CHAPTER 3: THE TARGET SCENARIO

There is an important connection between land use and transportation. That is, how we invest in our transportation systems has an influence on where growth and development occur. Similarly, where we experience new growth impacts how well the transportation system functions and where we need additional investment. This connection makes it imperative that we integrate transportation and land use planning. This is the purpose of the Target Scenario.

3.1 What is the Target Scenario?

The Target Scenario provides an alternative vision for the region that aspires to align local plans, policies, and development patterns to improve future transportation and land use conditions. Simply put, the Target Scenario represents a "what if" scenario that strives to achieve a higher quality of life through better mobility and an efficient use of land. While the Target Scenario embodies a variety of components, there are three that capture its essence:

1) Target investments to strengthen regional activity centers, support a core transit network, and enable safe bicycle and pedestrian connections,

2) Achieve a healthy balance of jobs and housing east and west of the Rio Grande, and

3) Preserve and protect open space, agricultural land, and rural communities.

At the root of the Target Scenario lies eight Guiding Principles that were developed and refined over the course of several years with extensive input from thousands of regional stakeholders through a collaborative scenario planning process. In addition to the **Guiding Principles**, the Target Scenario identifies **Key Locations** for investment and an alternative **Socioeconomic Forecast**.

Figure 3-1: The 3 Products of the Target Scenario.

Land Use and Transportation Integration Committee (LUTI)

The Land Use and Transportation Integration Committee (LUTI) is the guiding body for development of the Target Scenario. LUTI is comprised of local experts and their active participation ensures that the policies and preferences of their local communities are integrated into the Target Scenario. Participants include land use planners, school planners, transit professionals, and transportation engineers from different entities within the region. LUTI was formed in 2012 for the purpose of better integrating land use and transportation decisions and has become the steering committee for integrating scenario planning into the MTP.

> **While the Target Scenario process was facilitated by MRMPO, it is a scenario that is developed by and for its member governments.**

Beginning in 2012, LUTI led a two-year long scenario planning process that resulted in the development of the Preferred Scenario as documented in the *Futures 2040 MTP*. LUTI is also responsible for refining it to produce its successor, the Target Scenario.

In the development of the *Connections 2040 MTP*, LUTI was integral to updating the Target Scenario in the following ways:

1. Members provided information regarding how the entities they represent have adopted policies consistent with the Target Scenario since the previous MTP was adopted.
2. Members updated activity centers to reflect local priorities and desirable areas for future investment.
3. Members updated the Target transit network to reflect core transit service and desirable areas for improved service and transit supportive land use.
4. Members provided feedback on both the Trend and Target Socioeconomic Forecasts.
5. Members provided recommendations regarding strategies to implement the Target Scenario.

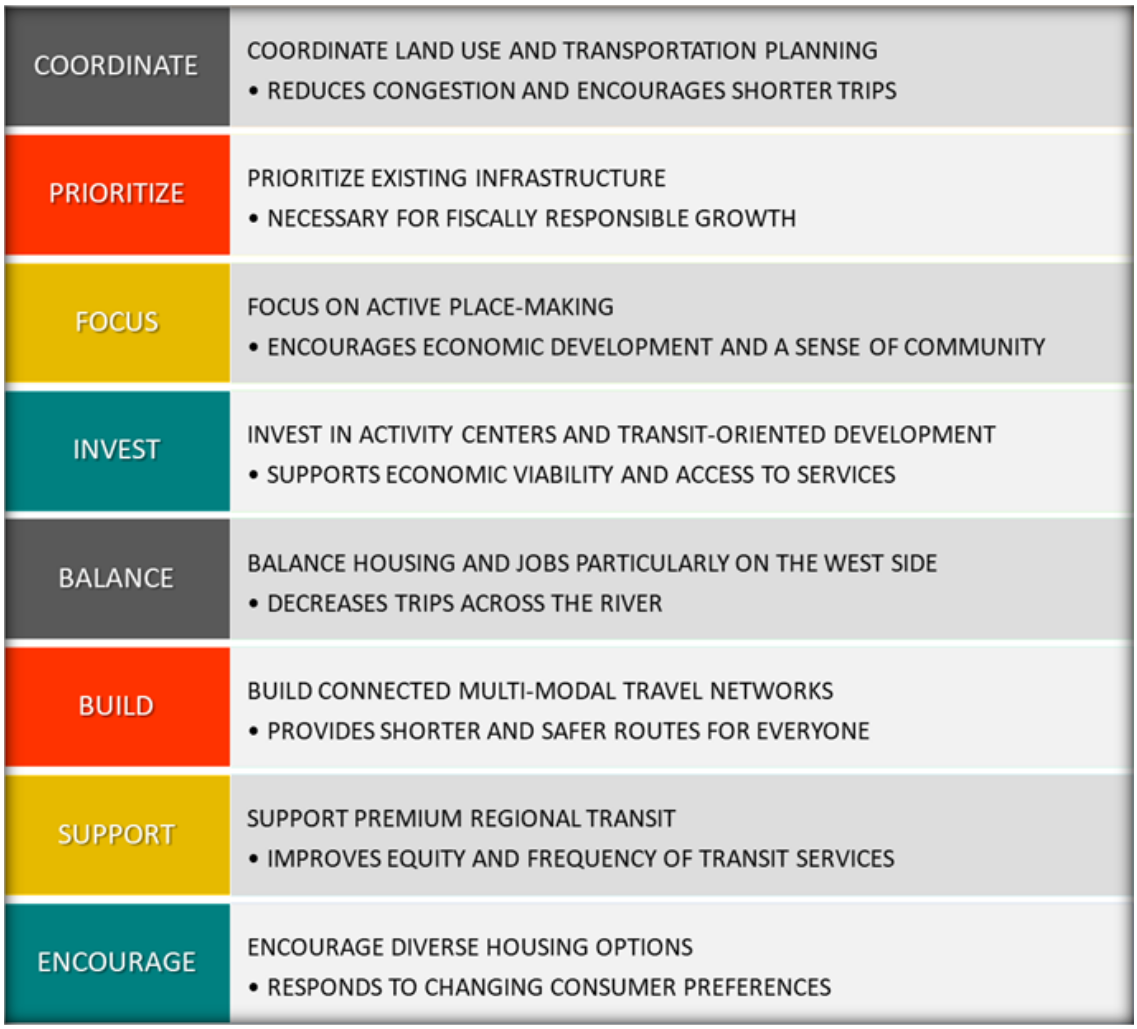
LUTI members ensured the Target Scenario incorporates new or expanded planning efforts that have occurred since the last MTP was approved, such as local comprehensive plan updates, the identification of new activity centers, multimodal corridors and core transit service. The Target Scenario accounts for areas that are not identified to grow or change in character, for example, the City of Albuquerque's newly established 'areas of consistency' as defined in the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, it incorporates elements that support Rio Rancho's desire to provide opportunities for its residents to shop, work, and access services all without having to leave the City. The Target Scenario supports Bernalillo County's efforts to create attractive multimodal communities and enhance the mix of uses in key centers like the Bernalillo/Sunport Rail Runner station. It supports creative partnerships and the development of vital community destinations such as the planned Route 66 museum in the Village of Los Lunas. The Target Scenario also embodies concurrence with regards to planning between various jurisdictions, agencies and school districts to ensure efficient provision of infrastructure.

