Chapter 2: Regional Profile and Trends

2.1. Introduction

A clear understanding of the demographic, economic, and land use context across the El Paso MPA is essential for effective transportation planning. The region's population growth, diversity, household structure, employment patterns, income distribution, and comprehensive access challenges all shape travel demand and influence the priorities of the RMS 2052 MTP. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the region's key trends, highlighting both opportunities and challenges for building a more connected, accessible, and resilient transportation system. For additional information and details on the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of the El Paso region, refer to **Appendix B: Existing Conditions**.

Figure 2-1. Socorro Mission

2.2. Population

The El Paso MPA has experienced steady and resilient population growth over the past decade, reflecting both the region's economic vitality and its role as a gateway between Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico. From 2013 to 2022, the MPA population increased by 6.4%, with El Paso County leading the way. While growth slowed during the mid-2010s, likely due to economic cycles and the COVID-19 pandemic, the region rebounded strongly in the early 2020s.

Population growth is not uniform across the MPA. El Paso County, as the urban core, continues to attract new residents, while Doña Ana and Otero Counties in New Mexico have seen more modest increases. Texas's overall growth rate (14.1%) far outpaces New Mexico's (2.1%), underscoring the dynamic nature of the border region.

Table 2-1 presents population data for the MPA and comparative geographies from 2018 through 2022, illustrating these trends in detail.

Table 2-1: Population by Geography (2018-2022)

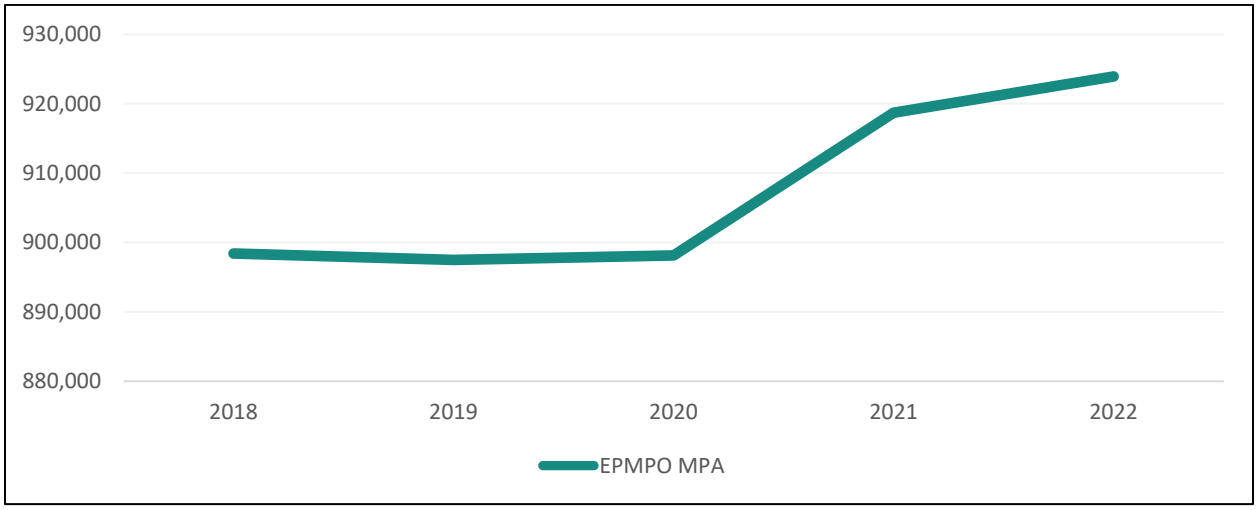
Geography	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Percent Change
New Mexico	2,092,434	2,092,454	2,097,021	2,109,366	2,112,463	2.1%
Texas	27,885,195	28,260,856	28,635,442	28,862,581	29,243,342	14.1%
Doña Ana County, NM	215,338	216,069	217,696	218,157	219,870	4.1%
Otero County, NM	65,745	66,137	66,804	67,298	67,850	4.8%
El Paso County, TX	837,654	836,062	836,915	860,485	863,832	6.3%
EPMPO MPA	898,400	897,482	898,137	918,689	923,916	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B01001.

Population density is highest in the City of El Paso, especially along the IH-10 corridor and in established neighborhoods. Suburban expansion is evident in areas like Horizon City and Socorro, while rural communities remain less densely populated. These patterns have direct implications for transportation planning: high-density areas are ideal for transit and active transportation investments, while lower-density areas may require innovative mobility solutions.

Figure 2-2 shows the MPA's population growth over time, while **Figure 2-4** maps the spatial distribution of population density across the region.

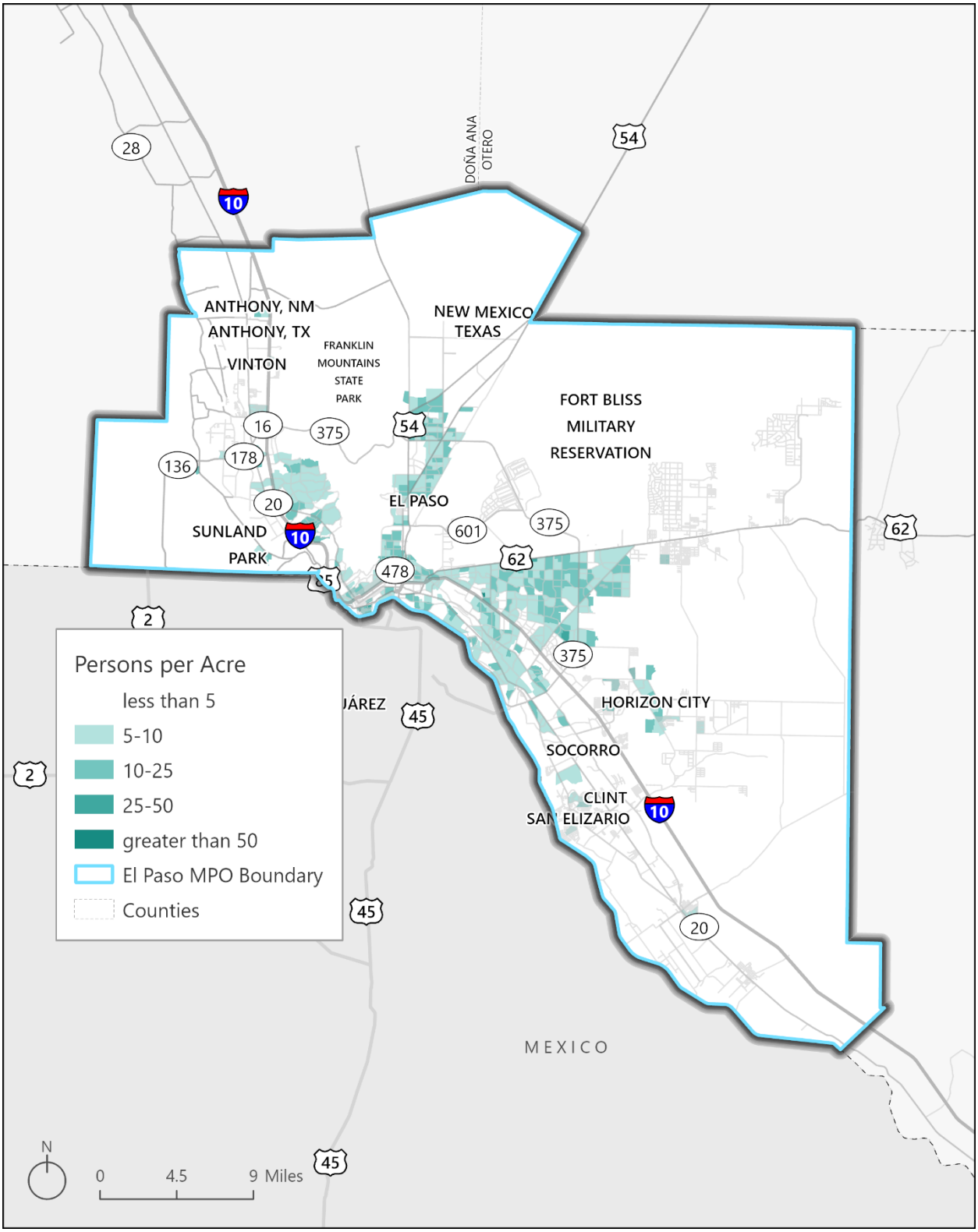
Figure 2-2: EPMPO MPA Population 2018–2022



Source: US Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B01001.

Figure 2-3. Propane Tank with Flag of Texas

Figure 2-4: EPMPO Population Density



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table 01001.

2.2.1. Population: Key Takeaways

- **The Numbers**: The MPA grew 6.4% (2013–2022). El Paso County accounts for most absolute growth.
- **Hot Spots**: Dense neighborhoods along IH-10 and the urban core (transit-ready markets); emerging growth in far east/west El Paso.
- **Recommendations**: Prioritize frequent transit, bus priority, and walk/bike safety where density and ridership potential overlap.

