. **In what ways would the introduction of a new transit system support job creation and support local businesses?**

2. **Where would economic activity be most likely to concentrate in the Plan Area?**

3. **Which proposed Plan Alternative would be most likely to generate increased economic opportunity in the Plan Area?**

4. **Would the different transit alternatives bring different economic benefits?**

5. **What will be the most important economic benefits that transit can bring to the study area (jobs, transit choices, increased access, business support, increased real estate values)?**

6. **How might transit make the study area more competitive/more desirable compared with other areas where businesses and residents could locate?**

Economic Development/Redevelopment Roundtable
Stakeholder Excercise
December 8, 2011

DRAFT Economic Development/Redevelopment Goals and Objectives

Goals	Objectives
Stimulate local economy	Increase in employment & income levels Net economic growth Increased commercial/retail spaces Decrease/stabilization of foreclosure rates
Promote job creation	Create and sustain jobs to ensure future growth Create more mixed use, transit oriented developments
Leverage public and private investment	Generate revenue from land development
Support redevelopment plans	Promote reinvestment in aging shopping centers, office complexes and residential areas.

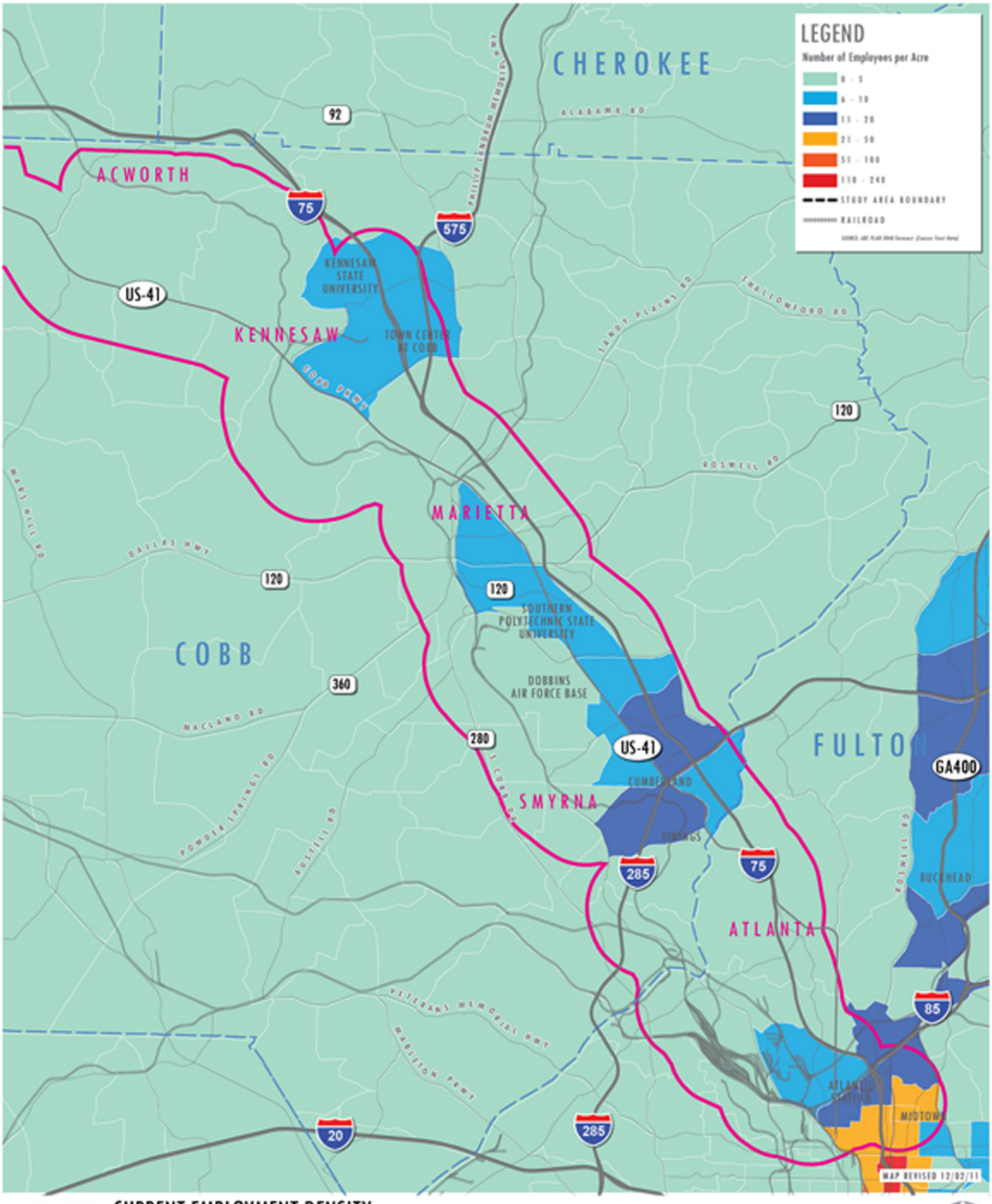
Economic Development/Redevelopment Issues Identified From Kick-Off

