



2045 DEMOGRAPHIC AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

A major component of identifying future transportation needs is understanding future population and employment growth trends for the region. Land use and growth patterns directly impact how people travel. In places where development is spread out and land use is separated, people are likely to take more long-distance trips in a personal vehicle throughout the day. On the other hand, in more dense, mixed-use environments, people can take more short trips and utilize other modes of transportation such as transit and walking. To better assess the transportation needs of the region, Destino 2045 first considered the potential growth trends that will impact both the performance of the transportation system as well as how travelers interact with the system.

Additional factors like household size and median income are major forces behind travel behavior. 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data displays the El Paso MPO Region's median household income to be roughly \$36,800 and contains an average household size of 2.92. The region's median household income is lower in comparison to those of Texas (\$53,207) and New Mexico (\$44,963), with concentrations of low-income households along the United States-Mexico border, downtown El Paso, the Mission Valley, and in Dona Ana and Otero Counties just north of the Texas state line.

Since travel along a transportation system relies so heavily on where people live and work, the 2045 El Paso Travel Demand Model (TDM), which is a travel forecasting tool that is explained further in later sections, includes an estimate of population and employment distribution for current and future years. For this metropolitan transportation plan, the El Paso MPO updated a community-driven demographic forecast that was originally developed for the 2040 Horizon MTP. Figure 1 shows population growth in the region between 2012 and 2045 based on estimates provided in the TDM.

Based on the TDM inputs, the region's population is anticipated to grow to nearly 1.4 million people by 2045, or by roughly 57% from 2012. Figure 0.1 shows the largest population increases are expected to occur outside of the current City of El Paso limits, particularly where there is more undeveloped land. Specific areas expected to experience high population growth compared to the rest of the region include the area near Eastlake Boulevard and the area east of Zaragoza Road at US 62. The forecasts also show significant growth in New Mexico west of El Paso County, as well as near Vinton and along Dyer Street at the northern part of El Paso County. Figure 0.2, which shows percent increase in population between 2012 and 2045, confirms these forecasted growth trends where areas outside of the City of El Paso are expected to experience much higher levels of growth relative to the population already living in those areas.

High employment growth areas are scattered throughout the region, according to TDM estimates (Figure 0.3). The largest concentration of employment growth appears east of El Paso International Airport on land formerly belonging to Fort Bliss and near the intersection of Loop 375 East and IH 10. Other areas of expected employment growth include the industrial and logistics development occurring near the Santa Teresa Port of Entry in Dona Ana County, the former smelter lands west of UTEP, and portions of the Upper West Valley along IH 10 and near the new westside hospital. Figure 0.4 combines the top employment and population growth areas, as forecasted by the TDM, to show the areas expected to experience the highest amounts of growth.



