

## Making Progress

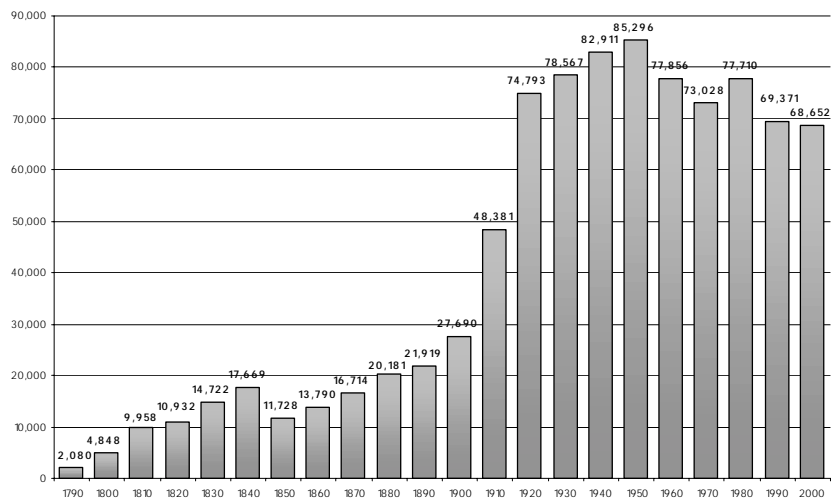
This spring and summer have been dedicated to finalizing the tools to be used in the study of roadway improvements and in developing the future year population and employment forecasts. This work includes:

- Development of a county-wide traffic forecasting model. With the simulation model, the study team will estimate the amount of traffic on major streets in 2025 and evaluate the impacts of planned and other tested roadway improvements.
- Development of a recommended 2025 population estimate for the county.
- Development of a recommended 2025 employment forecast for the county.
- Distribution of the increment of population and employment anticipated in the period from 2000 through 2025 to areas throughout the county. The study team has been working with the Advisory Committee and a group of county representatives organized by the Harrison County Development Authority in determining reasonable locations for residential, commercial and industrial uses.

Currently, BRW Inc., is preparing 2025 daily traffic forecasts for the major corridors in the county. Preliminary forecasts will be presented at public meetings in August 2001.

## Population & Employment Growth Expected

After uninterrupted growth from 1900 to 1950, Harrison County has experienced four decades of population decline. These fluctuations can be attributed in part to the energy crisis and coal boom of the 1970s, the national decline in heavy manufacturing in the 1980s and rural growth in the 1990s. From 1900 to 1920 alone, the county gained 50,000 people and continued to grow until its peak of 85,300 in 1950.



Harrison County Population 1790 - 2000

A more specific analysis of population grouped by age and gender and also considering births, deaths, and migration allows for a more accurate population forecast. The importance of migration can be seen in Census figures that break down population change between 1990 and 1999 into its components. In this time period, Harrison County had more deaths than births resulting in a natural decline in population. This trend is highly influenced by a low county lifetime average birth rate of 1.8 births per woman, relatively few women in prime child bearing ages (12.8% county versus 14.4% nationally), and a relatively older population (16.3% of county residents are over 65 compared to 12.7% nationally). Interestingly, more people moved into the county from 1990 to 2000 than out of the county, resulting in a net domestic migration. (continued page 2)

## Employment Trends

From 1969 to 1999 the number of jobs in the county rose by 10,000 to 41,000. Increases occurred in the service industry, retail trade, federal civilian jobs and state and local jobs, while a decrease occurred in manufacturing. The sharp manufacturing decline ended in 1988 and the sector has been growing or stable for the past 11 years.

County employment has grown far more steadily than population, which means the county must look to the rest of the region for skilled employees. Solutions as to where the employees are coming from may be attributed to:

- Increasing numbers of commuters.
- Previously unemployed county residents going to work.
- County residents previously not participating in the labor force now filling the new jobs.

