

PLAN ELEMENTS

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Transportation Plan proposes to upgrade the safety, connectivity, convenience, and efficiency of each county’s transportation network in a way that is compatible with the Land Use Plan’s identified Priority Areas and abutting Infill Areas, and connections to those locations from other parts of the two counties. This includes maintaining and improving access and mobility for vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and transit patrons. This Plan encourages further investment in added frequency and capacity for Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties’ five key local transit agencies, and the plan for future transit service includes options for both new passenger rail and new Bus Rapid Transit modes. The Plan also recognizes the importance of potential linkages to the New York Metropolitan area and the importance of rail extensions for freight movement and improved freight transportation service.

HOUSING PLAN

The Housing element explicitly recognizes the division of each county into Priority and Mixed Density Infill Areas for housing growth and Conservation Areas as the non-growth portion of the region. Priority Areas represent significant opportunities to develop and redevelop properties for mixed uses, including residential components. Parcels in these areas are suitable for higher-density residential uses, such as multi-family (apartment) and single-family attached (townhouse) units, and specialized residential uses such as life-care facilities. Infill Areas provide opportunities for new development and redevelopment on properties that are vacant or underutilized. New development or redevelopment of these areas will provide opportunities for new or rehabilitated housing stock to be built using green building principles and both counties will encourage environmentally-friendly housing construction.



The region has many stable suburban neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

Priority Areas are the places targeted for future residential, retail, and employment growth. It makes sense for community facilities to locate here, where concentrations of people are and where accessibility is good. Public libraries, educational institutions, hospitals and other health care services, and emergency services such as police, fire companies, and ambulance corps should be focused on these locations.

Each of the two-county area’s 116 municipalities has traditionally been responsible for providing its citizens with basic public services and facilities; however, greater intergovernmental cooperation is needed so that services and facilities can be provided more efficiently and economically.

PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND GREENWAYS PLAN

In 2004, an Open Space, Greenways & Outdoor Recreation Master Plan was adopted, providing a vision for the two-county area and a framework for a regional system of open space and greenways. The Land Use Plan’s widespread pattern of protected natural areas, permanent open space, sensitive natural features, existing and proposed trail network, and other areas to be preserved in Conservation Areas supports the 2004 Plan and forms the backbone of a two-countywide open space system. Reinvestment and new development within Priority Areas and Infill Areas should also incorporate access to green space, including public spaces such as civic squares and pocket parks as well as neighborhood parks.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

A clear and effective historic and landscape resources conservation plan will be an important part of the Land Use Plan implementation process. The process must promote development in the locations outlined in the Land Use Plan, and provide specific types of regulations in order to protect rural areas from scattered and breakaway development. The Plan must also provide options to preserve and rehabilitate the historic resources in existing communities in ways that are sympathetic to economic and other community concerns.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

If the farming industry is to continue, it is necessary that its land resource base be maintained. But the protection of the land base alone will not assure that the agricultural industry will remain profitable. Urbanization often results in additional financial costs to farmers, as well as conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors. Strategies for the strengthening of the agricultural community need to be pursued over the planning period.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN

The Environmental Protection element identifies specific areas in the two counties that are environmentally sensitive, including floodplains, wetlands, aquifer recharge and wellhead areas, and other critical natural features. It also addresses wildlife and plants, and stormwater management.

UTILITIES AND ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN

Central municipal water supply systems may have to increase their capacity to serve the increased residential and business populations in Priority Areas over the planning period and perhaps in Mixed Density Infill Areas as well. Corresponding increases in wastewater treatment capacity will also be needed.