FIGURE 0.1: FORECASTED POPULATION GROWTH; 2012-2045

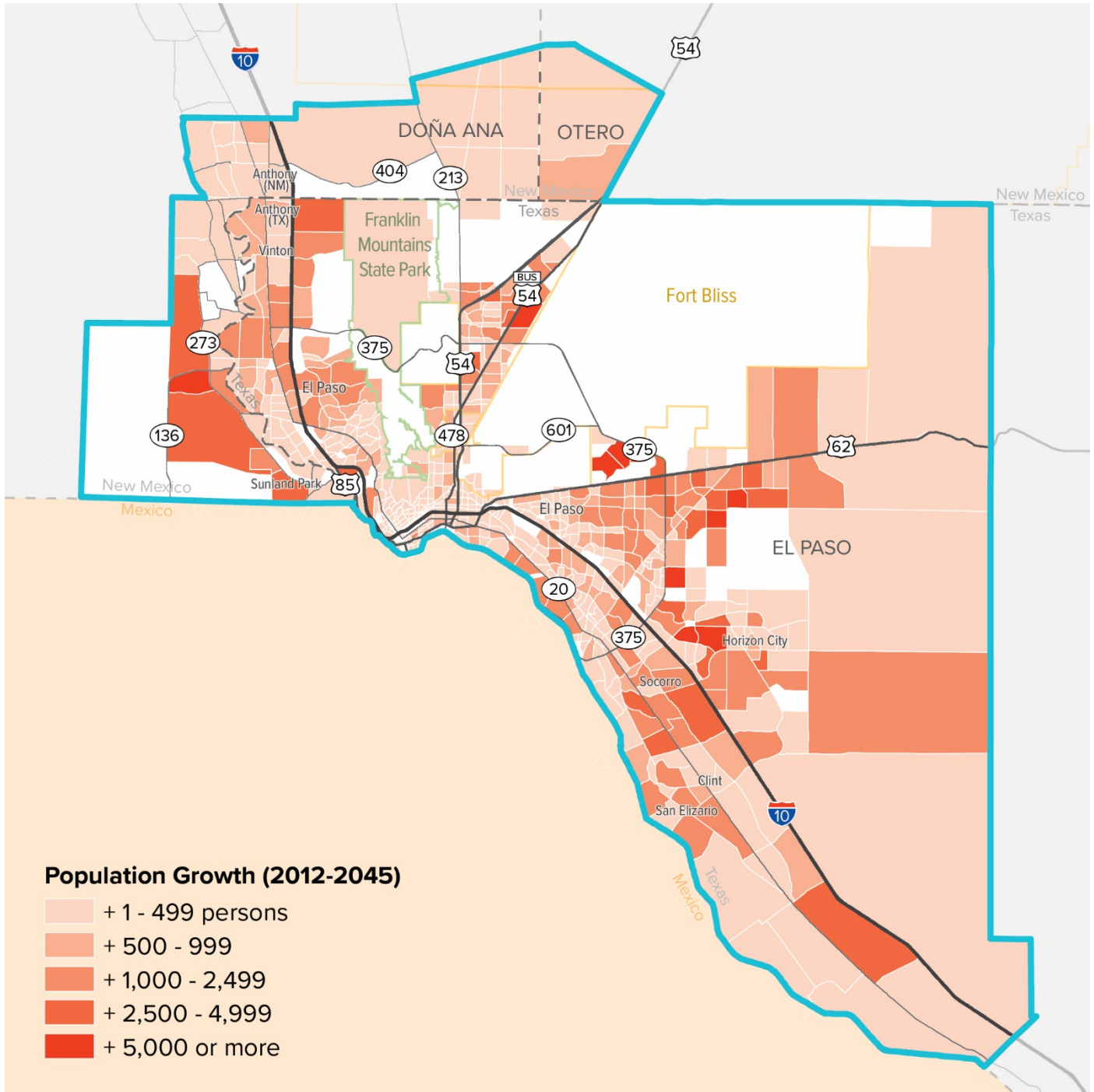




FIGURE 0.2 POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE; 2012-2045

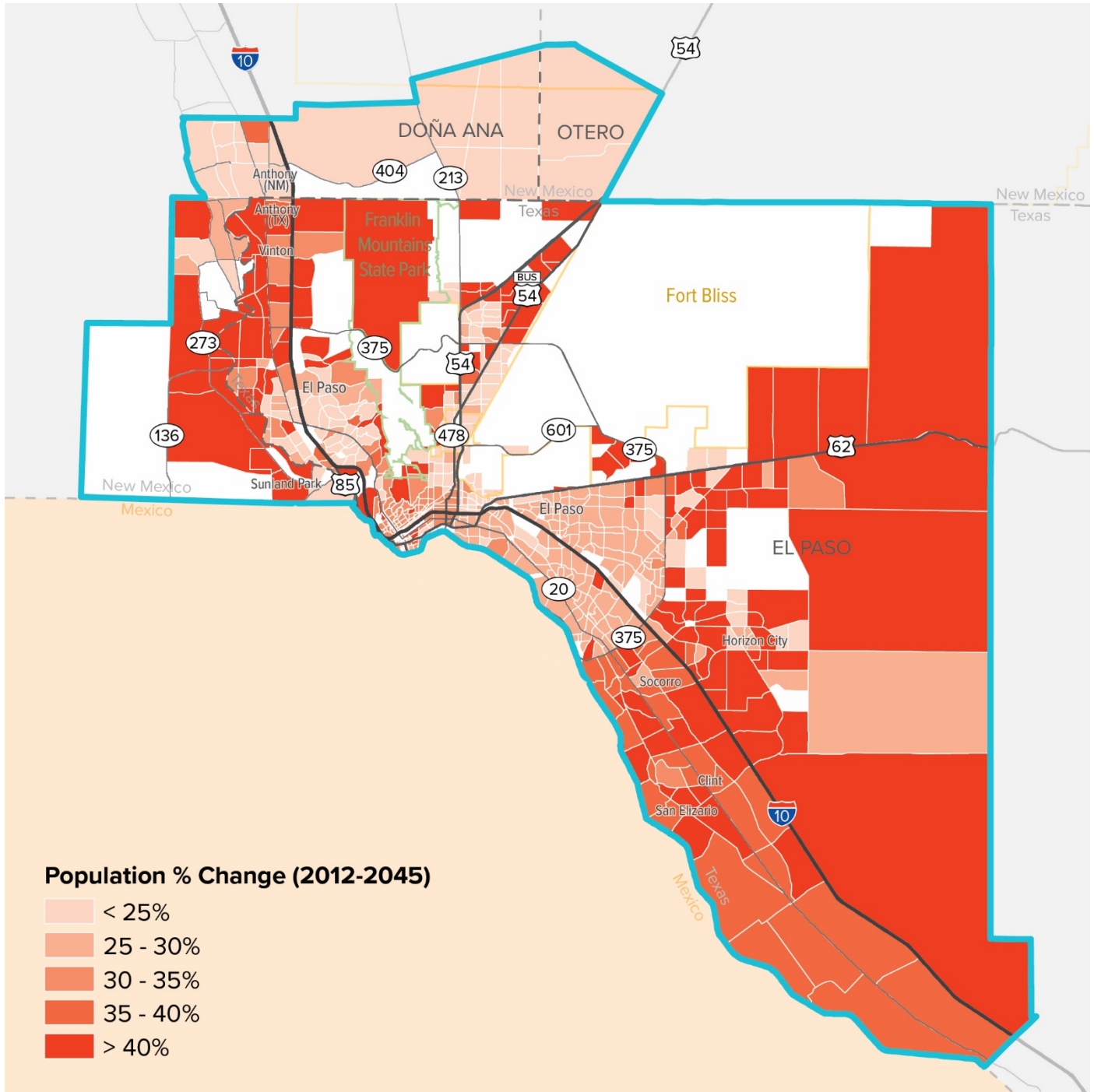




FIGURE 0.3: FORECASTED