



# Center for Metropolitan Studies

Policy Brief  
Volume 1, Winter 2014/2015

## *Innovative Solutions to Regional Issues*

## ANALYZING COMMUTE PATTERNS IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PA

### Executive Summary

This policy brief summarizes information on the location of where people work in Allegheny County and where they live and suggests that the alsoUrbs (municipalities contiguous to the City of Pittsburgh) be given greater representation in transportation planning. It paints an interesting picture of the movement of individuals from home to work and back again. That picture is a complex mosaic of interconnectedness and interdependence further complicated by varying intensity of interest in particular transportation areas and varying impact on residents.

#### In summary:

- Jobs are distributed throughout Allegheny County, but are highly concentrated in the urban core (defined as the City of Pittsburgh and the municipalities that share its border) where 64% are located.
- People live and work in different municipalities. Only 18% of Allegheny County residents work in the same municipality in which they live.
- The alsoUrbs have long been seen as the residence of the workers. Indeed, 34% of all workers live there. What is surprising is that 25% of all jobs in Allegheny County are located in these municipalities.
- Half of the people who are employed in the urban core live in the urban core. Their primary concern is how to get around the urban core.
- Half of the people who are employed in the urban core commute from outside the urban core. Their primary concern

is how to get into, and out of, the urban core.

- Of all workers who live in the urban core, the overwhelming majority work in the urban core.
- Of all workers who live outside the urban core, only a small percentage travel into the urban core.

To address these and other findings, the following policy recommendations are offered:

**Recommendation 1: Policies should be developed to more effectively integrate the alsoUrbs into the economic development activities of the region and Allegheny County.**

**Strategy 1.** Enhance economic development planning for job retention and job creation within the urban core by creating a formal program between the City and alsoUrbs.

**Strategy 2.** Officially recognize the alsoUrbs as an economic engine worthy of developing plans, programs, strategies, and financing mechanisms in support of job creation and expansion.

**Strategy 3.** Allegheny County should play an important role in facilitating and supporting the economic development activities of the alsoUrbs and the City by engaging in a process with the City and alsoUrbs to develop an urban core economic development strategy.

**Recommendation 2: Policies should be developed to increase the role and voice of the alsoUrbs in transportation planning, particularly as it relates to movement into and around the urban core.**

**Strategy 1.** Allegheny County and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) should more explicitly and actively engage the alsoUrbs in their transportation planning and decision-making processes.

