

# **RATS**

**Rockford Area Transportation Study  
Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
City of Rockford, Public Works Department  
425 East State Street, Rockford, IL 61104

## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

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of Transportation, Region 2*

# **RATS Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

(DRAFT DOCUMENT)

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**-SECTION 1-****Purpose of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan:**

The purpose of the Rockford Area Transportation Study Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (RATS-HSTP) is to assess the needs and concerns of public transit users in the area, develop strategies that will address and remedy these concerns and increase the overall efficiency of transit services provided to the public. While this plan will focus on public transit users as a whole, particular attention will be given to public transit dependent populations including elderly individuals, persons with disabilities and individuals with low incomes.

Assessment of the needs of public transit dependent populations will be determined through numerous methods, which include

- working with and gathering information from the RATS Mobility Subcommittee to determine transportation needs of transit dependent populations
- communication with various human service and transportation providers in the area to determine if there are transportation related issues for their clients
- working with the Rockford Mass Transit District to determine their scope of service as well as to identify any improvements that could be implemented to better service the targeted populations
- facilitation of public open house sessions to allow the public to directly state their concerns to providers and planning agencies that are developing the HSTP

This coordination process will benefit those who rely on public transportation as well as bring the Rockford Area Transportation Study in compliance with regulations stipulated by SAFETEA-LU. The Human Services Transportation Plan is also a prerequisite to receiving any Federal Transit Administration funding under the 5310 (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities), 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute) and 5317 (New Freedom) programs. This requirement was enacted by SAFETEA-LU. Eligible projects for these funding sources will be further elaborated upon in a later section.

It is important to note that the Human Service Transportation Plan process is ongoing and that this plan is the *initial version* of the RATS HSTP. Updates will be made to the plan as new transit concerns are identified. The listing of transit issues that are contained within this plan have come from organizations involved in the Mobility Subcommittee as well as from organizations who have provided input during the HSTP process.

**The Rockford Area Transportation Study**

RATS is an organization of officials, planners, engineers and citizens that meet on an ongoing basis to study transportation needs and formulate transportation plans and programs. The laws of the Illinois allow multiple government jurisdictions to contract together for the purpose of carrying out the federally mandated planning duties. The authority of RATS and its responsibilities and duties are set forth in a Cooperative Agreement dated July 24, 2003.<sup>1</sup> The government jurisdictions that are signatories to the Cooperative Agreement make up the RATS Policy Committee. The Policy Committee is responsible for directing the activities and procedures of RATS. The government jurisdictions and their representatives are listed in **Table 1**.

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<sup>1</sup>The Rockford Area Transportation Study was first established in the early 1960's. Similar agreements have been in effect since that time.

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| <b>Table 1<br/>RATS Policy Committee</b>   |
|--|
| City of Belvidere – Mayor<br>Boone County – Board Chairman<br>Illinois Department of Transportation – Deputy Director, Region 2 Engineer<br>City of Loves Park – Mayor<br>Village of Machesney Park – Village President<br>City of Rockford – Mayor<br>Winnebago County – Board Chairman |

The Cooperative Agreement also calls for a Technical Committee that provides advice and recommendations to the Policy Committee. **Table 2** lists the representatives that make up the Technical Committee.

