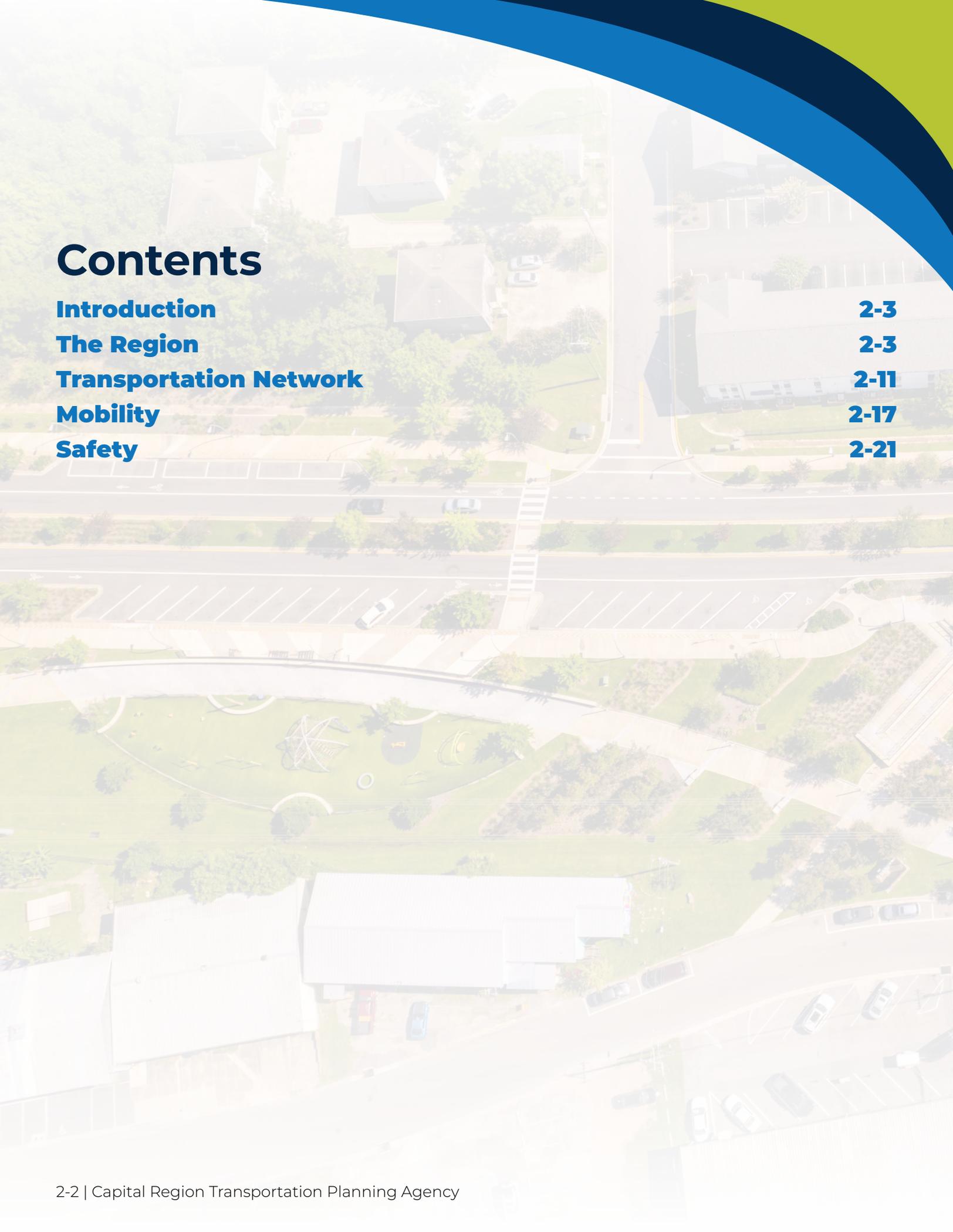


CHAPTER 2

STATE OF REGION



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Introduction

This section of the *Regional Mobility Plan (RMP)* provides an overview of the Capital Region, its population, employment, transportation networks and the trends that define its challenges and opportunities. The existing conditions and performance of the region's transportation system and expected growth are key to shaping the region's future and form the foundation for planning efforts aimed at building a safer and more connected transportation system.

The Region

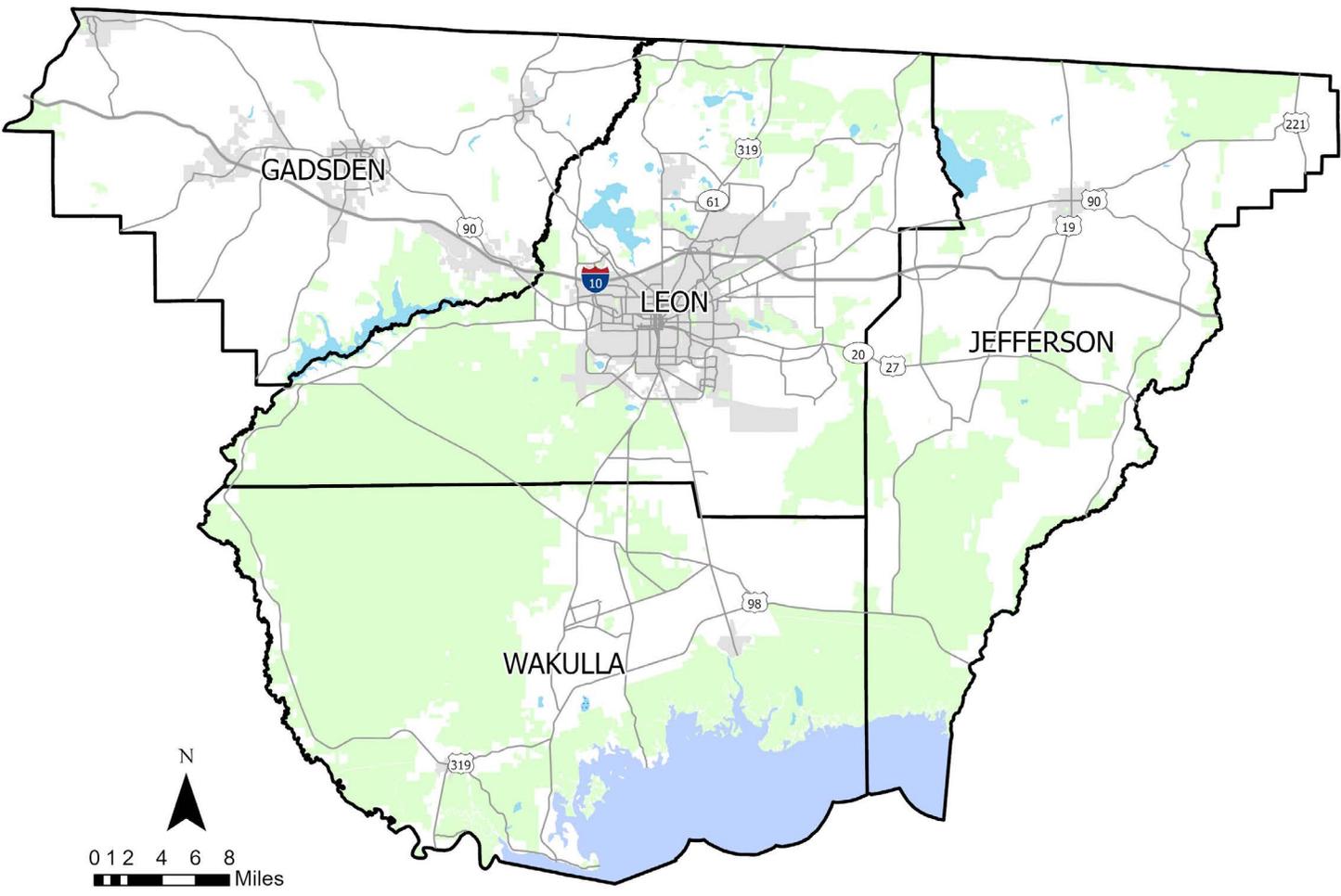
The Capital Region offers a mix of urban cultural hubs and vast, protected wilderness, providing its residents both opportunities for growth, whether it's economic or educational, and the space for quiet reflection and recreation. The region's identity is anchored in a history that spans Spanish colonial missions, the antebellum South, and a rich African American heritage. Community resources here are like living museums that provide educational value through immersive experiences at places like Mission San Luis, Gadsden Arts Center & Museum, and the Monticello Opera House.

One of the defining characteristics of the region is its natural landscapes, offering everything from freshwater springs to coastal wildlife refuges to vast forests. Wakulla Springs State Park is renowned for its massive freshwater spring that provides year-round hiking and swimming; Saint Marks National Wildlife Refuge allows visitors to engage with the region's diverse ecosystem and is home to St. Mark's Lighthouse, a historic beacon dating back to the 1800s; and the Apalachicola National Forest offers virtually endless hikes through its pristine woodlands.

Florida's State Capital in Tallahassee and the universities in the region - Florida State University (FSU), Florida A&M University (FAMU), and Tallahassee State College (TSC) - serve as the primary engines for the region's economy, culture, and social services. Innovation Park is home to over 17 buildings where FSU, FAMU, and TSC partner with private industry to create high-wage jobs. The east/west corridor encompassing FSU, FAMU, and TSC creates a massive "daytime population" surge where the number of people present during business hours is often three to four times higher than the resident population.