**Strategy 2.** Transportation policy should be more explicitly focused

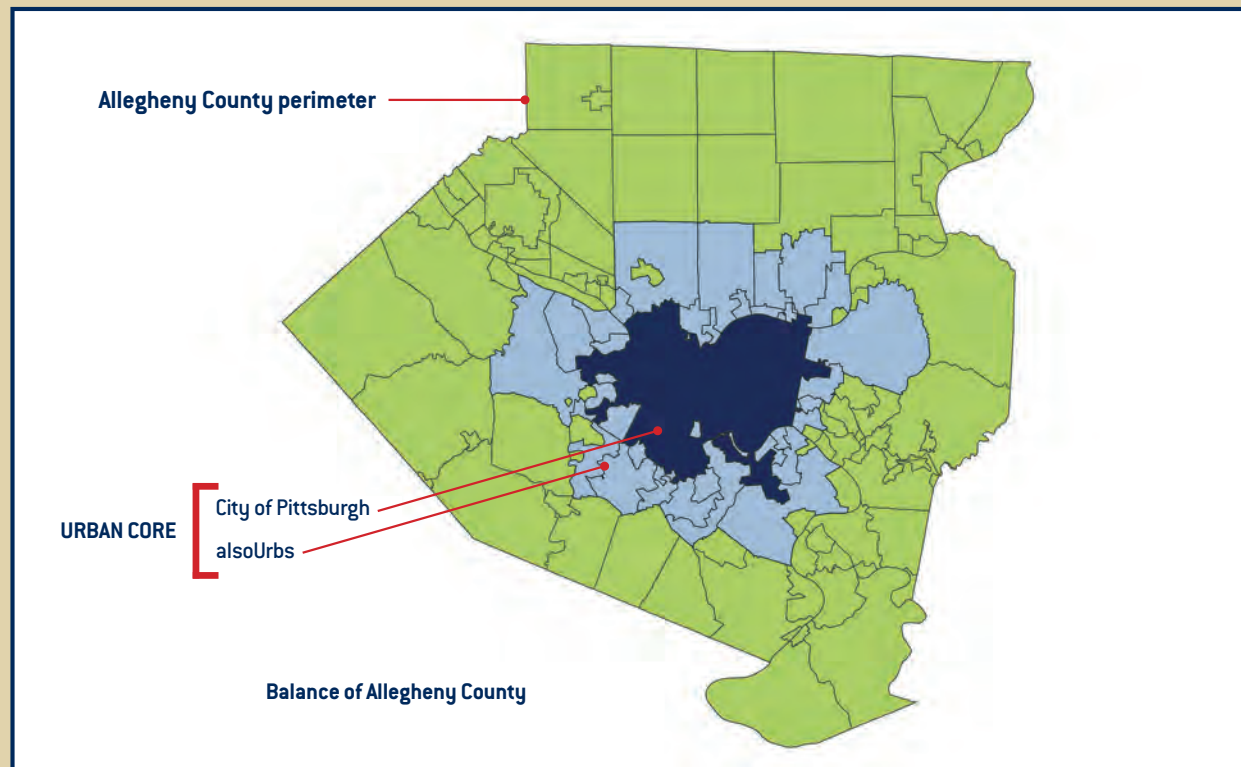
on two principal strategies: a) getting individuals into and out of the urban core and b) getting people around within the urban core. The City of Pittsburgh and the alsoUrbs should identify new and more comprehensive strategies to incorporate commute patterns.

**Strategy 3.** Allegheny County should consider identifying one of its commission members as an official representative of the alsoUrbs.

**Strategy 4.** SPC should consider designating an official alsoUrb representative on its relevant planning committees.

**Strategy 5.** Quarterly meetings between the Port Authority and representatives of the alsoUrbs should be established to allow the alsoUrbs to provide input and insights regarding changes and upgrades to the Port Authority system.

## DEFINING WHERE PEOPLE WORK AND LIVE



### Definitions

For purposes of this brief, the following definitions apply:

1. The City of Pittsburgh is the dark blue area on the map above. The City's population is 305,841 and its land area is 58.3 square miles.
2. The alsoUrbs are the 35 municipalities adjacent to the City of Pittsburgh and they are represented in light blue on the

map. Their combined population is 378,781 and their land area is 135.7 square miles.

3. The Urban Core combines the City of Pittsburgh and the alsoUrbs (the dark and light blue areas on the map above). Together, they have a population of 684,622 and cover 194 square miles.
4. The green portion of the map

represents the 94 municipalities in Allegheny County outside the urban core. Sometimes referred to as the "balance of Allegheny County" they have a combined population of 539,683 and cover 550 square miles.

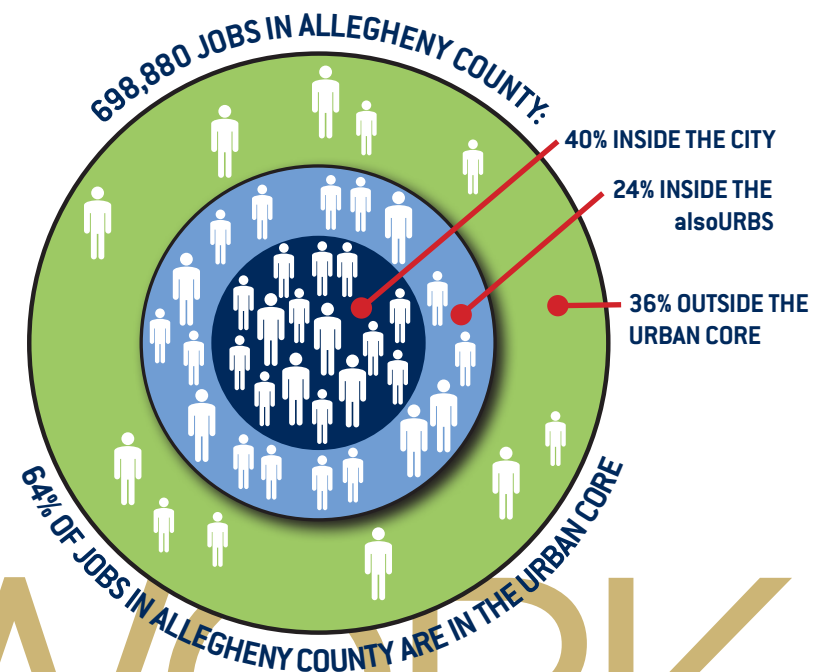
5. The white area on the map represents territory outside of Allegheny County.