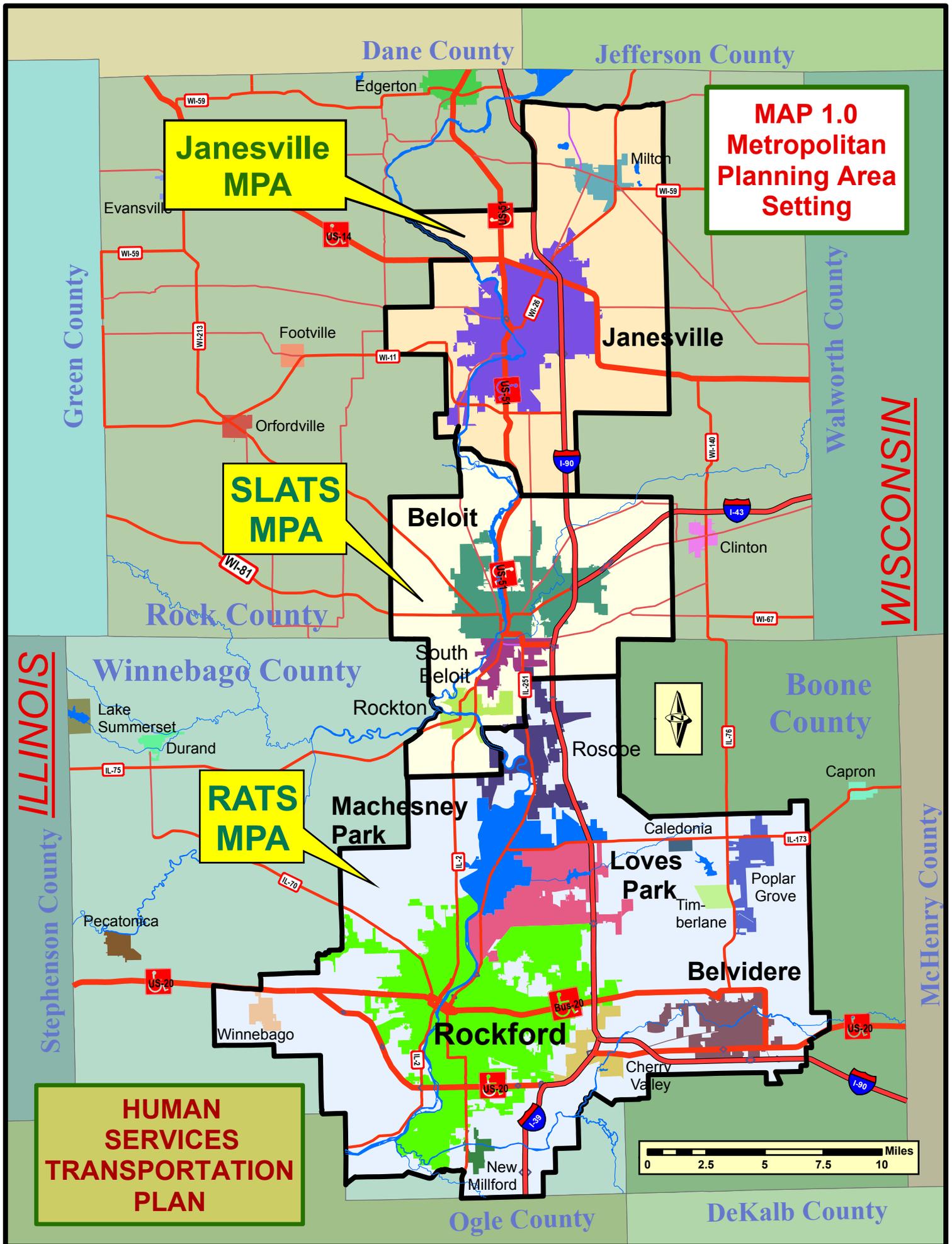
| <b>Table 2<br/>RATS Technical Committee</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Voting Members</b>  |  |
| Belvidere Public Works Department<br>Belvidere – Boone County Planning Department<br>Boone County Highway Department<br>Village of Cherry Valley<br>Greater Rockford Airport Authority<br>Illinois Department of Transportation, District 2<br>Loves Park Community Development Department<br>Loves Park Public Works Department | Machesney Park Planning Department<br>Rockford Community Development Department<br>Rockford Mass Transit District<br>Rockford Public Works Department<br>Village of Roscoe<br>Winnebago County Highway Department<br>Village of Winnebago<br>Winnebago County Planning and Economic Development Department |
| <i>NON-VOTING MEMBERS</i>  |  |
| Boone County Council on Aging<br>Federal Highway Administration, Illinois Division<br>Illinois Environmental Protection Agency<br>Illinois Tollway   | Illinois Department of Transportation, Division of Public Transportation<br>Illinois Department of Transportation, Division of Urban Program Planning<br>Ogle County Highway Department<br>State Line Area Transportation Study  |

The Rockford Public Works Department personnel are assigned to RATS to perform day-to-day transportation planning staff functions.

The area where RATS performs transportation planning is called the Rockford MPA. The Rockford MPA has three parts:

- The urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- The adjusted urbanized area includes other small areas that round off the irregular boundaries of the urbanized area. It also includes additional lands that are likely to be developed within the next five years and other abutting or nearby already developed lands.
- The forecasted area, which is expected to become included in the urbanized area in the next 30 years (through 2035). This area is determined through a consensus of the RATS Technical and Policy Committee members and is based on growth trends, local land use plans and general planning judgment.

The Rockford MPA is smaller than the boundaries of Winnebago and Boone Counties (see **Map 1.0**). However, to a limited extent, RATS coordinates planning and transportation improvement activities throughout both counties. This occurs voluntarily via the communication and cooperation of the Boone and Winnebago County officials serving on the RATS Policy and Technical Committees.



Map based on Year 2000 Census & data from RATS, SLATS & Janesville MPOs

**Process of Developing the RATS HSTP:**

The RATS Human Services Transportation Plan was developed through implementing various methods. One method, as explained in more detail later in the document, was to develop a Mobility Subcommittee that consists of area Transportation Providers as well as Human Services Providers.

The purpose of the Mobility Subcommittee is to create a forum where various stakeholders (transportation & human service providers; workforce development and planning agencies; the general public) can discuss transportation issues that affect transportation dependent populations in the RATS Metropolitan Planning Area as well as develop strategies that will promote better transit.

Individual meetings with organizations were conducted prior to the creation of the Mobility Subcommittee. The purpose of these meetings were twofold; one, to determine if there were any transportation issues that affected the clientele of the respective agency and two, to determine if there were other area agencies interested in the process of creating the HSTP through involvement in the RATS Mobility Subcommittee.

Another measure that was taken to solicit interest and invite other organizations to participate in the RATS Mobility Subcommittee as well as the development of the HSTP was to distribute an invitation letter and survey to potential participants. Invitation letters and surveys were distributed to 106 stakeholders in the RATS Metropolitan Planning Area, which included workforce development agencies, governmental entities, public and private transit providers, assisted living facilities, school districts, taxi and ambulance services and human service agencies. While any organization is welcome to attend any of the Mobility Subcommittee meetings and provide input, this process was undertaken to secure committed attendance and input for the first HSTP document. New organizations are always welcome to join the Mobility Subcommittee or attend meetings periodically to provide input.