The healthcare industry is the largest single private employer in the Capital Region, providing economic stability, workforce development, and essential healthcare services to areas within and beyond the region's four counties. There are two primary hospitals in Tallahassee - Tallahassee Memorial (TMH) and HCA Florida - with multiple satellite facilities, both currently undergoing multi-year expansions. TMH is also partnering with FSU to build an academic health center, which is expected to broaden services and healthcare opportunities throughout the region. Centers around Tallahassee Memorial (TMH) and HCA Florida Capital Hospital (northeast) represent rapidly densifying private sector employment hubs.

Figure 2-1. The Capital Region



Population

In 2025 the population of the Capital Region was estimated to be more than 400,000 people. Leon County remains the primary engine of the region, accounting for 75 percent of the total population. Unlike the surrounding counties, most Leon County residents (86 percent) live in the urbanized area in and around the City of Tallahassee. Leon County’s population grew by roughly eight percent between 2013 and 2024. However, growth is moving outward from Tallahassee into northeastern Leon County and northern Wakulla County. **Table 2-1** reports recent population growth by county in the region between 2013 and 2024.

Wakulla is the fastest-growing county in the region, primarily serving as a “bedroom community” for Tallahassee. It saw a 20 percent increase in population between 2013 and 2024, more than double the growth rate of Leon County. With majority rural land use (70 percent) and no major incorporated cities, much of this growth is concentrated in the Crawfordville area. It is expected to grow to over 40,000 people by 2030.

There is a sharp contrast between the growth of Leon and Wakulla counties versus the slower more rural trends in Jefferson and Gadsden counties. Gadsden County experienced a slight population decline of six percent between 2013 and 2024, while Jefferson County - the most rural of the four counties – grew by ten percent.

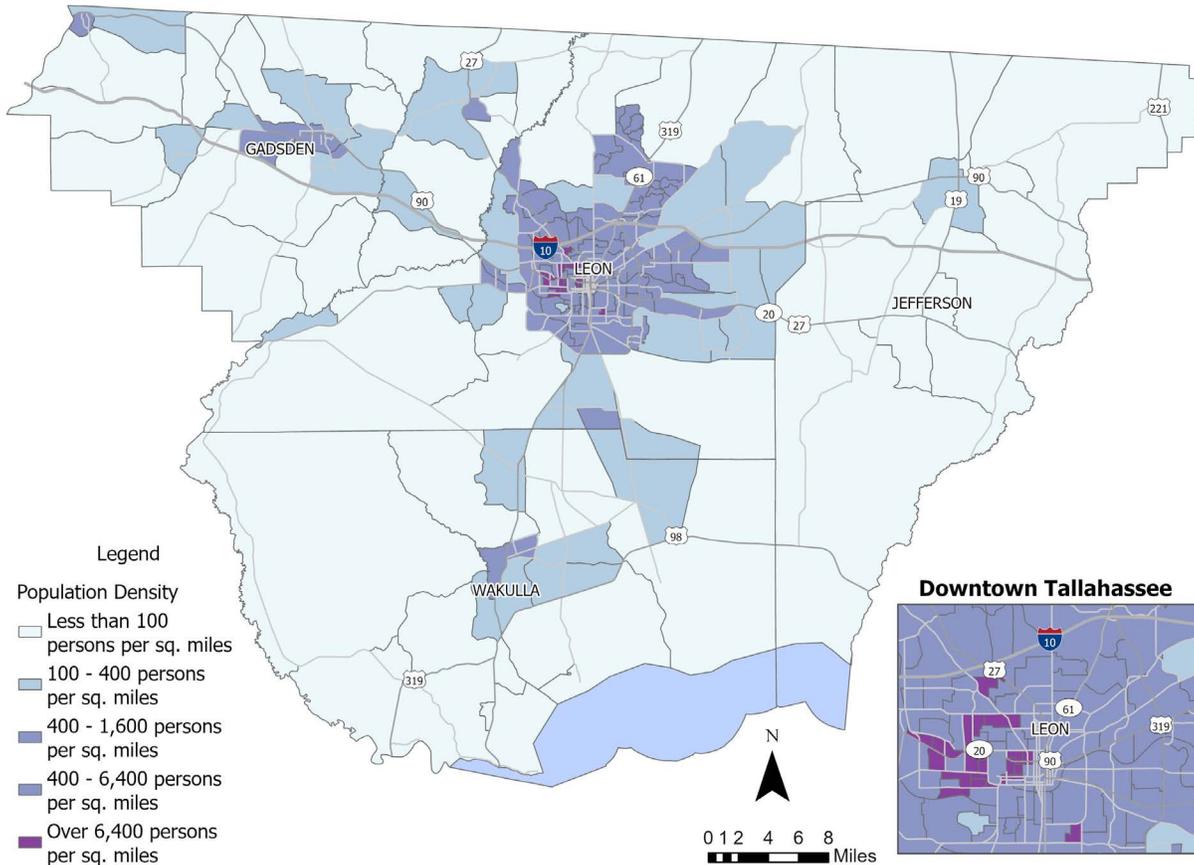
Table 2-1. Population by County Since 2013

County	Population		Growth	
	2013	2024	# of people	% of increase
Gadsden County	46,860	44,151	-2,709	-6%
Jefferson County	14,469	15,921	+1,452	+10%
Leon County	278,624	300,488	+21,864	+8%
Wakulla County	30,824	37,115	+6,291	+20%
Capital Region	370,777	397,675	+26,898	+7%

Population Density

The CRTPA planning area exhibits a “hub-and-spoke” density model. Population density is heavily concentrated in Leon County/Tallahassee and is rapidly expanding southward into Wakulla County. Wakulla County has transitioned from a rural region to the primary commuter hub for Tallahassee. Density is spiking along the Crawfordville Highway corridor connecting Wakulla and Leon counties. Jefferson and Gadsden counties maintain low-density, rural profiles. **Figure 2-2** displays the population densities in the region.

Figure 2-2. Population Density



Employment

Leon County serves as the primary employment center in the region, with over 80% of the region’s jobs, while Wakulla, Gadsden, and Jefferson counties function as labor “sheds” - areas where residents live but mostly commute into Tallahassee for work. Job growth outpaced population growth in Leon County between 2013 and 2023, growing by 16 percent in the ten years between 2013 and 2023. Gadsden County had the highest percentage increase in job growth, attracting nearly 40 percent more jobs in 2023 than it had in 2013. **Table 2-2** reports on the number of jobs by county.

Table 2-2. Employment by County Since 2013

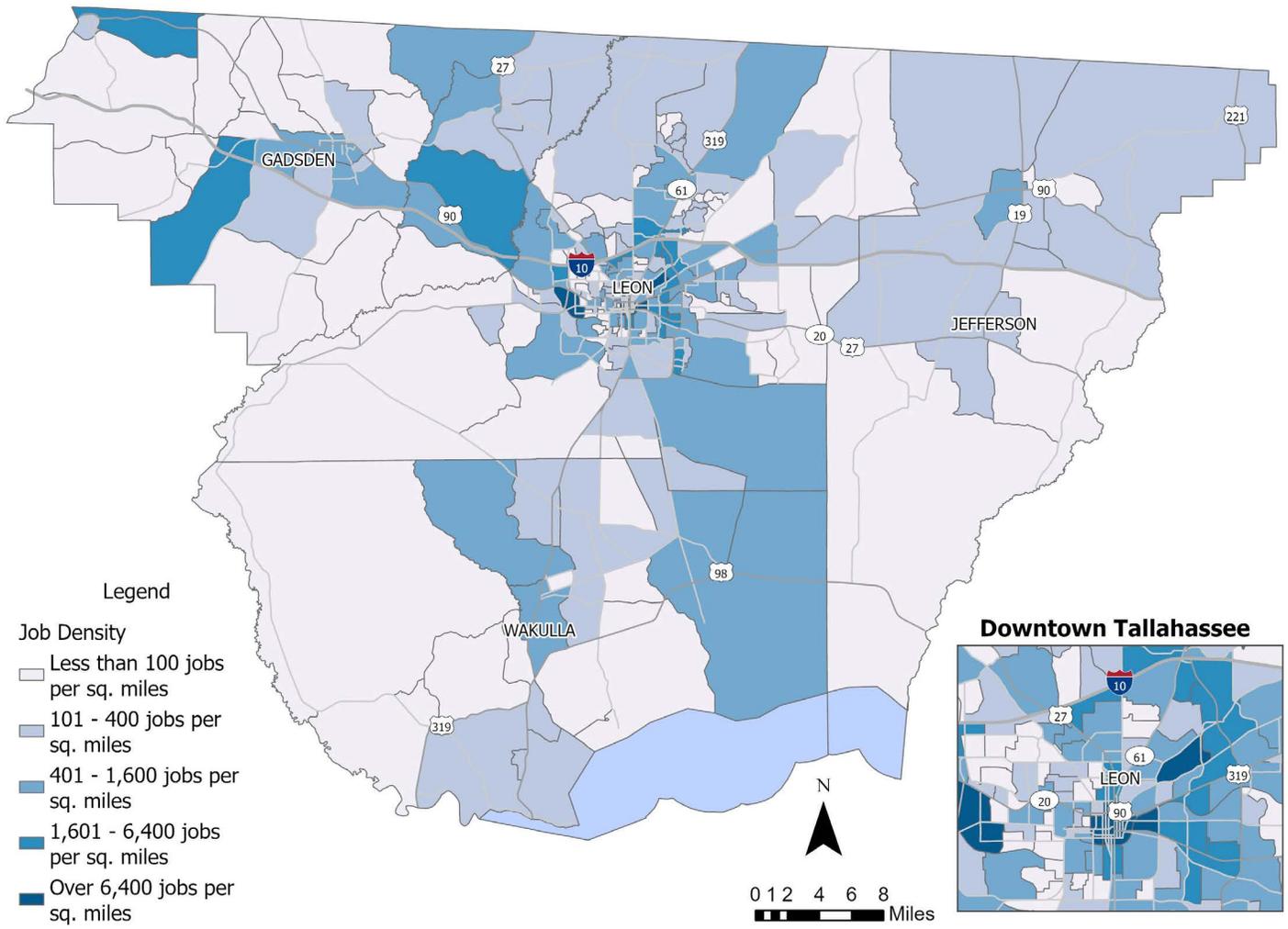
County	Employment		Growth	
	2013	2023	# of jobs	% of increase
Gadsden County	12,693	17,685	4,992	+39%
Jefferson County	2,457	2,916	459	+19%
Leon County	137,810	159,328	21,518	+16%
Wakulla County	5,057	6,403	1,346	+27%
Capital Region	158,017	186,332	28,315	+18%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Census Data

