

## Union City MPO

### Executive Summary

The Union City metropolitan area has a current population of 225,000, with 95,000 within Union City. Union City lies at the fall line of the Granite Mountains and represents the transition between these mountains and the coastal plain of the Sea of Great Affection. Union City has 4 distinct seasons with mild winters. Average annual rainfall is approximately 50 inches. Prior to the completion of Interstate 46 in 1974, no freeway class facilities existed within the Union City region. As a result of the late development of the Freeway network, the non-freeway portion of the NHS system is relatively extensive. Preventative maintenance has been underfunded within the state for the past 20 years and maintenance resources have been distributed to DOT districts based only on population density. As a result, statewide pavement and bridge condition scores have suffered with less than 70% of lane-miles scoring poor or worse and nearly 1 in 3 bridges being rated as structurally deficient. Public transportation is limited.

### Population Trends

Year	2000	2010	2017 (est)	Percent Change from 2000
MPO Region	175,000	200,000	225,000	+28.6%
Union City	75,000	85,000	95,000	+26.7%
Kermit	12,500	17,000	20,000	+60.0%
Berlin	1,000	1,100	5,000	+400.0%
Mountain Springs	750	800	850	+13.3%
Turnip Farms	275	280	300	+9.1%

Union City was established in 1826 at the first set of rapids along the Talladega River. The city's position between the fertile Talladega River valley to the southwest and the Granite Mountains to the northeast permitted the city to become well established by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Due to its accessibility via the Talladega River, Union City was established as the first State Capital upon statehood. Union City maintained its position as state capital until 1870 when the capital was moved to Hopkins Gap (later renamed Albany). As a consolation to the relocation of the state capital, the state legislature established the federal land grant college of Union State University east of the city center in 1872. Today Union State has a total enrollment of 19,000 students.

The scenic and therapeutic resort of Mountain Springs adjacent to Lake Union (which became a National Monument in 1998) additionally established the region as a major tourist destination. In 2004, Audi / VW chose the town of Berlin as the location for their first North American assembly plant. VW has since established its vehicle automation research facility within Berlin along with a future cities development for employees resulting in a significant population increase for the town since 2010.

## **Geography and Climate**

Union City lies at the fall line of the Granite Mountains and represents the transition between these mountains and the coastal plain of the Sea of Great Affection. Native Americans had previously established various settlements within the general vicinity due to accessibility via the Talladega River and access to fertile farmlands to the southwest and rich mineral deposits to the northeast. Numerous granite mines exist northeast of the city and was one of the earliest industries for the region.

Climate for Union City has 4 distinct seasons with summers being warm and humid and winters being mild with occasional freezes. Snow and ice events, while not frequent, do occur at least occasionally each year with an average snowfall of 4 to 6 inches annually, with higher amounts however in the Granite Mountains. Average annual rainfall is approximately 50 inches.

## **Highway Status**

Prior to the completion of Interstate 46 in 1974, no freeway class facilities existed within the Union City region. In addition to I-46, the I-346 spur was completed connecting the downtown area to I-46 in 1991. An outer loop I-296 was first proposed by the state DOT in the mid-1980s, but interstate status was later abandoned in the 1990s with the corridor reclassified as SH-296. The first section of SH-296 was completed across the Talladega River in 2005 just downriver from the Lake Union Dam with the connection to I-46 currently under construction. The western section of SH-296 was developed in 1999 with a privately maintained toll bridge. The northern portion of SH-296 remains unfunded with no current development timeline and an estimated construction cost of \$300 million. As a result of the late development of the Freeway network, the non-freeway portion of the NHS system is relatively extensive.

Preventative maintenance has been underfunded within the state for the past 20 years and maintenance resources have been distributed to DOT districts based only on population density. As a result, statewide pavement and bridge condition scores have suffered with less than 70% of lane-miles scoring poor or worse and nearly 1 in 3 bridges being rated as structurally deficient. The State Governor last year announced his 'Smooth Lane' initiative which promises to reform the distribution of highway funding to place link project funding with need and focus the next 5 years of funding on rehabilitation and reconstruction of the existing system with little resources on expanded capacity. The goal is to increase the statewide percentage of pavements rated good or better to 80% and reduce the number of structurally deficient bridges to less than 20%. The anticipated impact for Union City is to increase the DOT highway and bridge maintenance budget by \$100 million over 5 years.