A listing of the organizations that responded to the invitation letter as well as survey is provided in a later section of this document. To note, organizations that did not respond to the initial letter and survey were sent a follow up letter, which included another copy of the response form/survey. This follow up measure was taken to remind organizations of the Mobility Subcommittee and to again inquire as to if they would like to participate in this planning process. The listing that is provided later in this document is the final listing of organizations that responded either showing interest in the HSTP Planning Process and/or have made the decision to actively participate in the process.

Public review sessions were also held to allow members of the public comment on the RATS Human Services Transportation Plan. Aside from having the Mobility Subcommittee meetings open to the general public for participation and comment, this opportunity was afforded to the public to review draft material of the HSTP, provide feedback and comments, receive a general understanding of the framework of the plan as well as to understand the purpose of the HSTP. Also, these sessions allowed citizens to provide input as to any other transit related issues to members of the MPO and transit agencies present.

**Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area Profile:**

According to the year 2000 Census, the total population living within the Rockford Area Transportation Study Urban Area is 270,414. **Table 3** displays the percent distribution of the urban area population. Of that population, the areas with the top three percentages are the City of Rockford (55.43%), Winnebago County\* (18.78%) and Machesney Park (7.67%).

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\* This category accounts for Roscoe, the Village of Winnebago, Cherry Valley, New Milford and unincorporated parts of Winnebago County.

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| <b>AREAS</b>   | <b>RATS URBAN AREA (UA)</b> | <b>% of RATS UA Population</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Rockford       | 149,882                     | 55.43%                         |
| Winnebago Co   | 50,785                      | 18.78%                         |
| Machesney Park | 20,736                      | 7.67%                          |
| Loves Park     | 19,925                      | 7.37%                          |
| Belvidere      | 20,080                      | 7.43%                          |
| Boone County   | 9,006                       | 3.33%                          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>270,414</b>              | <b>100%</b>                    |

The distribution of transit dependent populations in the RATS Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) is displayed in **Maps 1.1** through **1.5**. Populations represented by these maps are individuals with disabilities, elderly individuals and individuals with low income and are represented by density on the Census Block Group Level using data from the year 2000 Census. Subsequently, minority population is important and the location of those areas is shown in **Maps 2.1** through **2.4**. These areas are well served by RMTD fixed route service and it must also be noted the RMTD paratransit services these areas as well.

**The Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS) Mobility Subcommittee:**

To promote communication and coordination between public transit and human services providers as well as public participation, the Rockford Area Transportation Study has created a Mobility Subcommittee. The RATS Mobility Subcommittee originated from the Getting to Work in Greater Rockford (GTW) organization, which was part of the larger statewide Work, Welfare and Families Coalition and consists of numerous human services and transportation agencies. The GTW organization began in 2005 and has met since to discuss transportation options for transit dependent populations and is continuing to do so as the new RATS Mobility Subcommittee. To note, new organizations can be added to the Mobility Subcommittee through the process outlined in the RATS Cooperative Agreement (2003).

