

# New data and strategies to shape major streets plan

## CHATTANOOGA-HAMILTON COUNTY/NORTH GEORGIA TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION



Source: Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Association, Chattanooga-Hamilton County / North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization's 2045 Regional Transit Plan.

IN 2015, THE CHATTANOOGA-HAMILTON COUNTY / NORTH GEORGIA TRANSPORTATION Planning Organization (CHCNGA TPO) earned the award for National Transportation Planning Excellence from the Federal Highway Administration. The CHCNGA TPO is the Metropolitan Planning Organization serving Hamilton County in Tennessee and northern areas of Catoosa, Dade, and Walker Counties in Georgia. Now, the TPO is attempting to advance public health by piloting a new approach to its regional major streets plan.

The Transportation and Health Tool is an online resource that provides state and metropolitan area transportation professionals with easy access to data and strategies to improve public health through transportation planning and policy. The tool was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Transportation, in partnership with the American Public Health Association.

#### **THT APPLICATIONS**

- Use THT indicator data to prioritize health and safety in Chattanooga's Major Streets Plan
- Incorporate health metrics into the Chattanooga-North Georgia's 2045 Regional Transportation Plan

#### **THT INDICATORS USED**

- Commute Mode Shares
- Complete Streets Policies
- Housing and Transportation Affordability
- Land Use Mix
- Proximity to Major Roadways
- Road Traffic Fatalities by Mode
- Vehicle Miles Traveled

#### **EXPLORE THE THT:**

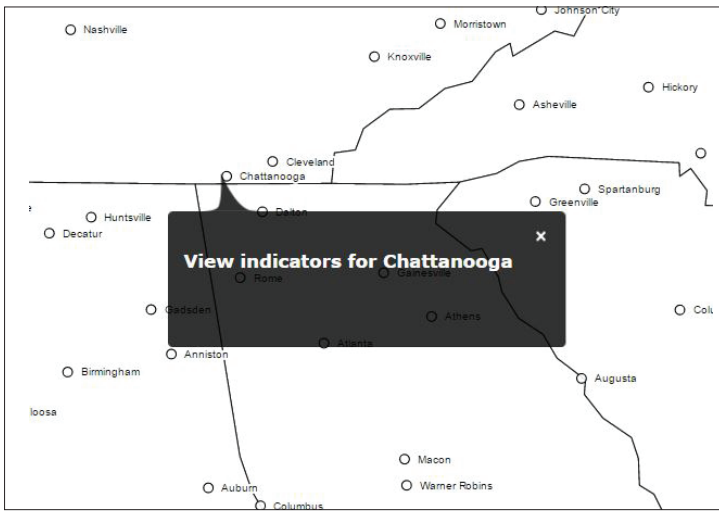
[www.transportation.gov/transportation-health-tool](http://www.transportation.gov/transportation-health-tool)

A major streets plan is a governmental policy or regulation that outlines the function for a street in a given region. CHCNGA TPO believes that redefining a street's function could result in zoning and land-use improvements that will promote health and safety in the region. Melissa Taylor, CHCNGA TPO Director of Strategic Long Range Planning, explained that with the advent of the automobile, land outside of central cities became more easily accessible and land uses became more separated from one another. "The separation and lack of proximity between land uses almost eliminated the ability of people to walk or bike during their everyday lives, as they had done prior to owning an automobile," Taylor said.

According to Taylor, making health a key focus of a major streets plan enables regional policymakers, planners, stakeholders, and residents to re-envision the way communities are designed. For example, transportation systems could be re-balanced so that active forms of travel, such as walking and biking, become a part of everyday life.