### NHS System Ownership

Classification	Owner	Lane-Miles	Percent of Total NHS	Percent Good or Better Condition
Freeway / Interstate	State DOT	180.0	30.6%	69.5%
Non-Freeway	State DOT	404.0	68.7%	67.0%
Toll Facility	Talladega Pkwy	4.0	0.7%	100.0%

### NHS Bridge Ownership

Classification	Owner	Bridges	Percent of Total NHS	Average Condition Score	Percent Functionally Obsolete
Freeway / Interstate	State DOT	45	40.5%	65.0	22.2%
Non-Freeway	State DOT	65	58.6%	66.3	26.2%
Toll Facility	Talladega Pkwy	1	0.9%	91.0	0.0%

### Public Transportation

The Union City Transit System provides service primarily within the Cities of Union City and Kermit along 7 fixed routes. In addition to the fixed routes Union City Transit also operates an ADA paratransit service with 8 vehicles. Outside of the Union City Transit service area, public transportation is provided through the Union County Rural Transit District. The RTD operates 10 vehicles on a demand response basis.

### MPO Organization and Resources

The Union City MPO is housed within the Planning Department of the City of Union City who acts as the fiscal agent. The Planning Department identifies 4 staff to administer the MPO program. The MPO Director is 100% allocated to the MPO, each of the other 3 staff split their time between MPO projects and other planning department tasks for a result of 2.8 FTEs. The MPO budget for FY 2017 is \$300,000 with 80% being federal planning dollars and 20% split evenly between the City of Union City and Union County. Each year, approximately \$75,000 of federal planning dollars are returned to the state DOT and eventually USDOT as the local match being provided is insufficient to match these funds. Due to the small staff, many planning efforts, such as development of the LRTP, are performed by outside consultants and require 'banking' several years of planning dollars.

The MPO is governed by a 5 member Policy Board composed of the Mayor of Union City, the CEO of Union County, the District Engineer of the State DOT, the Mayor of Kermit, and the Mayor of Berlin. The Policy Board is advised by a 20 member Technical Committee appointed by member municipalities, Union County and the State DOT. The MPO does not have a Citizens Committee.

### Long Range Transportation Plan & TIP Status

The Union City MPO adopted their LRTP in January of 2015. The region is designated attainment for all pollutants. Their next LRTP update is scheduled for January, 2020 with a horizon year of 2045. The census defined urbanized area for Union City had a population of 165,000 in 2010. As a result, Union City is defined as a non-transportation management area and is ineligible to receive the STP suballocation that TMA MPOs receive for highway mobility. Due to this and the decrease of mobility funds through 2022 as a result of the Governor's 'Smooth Lanes' initiative, the LRTP has relatively few highway mobility projects identified for development.

The 2017-2020 Union City Transportation Improvement Program was adopted in July of 2016 and is amended once each year in February. The next TIP, covering the years 2019 through 2022 is scheduled for adoption in July of 2018.

### Transportation Asset Management Plan Status

Agency	Facilities	Status
State DOT	All State Highways	Draft plan completed in 2015 but disapproved by transportation cabinet citing new pending federal regulations. New plan under development and proposed for adoption August, 2017.
City of Union City	All City Owned Streets	None
Union County	All County Owned Roads	None
City of Kermit	All City Owned Streets	None
Union City Transit	Union City Transit Owned Vehicles	FAST compliant plan under development for 2018 adoption
Union County Rural Transit District	Union County RTD Owned Vehicles	State DOT developing plan for all rural district fleets. Draft plan anticipated July, 2017.