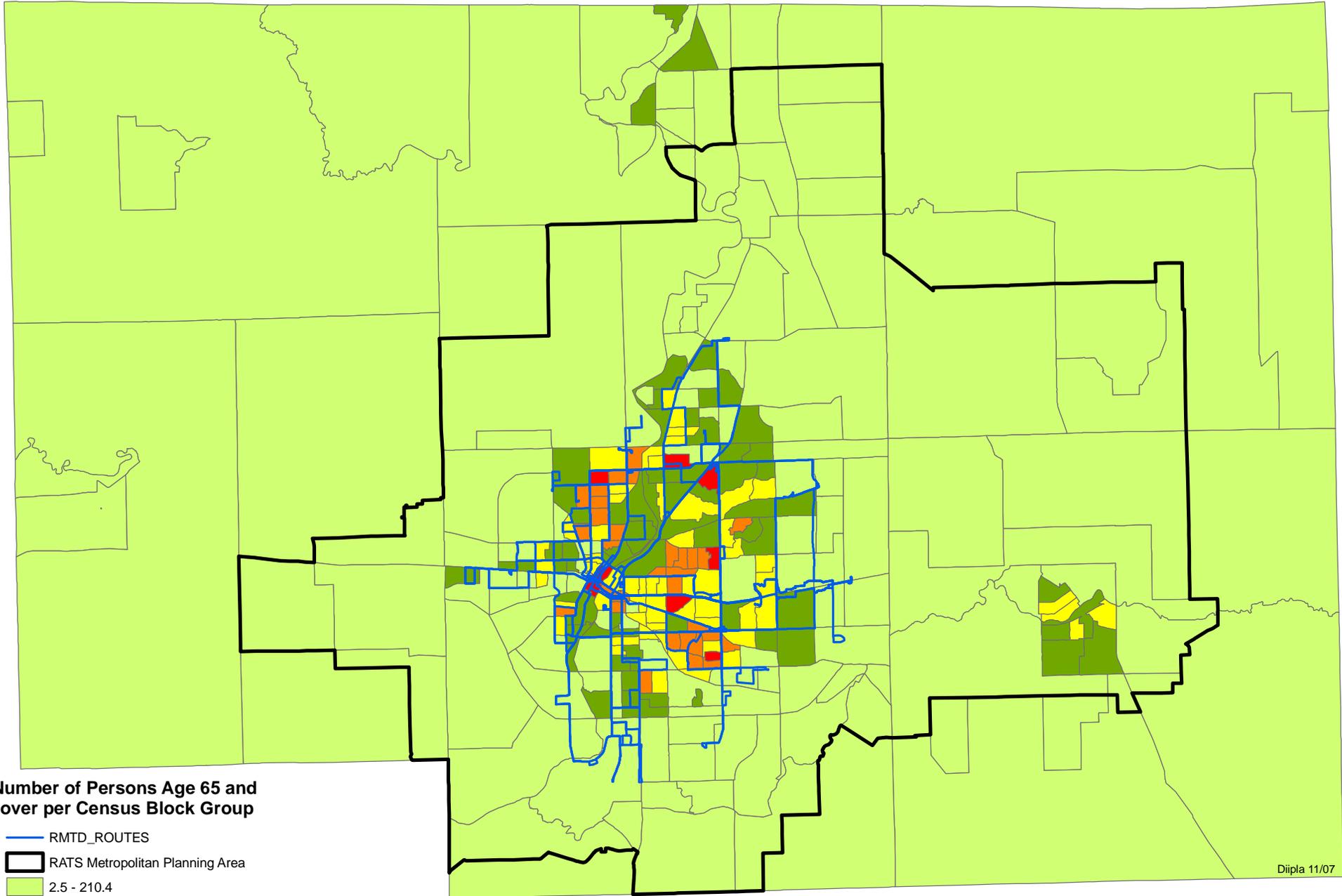
The duties of the Mobility Subcommittee are to facilitate public involvement to identify transportation needs, identify resource agencies and work with those agencies to develop strategies addressing transportation needs of public transit dependent populations. The Mobility Subcommittee also advocates for enhancements, expansion and new services that improve the wellbeing of public transportation dependent populations.

While the initial charge of the Mobility Subcommittee is to assist in the creation of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP), the subcommittee will also assist in exploring other possible transportation services and mode choices to adjacent areas to RATS as well as address and act upon associated issues as identified by the RATS Technical and Policy Committees. The Mobility Subcommittee meets the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 at the YWCA in Rockford, IL and all meetings of the Mobility Subcommittee are open to the public for comment and participation. Special meetings of the Mobility Subcommittee are permissible and occur on an as needed basis.

It is also important to note that the organizations involved in the Mobility Subcommittee have daily contact with individuals from public transit dependent populations. This interaction is important because it informs the organizations of transportation needs that transit dependent individuals face. Thus, by having these organizations partake in the Mobility Subcommittee, transit dependent populations concerns are represented and stated at Mobility Subcommittee meetings. Through this element, improvements in transportation services will better keep in mind the concerns of citizens who use public transportation on a consistent basis.

MAP 1.1

# DENSITY OF INDIVIDUALS 65 YEARS AND OVER (Per Square Mile)



**Number of Persons Age 65 and over per Census Block Group**

- RMTD\_ROUTES
- ▭ RATS Metropolitan Planning Area
- 2.5 - 210.4
- 210.5 - 508.3
- 508.4 - 864.9
- 865.0 - 1392.5
- 1392.6 - 2441.6