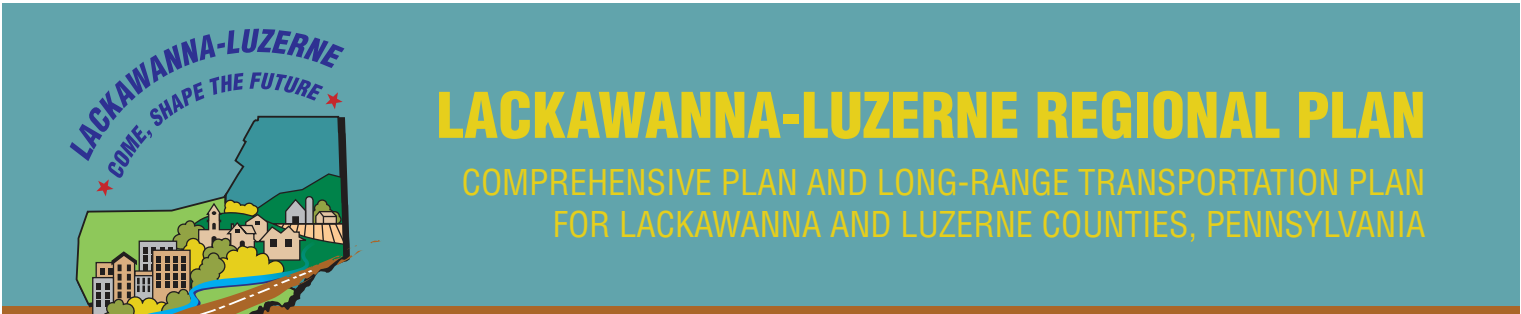
There are a number of public and private ventures currently taking place in the two counties to harness alternative energy sources. These include wind power, cogeneration facilities to use mine spoils as a power source, and the use of methane from landfills as fuel. Over the planning period, these resources are expected to be increasingly important.

RESOURCE EXTRACTION PLAN

Priority and Infill Areas in some cases coincide with locations that have been disturbed by mining activities. These places are clearly appropriate for a designation as highest priority for reclamation. The Regional Plan emphasizes the reclamation of mine spoils for development areas for future industrial, commercial, residential, and open space uses.



Strategies to strengthen the agricultural community need to be pursued.



Located in northeastern Pennsylvania, Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties are comprised of 116 municipalities and home to over a half-million people. Over the years, these two counties have demonstrated a strong history of governmental cooperation and regional collaboration. This association represents a shared vision for collaborative planning and decision-making on a wide range of challenges and

opportunities affecting the future of both counties. Chief among these are land use, economic development, transportation, and sustainable environmental quality.

The Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan are being prepared as a single, precedent-setting, two-county Regional Plan that satisfies both the Comprehensive Plan requirements

of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code as well as the Long-Range Transportation Plan requirements of PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. This innovative Plan takes full advantage of new and evolving planning tools and strategic guidance on sustainability, sound land use, economic revitalization, and smart transportation to maximize transportation investment dollars and multimodal opportunities.

PURPOSE OF THE NEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The preparation of a comprehensive plan serves four purposes:

- Establishes a common planning database for Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties
- Identifies the basic direction and structure recommended for the future of the two-county region
- Specifies the goals, policies, and individual elements that will form the basis for development, conservation, redevelopment, and preservation
- Provides a specific implementation strategy and program to help achieve the goals of the Plan

This comprehensive plan is fully responsive to the needs of the residents of Lackawanna and Luzerne County communities. It contains both long-range and short-range programs, balances local needs and perceptions with regional requirements and perspectives, and has its own logic and strategy for implementation.

PURPOSE OF THE NEW LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The long-range transportation plan has been developed as a long-range (20+ years) planning strategy and capital improvement program and serves as a guide for coordinated transportation planning throughout Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. The LRTP identifies the location, size, function, and type of new or improved transportation infrastructure, focusing on a multimodal approach to transportation planning. It includes projects for highways, streets, sidewalks, trails, rail, ports and airports, and for various modes of public transportation.

The LRTP serves as a resource to guide the wise use of public funds in the investment of a transportation system, so that cost-effective infrastructure that will efficiently move people and goods throughout the region will result.