2.3. Race & Ethnicity

The El Paso region's demographic profile is defined by its rich cultural heritage and its unique position along the United States-Mexico border. As of 2022, more than 83% of the MPA population identified as Hispanic or Latino, making it one of the most culturally distinct metropolitan areas in the United States. This proportion is more than double the state averages for Texas and New Mexico, and it shapes every aspect of regional life, from language and public engagement to travel patterns and mobility needs.

While the Hispanic/Latino community is the overwhelming majority, the region is also home to diverse racial groups, including White (11.1%), Black or African American (2.7%), Asian (1.1%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (0.3%). These communities contribute to the region's vibrancy and present unique considerations for transportation comprehensive access, language access, and culturally responsive planning. Table 2-2 summarizes the racial and ethnic composition of MPA and comparative geographies.

Table 2-2: Race & Ethnicity by Geography (2022)

Geography	White Alone	Black or African American alone	American Indian and Alaska	Asian alone	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific	Hispanic or Latino	Some Other Race	Two or More Races
New Mexico	35.6%	1.8%	8.5%	1.5%	0.1%	49.8%	0.4%	2.4%
Texas	40.1%	11.8%	0.2%	5.1%	0.1%	39.9%	0.3%	2.6%
Doña Ana County, NM	26.2%	1.6%	0.7%	1.0%	0.1%	68.9%	0.2%	1.3%
Otero County, NM	46.9%	3.5%	5.9%	1.2%	0.1%	39.0%	0.4%	3.1%
El Paso County, TX	11.2%	2.8%	0.3%	1.1%	0.1%	82.9%	0.2%	1.3%
EPMPO MPA	11.1%	2.7%	0.3%	1.1%	0.1%	83.3%	0.2%	1.3%

Source: US Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B02001.

2.3.1. Race & Ethnicity: Key Takeaways

- **The Numbers**: 83.3% Hispanic/Latino in the El Paso MPA vs 39.9% in Texas and 49.8% in New Mexico, representing a uniquely binational travel market.
- **Recommendations**: Implement bilingual wayfinding, continue Spanish-language engagement, and plan transportation that accommodates cross-border trip purposes.

2.4. Households

Household growth in the MPA has closely mirrored population trends, with a nearly 15% increase in total households from 2018 to 2022. The region's household structure is diverse, encompassing large multigenerational families, single-parent households, and individuals living alone. Household size and composition are key determinants of travel demand: larger households typically generate more trips, while areas with higher concentrations of children or elderly residents may have distinct mobility needs.

Table 2-3 details household growth and distribution across the MPA and comparative geographies.

Table 2-3: Households by Geography (2018–2022)

Geography	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Percent Change
New Mexico	775,651	780,249	792,755	797,596	812,852	6.7%
Texas	9,553,046	9,691,647	9,906,070	10,239,341	10,490,553	18.1%
Doña Ana County, NM	77,453	77,842	79,421	79,933	81,969	11.1%
Otero County, NM	No Data	23,634	23,112	23,590	23,832	-0.5%
El Paso County, TX	265,724	268,310	273,662	288,186	292,580	14.5%
EPMPO MPA	No Data	286,747	292,435	306,727	311,836	14.8%

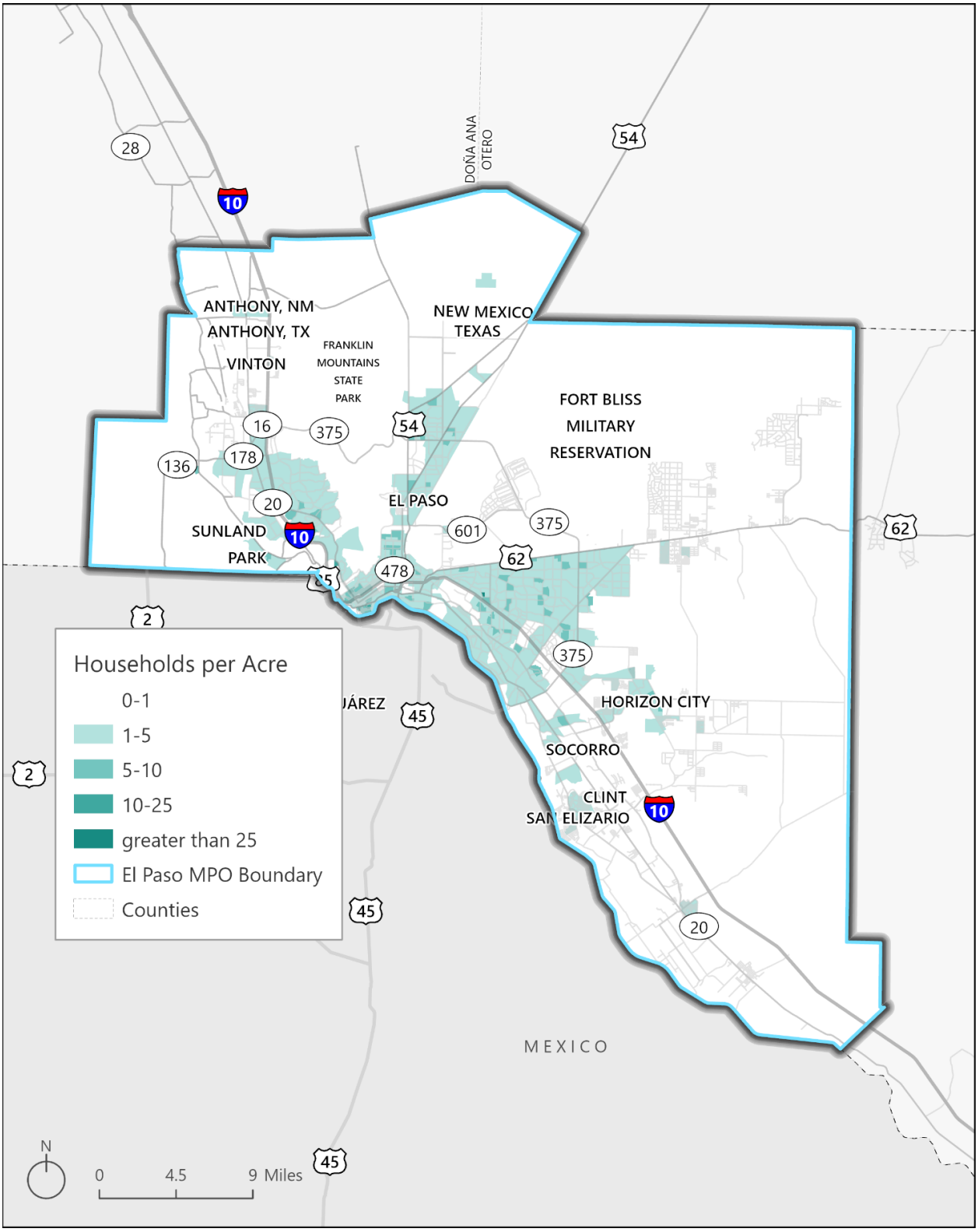
Source: US Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B11001.

Central El Paso and neighborhoods along major corridors have the highest household densities, reinforcing the importance of targeted investments in these areas for transit, walking, and biking infrastructure. **Figure 2-5** displays a map of household density across the region.

2.4.1. Households: Key Takeaways

- **The Numbers**: Households increased by approximately 14.8% (2018–2022), faster than population, pointing to a smaller average household size in growth areas.
- **Hot Spots**: Highest household density in central El Paso and along major corridors.
- **Recommendations**: Target first/last-mile transportation connections and complete streets where household density and amenities cluster.

Figure 2-5: EPMPO Household Distribution



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B1100

2.5. Employment

The El Paso region has demonstrated economic resilience and adaptability over the past decade. From 2013 to 2022, the MPA's employment rate increased from 87.2% to 89.7%, even as the region weathered national economic cycles and the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the employment rate remains slightly below the state averages for Texas and New Mexico, the region's workforce is growing and diversifying. **Table 2-4** presents employment rates for the MPA and comparative geographies from 2018 to 2022.