State government agencies located in Tallahassee make up the largest share of employment in the region. The universities are the second largest employers but still fall under the larger category of state employers. Some of the largest private employers in the region include Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare, Publix Super Markets, HCA Florida Capital Hospital, Walmart/Sam’s Club, Amazon and Trulieve.

Figure 2-3 displays job densities throughout the region. Florida State Hospital, Trulieve, and trucking depots account for most of the job density in Gadsden County. Neither Jefferson nor Wakulla counties have census tracts with job density comparable to the rest of the region.

Figure 2-3. Employment Density



Future Population and Employment Growth

As the Capital Region looks toward 2050, its growth trajectory is defined by a shift from a government-centric state capital to a diversified regional hub. By 2050, the region is projected to evolve into a more integrated metropolitan area, with Leon County reaching a population of approximately 382,600 residents. The region is entering a phase of steady, managed expansion. While Leon County remains the primary engine, the surrounding counties are increasingly absorbing the “spillover” as bedroom communities. **Table 2-3** reports the expected growth in population, using a base year of 2020 for consistency with the data source.

Table 2-3. Expected Population and Employment in 2050 by County

County	2050 Population	Population Growth	2050 Employment	Employment Growth
Gadsden County	46,100	4%	24,911	41%
Jefferson County	14,913	-6%	6,477	122%
Leon County	382,643	27%	270,371	70%
Wakulla County	43,532	17%	15,642	144%
Capital Region	487,188	23%	317,401	70%

Figure 2-4 and **Figure 2-5** depict expected population and employment growth in the region between 2020 and 2050. Population growth is concentrated in Leon and Wakulla counties, while employment growth is more dispersed, with pockets of concentrated growth in Crawfordville, Havana, Tallahassee and Monticello.

Another significant change through 2050 will be the region’s economic diversification. Government employment is projected to contract by approximately 3.7% in relative share by 2050 as state agencies automate more functions. Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality (OEV) aims to have the private sector account for over 70% of the local economy by 2050.

Figure 2-4. Expected Population Growth 2020-2050

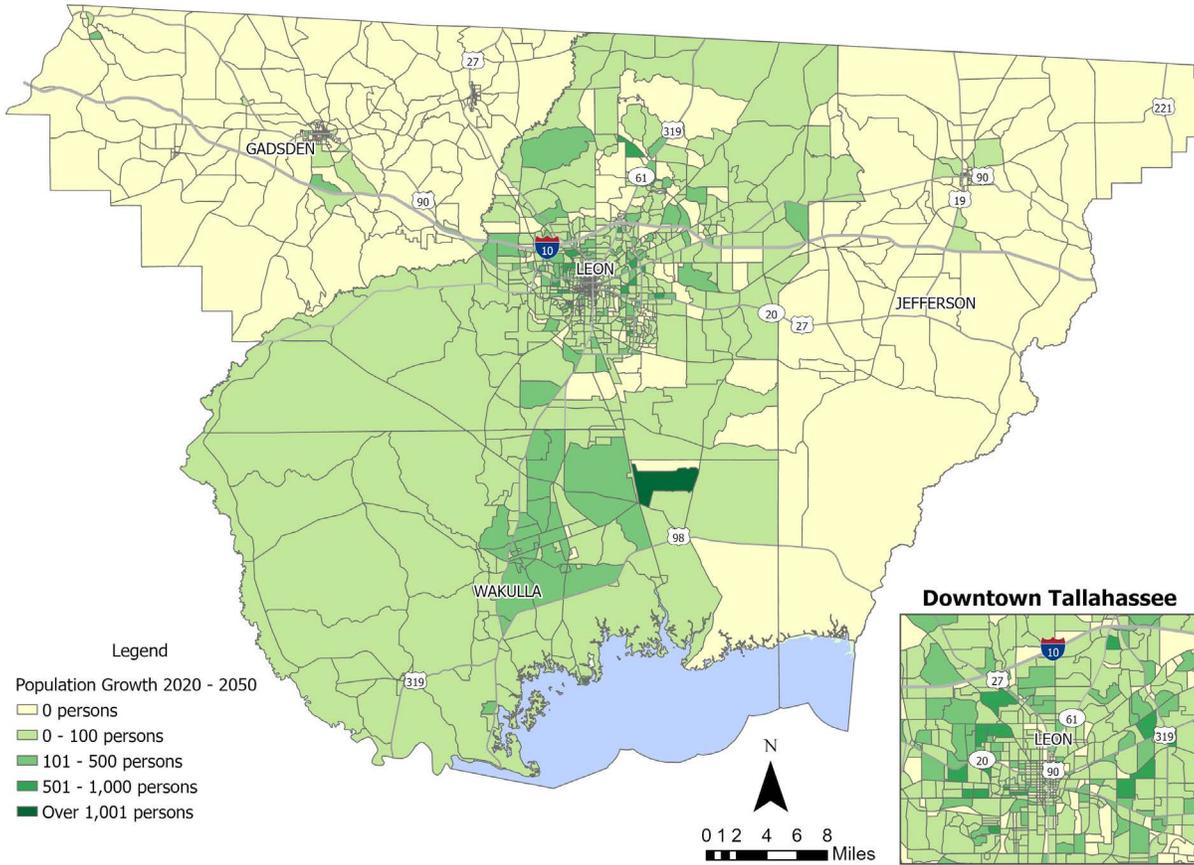
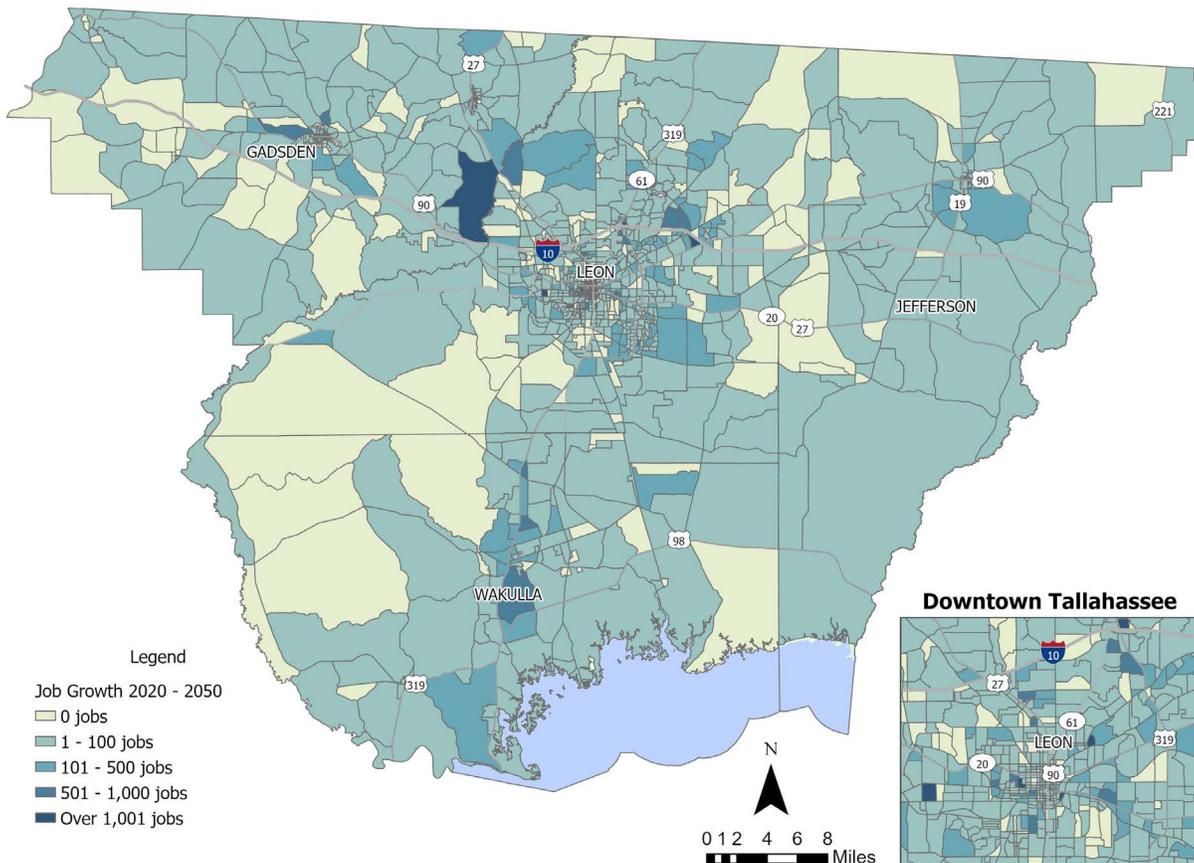