**2040 Financial Forecasts and Forecasted Needs**

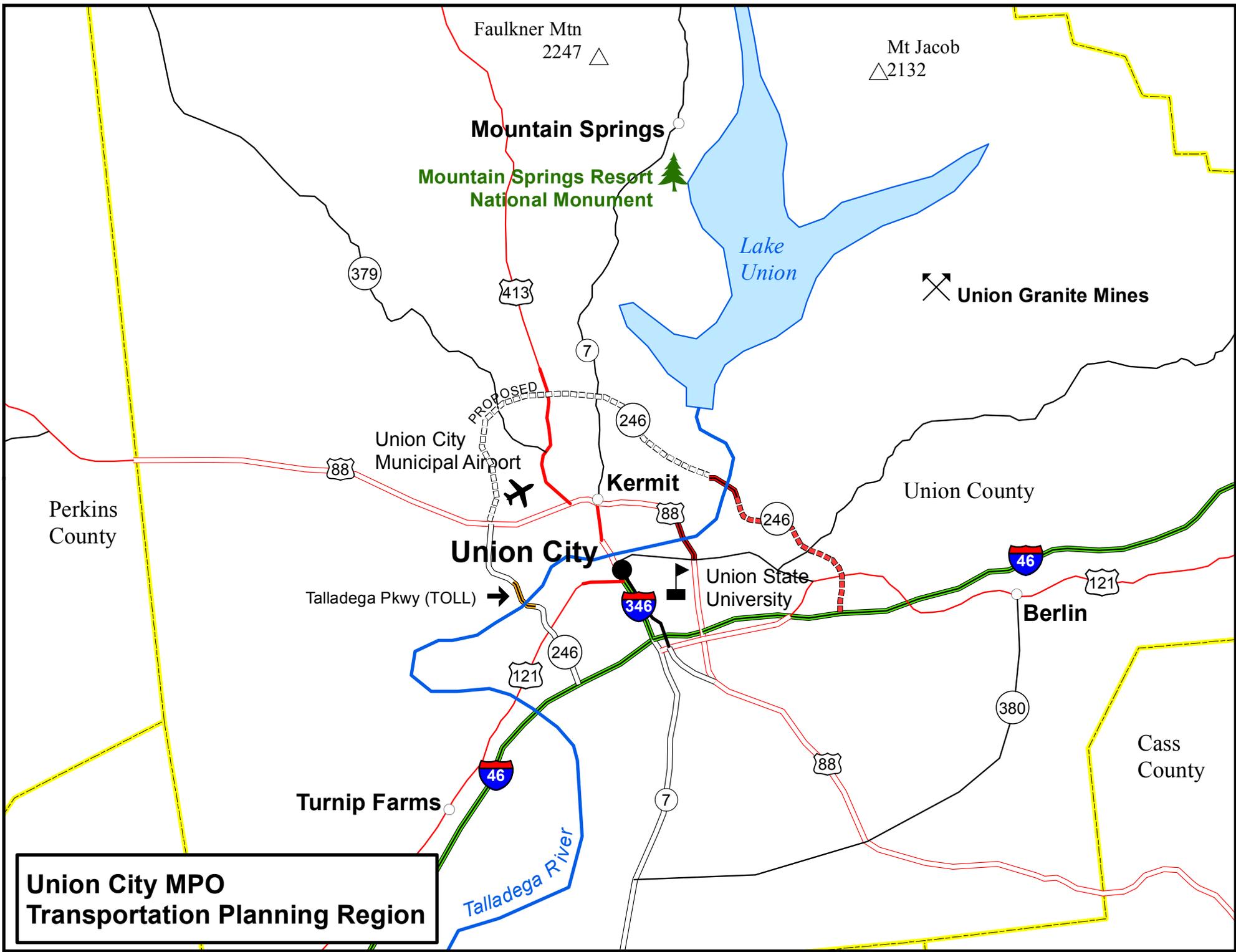
<b>Funding Silo<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>	<b>Estimated Revenues</b>	<b>Need</b>	<b>Percent Funded</b>
State Highway & Bridge Maintenance	State DOT	\$400 million <sup>b</sup>	\$750 million	53.3%
Local Highway Maintenance	Cities & Counties	\$250 million	\$500 million	50.0%
State Highway Mobility	State DOT	\$100 million	\$1.0 billion	10.0%
MPO Mobility*	Not applicable	\$0	\$0	Not applicable
FTA 5307 + Farebox	Union City Transit	\$75 million	\$150 million	50.0%
FTA 5310 + 5311	Union County RTD	\$10 million	\$40 million	25.0%
Toll Revenue	Toll Authority	\$15 million	\$25 million	60.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$850 million</b>	<b>\$2.465 billion</b>	<b>34.5%</b>

<b>Funding Silo<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Definition of Need</b>
Highway & Bridge Maintenance Local & State	Amount required to maintain 75% of pavements in good or better condition and 75% of bridges with a structural condition score greater than or equal 75
State Highway Mobility	Amount required to eliminate Level of Service 'F' on all state owned NHS facilities
MPO Mobility*	Cost of mobility projects scoring higher than 75 utilizing the MPO project evaluation criteria score
FTA 5307 + Farebox	Amount required to address 75% of service gaps identified within the 2040 transit coordination plan
FTA 5310 + 5311	Amount required to eliminate all denial of service with a 24 hour advanced reservation
Toll Revenue	Amount required to maintain all pavements in good or better condition and all bridges / tunnels with a structural condition score greater than or equal to 75 and eliminate Level of Service 'F'

\*Note: MPO mobility projects may be of any mode and for any purpose.

<sup>a</sup>Also known as cylinders of excellence

<sup>b</sup>\$160 million of state maintenance is required to be expended by 2022 as part of the 'Smooth Lane' initiative.



Faulkner Mtn  
2247  $\triangle$

Mt Jacob  
 $\triangle$ 2132

**Mountain Springs**

**Mountain Springs Resort  
National Monument**

*Lake  
Union*

$\times$  **Union Granite Mines**

379

413

7

246

88

Union City  
Municipal Airport



**Kermit**

88

246

Union County

Perkins  
County

**Union City**

Union State  
University

Talladega Pkwy (TOLL)  $\rightarrow$

346

46

121

**Berlin**

246

121

380

Cass  
County

**Turnip Farms**

7

88

**Union City MPO  
Transportation Planning Region**

*Talladega River*