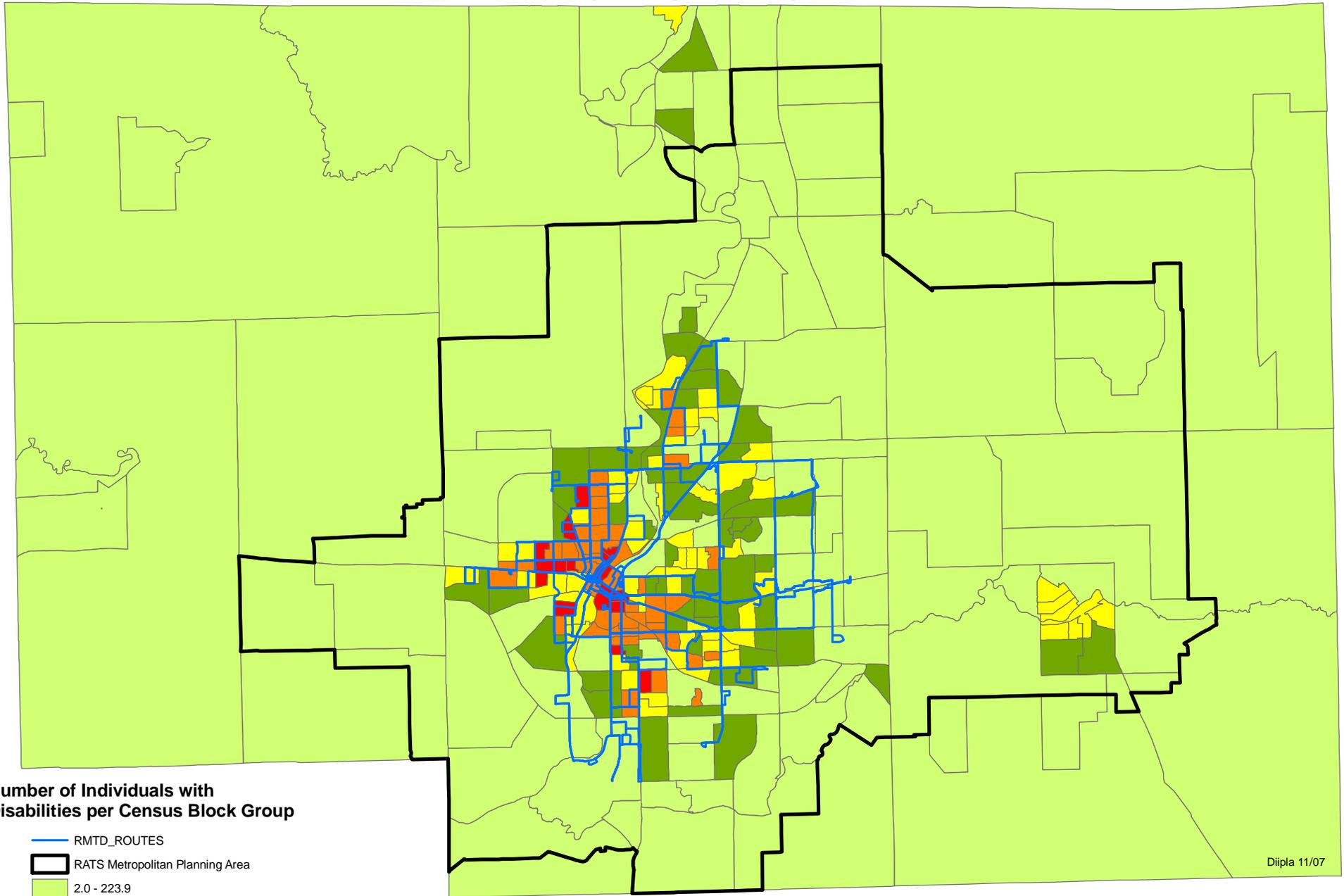
0 1 2 4 6 8 10 12 Miles

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Source: US Census 2000

MAP 1.2

# DENSITY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES (Per Square Mile)



### Number of Individuals with Disabilities per Census Block Group

-  RMTD\_ROUTES
-  RATS Metropolitan Planning Area
-  2.0 - 223.9
-  228.6 - 537.3
-  553.2 - 986.7
-  1004.0 - 1660.9
-  1798.7 - 3439.4