- Airfield and airspace issues near Dobbins AFB along US41
- Are other neighboring counties holding stakeholder meetings? What we do will have great impact on them, i.e. Cherokee, Douglas, etc. (and Atlanta)
- Circulators from neighborhoods to transit line (3)
- Collaboration between agencies/jurisdictions
- 1. Cost (2) 2. Economic benefits 3. Crime 4. Density
- Elected officials need to show bold vision. Future is not next 2 years or 5, it is next 20, 30, 50.
- How will development and walkability be accomplished along an interstate alignment?
- Need “hub” to service Life University and SPSU students/employees
- What coordination is being done w/City of Atlanta? A good portion of the corridor is outside of Cobb
- People move here for jobs – choose house for (1) school district (2) safe community. Transit should support both not create negative factors.
- You can’t really walk up Windy Hill – terrain is too steep for walkable stations.

Connections Identified from Kick-Off

- Lake Park Dr/US 41 800K+ square foot office
- West Paces Ferry Rd at I-75, Atlanta Beltline, Atlantic Station
- Connect Cumberland to Arts Center Station.
- Connect Cumberland to KSU (approximately 22,000 single occupancy vehicles)
- Connection to Smyrna (2) Absolutely essential!

- Connections to all major employees and universities
- Convenient access and parking
- Dallas Hwy at Paulding County Line (2)
- Downtown Marietta (2)
- Employment/activity centers on US41 Dobbins AFB/Lockheed/Clay NGL, KSU, Cobb Energy, etc.
- Financial center at Lenox-Buckhead (2)
- KSU – Town Center – Cumberland - Midtown
- KSU!
- MARTA at 400
- Must have rail connection from Cumberland to MARTA south and north to Kennesaw (at some point). Would also like to see east connection to Perimeter at some point. Cobb's economic development depends on this!! (2)
- Agree (see above bullet) - system should be implemented in stages and made to be expandable in future (Gwinnett, Alpharetta, etc)
- Perimeter Mall Circulator to Northside Hospital (3)
- Sixes Road
- Transit to big events, Braves game, bus service to Falcons, GA Tech
- Woodstock (2)