## Findings

1. **There are 698,880 jobs in Allegheny County divided into three distinct clusters:**

- 40% are located in the City of Pittsburgh  
4,836 jobs/sq. mile
- 24% are located in the alsoUrbs  
1,229 jobs/sq. mile
- 36% are located in the balance of Allegheny County  
455 jobs/sq. mile

Collectively, the City of Pittsburgh and the alsoUrbs are the primary economic engine for Allegheny County. **More than six of every 10 jobs (64.2%) are located within in the urban core.** The traditional role that the City plays in the location of jobs is not particularly surprising. However, the alsoUrbs, long seen as the residential counterpart to jobs in the City, has never been viewed as an important source of jobs.



2. **The alsoUrbs house a significant number of both individuals and jobs. 33% of the workers and 24% of the jobs in Allegheny County are located in these municipalities.**

3. **People don't work where they live.**

Overall, only 18% of Allegheny County residents live in the same municipality where they work.

4. **Of the 281,921 jobs located in the City, over half (50.4%) are filled by people who live in the urban core.**

- 71,616 (25.4%) are filled by individuals who live in the City
- 70,562 (25.0%) are filled by individuals who live in the alsoUrbs.

This commute-related observation demonstrates an important need for investing in transportation projects that promote connectivity between Pittsburgh and the alsoUrbs.



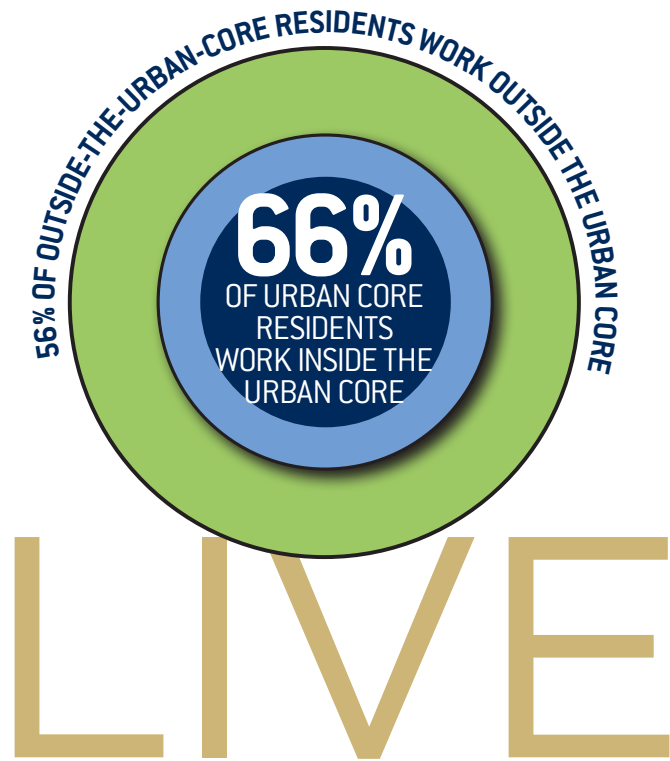
5. **Of the 448,704 jobs located in the urban core almost half (49%) are filled by individuals who live in the urban core.**

The daily commute problem facing half the workers in the urban core (roughly 220,000 workers) is not getting INTO the urban core but moving around WITHIN the urban core. The total jobs within Allegheny County's urban core include the 281,921 jobs in the City of Pittsburgh and the 166,783 jobs in the alsoUrbs.