The following sections outline the foundational elements of the Target Scenario and the ways that the *Connections 2040 MTP* builds upon the scenario planning work that was central to the *Futures 2040 MTP*.

a. Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles of the Target Scenario inform many aspects of the work performed at MRMPO. Many of the concepts in the guiding principles can also be found within local comprehensive and master plans providing for a stronger connection among regional visions and implementation. The Guiding Principles were enhanced from *Futures 2040 MTP* based on feedback from the LUTI committee and refined to add clarity and simplicity.

Figure 3-2: *Connections 2040* Target Scenario Guiding Principles



The 2040 MTP Questionnaire contained a question for the public about which of the guiding principles they felt would be most effective in bringing about positive change to the region. The two principles that came out on top were 'Coordinate land use and transportation decision-making' and 'Prioritize maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure.'

b. Key Locations

The Target Scenario highlights key locations that are of regional importance and have been identified as appropriate for additional investment. These locations focus on activity centers and transit nodes. *Connections 2040 MTP* updates these locations from those identified in *Futures 2040 MTP* based on recent growth, updates to local plans and priorities, and input from policy leaders and regional stakeholders. Updates include refining activity centers and center type designations, removing key commercial corridors, and modifying key transit nodes based on the Target Scenario Transit Network.

Target Scenario Activity Centers

Key activity centers are areas of concentrated employment and development activity. Centers serve different purposes. Some centers are intended for high-intensity commercial and industrial use, which may indicate the need for enhanced goods movement or neighborhood buffers. Others are intended to include a mix of activity, such as high-density housing in close proximity to shops and entertainment. In these mixed-use centers, landscaping, design, and safe and attractive paths for people walking and biking are important features. The Target Scenario identifies four specific types of centers to differentiate the kind of activity that is occurring there and what kind of investment may be needed to help them thrive.

Activity Center Types:

- **Regional Center** – Large regional market with existing employers and mix of uses. Currently served by public transit, or close to a regional transit station.
- **Opportunity Center** – Growing center or one that is currently underutilized. Opportunity to become a regional mixed-use destination.
- **Reinvestment Center** – Existing long-time hub of activity but targeted for relatively new redevelopment or additional activity.
- **Employment Center** – Business center or large single employer. No major plans for housing or major change in uses.

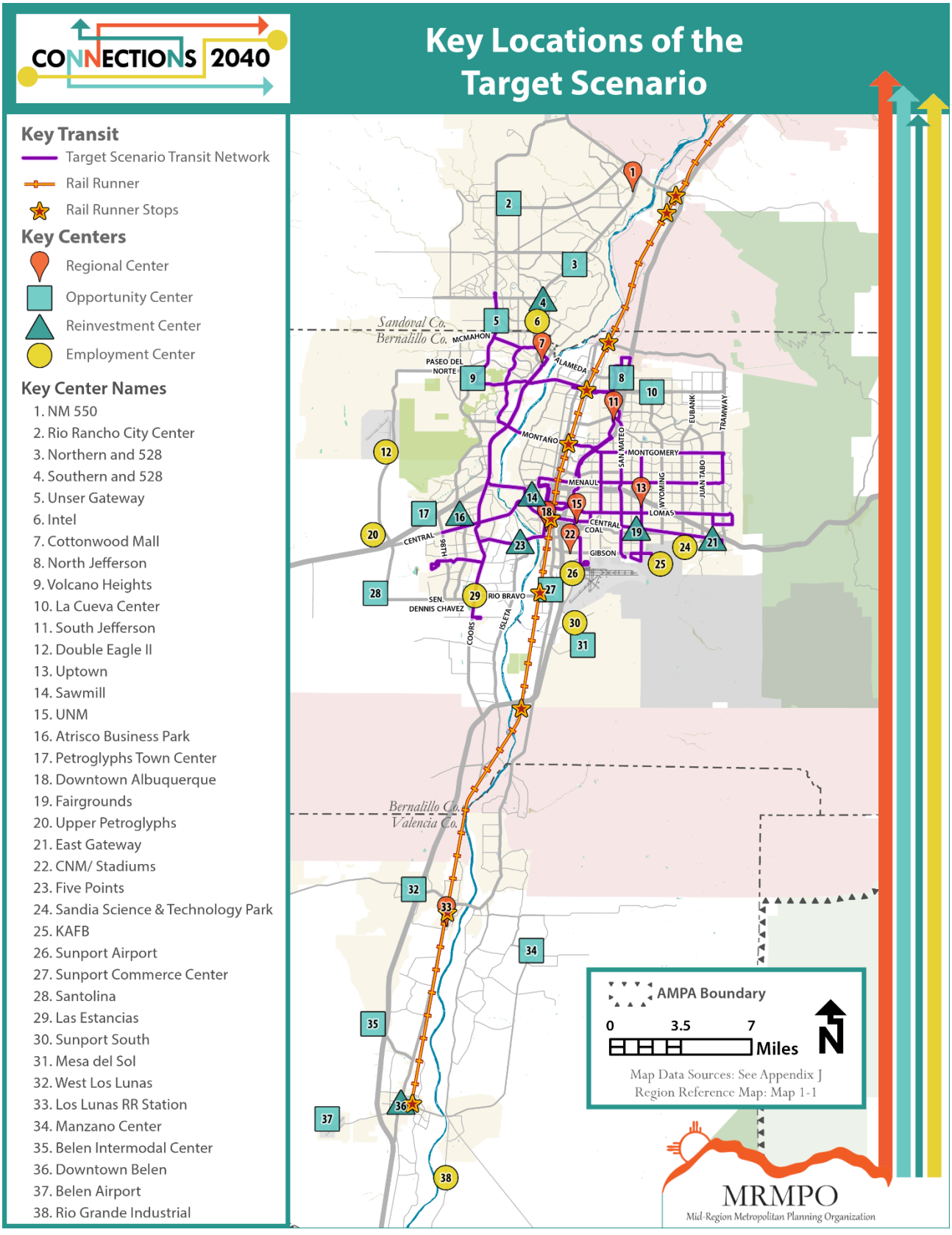
The LUTI Committee discussed the location and type of activity centers, including new centers emerging in the region. Representatives of member agencies considered whether an activity center has regional attraction, whether it would benefit from additional investment, and whether it is a local priority. Centers were updated as local jurisdictions updated their plans and new developments occurred. Some examples include new activity centers identified at Sunport South, Sunport Commerce Center, the Belen Airport, and emerging centers along 528 in Rio Rancho. To maintain a regional focus, the Target Scenario does not include all locally identified activity centers such as neighborhood centers.