Newly renovated waterfront in Wilkes-Barre



Downtown Scranton

LAND USE PLAN

As the principal expression of the future direction for the region and the interrelationships among plan elements, the Land Use Plan ties together all the other components that make up this Regional Plan. In the Land Use Plan, the recommended distribution and desired character of future land uses are described. In particular, the Land Use Plan proposes that development and redevelopment be largely directed to specific locations in the form of relatively-concentrated mixed-use settings, providing opportunities for people to live, work, and play in close proximity. The actions recommended build on strengths while addressing weaknesses apparent in the two-county area. In doing so, the plan provides opportunities for each county to prosper, while reinforcing the benefits of cities, villages and rural places.

GOAL

The goal of the Land Use Plan is to achieve an overall future pattern of development that is responsive to existing and future economic, social, and cultural needs of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, promoting revitalization in the area’s urban centers while conserving and preserving natural and agricultural resources.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives to be achieved by the Land Use Plan are as follows:

- A. Promote municipal consistency with the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan.
- B. Direct development and redevelopment to Priority Areas as identified in the Land Use Plan.
- C. Establish Priority Areas as compact, intensive mixed-use centers for living, working, and playing.



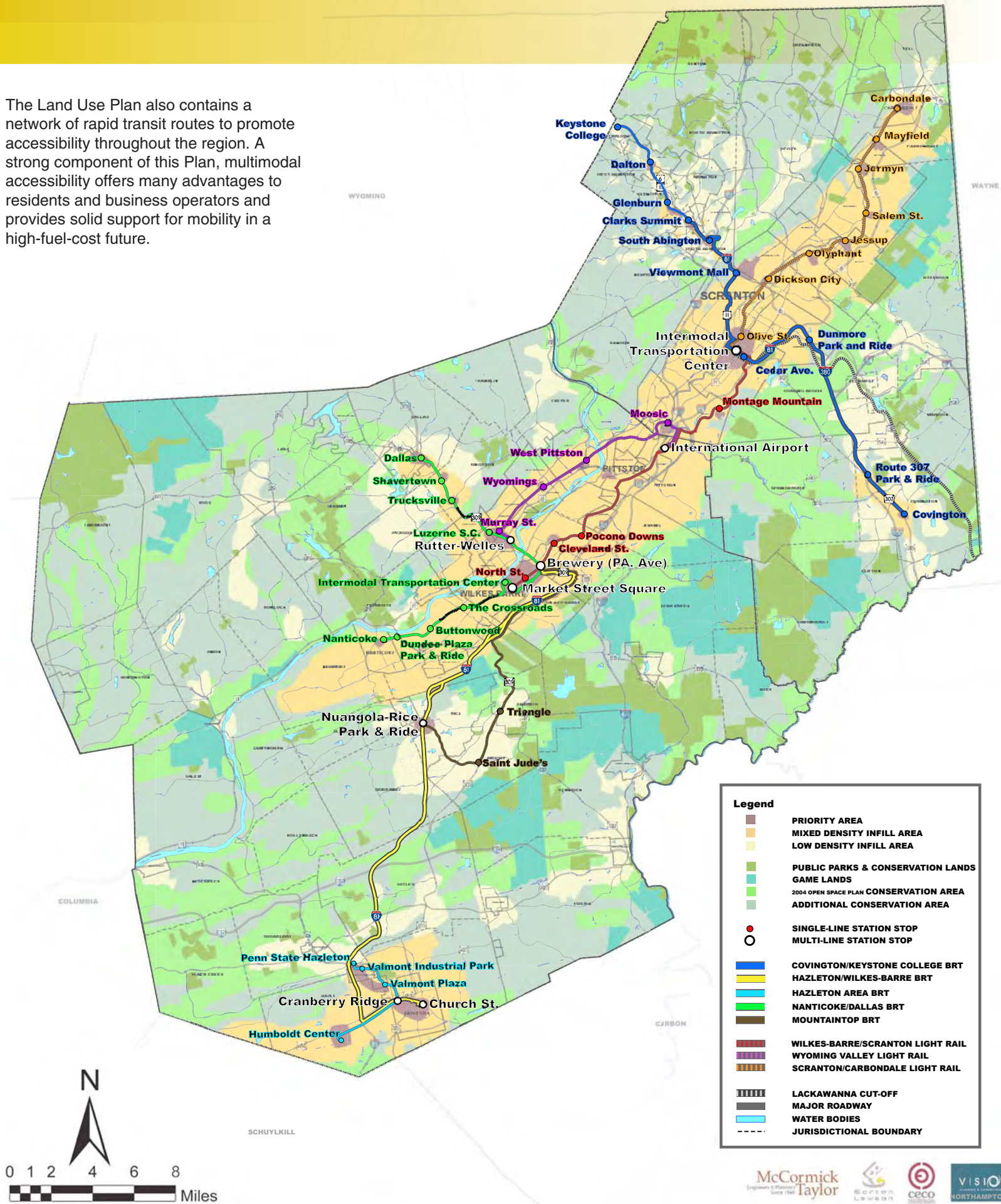
Bridge over the Susquehanna River in Pittston