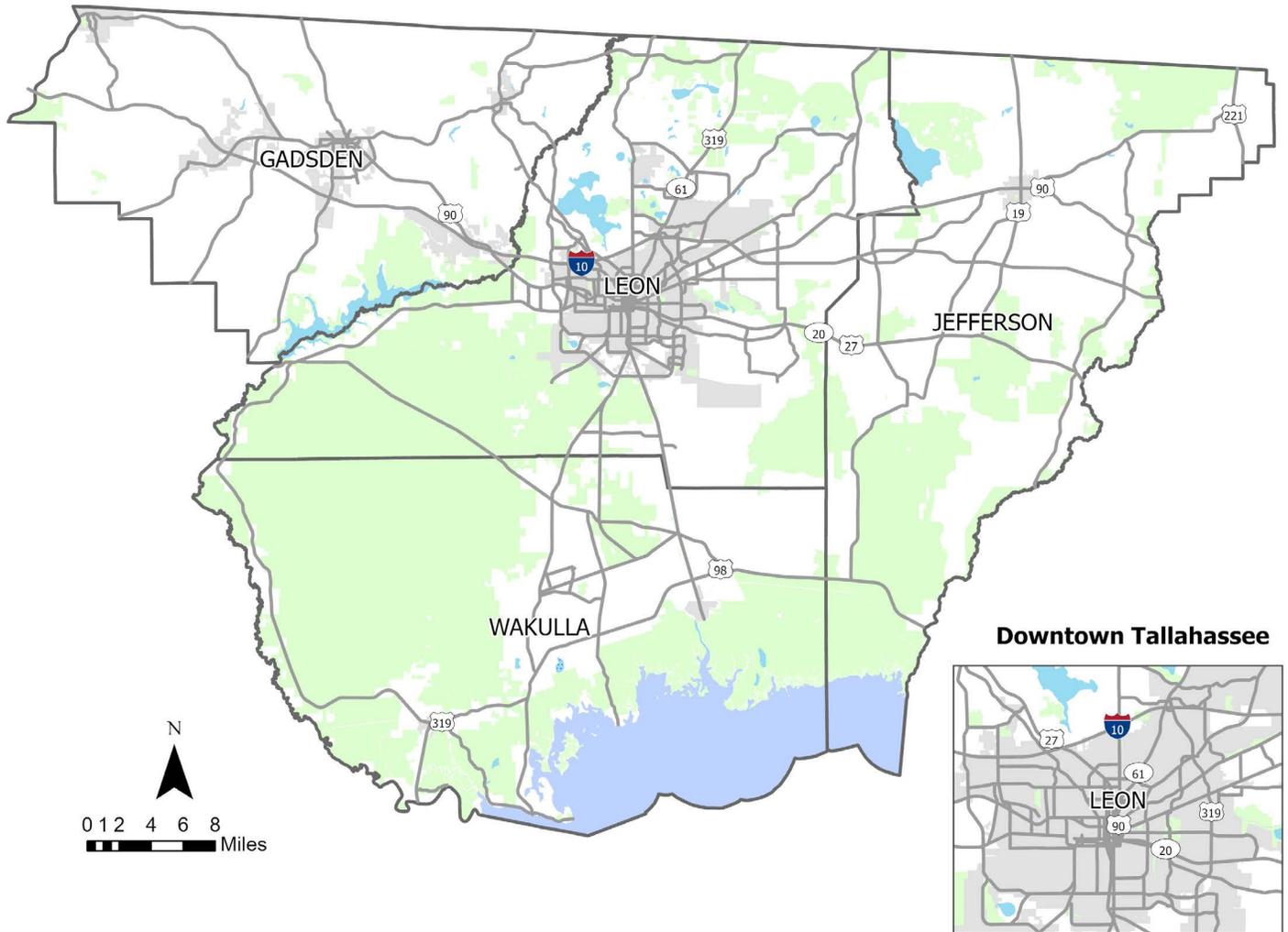
Figure 2-5. Expected Employment Growth 2020-2050



Transportation Network

The Capital Region is served by a comprehensive transportation network of roadways, public transit services, freight railroads, sidewalks, bike lanes, an international airport and two smaller general aviation airports. The roadway network that is the focus of the RMP is limited to facilities in the region that are eligible for federal funding, which is composed of 953 centerline miles of roadways (see **Figure 2-6**).

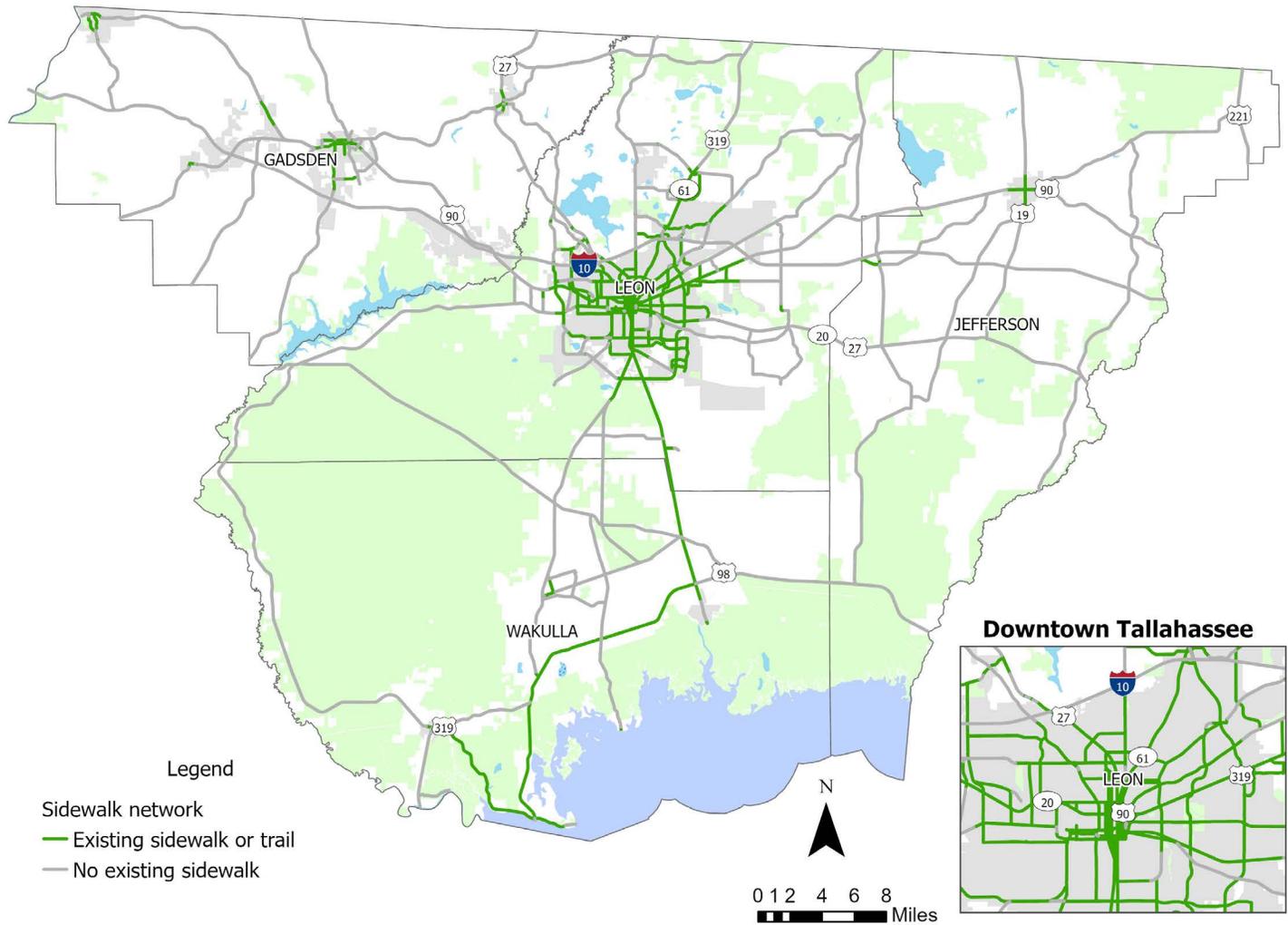
Figure 2-6. Federal Aid Eligible Roadway Network



Sidewalk Network

The presence of sidewalks along roadways allows for safe and comfortable pedestrian conditions and provides mobility options. Most of the urban areas within the 4 counties have adequate sidewalk coverage. However, in some cases coverage includes roadways where sidewalks only exist on one side of the road. In Wakulla County there is minimal sidewalk coverage, as seen in **Figure 2-7**. The City of Tallahassee, Blueprint 2020 and other agencies in the region continue to work towards improving connectivity through linking sidewalks in residential areas to pedestrian attractors such as transit, schools, and parks.