Table 2-4: Employment Rate by Geography (2018–2022)

Geography	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
New Mexico	91.9%	92.4%	92.4%	92.2%	92.4%
Texas	94.0%	94.3%	94.1%	94.0%	94.1%
Doña Ana County, NM	91.0%	91.6%	91.7%	92.0%	92.3%
Otero County, NM	87.2%	86.7%	84.3%	83.1%	81.0%
El Paso County, TX	89.2%	89.7%	89.7%	89.2%	89.0%
EPMPO MPA	90.0%	90.5%	90.3%	90.0%	89.7%

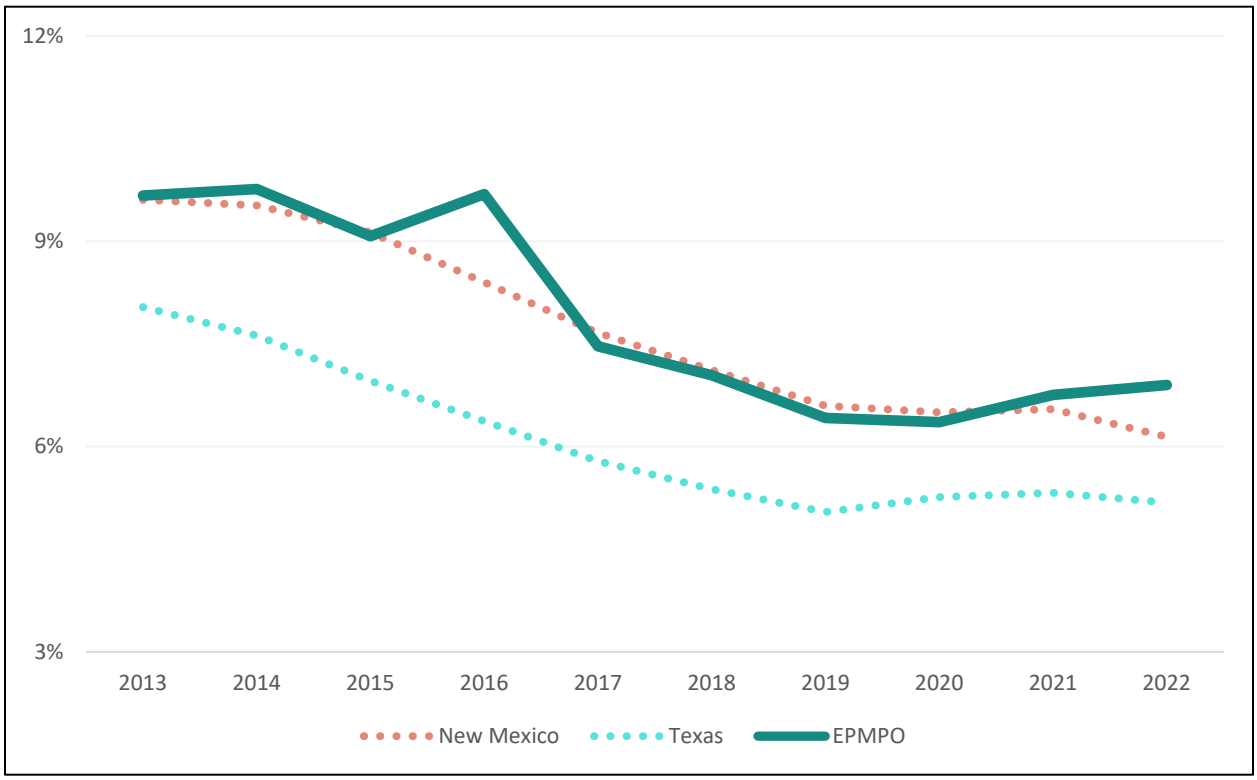
Source: US Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B23025

Major employment centers include downtown El Paso, the medical district, educational institutions, and logistics hubs near the border and along IH-10. The region's economy is increasingly driven by cross-border trade, healthcare, education, and advanced manufacturing, all of which have unique transportation needs.

Figure 2-6. Downtown El Paso

Figure 2-7 illustrates unemployment trends over time, while **Figure 2-8** maps the distribution of the employment rate across the region. The unemployment trend chart suggests that while EPMPO historically faced higher unemployment than Texas, it has made significant progress since 2016, narrowing the gap and improving economic conditions relative to New Mexico.

Figure 2-7: Unemployment Trends

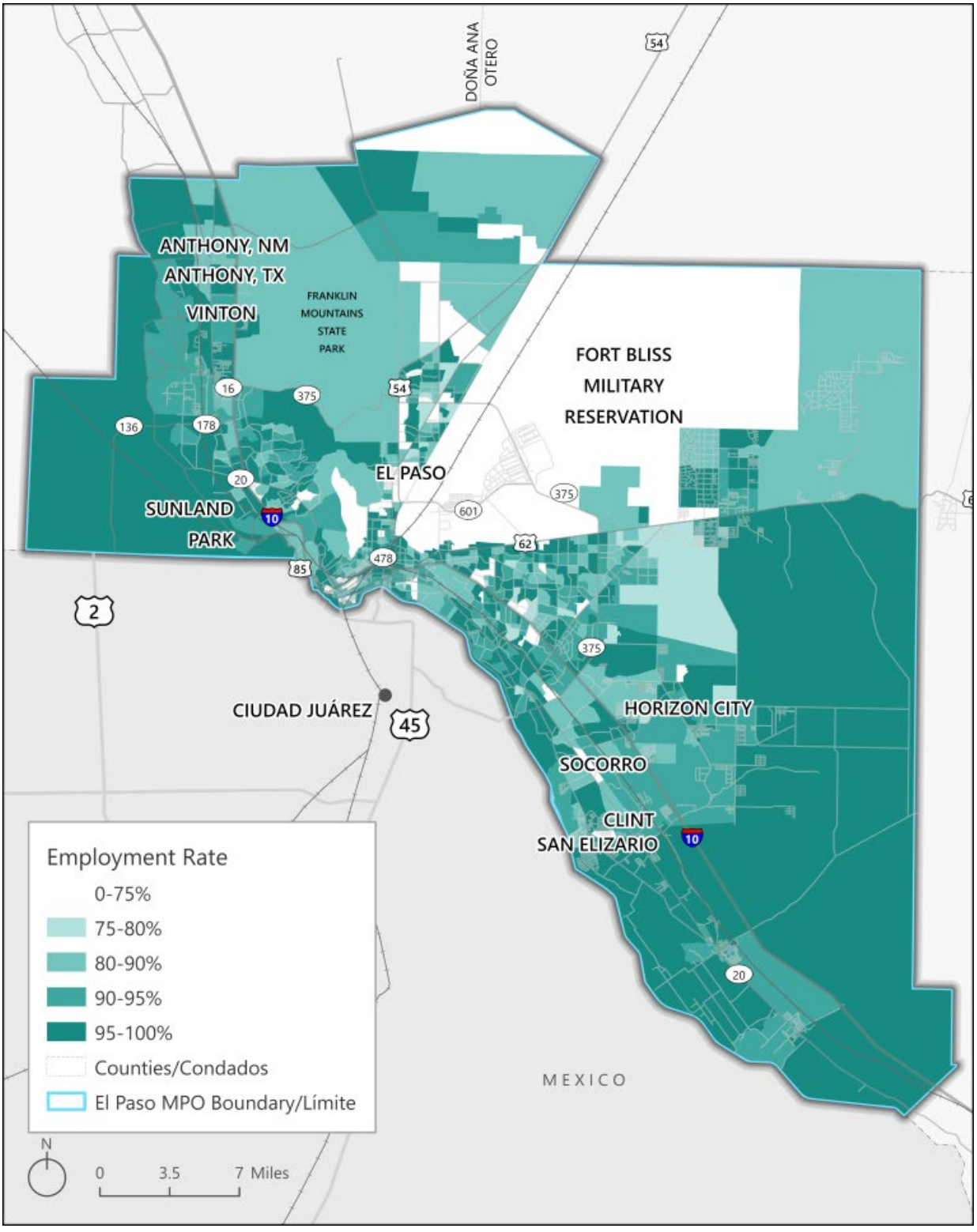


Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table 23025

2.5.1. Employment: Key Takeaways

- **The Numbers**: Employment rate 89.7% (2022), below TX/NM but improving.
- **Hotspots**: Downtown, medical/education hubs, and logistics near POEs and IH 10.
- **Recommendations**: Strengthen commuter transit, off-peak reliability, and freight people network compatibility on shared corridors.

Figure 2-8: Employment Rate



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B23025.

2.6. Income and Poverty

Income and poverty are critical indicators of transportation need and comprehensive access. Median household income in the MPA rose from $41,025 in 2013 to $51,538 in 2022, a 25.6% increase. When adjusted for inflation, the purchasing power of household income has declined as 2022 income has roughly 14% less real value compared to 2018. This erosion in purchasing power underscores that nominal income gains do not fully translate into improved economic conditions, which has implications for affordability and access to transportation.

However, this growth in income lagged Texas and New Mexico, and significant disparities persist across the region. Higher incomes are concentrated in eastern and western El Paso, while central neighborhoods and border communities face lower incomes and greater economic challenges.

Table 2-5 summarizes median household income by geography, while Table 2-6 presents poverty rates for the same period.

Table 2-5: Median Household Income by Geography (2018–2022)

Geography	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Percent Change
New Mexico	$48,059	$49,754	$51,243	$54,020	$58,722	30.7%
Texas	$59,570	$61,874	$63,826	$67,321	$73,035	40.7%
Doña Ana County, NM	$39,164	$40,973	$44,024	$47,151	$51,232	35.1%
Otero County, NM	$44,341	$42,771	$46,170	$50,757	$53,485	35.1%
El Paso County, TX	$44,597	$46,871	$48,292	$50,919	$55,417	38.0%
EPMPO MPA	$43,291	$44,879	$45,841	$47,802	$51,538	25.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B19013.