Target Scenario Transit Network

A core network of transit routes that are frequent, accessible, and reliable is integral to the function of a healthy region. The availability and quality of transit service is an asset for business attraction and economic vitality, and at the same time provides an important means of transportation for people who cannot drive or may not have access to a reliable vehicle. Connecting people and places with transit can have a significant impact on encouraging active transportation and alleviating congestion on key corridors - including the river crossings. Consequently, the Target Scenario emphasizes the importance of investing in a well-connected core transit network, as shown in the Key Locations of the Target Scenario Map.

The Target Scenario Transit Network is supported by the Metropolitan Transportation Boards' resolution to allocate 25 percent of specific categories of transportation funds toward transit ridership along a network of priority transit corridors. Additionally, the Target Scenario Transit Network reflects regional plans for Bus Rapid Transit, Rapid Ride, Primary, and Secondary routes that are part of the Long Range Transit Network that have frequencies of 15 minutes or less. This Target Scenario Transit Network was vetted through the LUTI committee, the CMP committee, and local transit agencies ABQ Ride and Rio Metro Regional Transit District. This transit network should be considered part of a system that includes supplemental connections such as park and ride locations that serve lower low density areas, and bike share stations, trails, and sidewalks that provide last mile connections to place of work or residence. The Target Scenario Transit Network is considered a core network of transit routes that warrant further attention whether through transit funds, increased service and reliability, or as land use changes occur and transit-oriented places develop.

Map 3-1: Key Locations of the Target Scenario, Key Centers and Transit



c. Target Scenario Socioeconomic Forecast

The final component of the Target Scenario is a land use forecast that represents a picture of possible future household and job growth based on its guiding principles and key locations. This is an alternative land use forecast that portrays what the region might look like and how mobility and other quality of life measures could be affected if we were to modify plans and policies to better align with the concepts behind the Target Scenario. This forecast is not meant to be evaluated at parcel level detail; nor is it intended to serve as a single best land use future for the region. Rather, the land use forecast that accompanies the Target Scenario should be used as a regional direction for member agencies and governments as they update policies and prioritize investments.

The Target Scenario Socioeconomic Forecast is generated with the same land use modeling framework that created the Trend Scenario with some key distinctions. That is, in order to simulate an alternative forecast, certain policy levers in the model were adjusted to reflect the principles of the Target Scenario. These levers simulate alternative policies as they relate to zoning, building costs, and development constraints.

Zoning

The land use model uses local zoning regulations to establish the allowable building types and densities on each parcel. Every zoning code is translated into a database of potential land uses, maximum dwelling units, and maximum floor-to-area ratios.

> **In the development of the Target Scenario, zoning was adjusted to allow 20 percent higher densities in key activity centers or along the Target Scenario transit network**.

Zoning densities were raised in Key Locations to support guiding principle four, additional investment in activity centers and transit-oriented development. The model simulates what might happen if local jurisdictions take measures to increase development in targeted areas through zoning tools such as density bonuses or reduced parking requirements. Zoning allowances were not elevated in the City of Albuquerque's key centers because the Integrated Development Ordinance, adopted in 2017, has already raised residential density allowances in these centers through mixed-use zoning, thereby aligning them with the goals of the Target Scenario. Land uses in the Target Scenario were not altered from the existing zoning classifications.

Revenue Incentives

The land use model contains a pro forma model, which computes the costs of potential development projects using construction costs, demolition costs (if a parcel is not vacant), financing costs, and parking costs. It also calculates potential revenues given the location of the parcel, building age, access to workers and jobs, and other factors. By estimating the costs and revenues of a site, the model selects projects that are likely to be most profitable among an array of potential projects**.**

> **The Target Scenario raises commercial revenues on the westside of the Rio Grande and particularly in Key Locations. It also raises residential revenues on the eastside of the Rio Grande and particularly in Key Locations that allow housing.**

These adjustments to the pro forma model support guiding principle four, invest in centers and transit nodes, as well as guiding principle 5, balance housing and jobs. The purpose of this adjustment is to simulate what may occur if additional policies are implemented to incentivize development in targeted areas such as land donations, infrastructure upgrades, or an expedited approvals process.