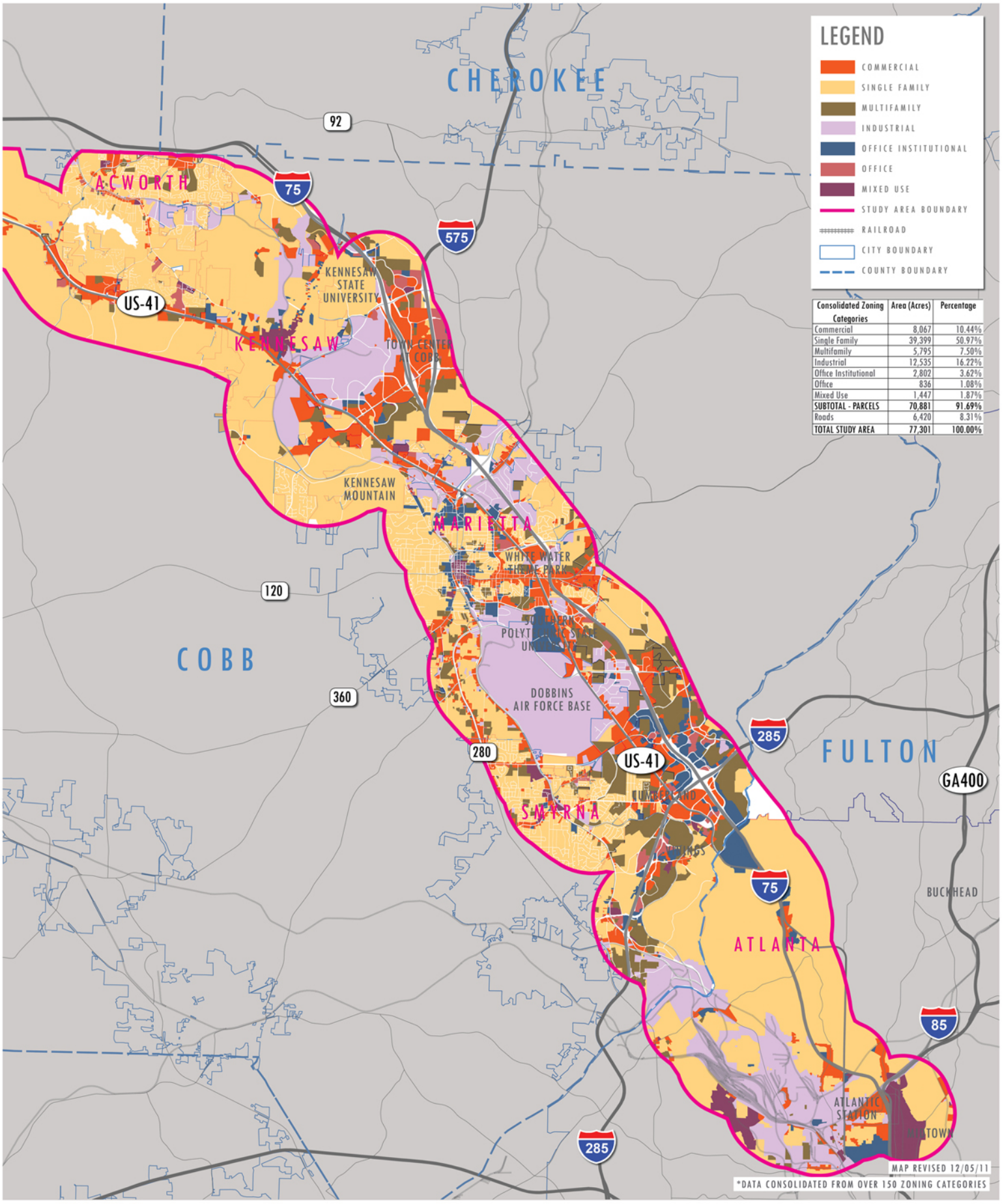


CURRENT EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND RAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

MILES



Consolidated Zoning Categories	Area (Acres)	Percentage
Commercial	8,067	10.44%
Single Family	39,399	50.97%
Multifamily	5,795	7.50%
Industrial	12,535	16.22%
Office Institutional	2,802	3.62%
Office	836	1.08%
Mixed Use	1,447	1.87%
SUBTOTAL - PARCELS	**70,881**	**91.69%**
Roads	6,420	8.31%
TOTAL STUDY AREA	**77,301**	**100.00%**

CONSOLIDATED ZONING FRAMEWORK*

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND BAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