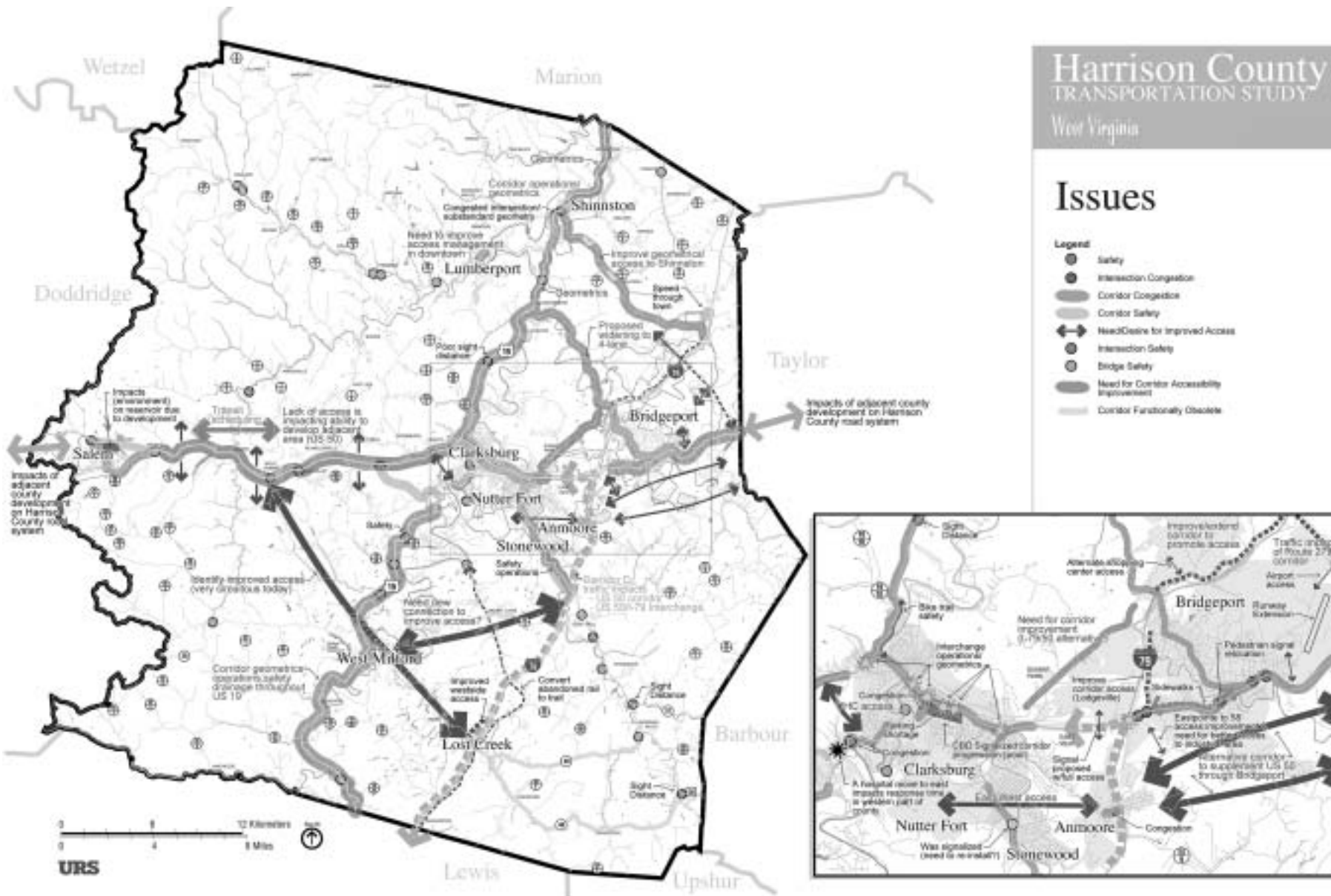
To the extent that such reservoirs of potential employees continue to exist within the county and its region, job growth may not produce commensurate population growth.

