

From Common Ground to Higher Ground

A Presentation to the North Carolina
Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
by The North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition
and the North Carolina Rural Center

26 April, 2019



About The Rural Center and the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition

We represent 30 cities
and 80 rural counties.



Not just common ground, but higher ground

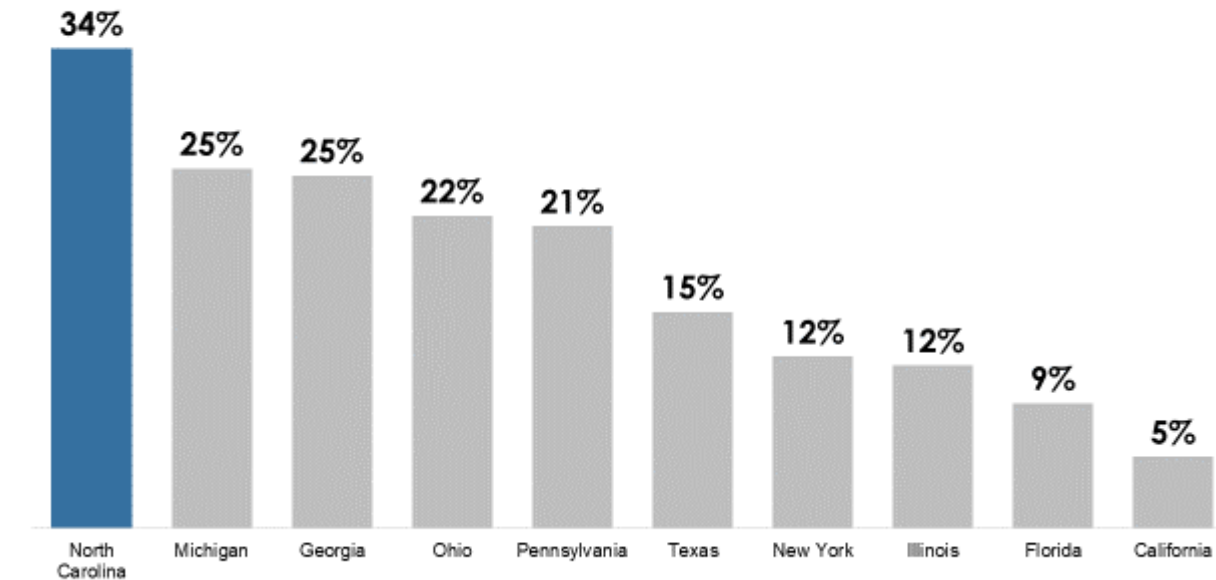
- We believe that rural and urban North Carolina have many common interests and a shared fate – far more so than the current common narrative.
- We share air and water sources, workforces, and an appreciation of what makes each worthwhile and important.
- We also share a number of concerns and hopes about North Carolina transportation issues. Strengthening our diverse transportation assets benefits rural and urban North Carolina.