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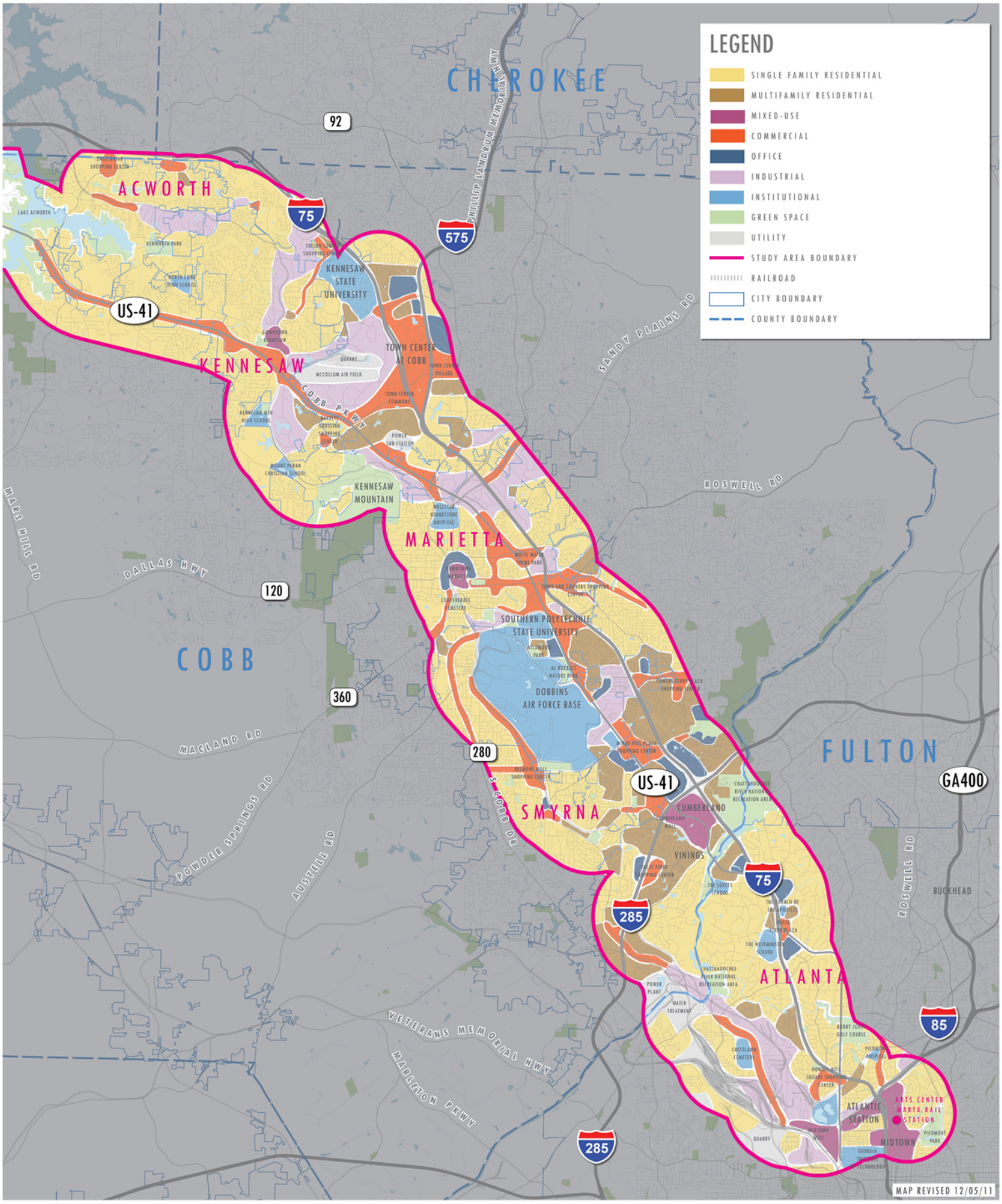

EXISTING LAND USE FRAMEWORK

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND BAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