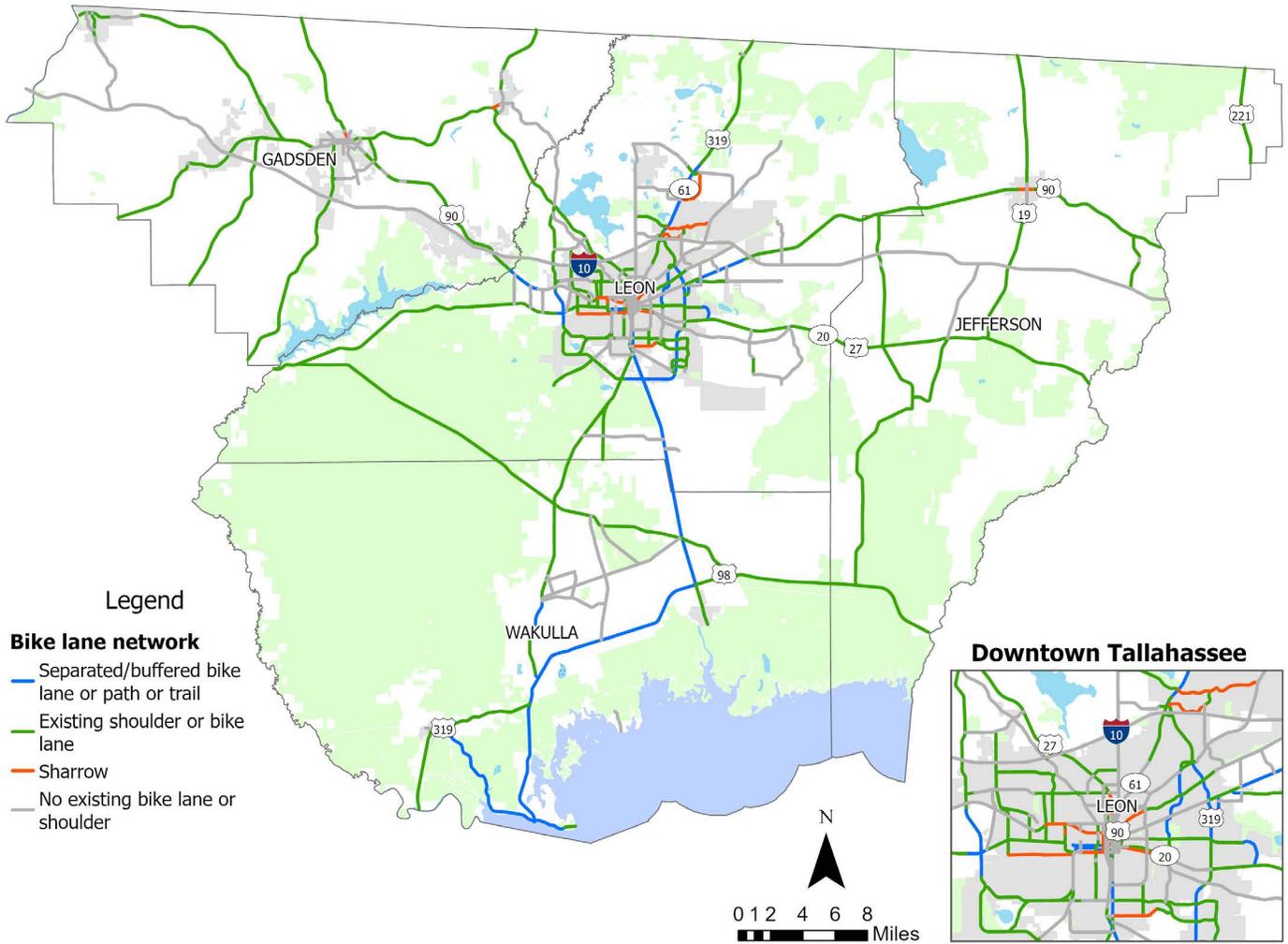
Figure 2-7. Sidewalk Network



Bicycle Network

Bicycle facility coverage in the Capital Region has transitioned from a disjointed system of on-street bike lanes to a robust, interconnected network of protected lanes and regional greenways. There are over 190 miles of dedicated bicycle infrastructure in the region. The current network is categorized by comfort levels, ranging from protected, high-comfort trails for families to on-street lanes for experienced commuters. Bike facility coverage is displayed in **Figure 2-8**. The City of Tallahassee is actively working towards becoming a “15-minute city” where every resident is within a 1.5-mile bike ride of a major trail or protected lane.

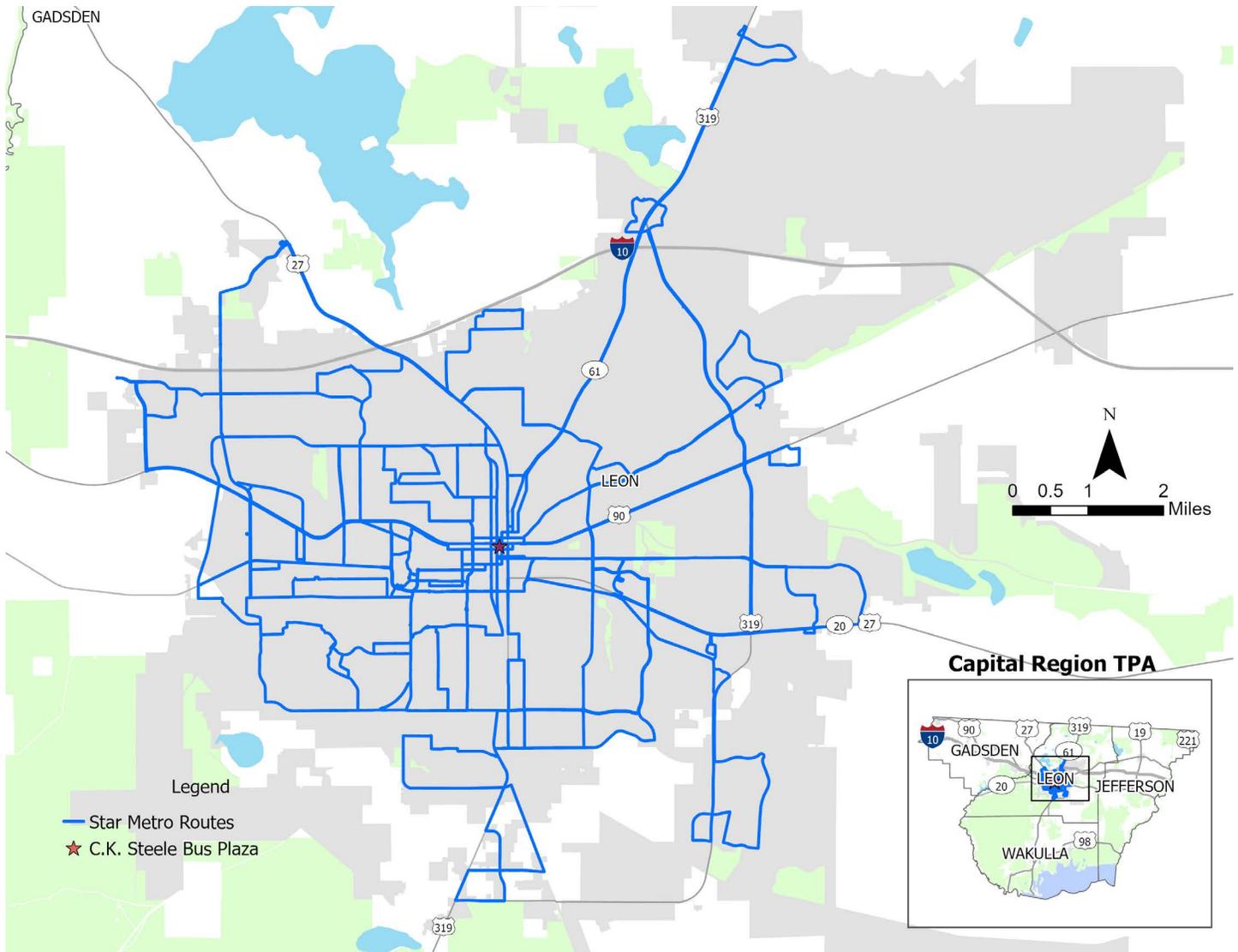
Figure 2-8. Bicycle Network



Public Transit Network

Public transit in the Capital Region is currently in a state of modernization, shifting from a centralized hub-and-spoke model to a more decentralized and technologically integrated network. Most bus routes still converge at the C.K. Steele Bus Plaza downtown. However, the system is transitioning to a multi-hub model with the construction of the Southside Transit Center. **Figure 2-9** displays StarMetro's route coverage. The system is defined by a mix of fixed-route buses, specialized university shuttles, and a new "Choice-based" pilot for on demand service. Connectivity beyond Leon County is primarily managed through partnerships with Big Bend Transit and Wakulla Transportation.