## Population Projection

For a projection of future population to be an accurate forecast, the birth, death, and particularly the migration probabilities used in the accounting system must hold into the future.

Five sets of population projections were made and discussed with the Advisory Committee and representatives from the development community. A year 2025 county population range of 71,000 to 77,700 was derived.

The population forecast must be logically consistent with the economic forecast. The underlying data are the time series from 1969 through 1999 from the *Regional Economic Information System* of the



Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce. The projection of total employment for the county is the sum of the projections for the individual job sectors. The five principal sectors include:

- Service
- Retail trade
- Manufacturing
- Transportation & public utilities
- Construction

The analysis has resulted in a county forecast of 55,000 jobs in 2025, a gain of 14,000. This change represents slightly accelerated growth over the past quarter-century—1.1% a year in contrast to 0.9%. The main difference is in private sector growth forecast to be 1.3% compared to 0.5% from 1974-99. Government employment is forecast to grow 0.5%, however, compared to 3.2% in the past quarter century.

The differences are easy to identify: declines in manufacturing and the growth in federal civilian employment are not expected to be repeated.

The study team concluded that the continued growth in employment in the county will likely lead to increased numbers of people moving into the county. These conclusions were drawn from the relatively high percentage of people in the typical working years (16 to 64) that are currently working, the finite number of potential employees from the surrounding region, and unemployment trends in key new sectors. The final conclusions for population and employment change:

- It is anticipated that population in the county will increase from a 2000 Census level of 69,000 to approximately 77,500 by 2025.
- County-wide employment is projected to increase from a 1999 level of 41,100 jobs to approximately 55,000 in 2025.

## Issues Identified

Initial public and staff meetings in the planning process were focused on gathering data on current and emerging transportation system issues throughout the county. In November of 2000, residents gathered at Robert C. Byrd High School and the Salem Recreational Barn to identify specific issues of concern that would be reviewed through the transportation planning process.

Additional meetings with representatives from the community, stakeholders, city/county staff and WVDOT staff provided input on which transportation system issues were of greatest concern.

The core issues identified through the various meetings included congestion along US 50 in Bridgeport and Clarksburg; traffic volume impacts when Corridors D and H are completed; connectivity of high activity areas and growth areas to regional facilities; safety along US 50 between Clarksburg and Salem, especially the bridge north of Salem; congestion along I-79; connectivity of existing trail systems and other alternative modes of transportation, including transit; access to the FBI Center; and alternate access between US 50 and the United Hospital Center.

An Issues Map (left) summarizes the information gathered during the various meetings. The next round of public information meetings will be held on the 1st and 2nd of August, 2001. See back cover for more information.

A multimodal transportation plan sponsored by the West Virginia Department of Transportation. Visit the project web site for additional information and updates:  
[www.harrisontrans.org](http://www.harrisontrans.org)



## Public Meetings Scheduled !

Wednesday August 1, 2001  
Benedum Civic Center  
164 W. Main Street, Bridgeport  
6:30 - 8:30 PM

Thursday August 2, 2001  
Lincoln High School Cafeteria  
Route 19 South, Shinnston  
6:30 - 8:30 PM

## Questions or Comments?

Contact Bill Troe of BRW, Inc., Project Manager for the study, at (402) 334-8182 or via email at [bill\\_troe@urscorp.com](mailto:bill_troe@urscorp.com). Or contact Richard Warner, P.E. at WVDOT at (304) 558-3156 or via email at [rwarners@dot.state.wv.us](mailto:rwarners@dot.state.wv.us).

## Study Schedule

**Summer - Fall 2001**

**MODEL DEVELOPMENT & APPLICATION**

**ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS**

Determine alternative transportation system improvements and costs.

**Fall 2001-Winter 2002**

**DRAFT PLAN REVIEW & ADOPTION**

Prepare draft plan and present for public review and discussion. Refine draft and prepare final plan for adoption.

**HCTrans**  
Harrison County Transportation Study

**UPDATE**

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