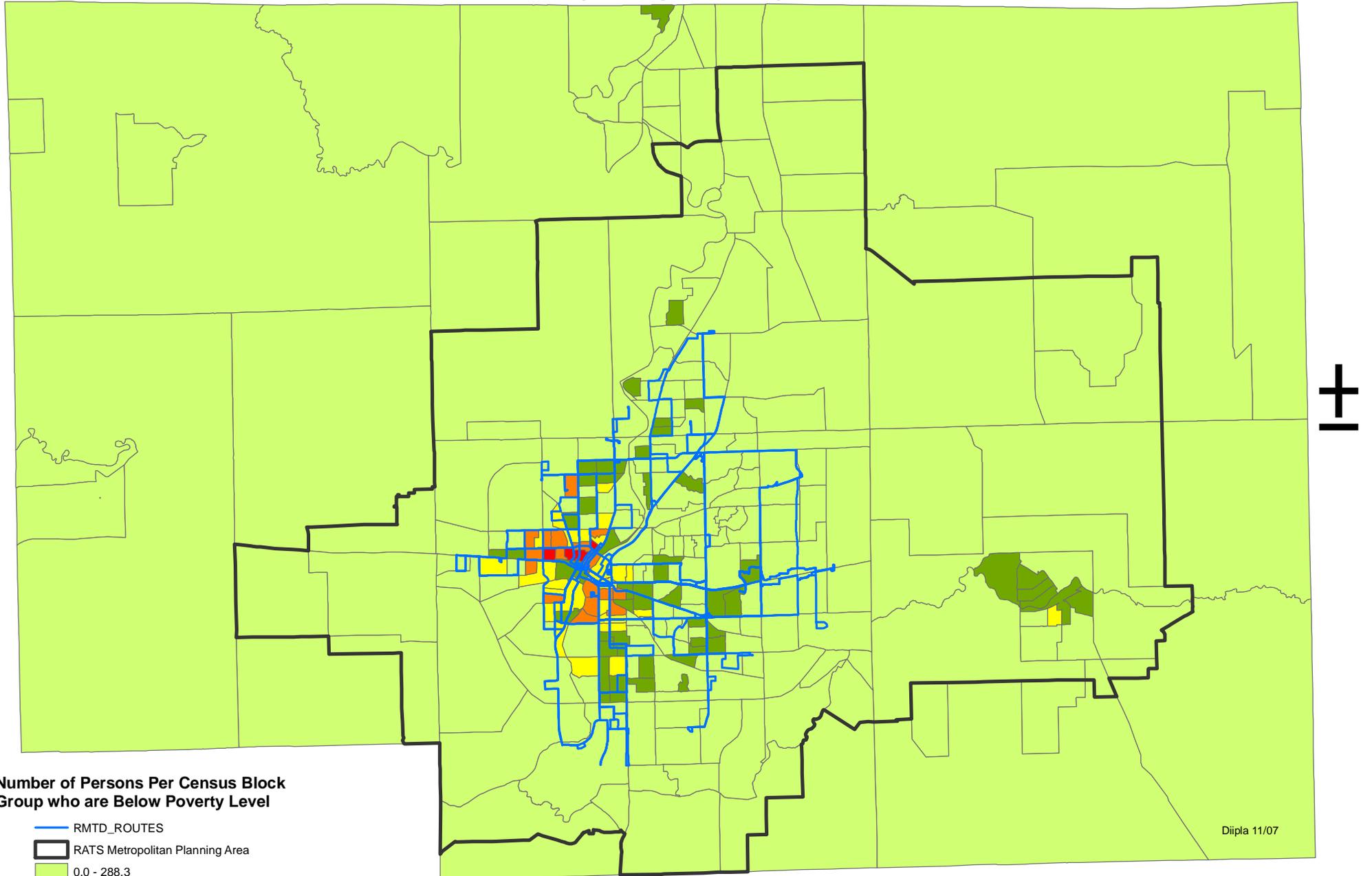
0 1 2 4 6 8 10 12 Miles

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Source: US Census 2000

MAP 1.3

# DENSITY OF INDIVIDUALS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL (Per Square Mile)



### Number of Persons Per Census Block Group who are Below Poverty Level

- RMTD\_ROUTES
- RATS Metropolitan Planning Area
- 0.0 - 288.3
- 288.4 - 825.2
- 825.3 - 1621.2
- 1621.3 - 3140.2
- 3140.3 - 6587.8