Land Constraints

Using the same approach as the revenue incentives, the model is adjusted to disincentivize development in rural communities or greenfield areas that are not currently being planned for growth.

In the Target Scenario, revenues are decreased for development in areas that are not currently being master planned and are not served by sewer, water, or roadway infrastructure.

This adjustment is made to support guiding principle two, prioritize existing infrastructure. It also serves to protect the rural character of outlying areas, a natural complement to increasing the intensity of uses in activity centers and along transit corridors. This step simulates what could result from additional policies to protect rural areas through conservation and preservation measures.

3.2 Target Scenario Forecast

A summary of the Target Scenario socioeconomic forecast demonstrates the effectiveness of modifying the land use model to achieve its guiding principles. As described in the preceding section, the Target Scenario was adjusted in order to attract jobs west of the river and housing east of the river to improve the jobs to housing balance, densify existing centers and transit nodes with a mix of uses, and preserve low density development in rural areas that are not master planned or currently served by infrastructure. The following tables evaluate the performance of the Target Scenario in achieving its intended goals.

Results Summary

The following table illustrates the extent to which the Target Scenario improves the jobs to housing balance west of the Rio Grande. There are approximately 13,000 more jobs west of the river and 6,700 fewer homes in the Target Scenario over the Trend, resulting in an improved jobs-to-housing ratio of 0.65. While the jobs-to-housing ratio decreases slightly east of the river between scenarios, it is still higher than the AMPA average and higher than the general target of 1.2 (which is the average number of workers per household in the AMPA). Note that the ratio remains the same in the Trend over the baseline conditions in 2016, exhibiting that existing plans and policies do not indicate an improvement over time without additional investment or intervention.

Table 3-1: Jobs-to-Housing Balance in 2016, Trend and Target Scenarios

Jobs-to-Housing Ratio	2016	Trend	Target
East of the Rio Grande	1.42	1.42	1.34
Housing	223,422	255,804	262,286
Jobs	317,489	364,483	351,067
West of the Rio Grande	0.56	0.55	0.65
Housing	153,926	196,898	190,163
Jobs	85,644	109,227	122,656
AMPA Average	**1.07**	**1.05**	**1.05**

The next table illustrates the impact of the Target Scenario in attracting additional households and jobs to regional activity centers and surrounding transit nodes. By incentivizing residential development in Key Locations east of the Rio Grande, the Target Scenario successfully increases accessibility of households to jobs and achieves a better mix of uses within eastside centers and transit nodes. In addition, by making westside Key Locations more attractive to employment uses, the Target Scenario increases jobs in these centers and nodes by 30 percent.

Table 3-2: Total Activity in Key Locations for 2016, and 2040 Trend and Target Scenarios

	2016	Trend	Target	Difference in Target
Eastside				
Households	20,675	25,348	31,033	22.4%
Jobs	156,926	180,318	170,039	-5.7%
Westside				
Households	6,465	9,244	8,023	-13.2%
Jobs	31,091	40,472	52,627	30.0%

Finally, the Target Scenario demonstrates better use of existing infrastructure while simultaneously preserving rural communities and low impact development in outlying areas. The following table shows that the Target Scenario achieves a decrease in households and jobs in rural areas when compared with the Trend in favor of areas that are served by water, sewer, and roadway infrastructure.

Table 3-3: Growth in Rural Areas and Existing Service Areas, 2040 Trend and Target Scenarios

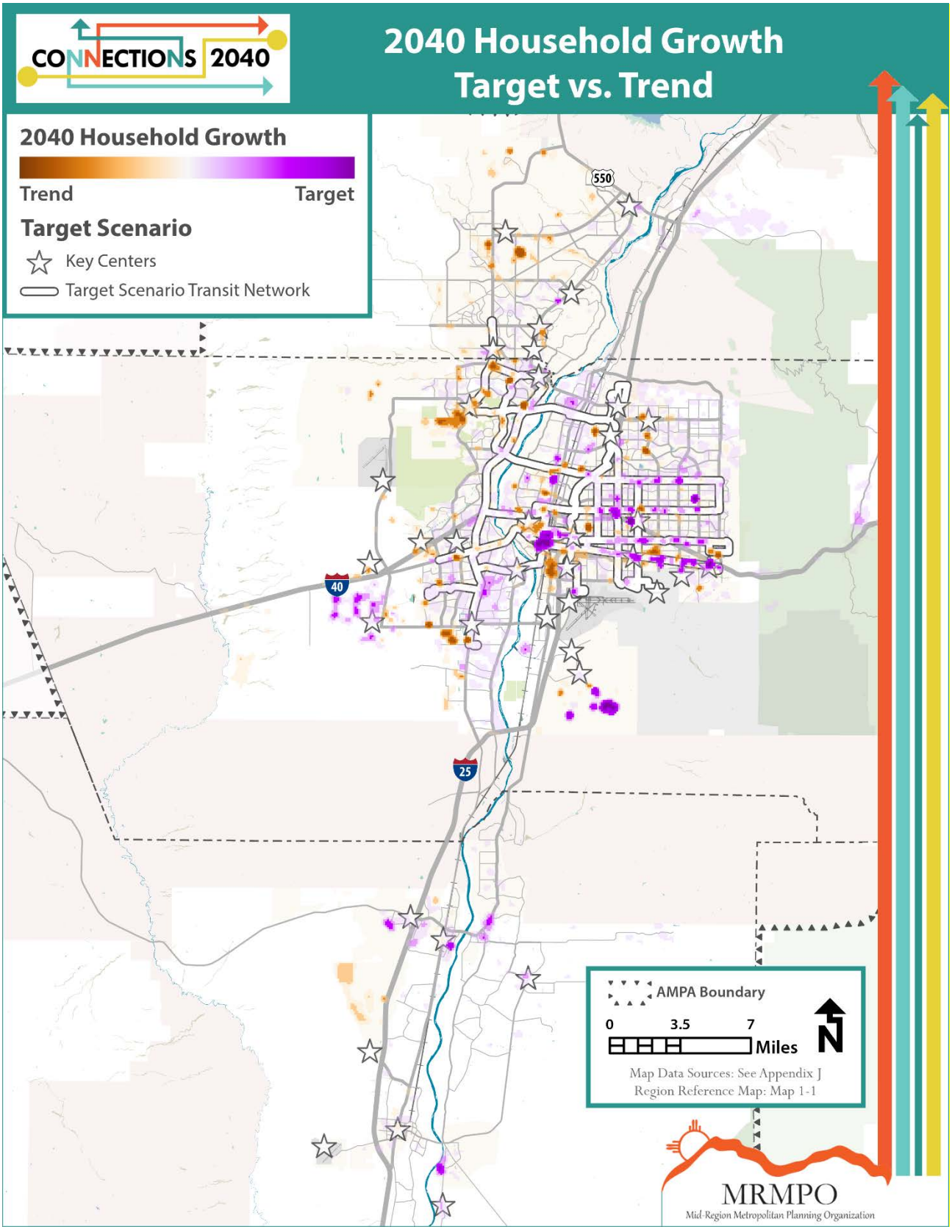
	Trend Growth		Target Growth		Growth Difference	
	Households	Jobs	Households	Jobs	Households	Jobs
Rural Area	31,813	16,180	27,708	13,807	-12.9%	-14.7%
Existing Service Area	34,924	55,701	39,029	58,074	11.8%	4.3%