6. **In Allegheny County, 31% of the jobs are filled by individuals who live outside of Allegheny County. Less than one in three of those individuals work in the City, and close to half do not work in the urban core. The majority do not travel far into Allegheny County.**

Only 17,911 people living outside of Allegheny County work in the City of Pittsburgh and only 19,026 work in the alsoUrbs. But on the other hand, 56,486 people living outside, yet employed inside Allegheny County, work in Allegheny County's outer suburbs. It is much less common for people living outside Allegheny County to commute into Allegheny County's urban core.

Continued...



7. Allegheny County residents who live in the urban core are very likely to work in the urban core. Close to three of every four Pittsburgh residents (72%) work in the City or the alsoUrbs. Of individuals who live in the alsoUrbs, 62% work in either the City or the alsoUrbs.

91,507 Pittsburgh residents work in Allegheny County's urban core: 71,656 in Pittsburgh and 19,851 in the alsoUrbs. Likewise, 129,984 residents of Allegheny County's alsoUrbs work in the urban core: 70,562 in Pittsburgh, 59,422 in the alsoUrbs.

8. Allegheny County residents who live outside the urban core are likely (56%) to work outside of the urban core.

Only 114,700 people living in the balance of Allegheny County (Allegheny County's outer suburbs) work in

the county's urban core: 71,336 in the City of Pittsburgh, and 43,364 in the alsoUrbs. However, a greater percentage of people living in the balance of Allegheny County (44%) work in the county's urban core, than work in either other suburbs in the balance of Allegheny County (34%) or in locations outside of Allegheny County (21.7%). Looking at the data from this perspective, it can be observed that Allegheny County's urban core and Allegheny County's outer suburbs are economically interdependent to a considerable degree.

On the other hand, if we look at the City of Pittsburgh and the alsoUrbs individually, and not combined together as the urban core, it would appear that most people (89,483) living in Allegheny County's outer suburbs, and employed within the county, work within Allegheny County's suburbs.

Therefore, looking at this data from both perspectives, it is observed that Allegheny County's urban core has significant economic impact within the balance of the county, as over 110,000 people living in the balance of Allegheny County work there. Nonetheless, in the balance of Allegheny County, the outer suburbs have significant economic impact as well.

9. Westmoreland, Washington, Butler, and Beaver Counties collectively account for 65% of the residency of individuals who work in Allegheny County but live elsewhere.

Of the 215,414 people who work in Allegheny County but live elsewhere, a majority of people (141,612) live in counties directly bordering Allegheny County: 55,697 in Westmoreland County (26%), 32,812 in Washington County (15%), 26,738 in Butler County (12%), and 26,365 in Beaver County (12%). These people may live in sections of these counties that are close to the Allegheny County border, and work within outer Allegheny County suburbs.

The other 35% of people working in Allegheny County, but living elsewhere, reside in a variety of places, including counties across Pennsylvania, as well as counties in neighboring states. Though it cannot be determined with certainty, this population likely includes people who live in these other counties, but work from home for companies in Allegheny County, and students who attend college in Allegheny County, but live elsewhere.

### Commentary

Two distinct observations can be drawn from these findings when examined as a whole.