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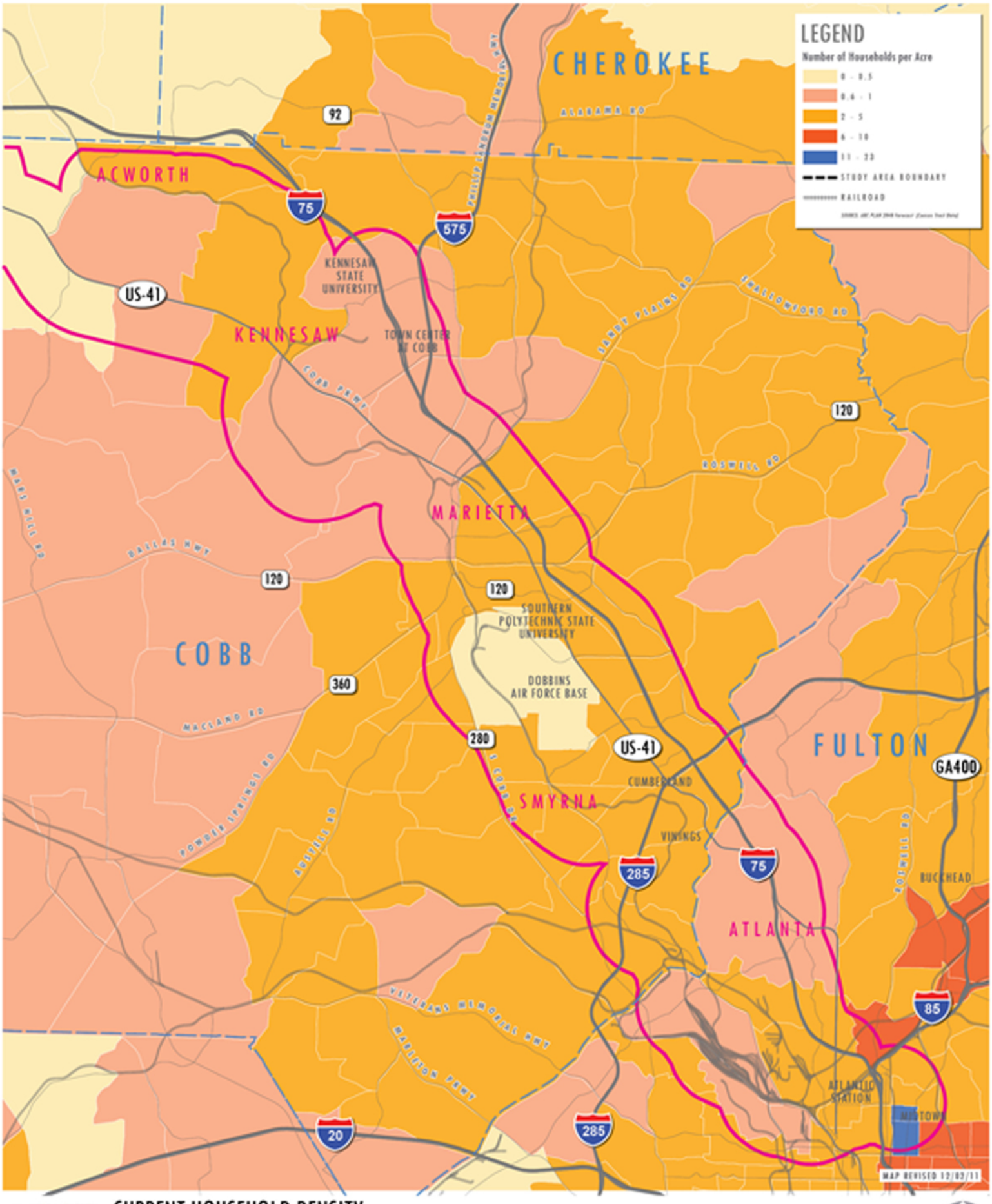