Urban growth – but STILL a uniquely rural state

Among 10 most populous states, NC most rural

Population share living in rural areas, 2010

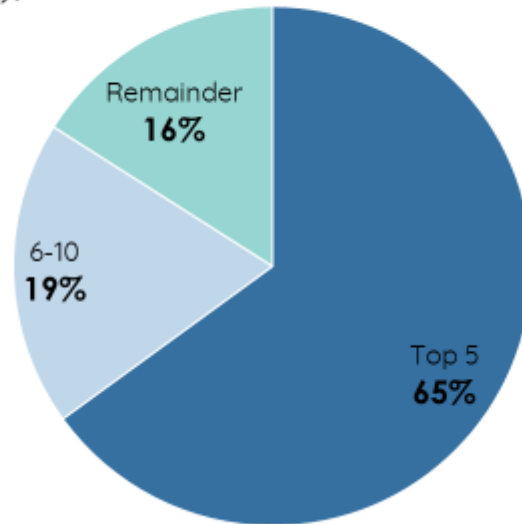


Data Source: US Census Bureau

Rural, but metro regions drive North Carolina's economy

65% of new establishments in 5 counties

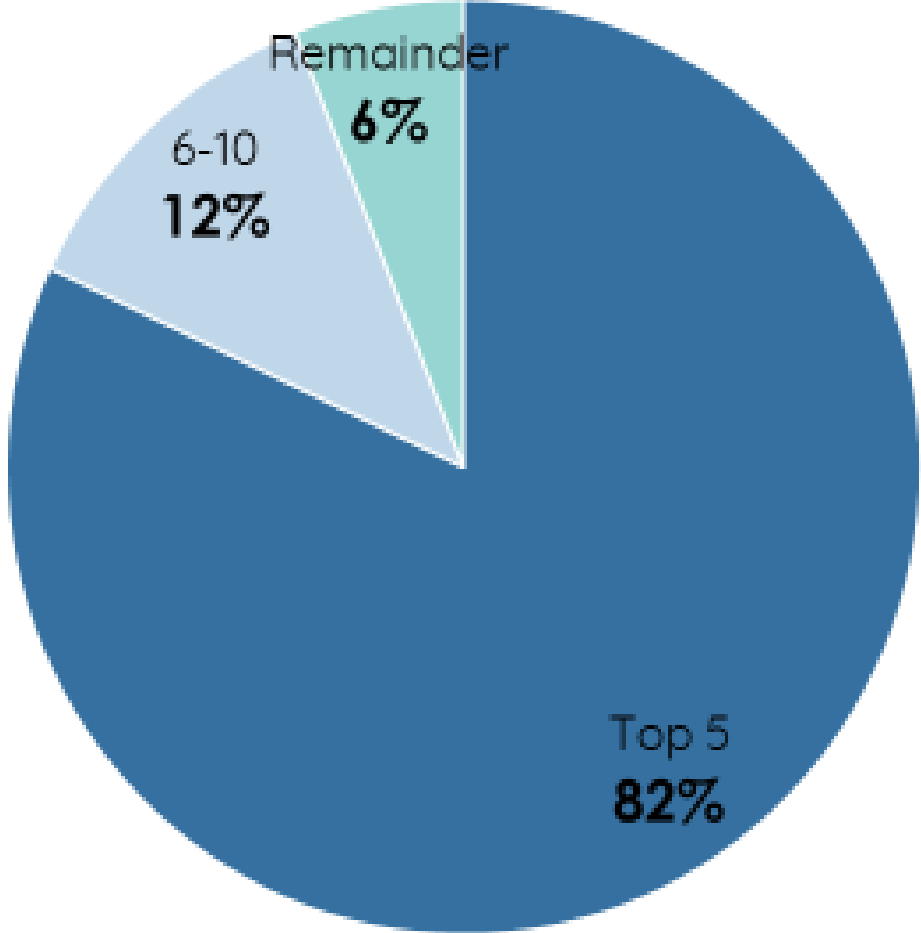
NC firm growth (Q4), 2007-2017



Data Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