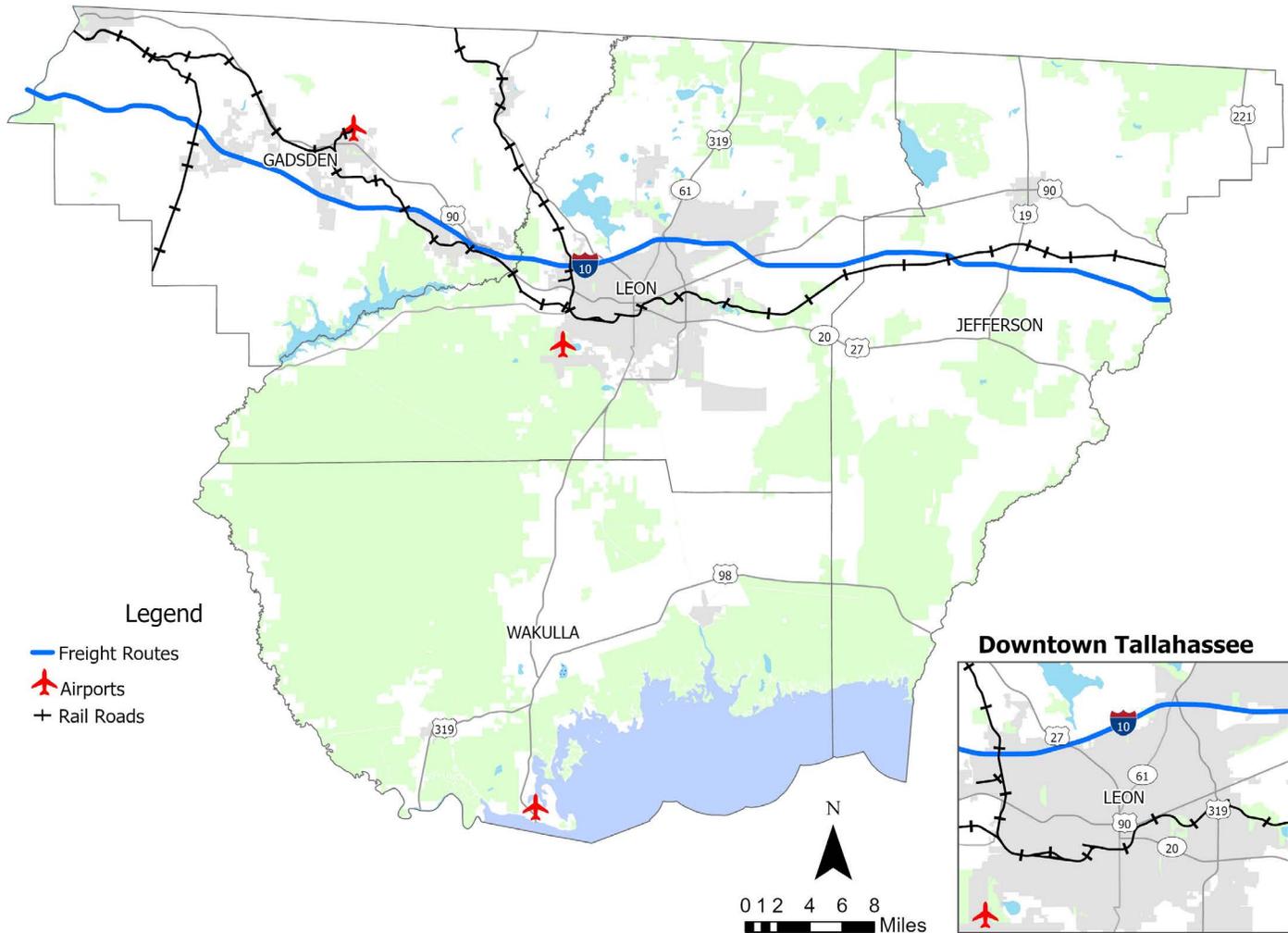
Figure 2-9. Public Transit Routes



Freight Network

The Capital Region's freight connectivity is built on a multimodal framework with an interstate, Class I railroads, and expanding air-cargo facilities. Freight movement in the region is shifting from pass-through to a global "International Port of Entry." Interstate 10 is the region's primary freight artery, carrying approximately 8,000 heavy trucks per day. It links the region directly to the major ports of Jacksonville (to the east) and Mobile/New Orleans Interstate 10 (I-10). The region is served by a CSX Class I rail line that runs parallel to the I-10 corridor and is used primarily for bulk commodities and heavy manufacturing components. **Figure 2-10** maps the freight network as well as the airports in the region.

Figure 2-10. Air, Rail, and Highway Freight Routes



Aviation

Tallahassee International Airport (TLH) is in the final stages of constructing an International Processing Facility to handle international cargo directly, including a U.S. Customs and Border Protection-approved port of entry. In 2024 TLH processed over 19 million pounds of air cargo. The city's strategic plan aims to process 22 million pounds of cargo annually by the end of 2026.

In 2024 TLH had 469,300 plane boardings which represents a 13 percent increase from the year prior. That year flights from 4 commercial airlines connected directly to Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Tampa, and Washington D.C. **Figure 2-11** and **Figure 2-12** display passenger boardings and freight tonnage moving through TLH over the eight year period between 2017 and 2024, respectively.

Figure 2-11. Historical Passenger Travel at Tallahassee International Airport

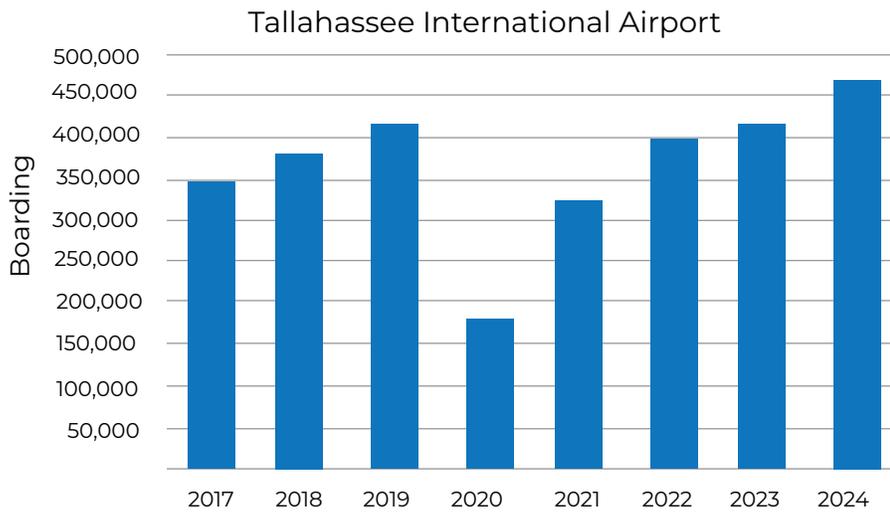
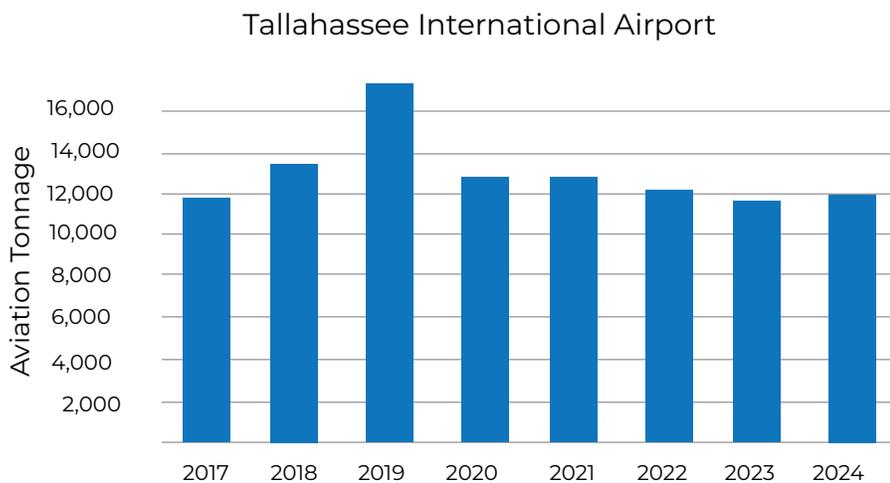


Figure 2-12. Historical Freight Tonnage at Tallahassee International Airport



Mobility

Mobility in the Capital Region is served primarily by the roadway network. Interstate 10 facilitates east/west interregional travel, functioning as a connector for trips moving into or out of the region. Roadways serving the majority of travel within the region include US 319 in northeast Leon County, Tallahassee, and in Wakulla County; US 27 facilitating commuter trips from points east and northwest of Tallahassee; and US 90 providing the majority of east/west mobility within the region. Other components of the infrastructure, including public transit, sidewalks, and bike facilities serve primarily localized travel in Tallahassee and other urban centers in the region. The greenways connecting Leon and Wakulla counties provide both recreational and mobility options for regional travel.