The following maps show the spatial differences between the Trend and the Target Scenario in households and jobs. These maps are for illustrative purposes only and do not necessarily depict exact locations for desired growth. For example, a principle of the Target Scenario was to increase density in activity centers. This concept was translated into a land use model input by making eastside centers and transit nodes more attractive for residential development, and westside centers and transit nodes more attractive to commercial growth. The land use model determines the placement of future households and jobs based on variables that have been proven to be statistically significant in predicting the location of growth. The fact that one center may develop more than another is a result of a modeled prediction of site suitability and not a decision by stakeholders or MRMPO staff.

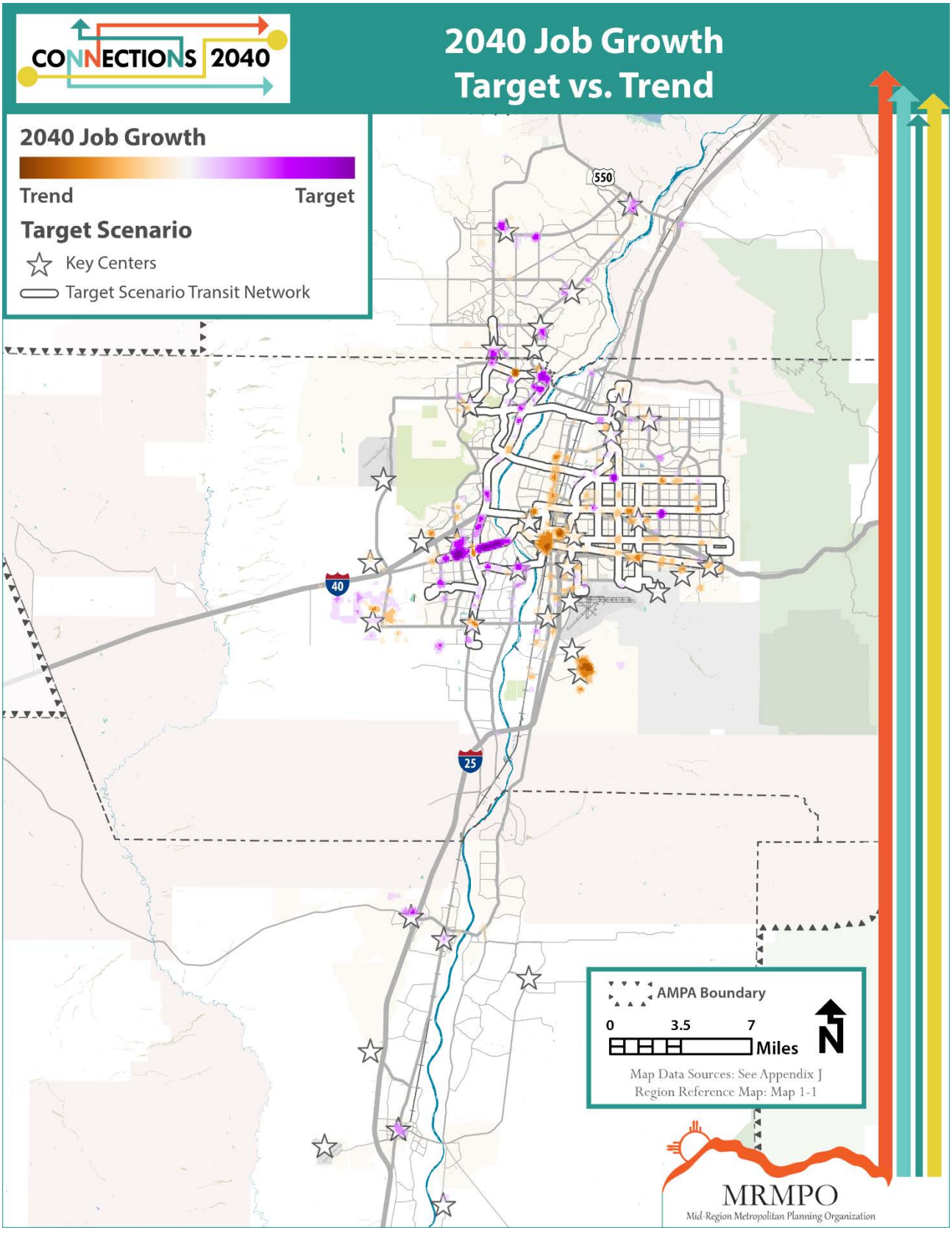
> **The Target Scenario is best described by its guiding principles and its key locations, and the land use forecast is one example of what the Target Scenario could look like if those guiding principles are translated into local land use policies.**

The Target Scenario generally shows increased household and job development in activity centers and transit corridors. Although the Target Scenario exhibits a greater concentration of household growth on the eastside and job growth on the westside, some interesting exceptions stand out. For example, the Santolina Master Plan area attracts more household growth in the Target Scenario. This is likely the effect of having more jobs on the westside. Access to jobs is an important factor in where households choose to locate in the land use model.