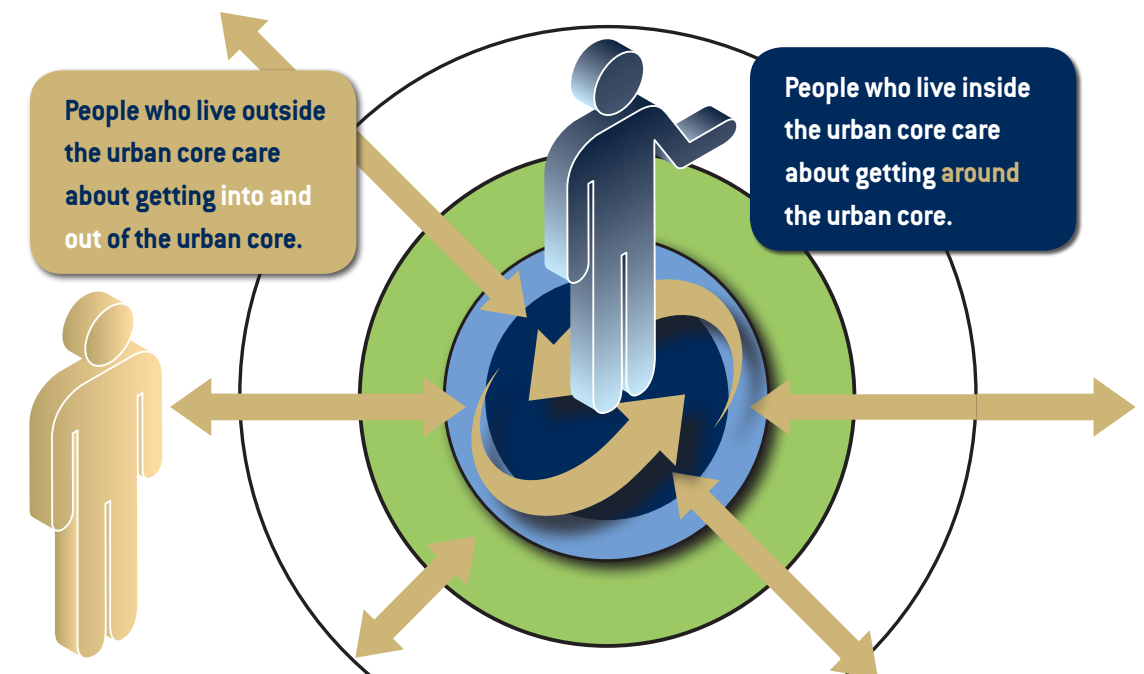
First is the recognition of the vast number of jobs that are located in the alsoUrbs. Long seen as the bedroom of Pittsburgh, the place where residents went home to sleep after completing their jobs in the City, the alsoUrbs have become an important employment provider. Despite that fact, few public policies, and no economic development strategies, are currently in place that focus on potential job development in, and the enhancement of the economic strength of the alsoUrbs. *These findings point strongly to the need to recognize the alsoUrbs as one of our region's vital economic engines, and to develop a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the economies of these municipalities.*

The second observation takes into consideration the different perspectives of individuals who live in the urban core, compared to those who live outside. A high percentage of people who live in the urban core also work in the urban core. As a result, to those people, transportation into and out of the urban core holds less importance than transportation within

the urban core. The majority of individuals who live outside the urban core don't work in the urban core. As such, transportation into and out of the urban core is not a high priority issue for them. But, for the minority of these residents who do work in the urban core, transportation into and out of the core is vitally important, and because the commute is often longer, the importance takes on a greater intensity. Though this intensity is great, it is a minority of all workers (about one in three) that commute into Allegheny County.

As a percentage of the total relevant populations affected, transportation into and within the urban core is highest for those who live in the urban core (70%) compared to those who live in the balance of Allegheny County (less than 50%) compared to those who commute into Allegheny County to work (less than 33%).

**In recognition of these differing impacts on populations, it is recommended that the voice of the urban core be given greater weight in transportation policy making.**



# TRANSPORTATION



## Recommendation #1

**Policies should be developed to more effectively integrate the alsoUrbs into the economic development activities of the region and Allegheny County.**



**Strategy 1: Enhance economic development planning for job retention and job creation within the urban core by creating a formal program between the City and alsoUrbs.**

Economic development at this time is done separately – with the City utilizing

its planning department and Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the balance of the County utilizing Allegheny County Economic Development (ACED) which has a history of focusing on certain corridors of development. The alsoUrbs, along with the community development corporations (CDCs) operating in their communities should be afforded a seat at the planning table, one in which the focus of federal funding is not just within the City limits, but where development will benefit the entire region.

**Strategy 2: Officially recognize the alsoUrbs as an economic engine worthy of developing plans, programs, strategies, and financing mechanisms in support of job creation and expansion.**

As businesses locate to our region, a special focus should be given to the alsoUrb communities, promoting infill development over sprawl. Partnerships with organizations like the URA, Pittsburgh Regional Alliance and ACED should be developed and coordinated with alsoUrb CDC organizations to identify and promote properties that are available for infill development in the urban core.