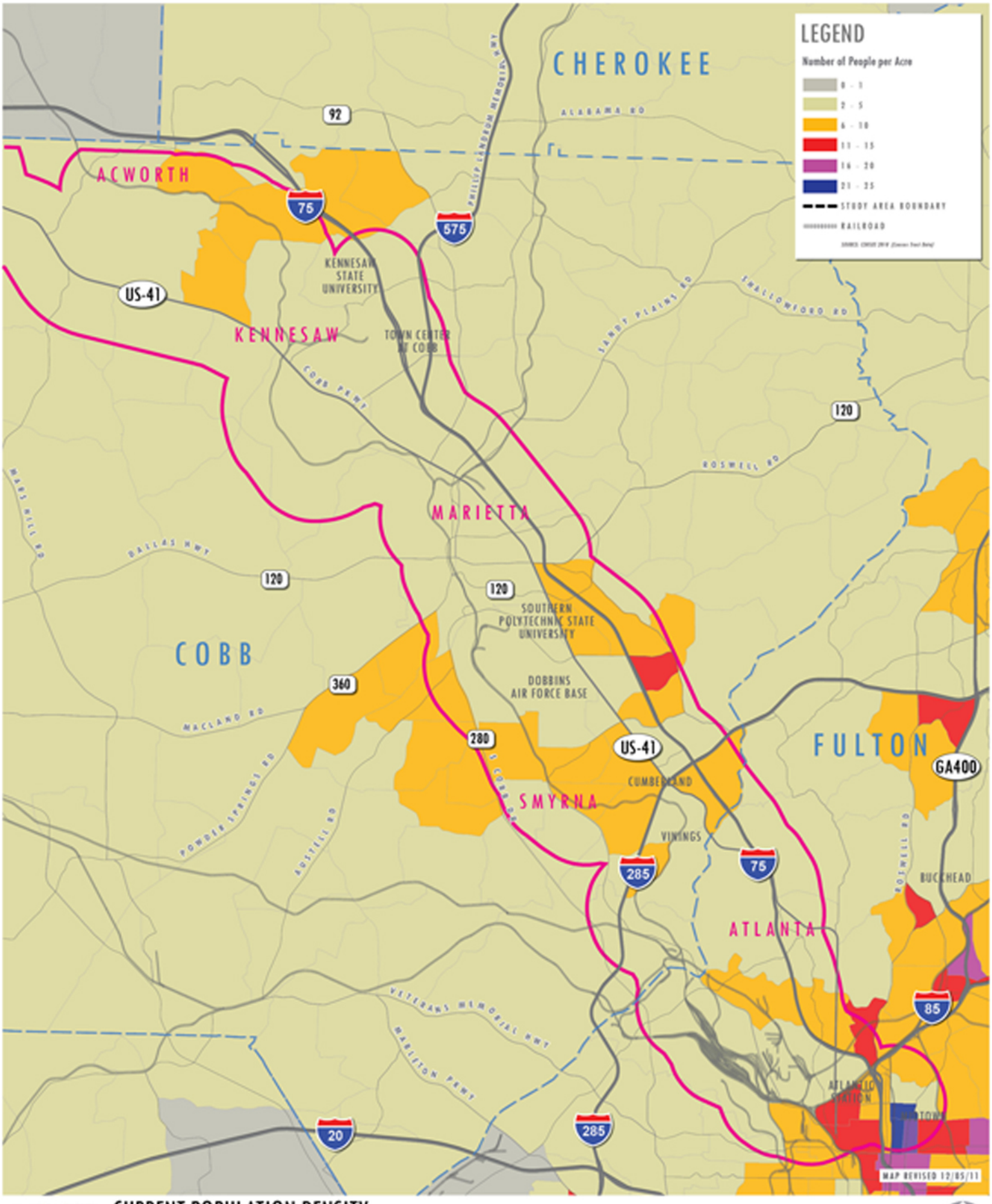
MAP REVISED 12/02/11

CURRENT HOUSEHOLD DENSITY

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND RAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

MILES



CURRENT POPULATION DENSITY

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND BAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