The intent of the Land Use Plan (**see map**) is to provide an efficient and economical way to allow for both new growth and revitalization, meet a diversity of needs, support transit, reduce consumption of open space, and protect environmentally-sensitive resources. The Land Use Plan is a guide for development and redevelopment in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties through the year 2035. It is based on the moderate rate of growth projected to occur over the planning period, including an additional increase in population of approximately 35,000 people (568,000 total) and a net gain of 24,000 housing units. Recognizing current development trends and the importance of reinvestment along the Lackawanna and Luzerne County valleys and in urban centers, the Land Use Plan is built around ‘smart growth’ and sustainability principles.

MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

The Land Use Plan is structured on a framework of Priority Areas for targeted growth and revitalization, Infill Areas for additional growth, and Conservation Areas for agricultural, recreation, and open space uses. It is through this framework that both counties may support their existing centers, minimize sprawl, and promote the conservation of natural resources. The Land Use Plan builds upon existing infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer systems, and adds missing features to ensure appropriate access and servicing in all parts of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.

The Land Use Plan also contains a network of rapid transit routes to promote accessibility throughout the region. A strong component of this Plan, multimodal accessibility offers many advantages to residents and business operators and provides solid support for mobility in a high-fuel-cost future.



CONCEPT 1 – PRIORITY AREAS

Priority Areas include the existing settings of City Centers as well as Borough and Township Centers and proposed Transit Villages. The Land Use Plan proposes a combination of housing, shopping, employment, community facilities, and public open space by incorporating existing buildings, adaptively reused structures, and new construction.

Priority Areas are intended to provide a density of population sufficient to support new retail uses and community facilities, and attract employment. Concentrating jobs and residences in identified Priority Areas will increase transit ridership potential. As the demand for transit emerges, local transit authorities can offer new routes or extend existing ones.

CONCEPT 2 – INFILL AREAS

Infill Areas occur at various locations in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, and provide opportunities for new development and redevelopment on properties that are vacant or underutilized. While these are not expected to be targeted locations for public investment, they will continue to be locations where people live, work, and play.

An important aspect of Infill Areas is their proximity to Priority Areas. Future growth and development in Infill Areas will support multimodal linkages to nearby Priority Areas, including bicycle and pedestrian access.

CONCEPT 3 – CONSERVATION AREAS

Conservation Areas include sensitive environmental features, scenic landscapes, agricultural lands, as well as recreational sites and other cultural resources. Except for agricultural, recreational, and resource-based enterprises, there should be no new commercial or industrial uses in these areas.



Conservation Area must be preserved throughout the two-county area.