Map 3-2: Household Growth, Trend vs. Target Scenario, 2040



Map 3-3: Employment Growth, Trend vs. Target Scenarios, 2040



3.3 Benefits of the Target Scenario

A thorough scenario planning process is accompanied by an evaluation of scenario performance in order to better understand the impacts of various future development patterns on the transportation network, environment, and economy. Assessing the effect of land use changes on key measures such as access to jobs, overall mobility, and land consumption (to name a few) better equips planners to understand how the region may fare given different policy decisions. The true value of scenario planning, in addition to the collaborative visioning process, is in the performance evaluation of the scenarios. **Simply put, scenario planning provides planners with a tool to evaluate the trade-offs between different growth patterns.** The summary statistics below reveal the extent to which the land use development patterns differ between the base year, the Trend Scenario, and the Target Scenario and the impact of those differences.

Table 3-4: Summary Statistics, 2016 Base Year, 2040 Trend and Target Scenarios

Cluster	Metric	Unit of Analysis	2016 Base Year	2040 Scenarios		Scenario Comparison		
				Trend	Target	Trend vs 2016	Target vs 2016	Target vs Trend
Optimized Mobility	Systemwide Speed	PM peak hour average speeds (miles per hour)	26.8	25.91	26.1	-3.2%	-2.5%	0.8%
	VHD - Vehicle Hours of Delay	PM peak hour delay (model speed vs. posted speed)	23,131	33,999	30,244	47.0%	30.8%	-11.0%
	VHT - Vehicle Hours Traveled	PM peak hour total driving time for all roadway users	58,700	75,503	71,224	28.6%	21.3%	-5.7%
	VMT - Vehicle Miles Traveled	Daily value for all roadway vehicle travel	1,673,908	1,937,337	1,913,356	15.7%	14.3%	-1.2%
	VMT per Capita	Average vehicle miles traveled per person	17.5	20.2	20.0	15.2%	13.8%	-1.2%
	Roadway Network Congestion	Percentage of VMT with V/C > 1.0, PM peak hour	4%	6.4%	5.8%	60.0%	45.0%	-9.4%
	Freight Corridor Congestion	Percentage of freight network VMT with V/C > 1.0, PM peak hour	5.4%	7.3%	6.4%	35.2%	18.5%	-12.3%
	River Crossing Congestion (Delay)	PM peak hour vehicle hours of delay (VHD)	923.9	2,766.9	1,570.8	199.5%	70.0%	-43.2%
	River Crossing Trips	Daily roadway vehicle travel across the Rio Grande	576,302	695,831	657,285	20.7%	14.1%	-5.5%
	Number of Crashes	REMI multiplier based on VMT	14,544	16,793	16,615	15%	14%	-1.1%
Active Transportation	Proximity to Activity Centers	Households within 1 mile	98,535	118,672	118,471	20%	20%	-0.2%
	Proximity to Transit	Households within 1/4-mile	100,701	115,615	118,462	15%	18%	2.5%
	Proximity to Existing Schools	Households within 1/4-mile	62,643	72,242	73,231	15%	17%	1.4%
	Jobs/Housing Mix in Activity Centers	Employment divided by households in Activity Centers	6.41	5.92	5.28	-8%	-18%	-10.8%
	Jobs/Housing Ratio Westside	Employment divided by households in Activity Centers	0.56	0.55	0.65	-2%	16%	18.2%
Economic Linkages	Infill Development	Households in areas with existing infrastructure	308,623	343,552	347,657	11%	13%	1.2%
	Proximity to Employment Sites	Jobs within 20 minutes to Households	140,604	142,788	145,114	2%	3%	1.6%
	Proximity to Employment Sites - EJ	Average # of jobs EJ households can reach within 20 mins (AM pk)	160,121	158,336	162,592	-1%	2%	2.7%
	Industrial Jobs in EJ Areas	Total number of industrial sector jobs within EJ areas	21,017	24,850	24,277	18%	16%	-2.3%
	Average Commute Time	Travel time for work trips from home to work (minutes)	34.85	36.71	35.64	5.1%	2.2%	-3.0%
Sustainability & Resiliency	New Land Developed	Total acres of new development	--	24,030	22,590	--	--	-6.0%
	Emissions Levels	REMI: metric tons of VOC,NOX,CO,SOX, and PM per year	108,703	125,375	124,052	15%	14%	-1.1%
	Development in High Flood Risk Areas	Number of Households in undeveloped* FEMA 100-Year Floodplains	13,499	18,231	17,521	35%	30%	-3.9%
	Development in Forest Fire Risk Areas	Number of Households in undeveloped* wildland-urban intermix areas	13,943	16,600	16,449	19%	18%	-0.9%

The Target Scenario brings us closer to all four of our MTP goals. Summary statistics demonstrate that time spent driving decreases considerably when compared with the Trend, especially on our river crossings. In addition, we have better access to jobs and other frequent destinations, improve the balance of land uses, consume fewer acres, and decrease development in areas that are considered high-risk for flooding and forest fires.

3.4 Foundation of the Target Scenario

The 2035 MTP, approved in 2011, included MRMPO's initial effort towards scenario development as presented in its Appendix A, "The Compact Land Use Scenario". This scenario was developed in response to high projections for population growth and congestion, including an anticipated quadrupling of vehicle hours of delay and single digit speeds across the river during PM peak commutes.