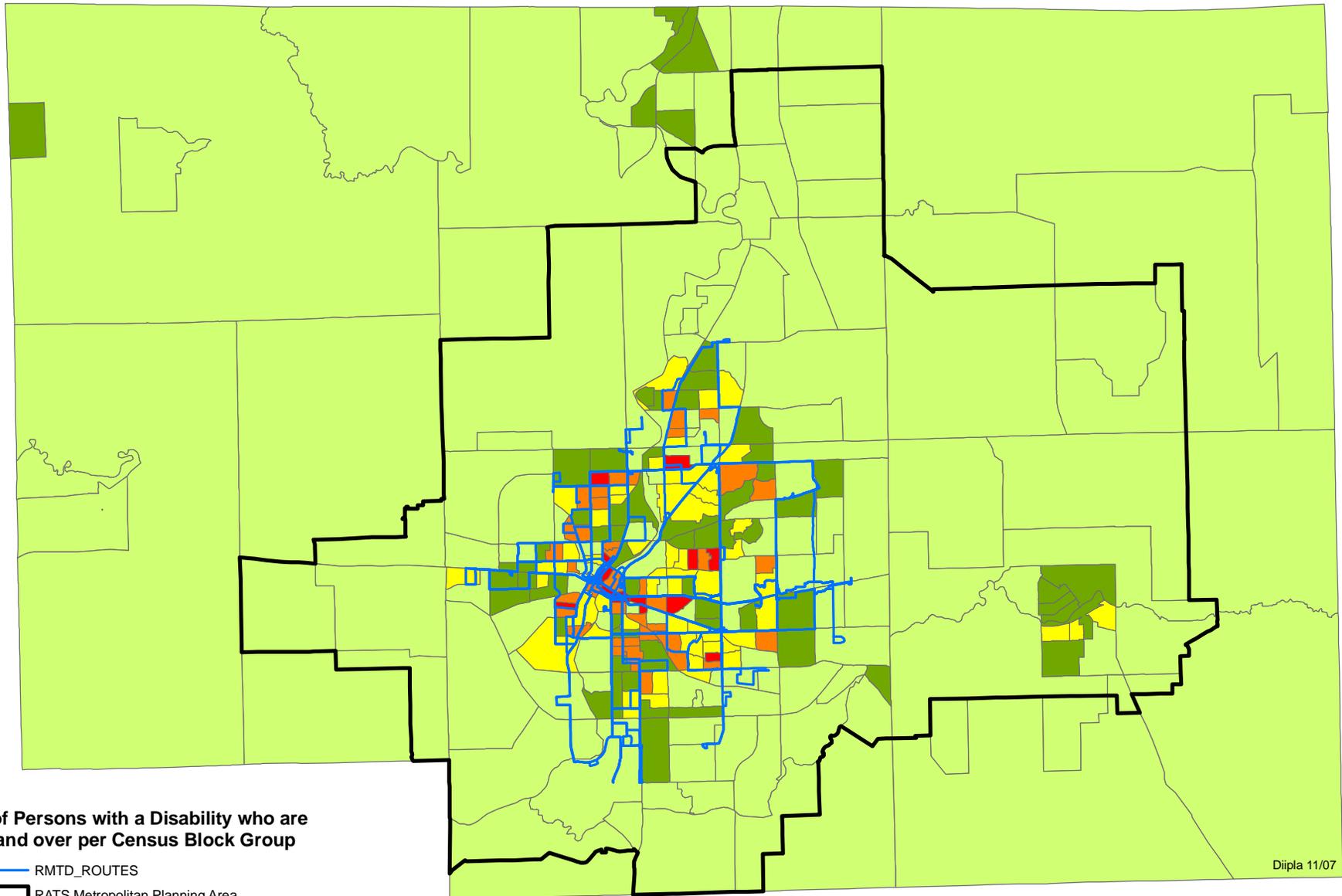
0 1 2 4 6 8 10 12 Miles

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Source: US Census 2000

MAP 1.4

DENSITY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO  
ARE 65 YEARS AND OVER  
(Per Square Mile)



Number of Persons with a Disability who are  
65 years and over per Census Block Group

- RMTD\_ROUTES
- ▭ RATS Metropolitan Planning Area
- 0.0 - 25.7
- 25.8 - 67.2
- 67.3 - 126.1
- 126.2 - 226.0
- 226.1 - 385.1

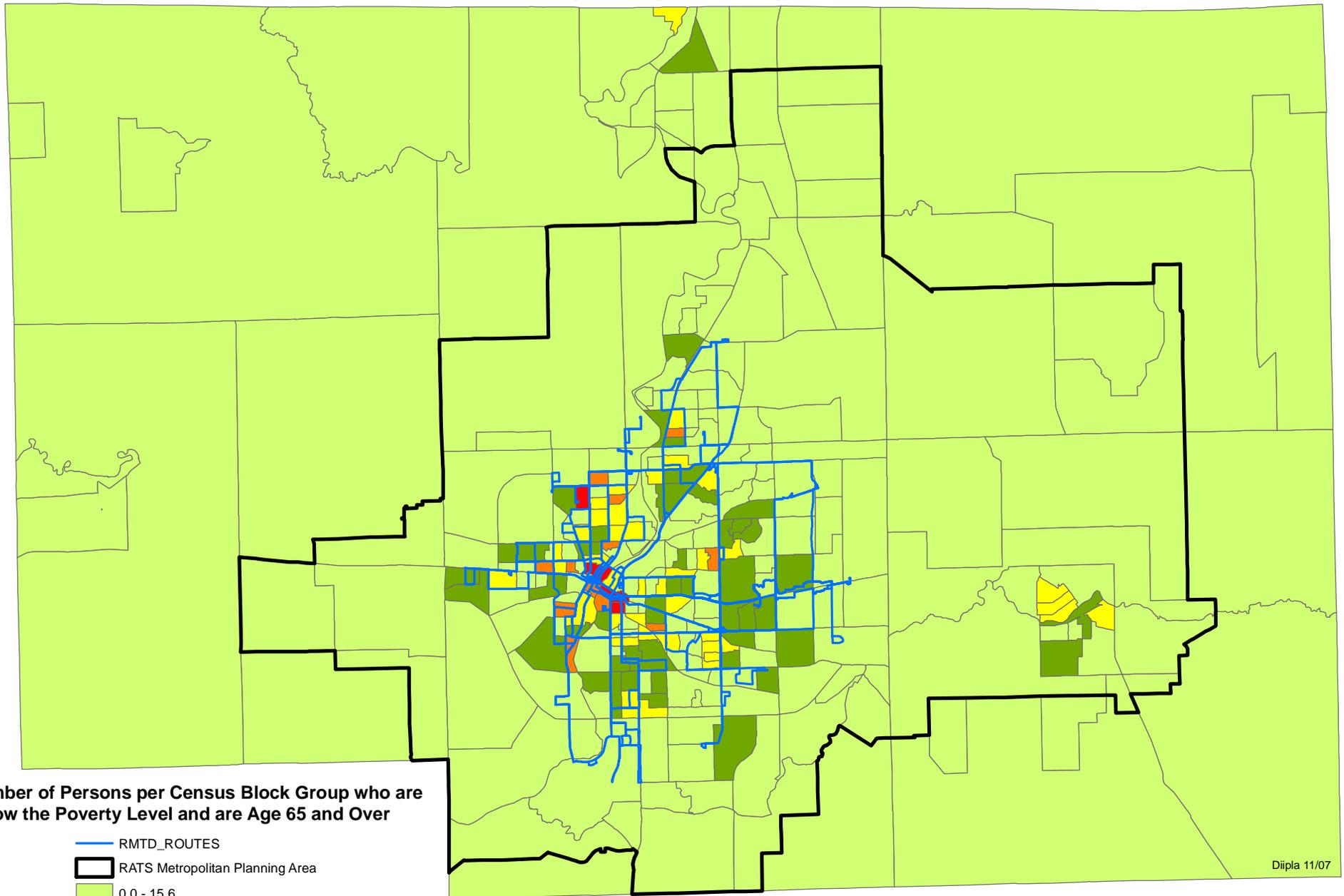
0 1 2 4 6 8 10 12 Miles

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Source: US Census 2000

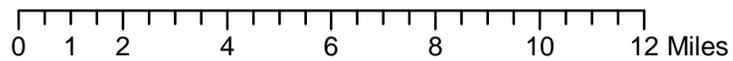
MAP 1.5

DENSITY OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL  
AND ARE AGE 65 YEARS AND OVER  
(Per Square Mile)