Table 2-6: Poverty Rates by Geography (2018–2022)

Geography	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
New Mexico	20.0%	19.1%	18.6%	18.3%	18.3%
Texas	15.5%	14.7%	14.2%	14.0%	13.9%
Doña Ana County, NM	27.7%	26.4%	24.8%	23.2%	22.8%
Otero County, NM	18.9%	20.2%	20.2%	18.2%	19.2%
El Paso County, TX	21.3%	20.2%	19.5%	19.3%	19.5%
EPMPO MPA	23.9%	23.1%	22.3%	21.8%	21.8%

Source: US Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B17021.

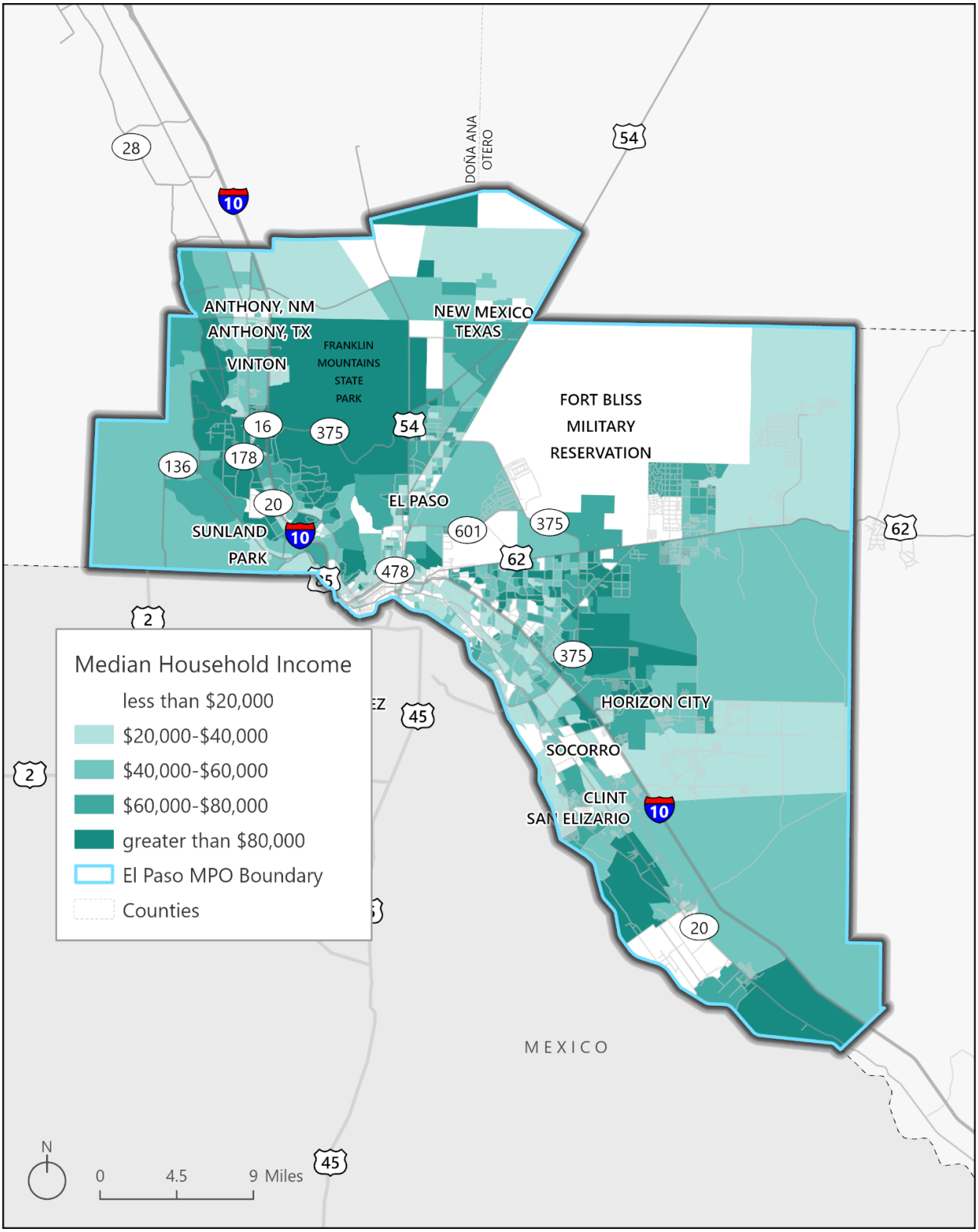
Poverty rates have declined over the past decade but remain higher than state averages. In 2022, 21.8% of the MPA population lived in poverty, compared to 13.9% in Texas and 18.3% in New Mexico. Central El Paso and border areas have the highest concentrations of poverty, which directly impacts comprehensive transportation access. Residents in poverty are more likely to rely on transit, carpooling, and active transportation, and may face barriers to accessing jobs, education, and essential services.

Figure 2-9 shows the spatial distribution of median household income, while **Figure 2-10** maps concentrations of poverty across the MPA.

2.6.1. Income & Poverty: Key Takeaways

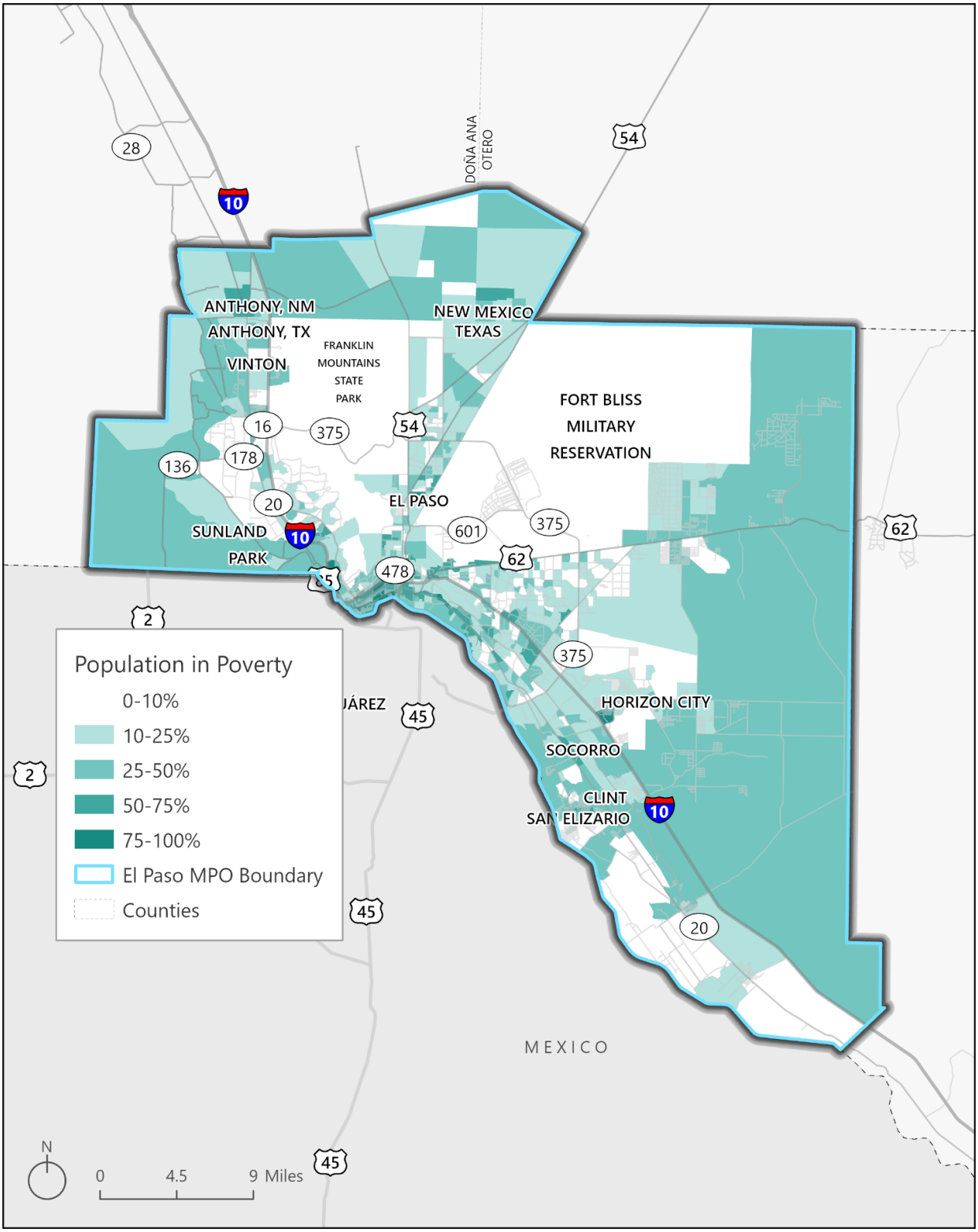
- **The Numbers**: Median income +25.6% since 2013 (trails TX/NM), higher incomes are located in eastern and western El Paso; lower incomes central/border.
- **Hot Spots**: Poverty 21.8%, above TX/NM; clusters central/border tracts.
- **Recommendations**: Prioritize affordable, reliable transit, fare policy coordination, and safe, low-cost active modes where poverty is highest.

Figure 2-9: Median Household Income Distribution



Source: US Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B17021.