Understanding the potential for severe degradation of mobility throughout the region under intense growth pressure, the MTB recognized that it simply was not feasible to build our way out through the construction of new roads. Member governments requested that MRMPO investigate alternative solutions to help mitigate future congestion. The Compact Land Use Scenario showed that by shifting development patterns to areas with excess roadway capacity in the urban core, we could reduce future vehicle miles of travel by 17 percent and increase average speeds by 16 percent.

The *Futures 2040 MTP*, approved in 2015, built upon the Compact Scenario and brought scenario planning from an appendix into a full-blown multi-year participatory process that resulted in the development of a shared vision called the Preferred Scenario, which was officially adopted as a future target for growth by the MTB. The Preferred Scenario was the product of an intensive two-year scenario planning process that involved two grant awards from the FHWA and the Volpe Resource Center. With expert federal assistance both in scenario development and analysis, MRMPO designed and carried out a rigorous process in terms of participation, modeling tools, and analytical capabilities. In the end, regional stakeholders voted and approved the adoption of an alternative scenario, which represents an aspirational transportation and land use future for our region. This section summarizes the major regional effort between 2013 and 2015 that culminated in the development of the Preferred Scenario. After the adoption of the Preferred Scenario as the regional target, this scenario was aptly renamed "The Target Scenario" which has since been updated for this MTP.

a. Rethinking the Future

There are many uncertain conditions in the region's future, including population growth, the economy, housing and development trends, availability of natural resources, and changing regional priorities. Given that the future is not set in stone, scenario planning provides tools to understand a range of potential future outcomes and measure the benefits of different growth patterns. The scenario planning process that led up to the development of *Futures 2040 MTP* occurred with the backdrop of several key themes, described below.

Limited Financial Resources

Policy leaders are faced with the reality of decreasing financial resources during a time of growing need. Tighter budgets have led to an increased emphasis on targeted investments that maximize return and minimize costs. Limited resources require new avenues for collaboration, creative financing strategies, and public/private partnerships in order to accomplish more with less. Understanding that there is not enough money to develop every desired project, public officials are emphasizing catalytic projects that are likely to leverage existing infrastructure and help connect the dots between major activity centers. **The scenario planning process highlights the potential benefits of these key investments.**

River Crossing Congestion

River crossing congestion is certain to worsen over time. While roadway expansion can still be beneficial to a certain degree, given the expected levels of future congestion and reduced amount of funding available for transportation it will be impossible to "build our way out" of these conditions. Therefore, a combination of strategies will be required to tackle this issue. One key strategy is achieving a better balance between jobs and housing west of the river and shifting residential density to key centers east of the river.

More jobs on the Westside would serve residents by creating more nearby destinations and foster a "reverse commute". Greater residential density east of the river in key centers would improve access to jobs and multimodal transportation options. **The scenario planning process allows us to see the impacts of a better balance between housing and jobs throughout the AMPA.**

Scenario Planning Workshops

The 2-year scenario planning process that led to the *Futures 2040 MTP* was highly participatory. Representatives from a variety of professions and agencies were active in the process, including public health and bicycle advocates, housing specialists, elected officials, natural resources experts, rural area representatives, neighborhood associations, economic development managers, land developers and business groups. In some cases, interactive workshops were held to discuss a range of topics, and in other cases small focus groups met to discuss pressing issues.

Changing Consumer Preferences

As millennials (born early 1980s - 2000) become the largest generation in the labor force and baby boomers (born 1946 – 1964) increasingly enter their retirement years, we are experiencing an increased demand for a broader range of housing and transportation options. Public officials, business leaders, and housing experts alike recognize a growing preference towards walkable, mixed-use communities and housing options that are closer to jobs and services. There is also a growing demand for more transportation options, particularly among young adults. On the heels of the Great Recession and the subsequent increase in out-migration from the region, it is important that we respond to changing preferences in order to increase attraction to business and workers while improving quality of life among existing residents. **The scenario planning process incorporates emerging lifestyles into future growth assumptions so that we can assess their impacts.**

b. Scenario Planning Process

Federal Guidance

Federal guidance mandates that MTPs contain a likely forecast for growth given existing plans and policies. This growth forecast is called a Trend Scenario because it assumes a future that is predicated on similar conditions that created today's transportation and land use patterns. However, MPOs across the nation are choosing to generate alternative future scenarios that investigate what might happen if there is a departure from existing trends that causes the region to develop differently. This is called "scenario planning" and is considered a best practice by the FHWA. Scenario planning allows for comparisons between the costs and benefits of different growth scenarios and has the power to inform decision-making related to transportation priorities, land use strategies, and infrastructure investment. Scenario planning provides a proactive framework for planning and can be integral in developing collaboration among member agencies.

> **"There are several approaches for inviting stakeholders to participate in scenario planning. Scenario planning helps inform projects and activities based on values and visions while considering the reality of other inputs (e.g., population, land use, transportation). The purpose of scenario planning is not to create an ideal world but rather a series of potential visions that consider the reality of competing interests."**
>
> -- Excerpt from MRMPO Scenario Planning Peer Exchange Workshop Summary, FHWA 2013

The Preferred Scenario

The development of the Preferred Scenario occurred over the course of two years and involved multiple avenues for stakeholder input, including several large workshops, small focus groups, online surveys, and public outreach at community events. The first step in the scenario planning process was to collect information related to what people saw as the key challenges in the region. Interestingly, despite the number of people interested in transportation planning, water resource availability was identified as the most pressing challenge facing the region, followed by economic development. Other challenges identified were a lack of diverse housing and transportation options, an imbalance between jobs and housing, and a need for shared and active places.