82% of new jobs in 5 counties

NC employment growth (Q4), 2007-2017



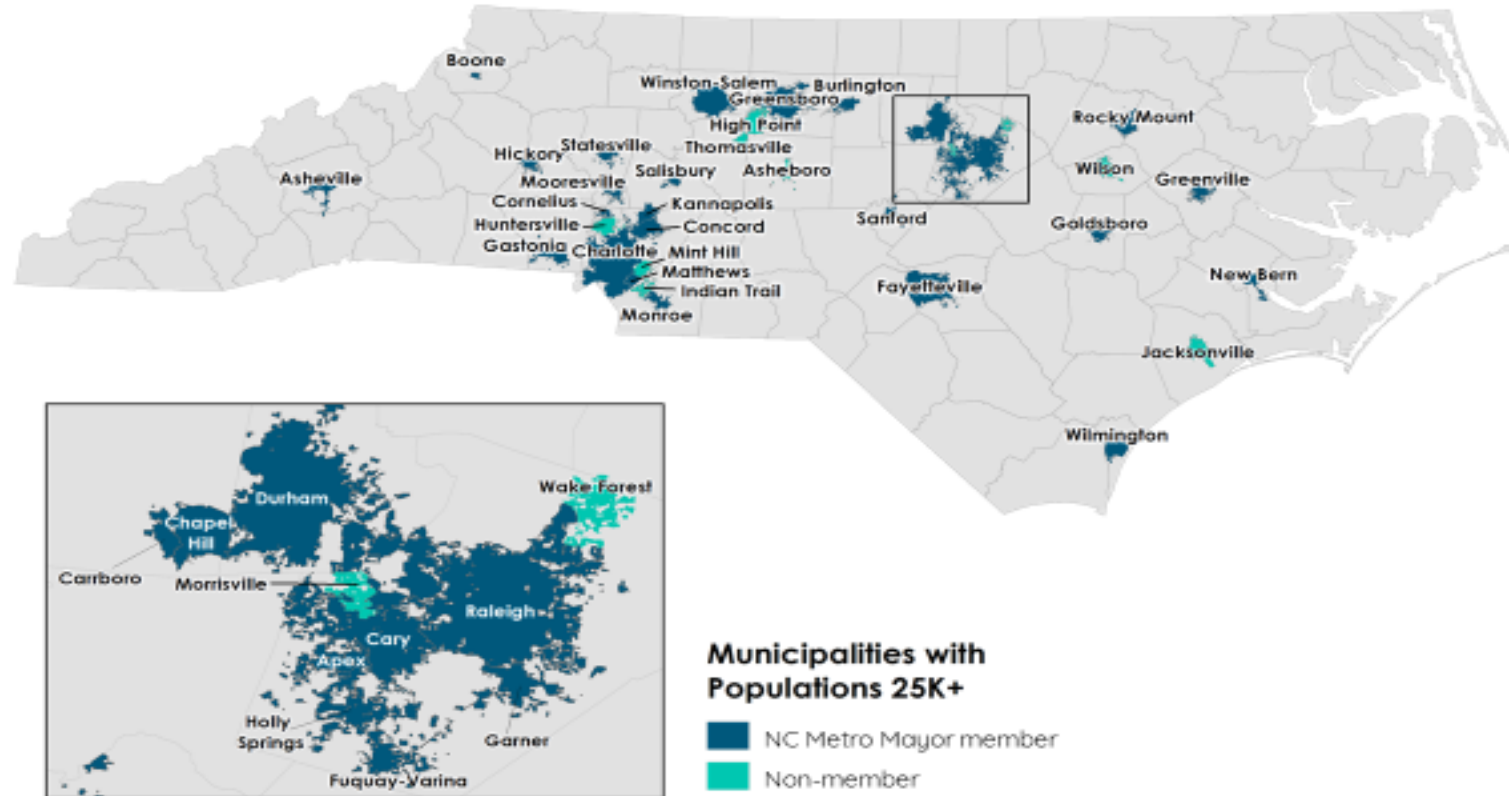
Data Source: QCEW

This is not unique to NC – it is a global issue



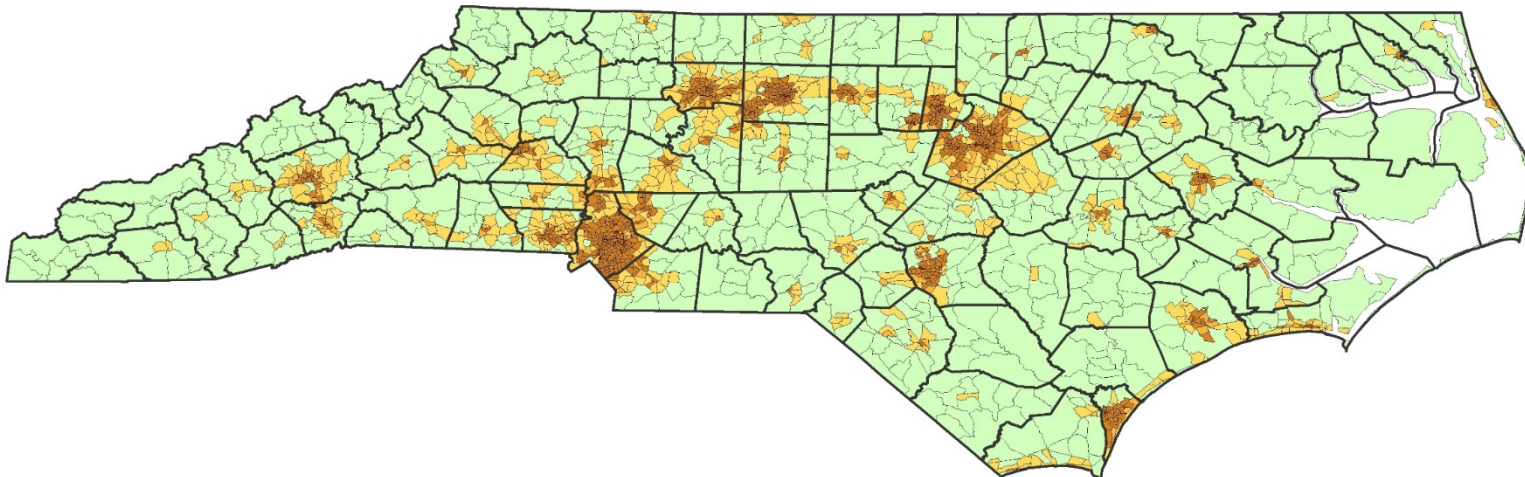
Between 2014 and 2016, just over half of the world's 300 largest metropolitan economies were considered "pockets of growth," high-performing metro areas disproportionately accountable for employment and GDP per capita growth