**Strategy 3: Allegheny County should play an important role in facilitating and supporting the economic development activities of the alsoUrbs and the City by engaging in a process with the City and alsoUrbs to develop an urban core economic development strategy.**

## Recommendation #2

**Policies should be developed to increase the role and voice of the alsoUrbs in transportation planning, particularly as it relates to movement into and around the urban core.**

**Strategy 1: Allegheny County and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) should more explicitly and actively engage the alsoUrbs in their transportation planning and decision-making processes.**

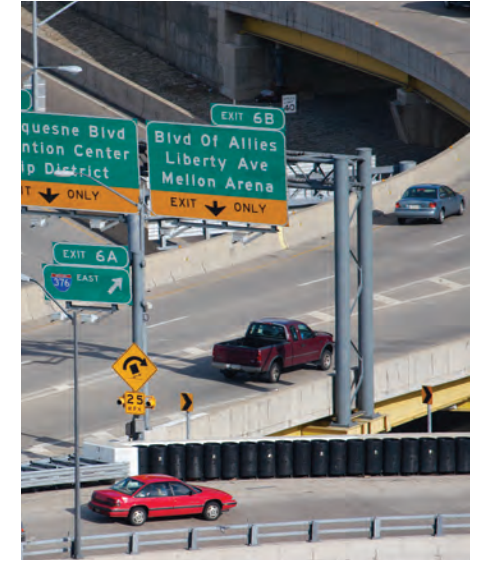
**Strategy 2: Transportation policy should be more explicitly focused on two principle strategies: a) getting individuals into and out of the urban core; and b) getting people around within the urban core. The City of Pittsburgh and the alsoUrbs should identify new and more comprehensive strategies to incorporate commute patterns.**

**Strategy 3: Allegheny County should consider identifying one of its commission members as an official representative of the alsoUrbs.**

The purpose of this seat would be to represent the interests of the residents and business owners of the alsoUrbs. People make housing decisions based on a variety of lifestyle factors including length of commute. Activities like ramp metering in inner ring municipalities to allow for unrestricted flow of traffic from outer suburbs devalues property in the alsoUrbs.

**Strategy 4: SPC should consider designating an official alsoUrb representative on its relevant planning committees.**

**Strategy 5: Quarterly meetings between the Port Authority and representatives of the alsoUrbs should be established to allow the alsoUrbs to provide input and insights regarding changes and upgrades to the Port Authority system.**



As opportunities like transit oriented development (TOD) are realized, the only way the system can best service the residents of our region is to ensure that they have input regarding needs. At the same time, to make the system look and feel seamless to the rider, development of TODs in all communities should look uniform (as well as be integrated into the community). This can only be achieved through the development of a mutually beneficial working relationship.

### Methodology

Data was obtained from the LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) Dataset. The LODES Dataset, developed by the U.S. Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies, is collected and synthesized annually. LODES is comprised of both confidential data sources and public use data sources. LODES data was accessed from the OntheMap website, <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov>.

The confidential data sources comprising LODES include unemployment insurance wage records, the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, the Statistical Administrative

Records System, and other Census Bureau surveys. The LODES Dataset combines these confidential data sources with public use data sources including the current Decennial Census, TIGER/Line shapefiles, as well as OnTheMap data from the previous year. Publicly released LODES data is one of three types: origin-destination (OD), residence area characteristics (RAC) and workplace area characteristics (WAC). OD connects home blocks with work blocks, while RAC/WAC provides information for the residence or workplace side only, but not both.



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### **About the Center for Metropolitan Studies**

A research center that is part of the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, the Center for Metropolitan Studies facilitates activities that connect the University of Pittsburgh and our students to the resolution of important public policy issues confronting our region, our state, and our country. The Center houses a variety of initiatives that address a wide range of public concerns including the Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT), the Metropolitan Power Diffusion Index, the Interactive Bibliography on Metropolitan Regionalism, the National Database on Innovations in Regional Governance, model practices in Pennsylvania local and regional government, and research on multi-jurisdictional issues.

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