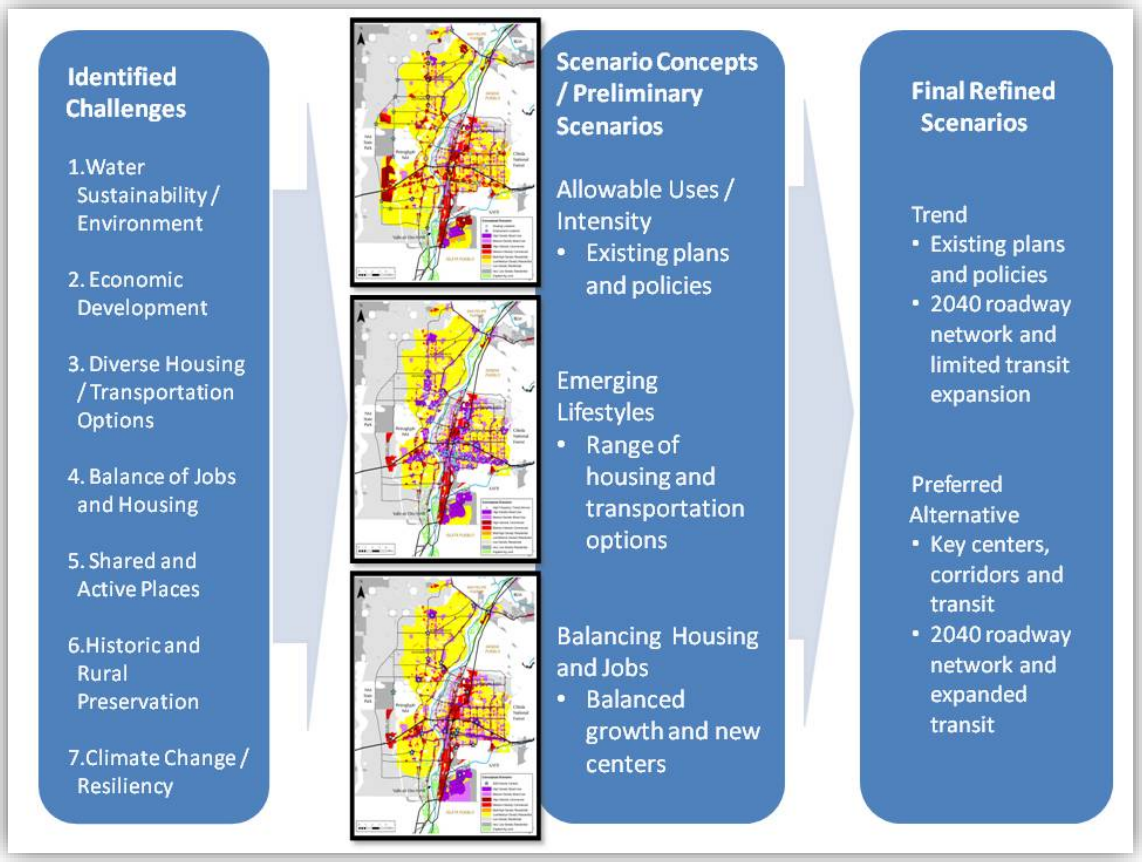
> **The goal of this process was to develop an agreed upon scenario that best addresses regional challenges and identifies key locations for future development and transportation infrastructure investments over the next 20 years.**

Following the identification of the top regional challenges, stakeholders developed initial "scenario concepts," which entailed creating a narrative regarding the different ways the region might grow that could mitigate these challenges. These conversations revealed a broad set of future interests, including: more transit service, a mix of land uses in key activity centers and transit stops, a better balance of housing and jobs, emphasis on existing water service areas, enhanced preservation of open space and sensitive areas like floodplains and crucial wildlife habitat areas, and the preservation of historic and cultural assets. Some of these interests could not be specifically addressed through land use scenarios. However, all are within the purview of local jurisdictions and addressed through locally implemented programs and policies.

Some of the objectives voiced by stakeholders appeared to conflict on the surface, for example; the desire for dense, unique activity centers, as well as the preservation of the rural character of specific areas. **It became clear through scenario planning efforts that these two interests can in fact support each other by targeting growth in key centers and minimizing impacts on agricultural and other sensitive lands**. In the early stages of the scenario development process three scenarios emerged; 1) Allowable Uses (the Trend), 2) Emerging Lifestyles, and 3) Balancing Housing and Jobs.

After reaching agreement with member agencies on the scenario concepts, MRMPO staff adjusted land use and transportation model inputs in a manner that translated the key concepts behind each scenario into policy changes. The models were run iteratively (i.e. the land use forecast influenced travel demand which in turn influenced future growth allocation) and generated performance measures that were used to evaluate each scenario. These measures were brought back to the stakeholders in another round of collaborative workshops designed to initiate additional discussion and solicit feedback on how well each scenario addressed regional challenges and how they might be further refined to improve their performance and their impact on the region. The process of identifying regional challenges, scenario concepts, and scenario refinement is depicted in the following graphic.

Figure 3-3: Translating Regional Challenges into Scenarios



Based on stakeholder feedback and with the guidance of the LUTI committee, MRMPO finalized a Preferred Scenario based on a hybrid between the *Emerging Lifestyles* and the *Balancing Housing and Jobs* scenarios. Regional stakeholders agreed this scenario best addressed the concerns that arose throughout the process and voted to forward it as a regional target for growth.

In the final workshop, stakeholders participated in breakout groups to brainstorm strategies and actions that they could take based on their role in the planning process to achieve the Preferred Scenario. Ideas ranged from presenting project costs in terms of their full lifecycle costs, incorporating Preferred Scenario principles into local development review processes, estimating fiscal impacts of different growth scenarios, establishing a future network of high frequency transit corridors, decreasing parking requirements and increasing allowable densities in activity centers. The strategies varied in level of effort required, timeline, and implementation agency. Participants agreed that strategies that may work for one jurisdiction may not be appropriate for another. What resulted was a toolbox of potential strategies in order to help move the region in the right direction. A complete list is provided in Chapter 5 of *Futures 2040 MTP*.

Making the Connection

Connections 2040 MTP efforts did not attempt to replicate the same rigorous scenario planning process; rather, the intent for this MTP is to rely on the integrity of the process that was undertaken in the *Futures 2040 MTP,* and strive to strengthen and build upon it. This MTP includes updates to the toolbox of strategies with input from public outreach workshops, agency meetings, MRMPO committees, and public officials. An updated list of pathways to implement the MTP and move the region closer to the Target Scenario is provided in Chapter 9.