Number of Persons per Census Block Group who are Below the Poverty Level and are Age 65 and Over

- RMTD\_ROUTES
- ▭ RATS Metropolitan Planning Area
- 0.0 - 15.6
- 15.7 - 53.9
- 54.0 - 139.2
- 139.3 - 274.9
- 275.0 - 528.5



Dipla 11/07

Source: US Census 2000

# HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**MAP 2.1  
TOTAL POPULATION**

**MAP 2.2  
BLACK POPULATION**

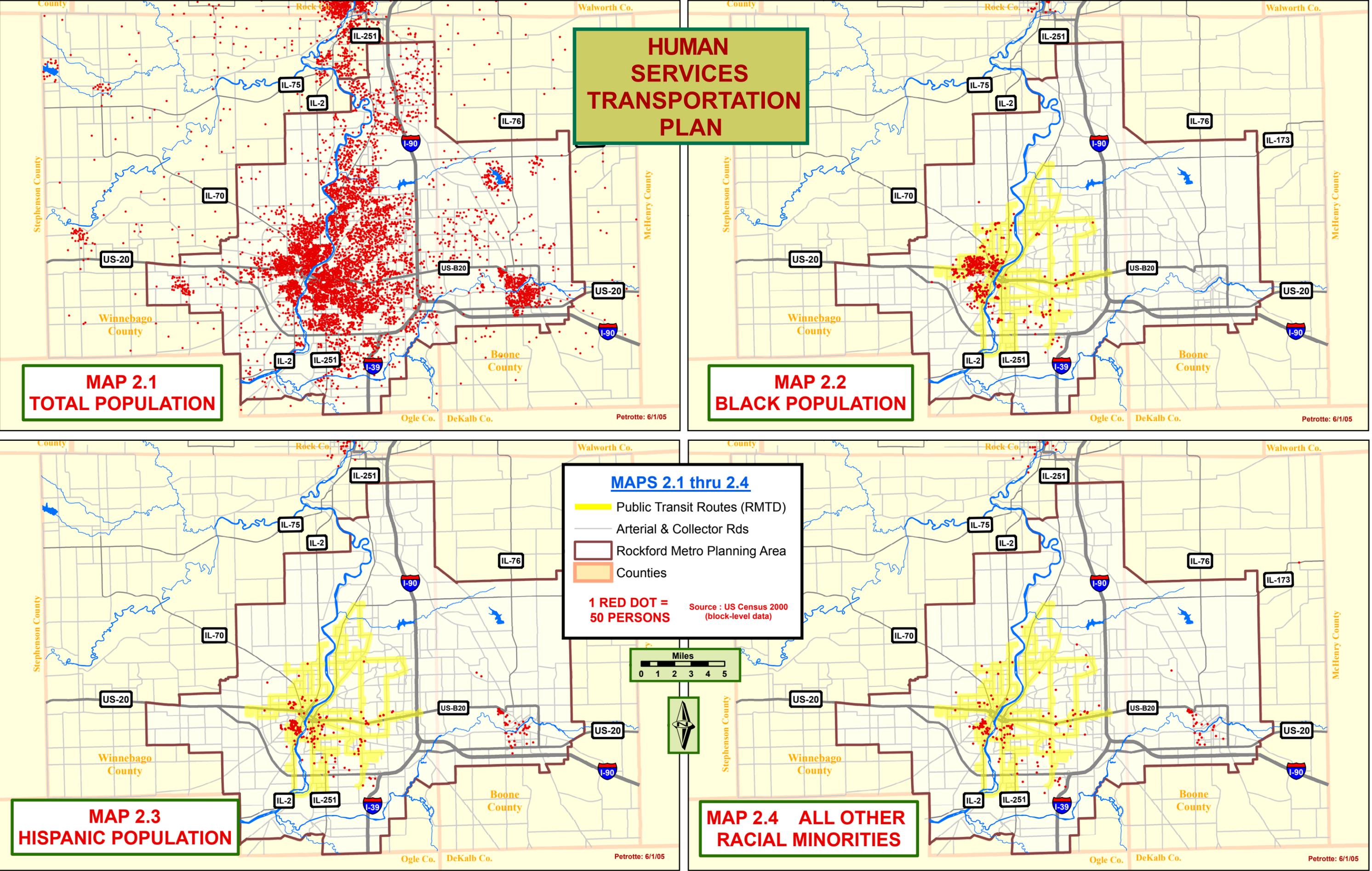
**MAP 2.3  
HISPANIC POPULATION**

**MAP 2.4  
ALL OTHER RACIAL MINORITIES**

**MAPS 2.1 thru 2.4**

-  Public Transit Routes (RMTD)
-  Arterial & Collector Rds
-  Rockford Metro Planning Area
-  Counties

**1 RED DOT = 50 PERSONS**      Source : US Census 2000 (block-level data)



Petrotte: 6/1/05

Petrotte: 6/1/05

Petrotte: 6/1/05

Petrotte: 6/1/05