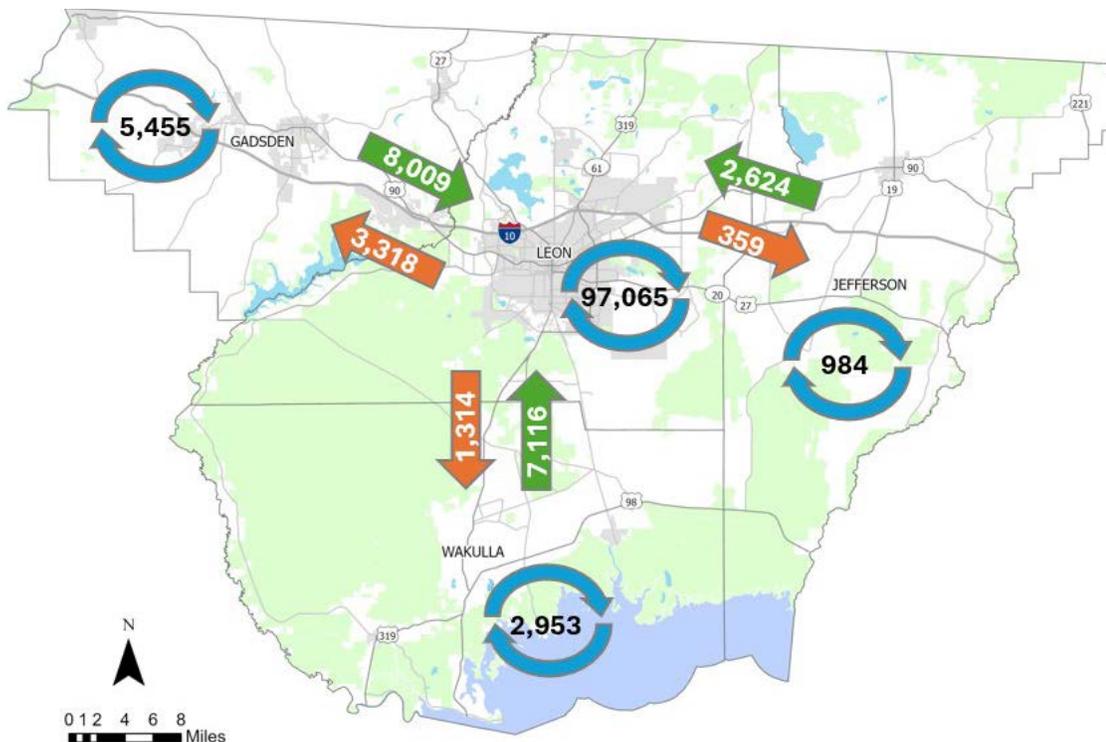
Where People Live and Where They Work

Leon County remains the primary trip generator and trip attractor for the region while the surrounding counties can be characterized as “bedroom communities” composed primarily of residential land use. This creates a massive daily migration into Leon, putting immense pressure on the US 319, US 90 and other regional corridors. Jefferson County has the most significant imbalance where 73 percent of residents travel to surrounding counties for their daily work commutes. **Figure 2-13** illustrates the work commute patterns between Leon County and the surrounding counties.

Within Leon County, the association between where people live and where they work can be characterized as a “Hub and Spoke” model. Most high-value employment is concentrated in a dense central core, while residential populations have increasingly “sprawled” into the northeast part of the county and into the neighboring rural counties.

Tallahassee’s employment is geographically compact. The majority of the region’s jobs are located within a 5-mile radius of the Florida State Capitol building. This encompasses the state government offices including those downtown and in Southwood. The region’s largest private sector employers – healthcare and the universities, including Innovation Park – are also located within the 5-mile radius.

Figure 2-13. Commuter Travel Patterns



How People Get to Work

The primary mode of travel used by people in the Capital Region to get to work is characterized by those driving alone in an automobile, representing almost 79 percent of work commutes in the region. Those who carpool represent the second largest group, accounting for 12 percent of travel, while most of the remaining nine percent of commuters work from home, with a little more than two percent using alternate modes of travel. **Figure 2-14** illustrates regional mode shares for work commuters. **Table 2-4** outlines mode shares by county, revealing similarities, as well as some meaningful differences tied to geography, infrastructure, and socioeconomic characteristics. In Wakulla County, for example, the share of people who work from home is double the regionwide share. All four counties are dominated by drive alone mode share, reflecting a car-centric transportation environment characterized by dispersed land use, limited transit service, and a strong cultural preference for personal vehicles.