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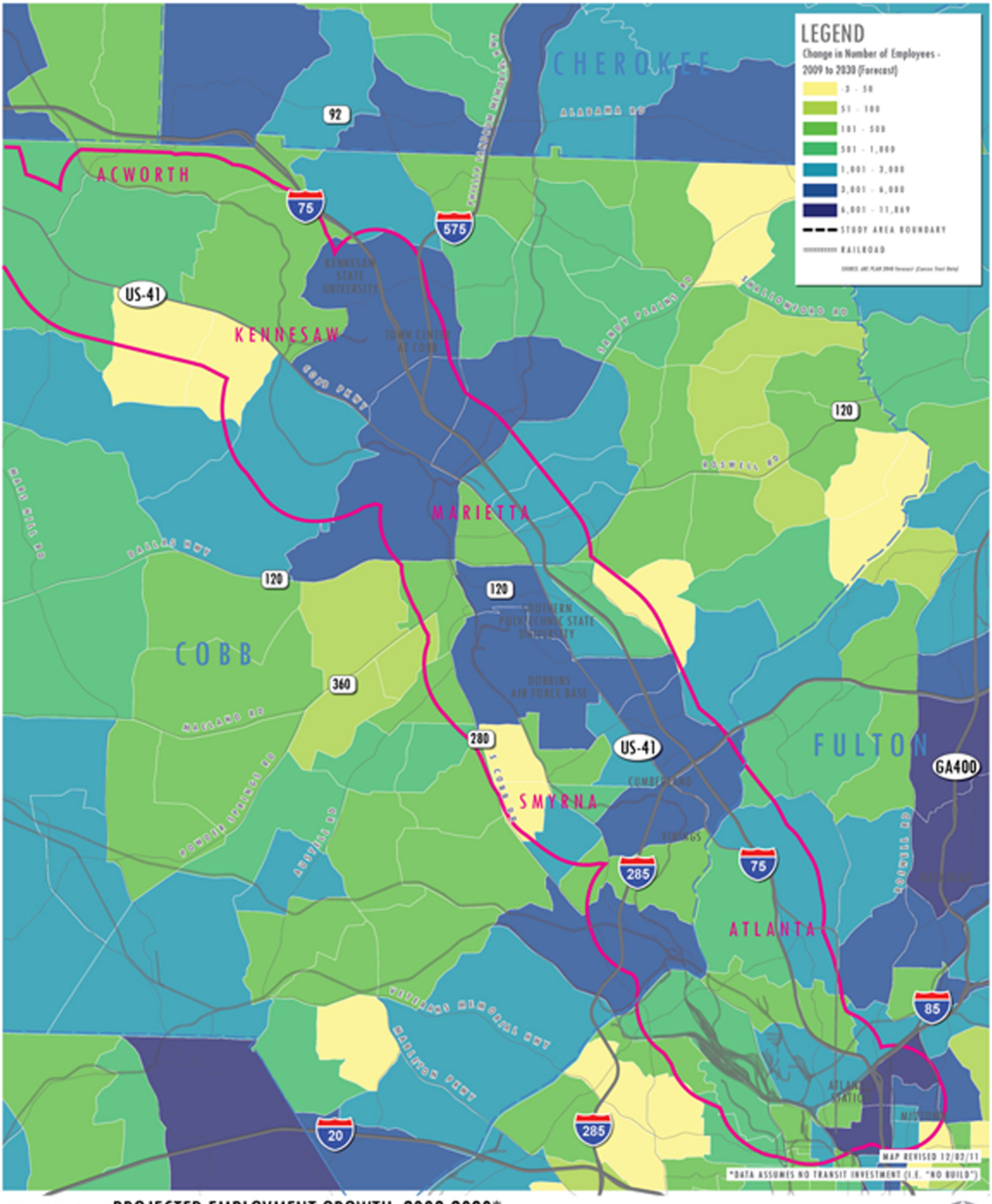
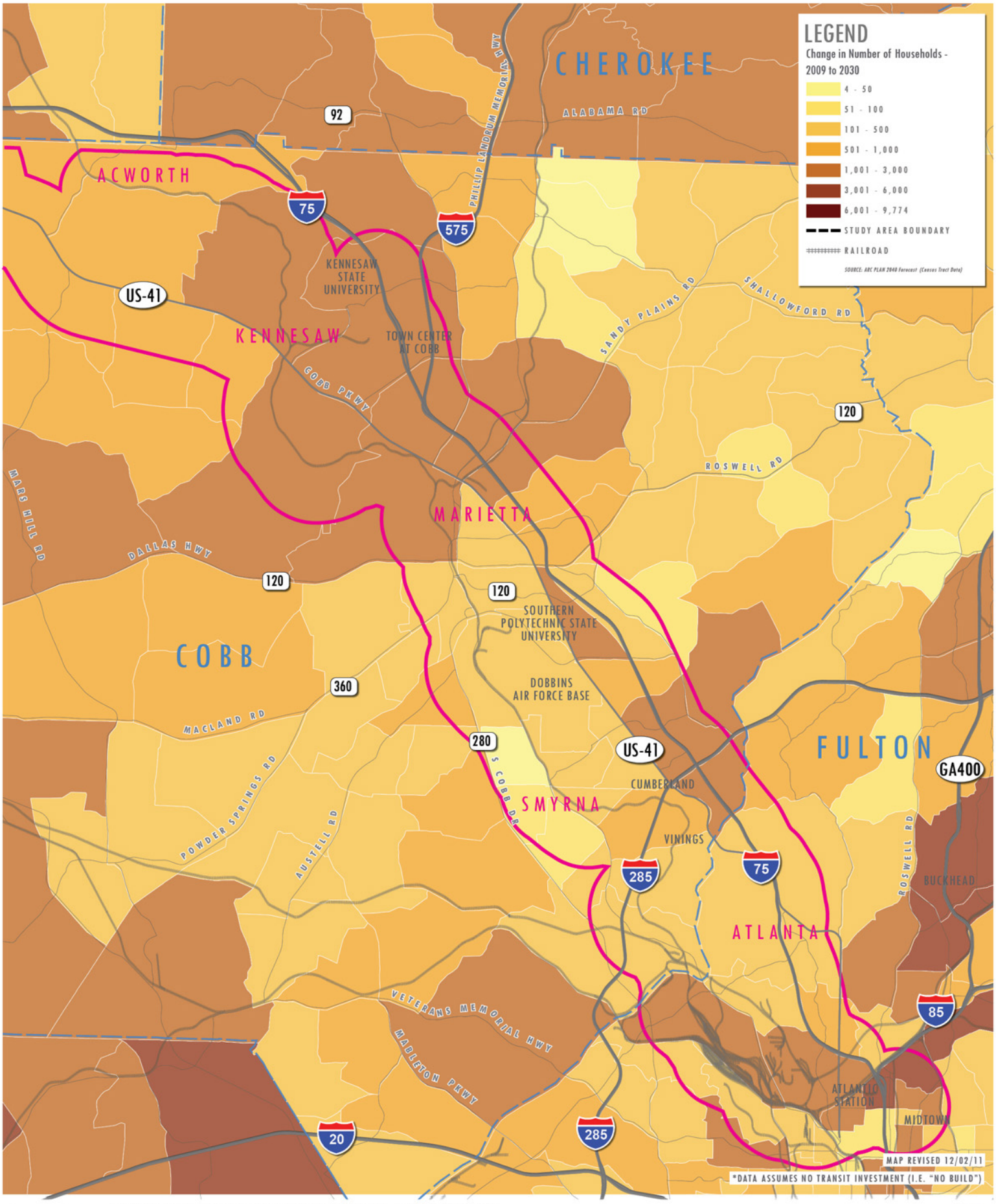


PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT GROWTH: 2009-2030*

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND RAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis



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