To compete nationally and globally – we must nurture our metro regions and connected rural areas



There are rural areas even within urban or suburban counties

North Carolina Population Density By Census Tract, 2010



Legend

People Per Square Miles

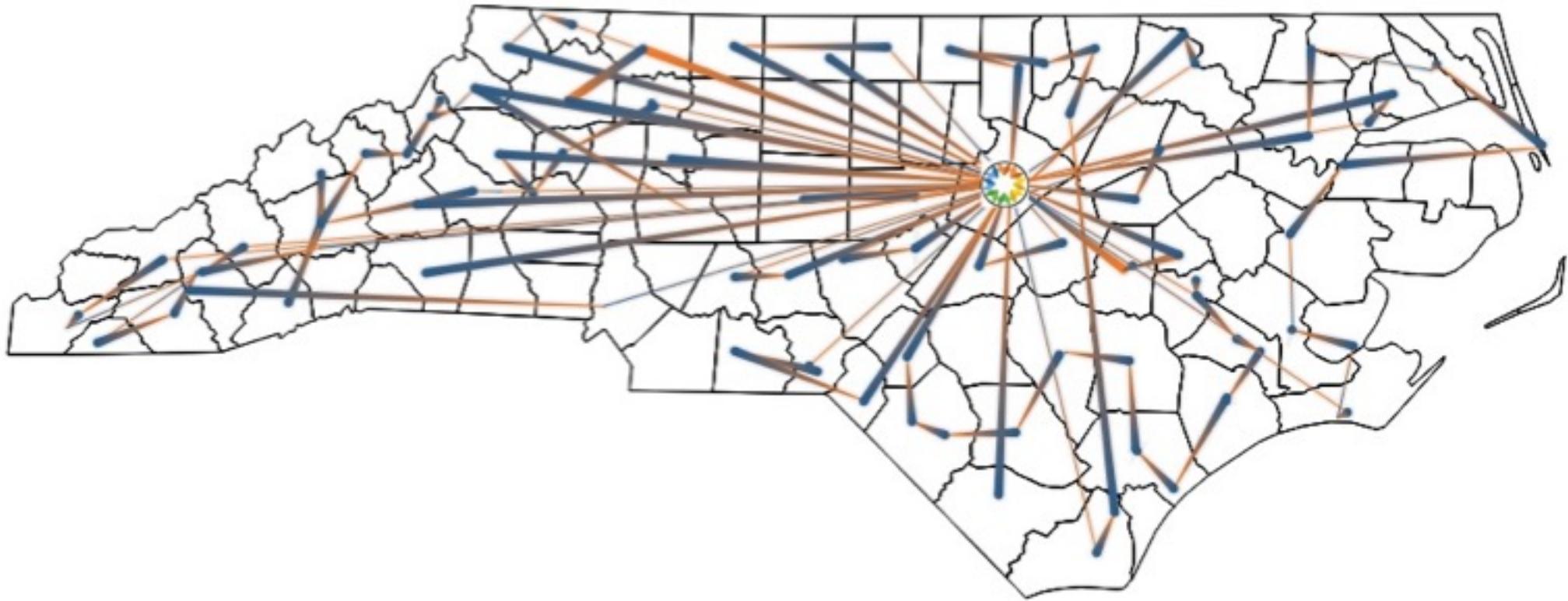
0 - 250	1,001 - 5,000
251 - 750	5,001 - 10,000
751 - 1,000	10,000 - 13,553