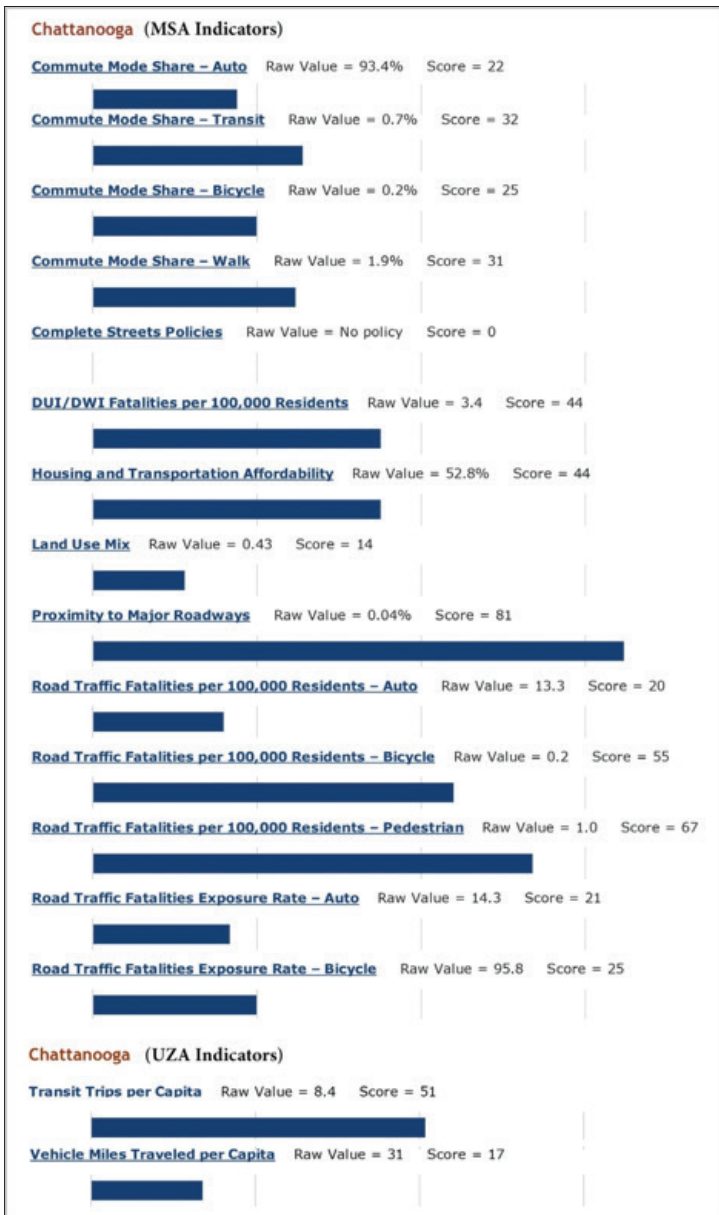
The major streets planning process began summer 2016 and will involve a thorough review of the definitions and functions of different street classification systems. One possible outcome is including new classifications for streets that accommodate all modes.

"If roads are classified with health-based factors in mind, then land use changes may happen due to the new or improved classification system. For example, a street that is no longer needed for automobile traffic could be repurposed for



“The THT can be used to guide a city’s major roads and streets plan. For this type of project the THT provides relevant travel mode, land use, and safety data.”

— Melissa Taylor,  
Director of Strategic Long Range Planning, CHCNGA TPO



Source: USDOT, Transportation and Health Tool website  
THT indicator scores (represented by the blue bars) demonstrate how the Chattanooga region performs on key transportation and health measures compared to other metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) and urbanized areas (UZA). Scores are presented on a 1–100 point scale where 50 is the median and higher scores always represent better performance from a health perspective.

pedestrian movement and become a pedestrian-only right-of-way,” Taylor said.

Taylor believes the Transportation and Health Tool provides support for the initiative. Taylor aims to review THT indicators with City of Chattanooga transportation officials and engineers during their discussions about the intended functions of various roadways in urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

Taylor hopes to see this practice spread to other regions in the United States. “I’m sure there are plenty of other cities with out-of-date road/streets plans. If it were to be successful, [our plan] could prove to be another model of collaborative innovation between Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, DOTs, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and other transportation and health entities,” Taylor said.

Taylor also envisions CHCNGA TPO using the THT for its 2045 Regional Transportation Plan. The plan uses project-level evaluation criteria (i.e., system maintenance, safety and security, economic growth, environmental sustainability, system reliability, and project delivery) to determine how well a proposed transportation project meets the region’s needs. As a first step towards using the THT in future planning, CHCNGA TPO has identified existing project-level evaluation measures that align with THT indicators.\*

CHCNGA TPO’s next step is to communicate the region’s performance for each of its evaluation criteria using THT indicators or similar measures. “I think digging deeper into the THT could be very beneficial for our 2045 focus on travel demand management with building developers and major employers,” Taylor said.

\*Currently, seven THT indicators (*Commute Mode Shares, Complete Streets Policies, Housing and Transportation Affordability, Land Use Mix, Proximity to Major Roadways, Road Traffic Fatalities by Mode, and Vehicle Miles Traveled*) provide data that correspond with three of CHCNGA TPO’s project-level evaluation criteria (safety and security, environmental sustainability, and system reliability).