Figure 2-14. Regional Mode Share

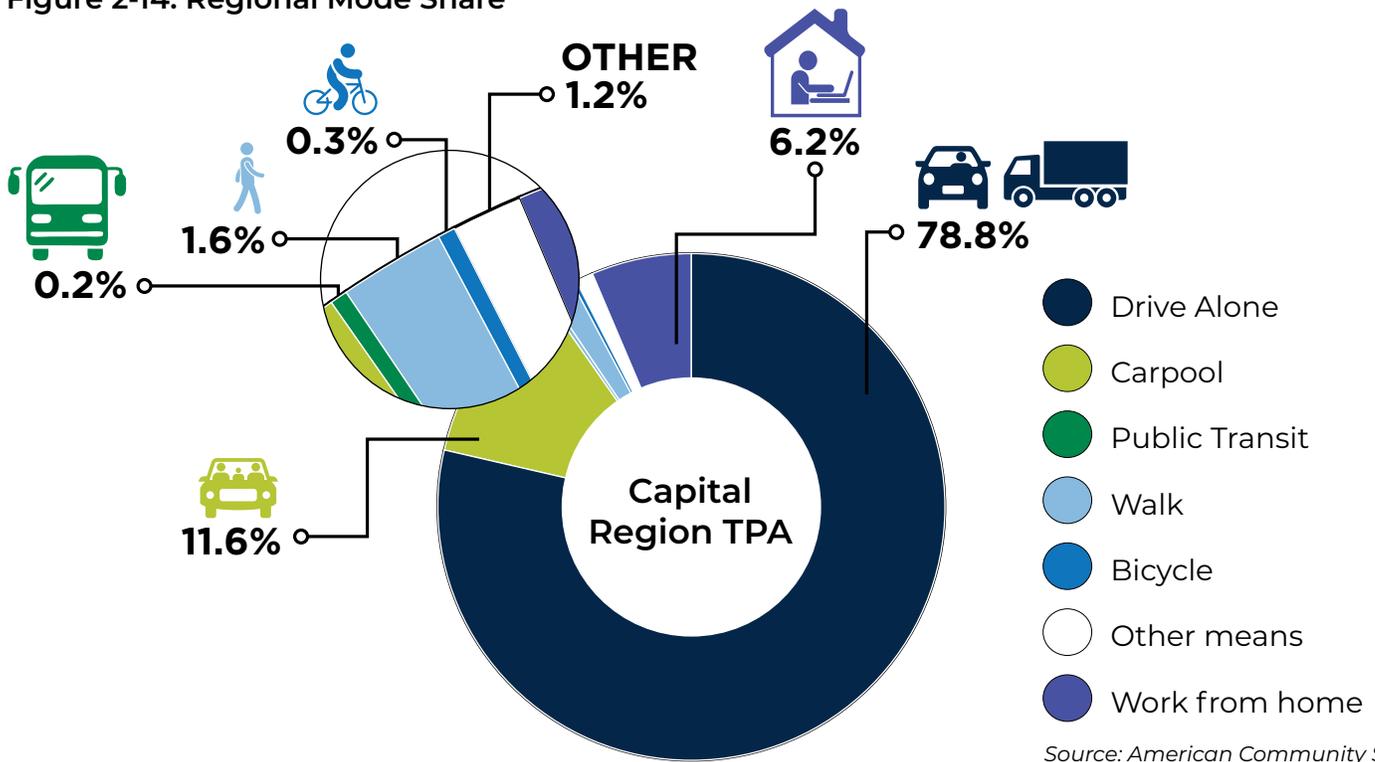


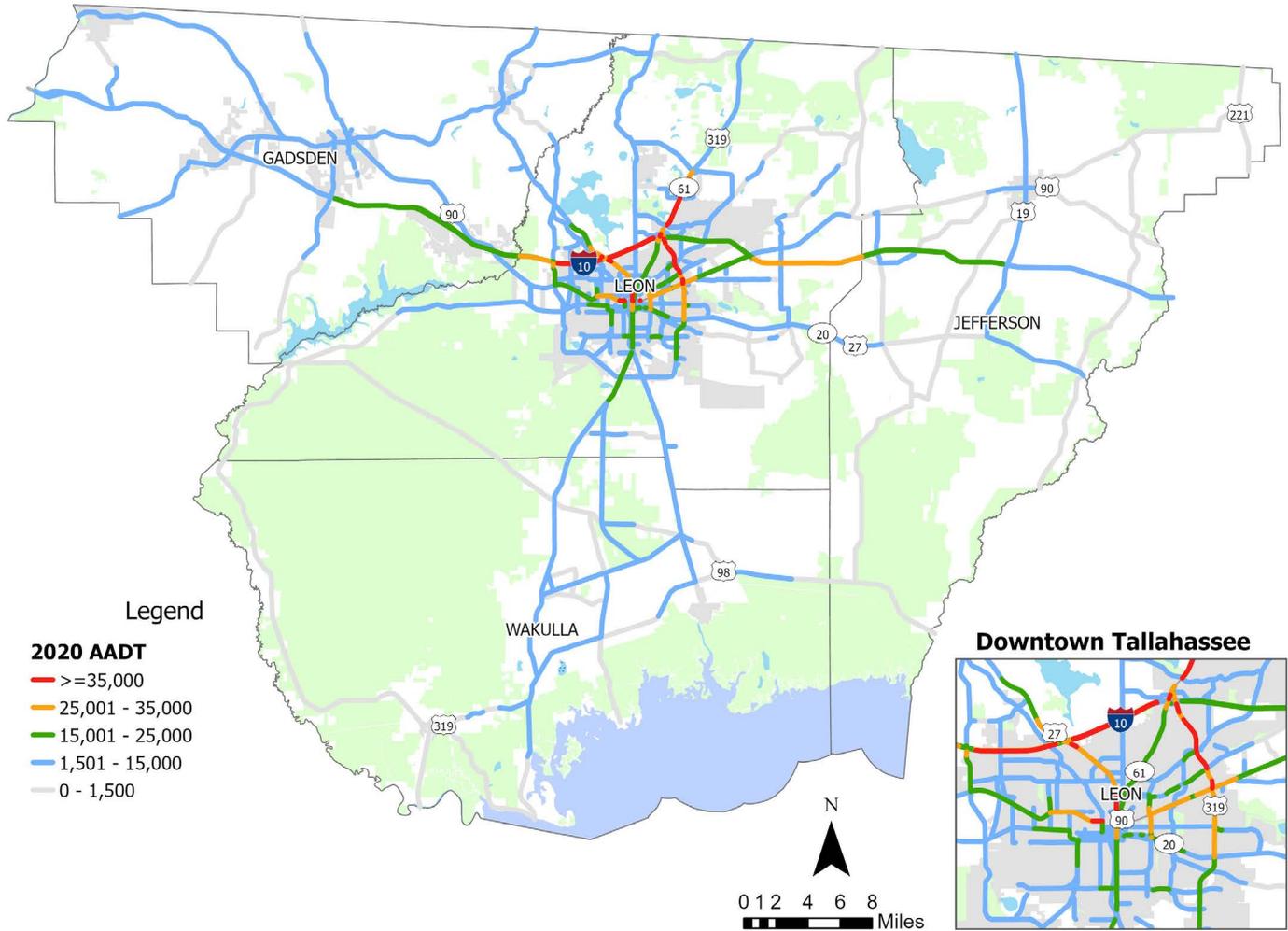
Table 2-4. Mode Shares by County

Regions	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Transit	Walk	Bicycle	Other means	Work from Home
Gadsden	81.1%	8.5%	0.5%	1.4%	0.0%	0.3%	8.2%
Leon	78.8%	11.6%	0.2%	1.6%	0.3%	1.2%	6.2%
Wakulla	73.9%	8.0%	1.6%	2.3%	0.5%	1.0%	12.8%
Jefferson	82.7%	8.9%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	1.0%	7.0%
Regionwide	78.8%	11.6%	0.2%	1.6%	0.3%	1.2%	6.2%

Traffic Characteristics

Traffic in the region is heaviest in Tallahassee and on regional roadways connecting the region. **Figure 2-15** displays 2025 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for the roadway network in the Capital Region. Interstate 10 carries the most traffic. Of the non-interstate roadways, Capital Circle NE has the highest AADT (58,000), followed by Thomasville Road (55,500), N. Monroe Street (40,500) and Tennessee Street (33,500).

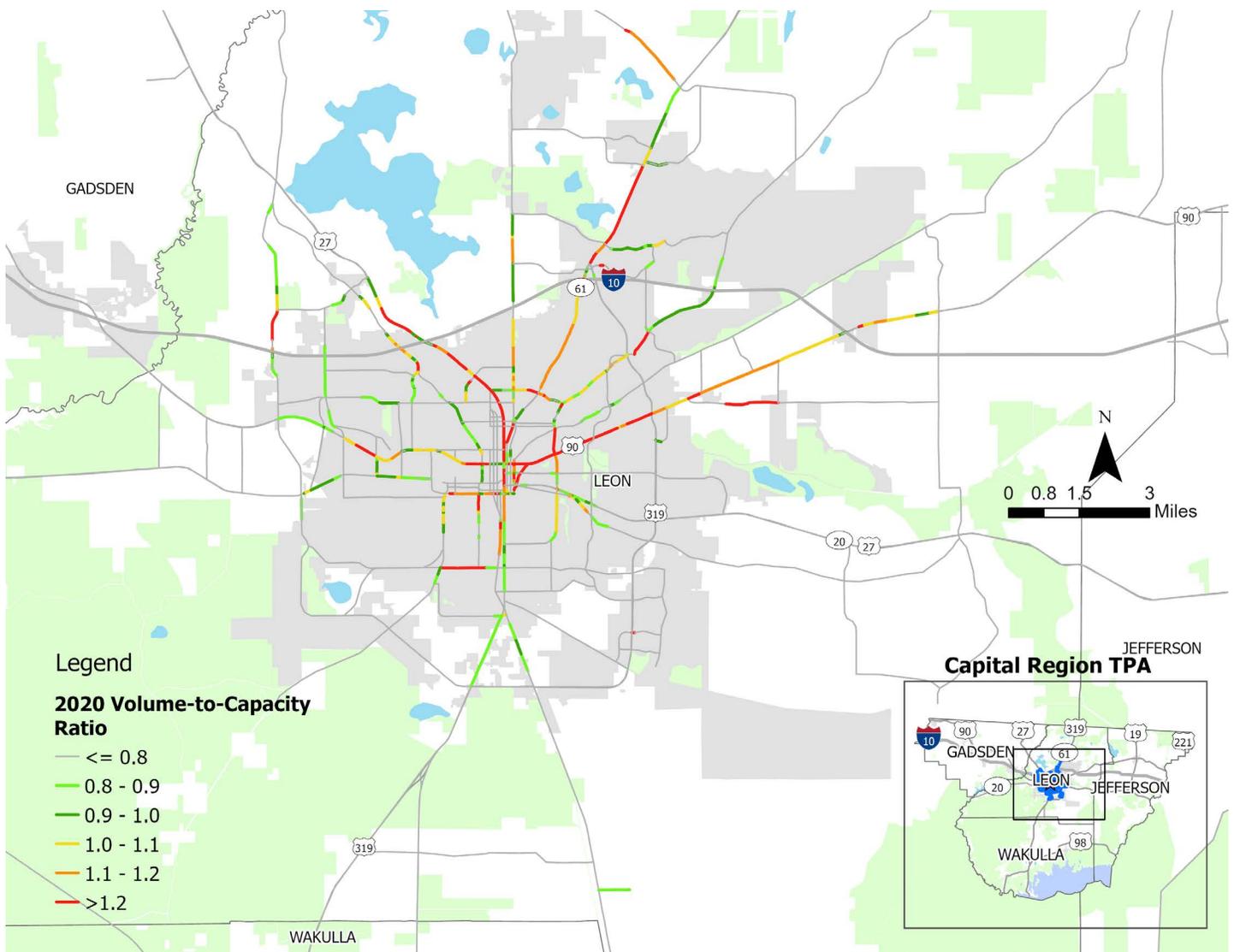
Figure 2-15. Average Daily Traffic



Traffic congestion in the region - measured as the ratio of traffic volume to roadway capacity - is limited primarily to roadways in Leon County, specifically in Tallahassee. Volume to Capacity (V/C) ratios greater than 1.0 suggest that there is more traffic on the roadway than its capacity. The V/C data illustrated in **Figure 2-16** for federal aid eligible roadways in the region were sourced from the 2020 base year scenario of the Northwest Florida Regional Planning Model (NWFRPM). Roadways experiencing exceedingly high V/C ratios in the model simulation include:

- **Monroe St (US 27)** – Primary north/south facility connecting northwest Leon County and Wakulla County to Tallahassee.
- **Tennessee St (US 90)** – Primary east/west facility connecting Gadsden and Jefferson counties to Tallahassee.
- **Orange Ave (SR 373) between Springhill Rd and Monroe St** – east/west facility connecting Capital Circle, SW to Monroe St.
- **Thomasville Rd north of I-10** – Primary north/south facility connecting commuters from northeast Leon County to Tallahassee.

Figure 2-16. Traffic Congestion



Safety

In addition to traffic, one of the most important indicators of a high-quality transportation system is its safety. There were 52,093 crashes on Capital Region roadways in the five-year period between 2019 and 2023. Leon County has the highest number of crashes, which is to be expected, as the highest levels of traffic also occur in Leon County. With 41,869 total crashes, Leon County accounts for 80 percent of the region’s total crashes. Despite the total number of crashes, Leon County has lower rates for impaired (under 2 percent) and distracted (11 percent) drivers, but the highest pedestrian/bicyclist rate of crashes (over 2 percent).

Wakulla County shows the highest rates for impaired driving (5 percent), teen driver crashes (18 percent), and crashes for persons 65 and older (18 percent). Gadsden has the highest distracted driving rate (16 percent). **Table 2-5** provides more details on the crash types by county.

Table 2-5. Crashes by Type by County 2019-2023

Regions	Total	Impaired Driving	Distracted Driving	Crashes Involving Teen Driver	Crashes Involving 65+ Aged Driver	Crashes Involving Bicyclist/ Pedestrian	Work from Home
Gadsden	5,243	236	856	511	832	84	8.2%
Jefferson	1,968	69	259	221	322	19	6.2%
Leon	41,869	1,048	4,526	7,496	6,622	1,034	12.8%
Wakulla	3,013	157	491	541	544	39	7.0%
Regionwide	52,093	1,510	6,132	8,769	8,320	1,176	6.2%

Many of the roadways on the western side of Tallahassee experienced the highest crash rates including Mission Road, Pensacola Street, and Jackson Bluff, many involving pedestrians. Hardaway Highway and Providence Road in Gadsden County were some of the rural roads with relatively high crash rates, as well as Crawfordville Highway in Wakulla County. **Figure 2-17** displays historical crash densities for the region during the period between 2019 and 2023.

Figure 2-17. Historical Traffic Crash Densities