EMPLOYMENT GROWTH; 2012-2045

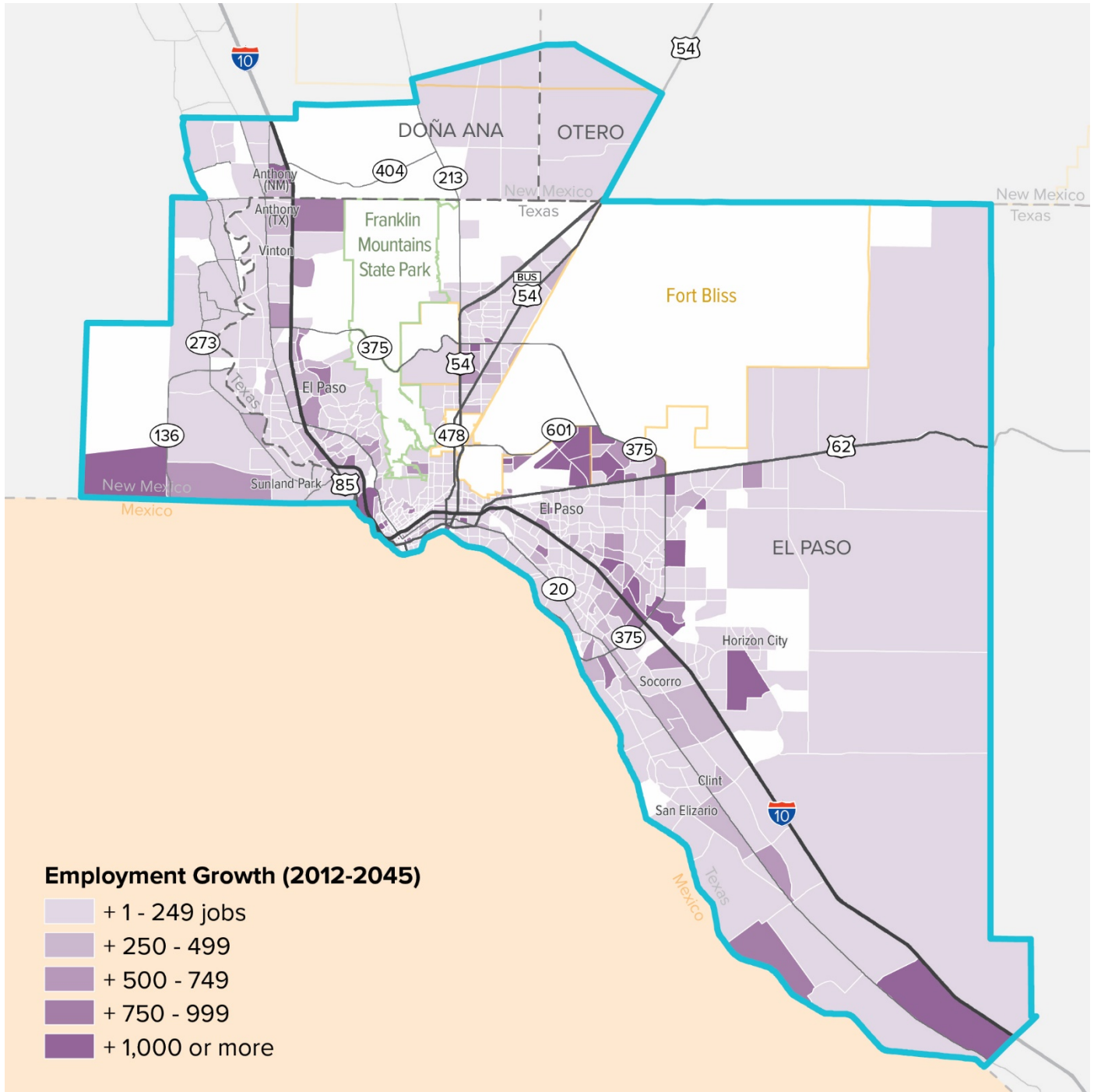
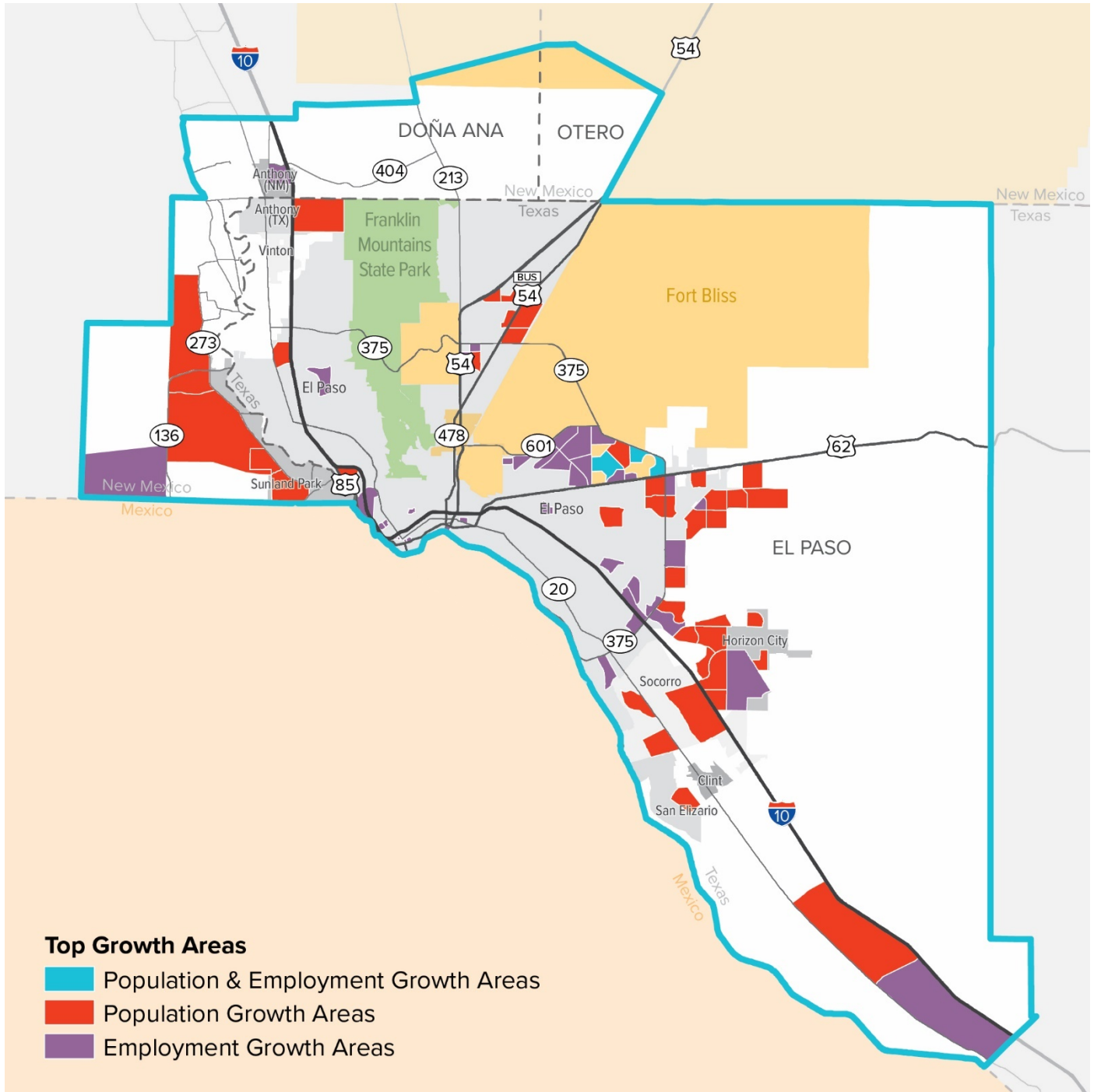