Figure 2-10: Poverty Distribution



Source: US Census Bureau. 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B17021.

2.7. Comprehensive Access Need Areas

Comprehensive access is a guiding principle of the RMS 2052 MTP. To ensure that transportation investments address the needs of the populations with limited access, EPMPO conducted a comprehensive analysis of 21 indicators including disability, education, age, unemployment, language proficiency, housing cost burden, vehicle access, and poverty. Census tracts were ranked based on these indicators to identify areas with the greatest needs. **Table 2-7** lists the selected access indicators and their MPA averages.

Table 2-7: Selected Comprehensive Access Indicators (EPMPO Averages)

Indicator	EPMPO Average
Households with at least one person with a disability	32.1%
Adults with less than a high school education	22.9%
Households with at least one person 65 years or older (elderly)	30.8%
Unemployed civilian population	6.9%
Households with at least one person under 18 years old (child)	31.1%
Female-headed households with at least one person under 18 years old (child)	7.9%
Male-headed households with at least one person under 18 years old (child)	1.6%
Households without internet access	12.8%
Housing units without complete kitchen facilities	2.5%
Population over 5 years old with limited English proficiency	15.2%
Owner-occupied housing units that are housing cost burdened	15.6%
Occupied housing units without complete plumbing	0.7%
Population in poverty	21.8%
Minority population	49.9%
Renter-occupied housing units that are housing cost burdened	34.6%
Households receiving SNAP benefits	23.5%
Occupied housing units that have no access to a vehicle	7.2%
Occupied housing units without heating fuel	0.4%
Individuals in group living quarters	1.6%
Housing unit build before 1980	46.5%
Household Type: Non-site build structures (boats, RV, van, mobile homes)	8.1%

Source: WSP Analysis of US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

The analysis revealed that areas with the highest access needs are concentrated in downtown El Paso, along the border, and in outlying communities. These neighborhoods face overlapping challenges: higher rates of poverty, limited English proficiency, older

housing stock, and lower rates of vehicle ownership. By mapping these needs, EPMPO can prioritize projects that address disparities and promote equitable access to mobility.

Figure 2-12 maps the Comprehensive Access Need Areas, highlighting census tracts with the highest concentrations of need.

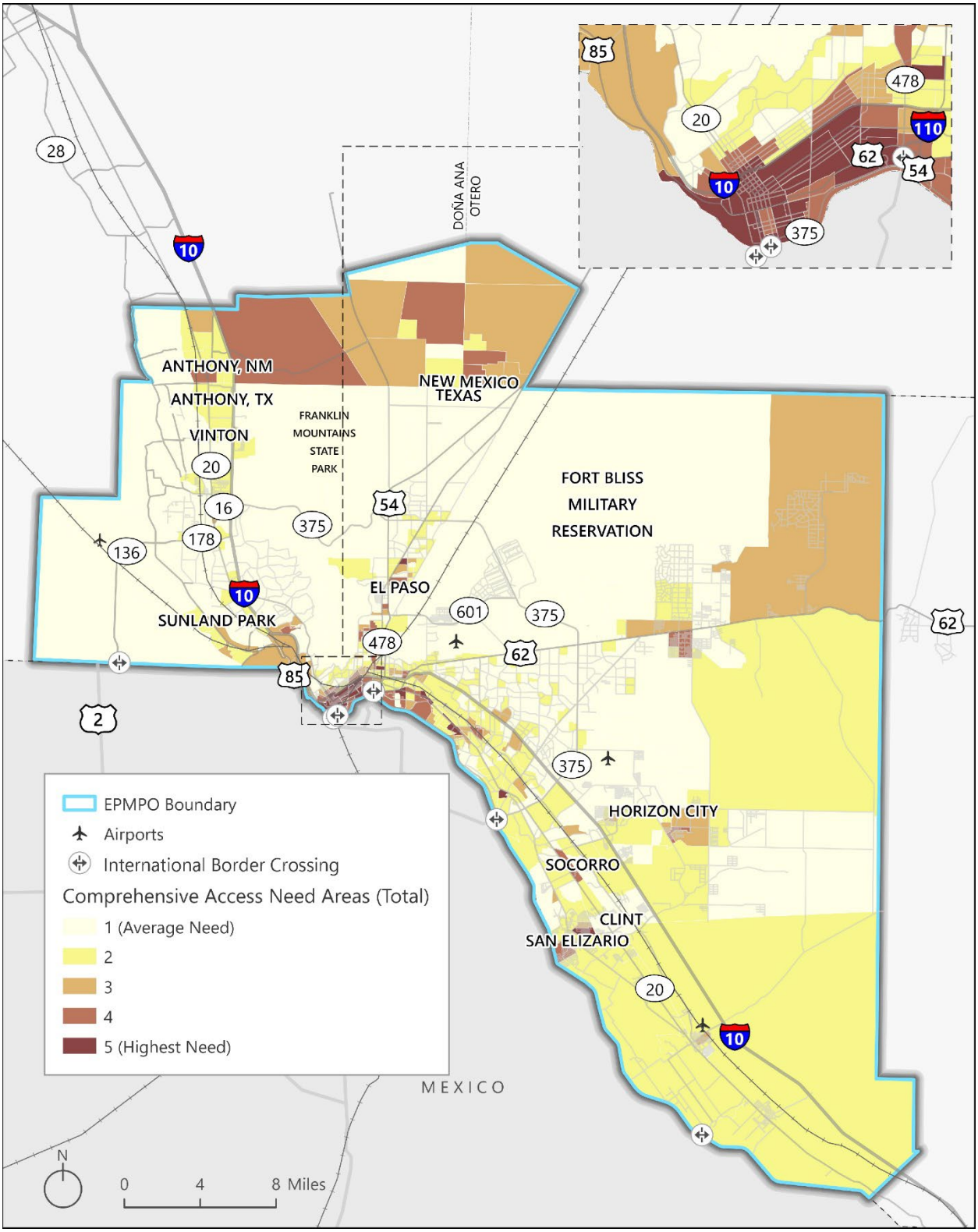
2.7.1. Comprehensive Access Need Areas: Key Takeaways

- **The Numbers**: 32.1% disability, 15.2% LEP, 7.2% no-vehicle, 34.6% renter cost-burden.
- **Hot Spots**: High-need tracts in downtown/border and select outlying communities.
- **Recommendations**: Use comprehensive access mapping to identify needed projects, site amenities (lighting, shade, crossings), and set transit service frequencies in priority tracts.

Refer to **Appendix C: Comprehensive Access Need Areas and Comprehensive Resiliency Network** for additional details of this analysis.

Figure 2-11. Car with Pedestrians

Figure 2-12: Comprehensive Access Need Areas



Source: WSP Analysis of US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

2.8. Land Use Patterns & Development Trends

Land use in the El Paso MPA is characterized by dominant single-family home urban neighborhoods, expanding suburbs, rural communities, and industrial corridors. The City of El Paso serves as the region's urban core, with more intense commercial, and institutional uses concentrated along major corridors and within downtown. The residential development inside the city follows a similar pattern that is observed in its neighbors. Suburban growth is evident in areas such as Horizon City, Socorro, and the far east and west sides of El Paso County, where new housing and commercial developments are reshaping the landscape.