Recent Visits to all of our 32 metro cities to solicit top short and long term issues - challenges and opportunities



Apex	Asheville	Boone	Burlington	Carrboro
Cary	Chapel Hill	Charlotte	Concord	Cornelius
Durham	Fayetteville	Fuquay-Varina	Garner	Gastonia
Goldsboro	Greensboro	Greenville	Hickory	Holly Springs
Kannapolis	Matthews	Monroe	Mooresville	New Bern
Raleigh	Rocky Mount	Salisbury	Sanford	Statesville
	Wilmington	Winston-Salem		

The Rural Center's Rural Road Trip – 1 year; 8,457 miles; 1,600 rural leaders; 80 rural counties



WHAT WE AGREE ON:

#1: Deploy efficiency strategies from highway projects to non-highway projects

- DOT/Secretary Trogdon has done an exemplary job of drawing down the backlog of highway projects.
- We now need to shift this same strategy to non-highway projects.
- Multi-modal investments ARE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT

WHAT WE AGREE ON:

#2: Complete Streets

- We concur with and support the RPO/MPO recommendation made in their April presentation to the DOT Board's Multi-Modal Committee that the Complete Street planning should be incorporated within the Comprehensive Transportation Planning (CTP) process.
- Complete Streets update (Typicals/cross sections) need a “road show” and broad educational efforts. Needs review of betterment language. There needs to be stronger connection made with project “purpose and need” statements.
- Review bike and pedestrian cost match policy. Rural areas and smaller towns find the cost match onerous, therefore resources are not being drawn down.

WHAT WE AGREE ON:

#3: State Match for Federal Non-Highway projects

We encourage the NC DOT to encourage the North Carolina General Assembly to change the state law so that state dollars can be used, as they once were, as a match to leverage federal non-highway dollars for stand alone projects.

NC DOT should consider as a model the NC DEQ Water Infrastructure Office's "Ability to Pay" criteria for water and wastewater infrastructure projects. This criteria could also be used for betterment projects.

WHAT WE AGREE ON:

#4: Interagency Coordination

NC DOT has been a leader in collaboration – NEED MORE!

Strongly encourage coordination between DOT Complete Streets program and the Dept. of Commerce Main Street program.

WHAT WE AGREE ON:

#5: Fiber lines are part of the multi-modal equation

Connecting NC is good for URBAN and RURAL communities. NC DOT can make a significant contribution by assuring that every new project has conduit installed.

Every state agency in North Carolina has to have this as a priority, including MPOs and RPOs.

We are pleased to see Governor Cooper make a “dig-once” policy an administrative priority.

WHAT WE AGREE ON:

#6: Build capacity for REGIONAL STRATEGIES

- DOT has a growing commitment to build planning capacity within Rural Planning Organizations. This must continue to make RPOs more competitive for federal planning grants, and building a pipeline of shovel ready projects. Getting project development engineers in the divisions is a welcome addition. How do we accelerate the ramp up?
- *How can DOT Division and Regional staff facilitate regional rural-urban planning for major projects? How do we build regional capacity for bundling bike-ped projects? We welcome DOT leadership to facilitate rural and urban connections!*