FIGURE 0.4: TOP GROWTH AREAS; 2012-2045





ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In addition to future population and employment growth, environmental justice considerations are also a critical step in addressing a region's transportation needs. Environmental justice considerations aim to minimize negative externalities created by a transportation system and ensure that harmful effects of infrastructure investments are avoided in areas with concentrations of populations that have been disproportionately impacted by past interventions, such as neighborhoods demolished for freeway construction or families living near heavy-polluting industrial development. Introduced to metropolitan scale planning in 1994 by Executive Order 12898 and stemming from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the regulation specifically seeks to:

- Avoid or mitigate disproportionately high public health, socioeconomic, and environmental effects on low-income and minority populations;
- Locate and include all potentially impacted communities in the decision-making process;
- Prevent the denial or lack of receipt of benefits from the process by low-income and minority populations.

With SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21, and now the FAST Act further outlining these principles, Destino 2045 incorporated environmental justice considerations into the multimodal needs assessment to evaluate and locate environmental justice zones (EJZs) throughout the region. Accordingly, Destino 2045 utilized GIS analysis tools and 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data detailing households below the poverty line and limited English proficiency (LEP) households. While minority population is an important consideration in any environmental justice analysis, the high concentration of Hispanic population in the El Paso region makes it difficult to consider this population in this analysis, since nearly the entire study area would be designated as an environmental justice area based on minority population criteria. For this reason, minority status was not used as an indicator of for EJZs. Furthermore, the ACS data revealed that areas with high concentrations of households in poverty closely overlapped with areas where there were high concentrations of households with limited English proficiency; therefore, Destino 2045 identifies households below the poverty line as the primary indicator for determining EJZs.

ACS household poverty status data originates at the census block group level and was aggregated to the region's traffic analysis zones (TAZ) to highlight low-income areas in relation to the El Paso MPO's transportation system. The analysis identifies EJZs as any TAZ where 35% or more of households are considered to be in poverty (i.e. household income is below a certain poverty threshold determined by the ACS). Figure 0.5 shows the location of EJZs within the region. In general, the Mission Valley (e.g. San Elizario and Socorro), the area south of IH 10 in downtown El Paso, and portions of Dona Ana County in the north of the study area show the highest concentrations of EJZs. As analysis progresses for Destino 2045, this inventory of EJZs will serve to identify and assess potential impacts created by proposed transportation improvements, ultimately resulting in the development mitigation strategies for the system. Destino 2045 will also explore the benefits of proposed transportation projects in terms of commute times improvements specific to EJZs.



FIGURE 0.5: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ZONES; HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