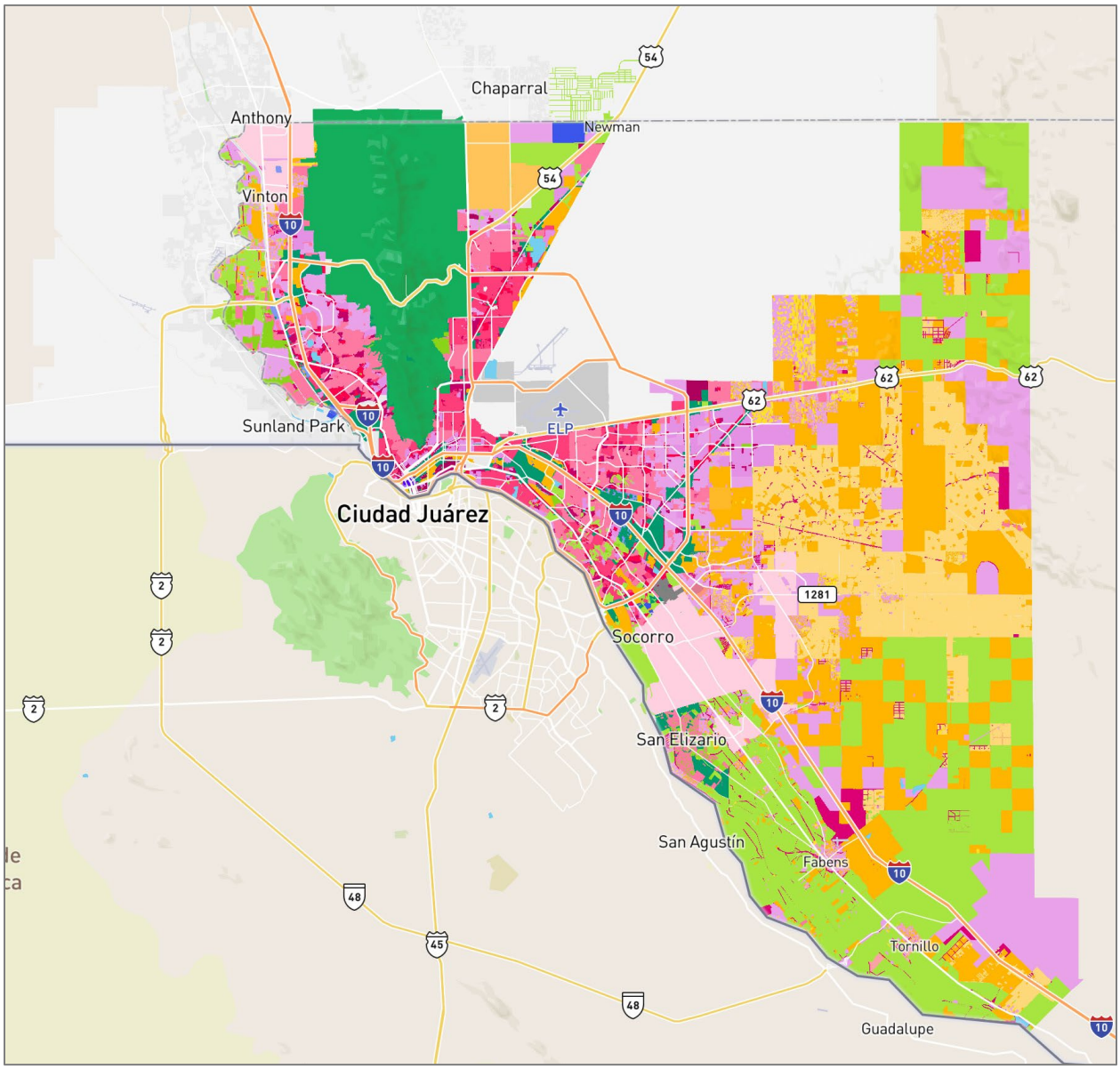
Efforts over the past decade include some limited attempts at infill development and revitalization of downtown and historic districts, as well as the emergence of a small number of mixed-use and transit-oriented projects. Industrial and logistics uses are concentrated near the border, along IH-10, and in proximity to major freight corridors and Ports of Entry. Agricultural and open space uses persist in outlying areas, particularly in New Mexico.

Land use patterns directly influence transportation demand, travel behavior, and the feasibility of multimodal investments. Compact, mixed-use development supports transit and active transportation, while dispersed, low-density growth increases reliance on private vehicles. MTP's strategies for integrating land use and transportation planning are designed to promote sustainable, connected, and equitable communities. **Figure 2-13** illustrates the current land use patterns across the EPMPO region.

2.8.1. Land Use Patterns & Development Trends: Key Takeaways

- **Hot Spots**: Compact, mixed-use districts (downtown, historic corridors) are transit-ready but could benefit from upzoning policies, suburban expansion requires phased service and Travel Demand Management.
- **Hot Spots**: Industrial/logistics near POEs and IH-10 intensify freight/people interactions – design for safety and reliability on these corridors.
- **Recommendations**: Align land use (infill, TOD, corridor form-based standards) with multimodal investments to lock in mode shift.

Figure 2-13: Land Use Patterns in the EPMPO Region



Source: Urban Densification Emissions Impact Study, UrbanSim, 2025

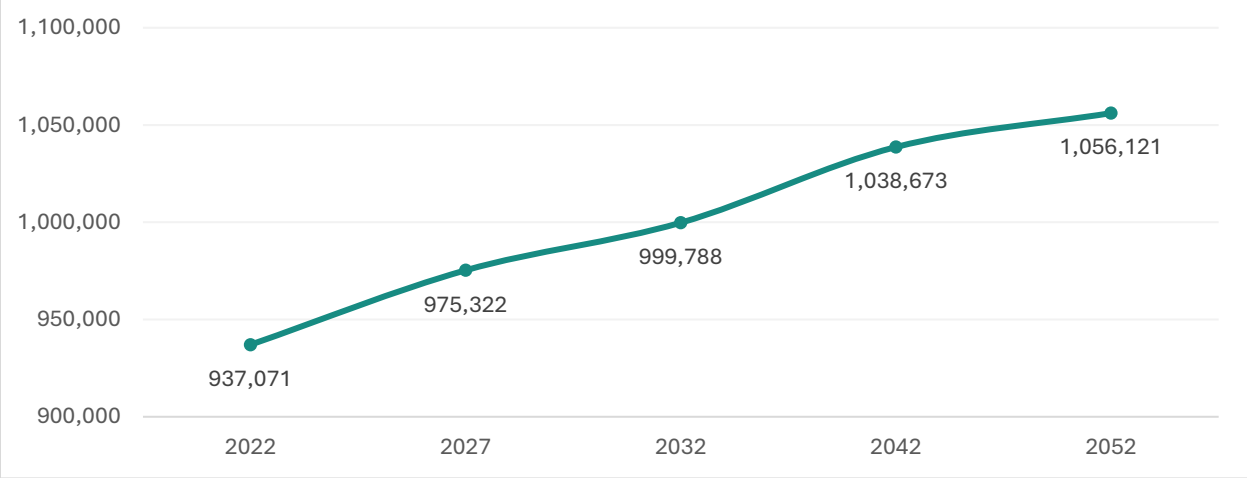
2.9. Regional Trends and Forecasts

Population and other socioeconomic control total projections for the El Paso MPA were obtained from the Texas Demographic Center for years 2027, 2032, 2042 and 2052, as 5 or 10-year increments from the baseline year. The baseline year was selected based on the latest traffic saturation counts available (2022). The geographic distribution of control totals throughout the El Paso MPA, for every forecast year was established through land-use modeling which takes into account availability and cost of land as well as zoning policies among other variables . Evaluating these indicators can support decision-making processes by helping to understand where growth or shrinkage is occurring over time. The baseline year of 2022 was used and compared to predictions for 2052.

2.9.1. Population

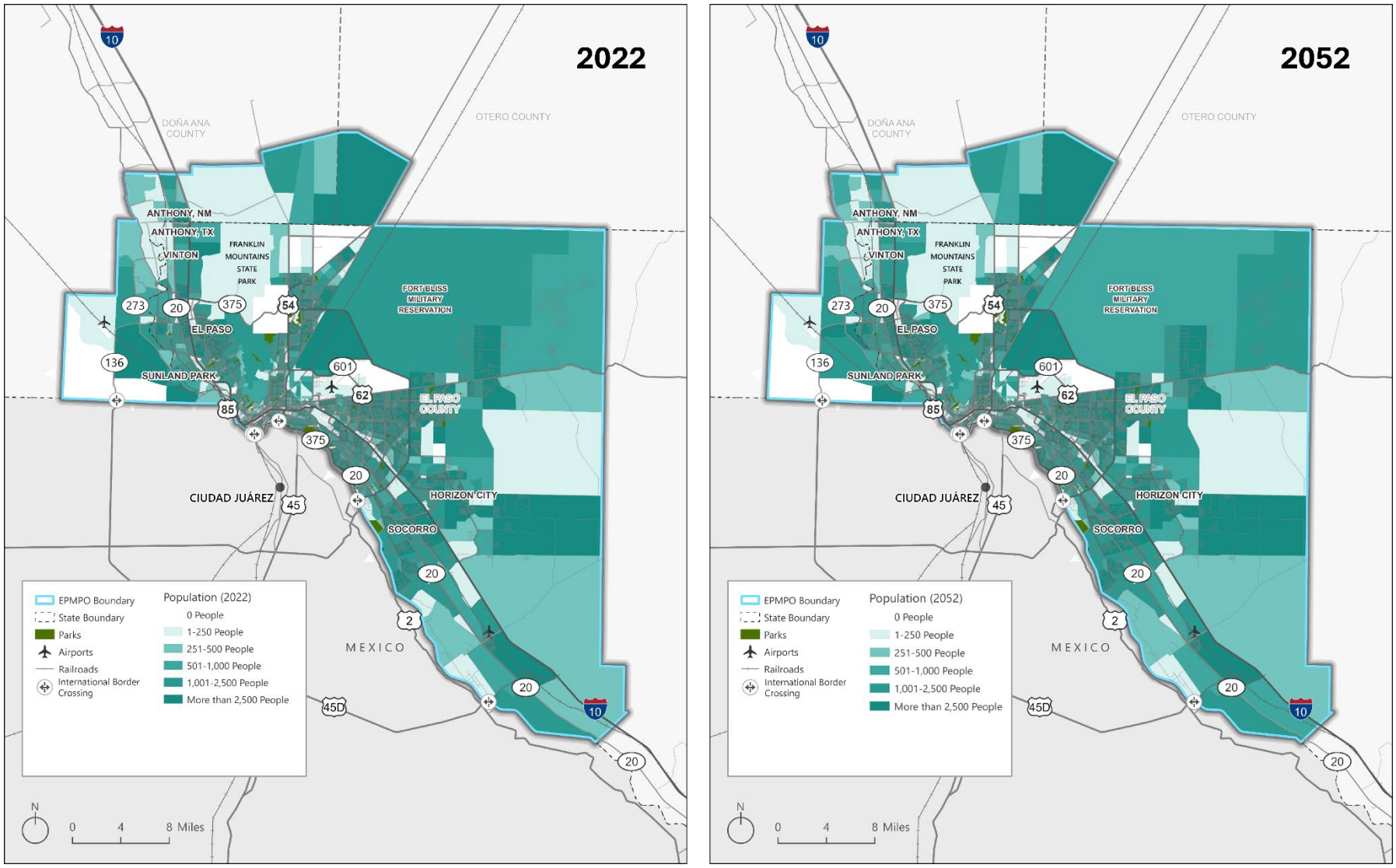
Population is projected to trend upwards from 2022 to 2052, going from a population of 937,071 to 1,056,121, as can be seen in **Figure 2-14**. This data is also visualized by TAZ in **Figure 2-15**, comparing years 2022 and 2052 spatially. The average yearly rate of change over the thirty-year period is 0.4%. Growth can be seen in areas already high in population, with saturation deepening over the 30 years.

Figure 2-14. Population Growth Chart from 2022 to 2052 (TxDOT-TPP Validated Travel Demand Model)



Source: EPMPO Travel Demand Model Output, 2025.

Figure 2-15. Current and Project Population (TxDOT-TPP Validated Travel Demand Model)

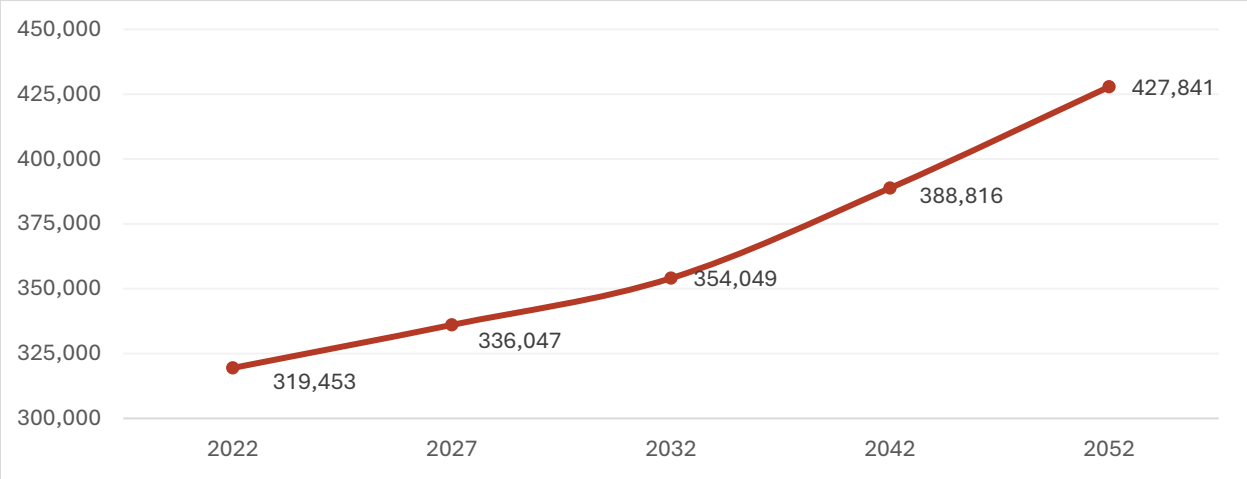


Source: EPMPO Travel Demand Model Output, 2025.

2.9.2. Households

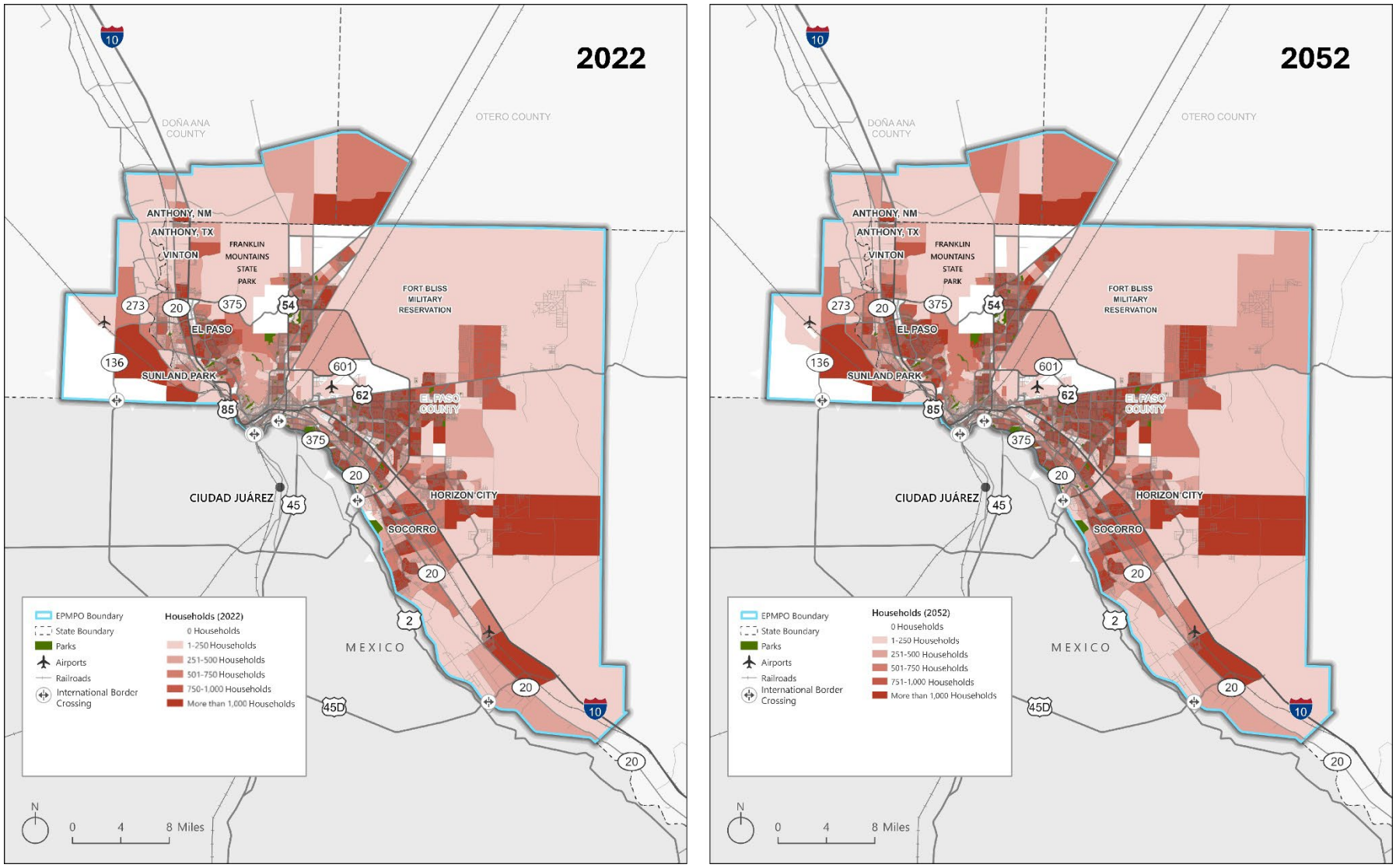
Household numbers are also projected to trend upwards for the region over the thirty-year period, as can be seen in **Figure 2-16**. In 2022, there were 319,453 households. This is projected to increase to 427,841 by 2052 for an average yearly rate of change of 1.1%. Growth appears along major routes and in areas already high in household numbers (**Figure 2-16**).

Figure 2-16. Household Growth Chart from 2022 to 2052 (TxDOT-TPP Validated Travel Demand Model)



Source: EPMPO Travel Demand Model Output, 2025.

Figure 2-17. Current and Project Households (TxDOT-TPP Validated Travel Demand Model)

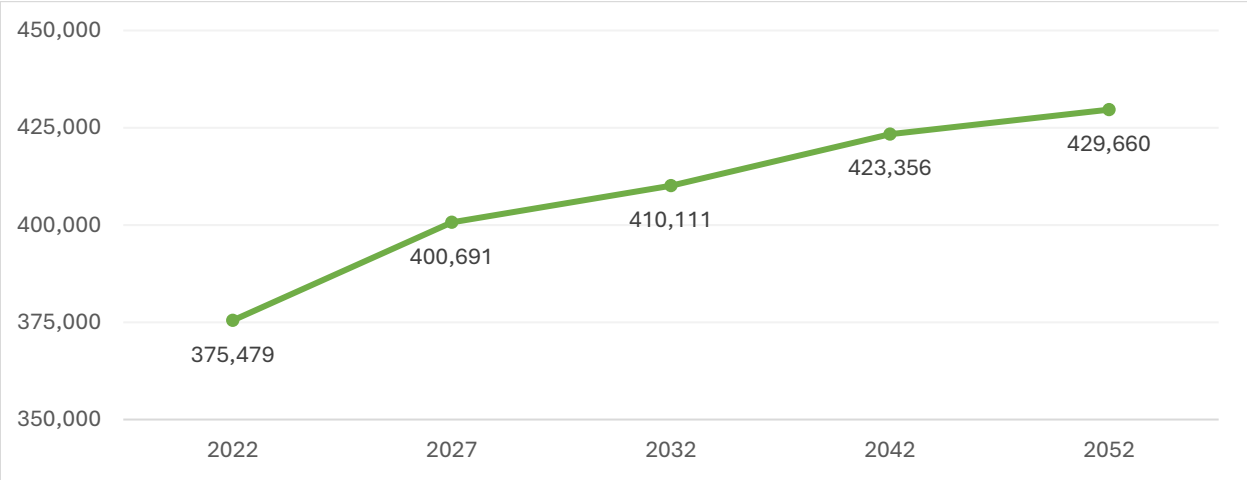


Source: EPMPO Travel Demand Model Output, 2025.

2.9.3. Employment

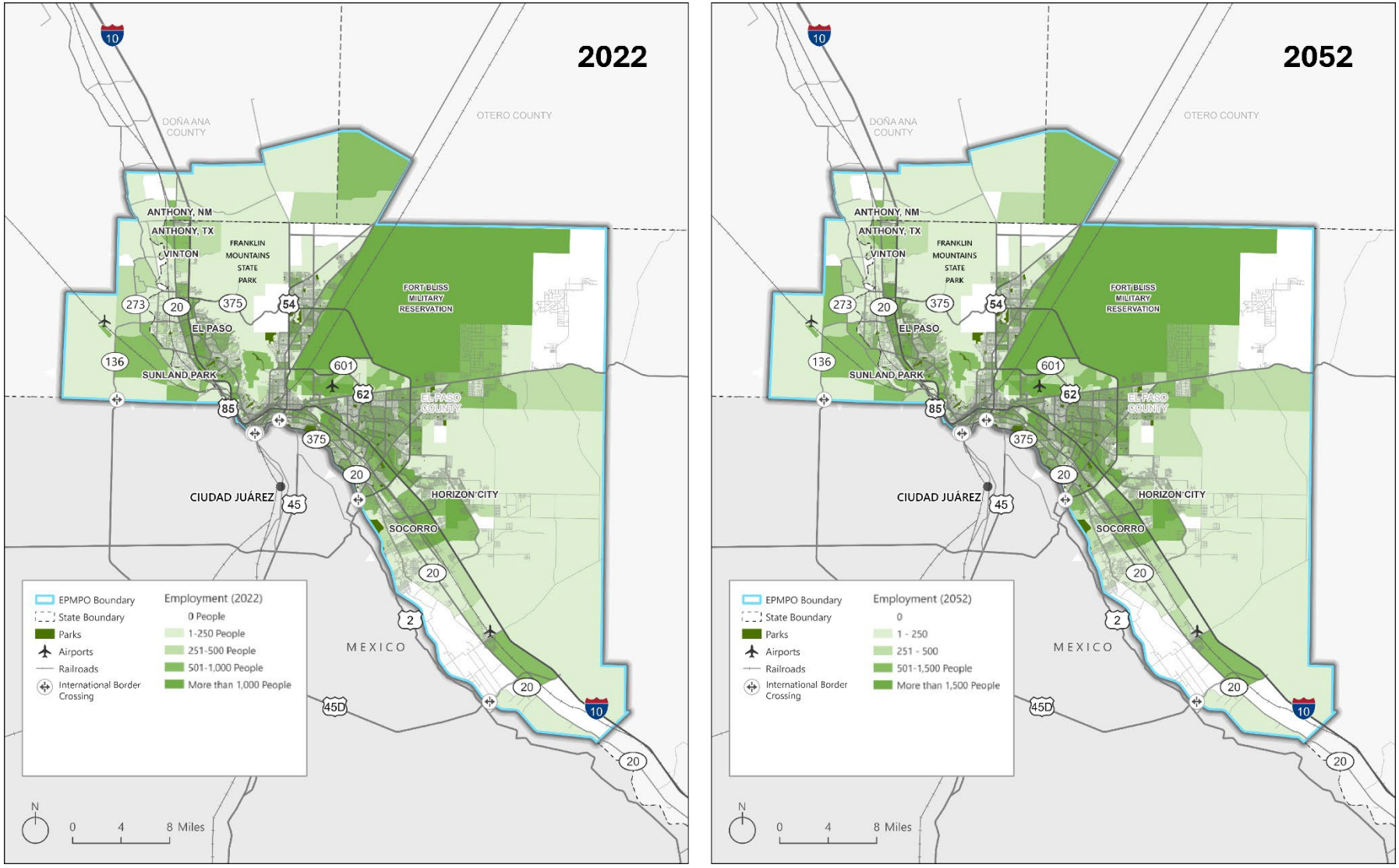
Employment in the region is projected to increase from 375,479 to 429,660 between 2022 and 2052 (**Figure 2-18**). Employment growth appears most prominent in the central part of the MPO, near El Paso, as can be seen in **Figure 2-19**. Employment sectors remain relatively the same between 2022 and 2052, with the service industry growing four percent (**Figure 2-20**). Basic and retail industries shrink just a small amount, while the education sector remains constant at 10%.

Figure 2-18. Employment Growth Chart from 2022 to 2052 (TxDOT-TPP Validated Travel Demand Model)



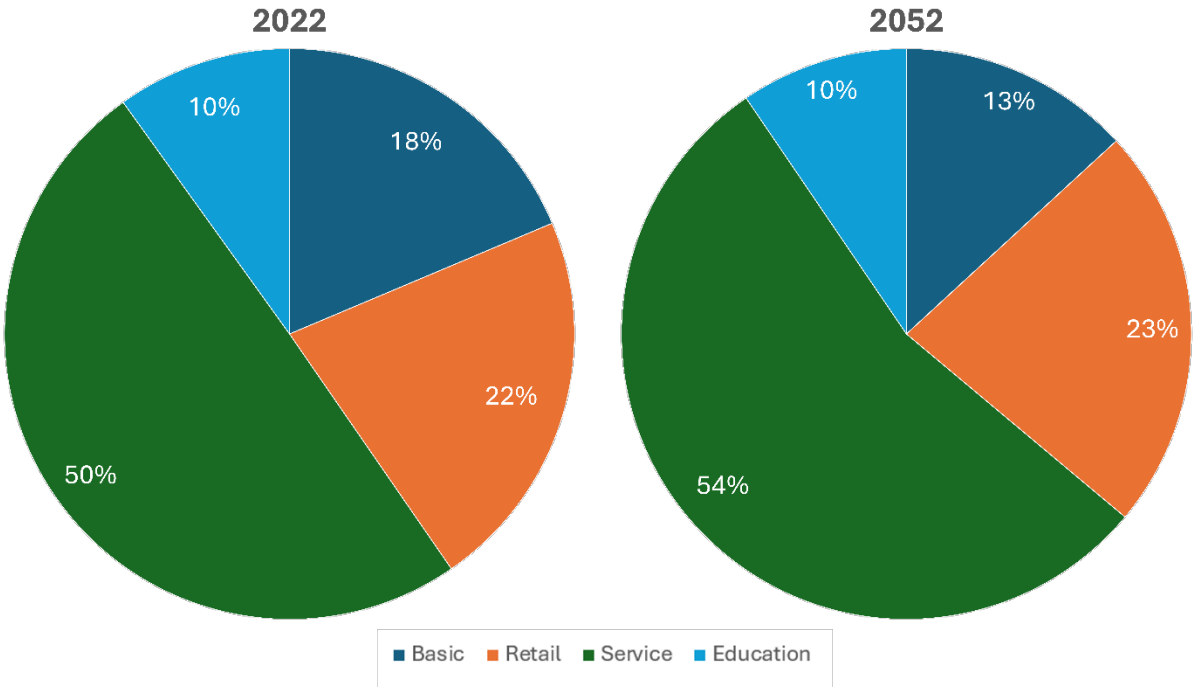
Source: EPMPO Travel Demand Model Output, 2025.

Figure 2-19. Current and Project Employment (TxDOT-TPP Validated Travel Demand Model)



Source: EPMPO Travel Demand Model Output, 2025.

Figure 2-20. Employment Sectors in 2022 and 2052 (TxDOT-TPP Validated Travel Demand Model)



Source: EPMPO Travel Demand Model Output, 2025.

2.10. Summary & Implications for Transportation Planning

The demographic, economic, and land use trends described in this chapter provide the foundation for the RMS 2052 MTP's vision, goals, and project selection criteria. Population growth, multicultural and multilingual populations, persistent poverty, and evolving development patterns require a flexible, data-driven approach to investment and policy. By centering comprehensive access, supporting economic vitality, and aligning land use with mobility goals, EPMPO is positioned to meet the needs of all residents – today and in the decades to come.