

# Defining Megacities and Megaregions: The Need for U.S. Spatial Planning

Chapter 1:  
Megacities and Megaregions:  
Frontiers in Spatial Planning

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# Why a New Planning Approach?

- Geographical scale of problems grown
  - Development around urban areas spreading out farther
  - Water scarcity
  - Habitat Loss
  - Commuting distances longer
  - Growing gap between “haves” and “have-nots”
  - Reduced limits to communication and mobility

# Why a New Planning Approach?

- Economic activities global
  - Jobs moved to workforce
  - Communication instantaneous
  - Competitiveness defined more at regional scale with increase mobility
  - Infrastructure needs increasing to keep pace

# Why a New Planning Approach?

- Current planning approaches
  - Scale of authority at city and/or county level
  - Funding linked to property values, wealth, and inequities
  - Emphasize command and control regulation and authority
  - Often insulated from citizen activity and political action

# Why a New Planning Approach?

1. Spatial mismatch of planning strategies and current and future problems and opportunities
2. Coordinated approach needed across current political and legal boundaries

# Useful Constructs

## ■ Megacity

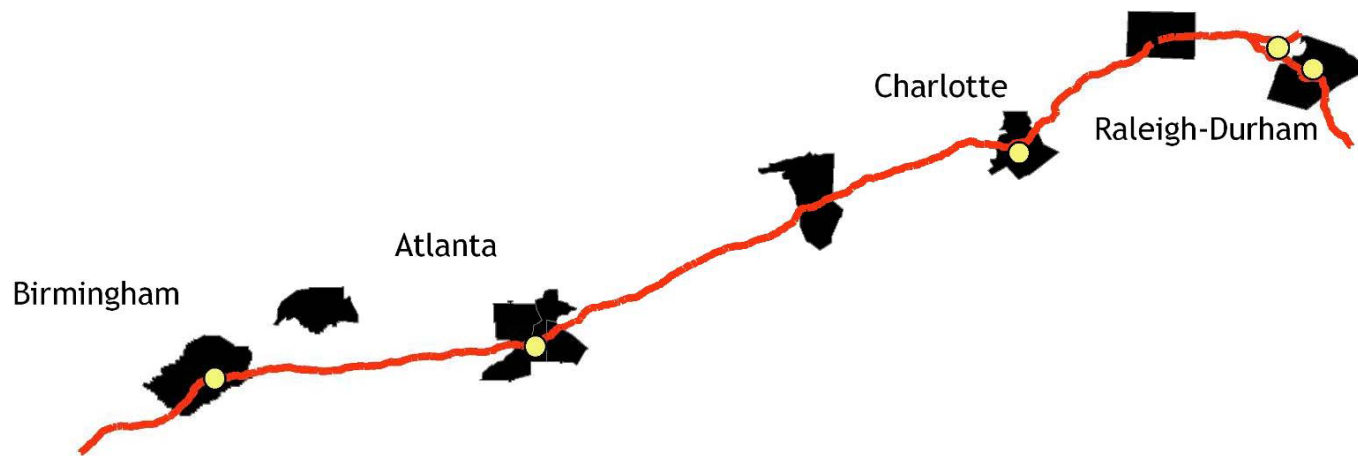
- Traditionally, city of 10 million residents or two or more linked cities with total population of 10 million or more
- In U.S., only New York City and Los Angeles
- With relaxed definition for U.S. development pattern adjustment, use 3 million population
- Characterized by:
  - Relatively high density population and employment
  - Concentration of economic activity

# Useful Constructs

## ■ **Linked Megacities**

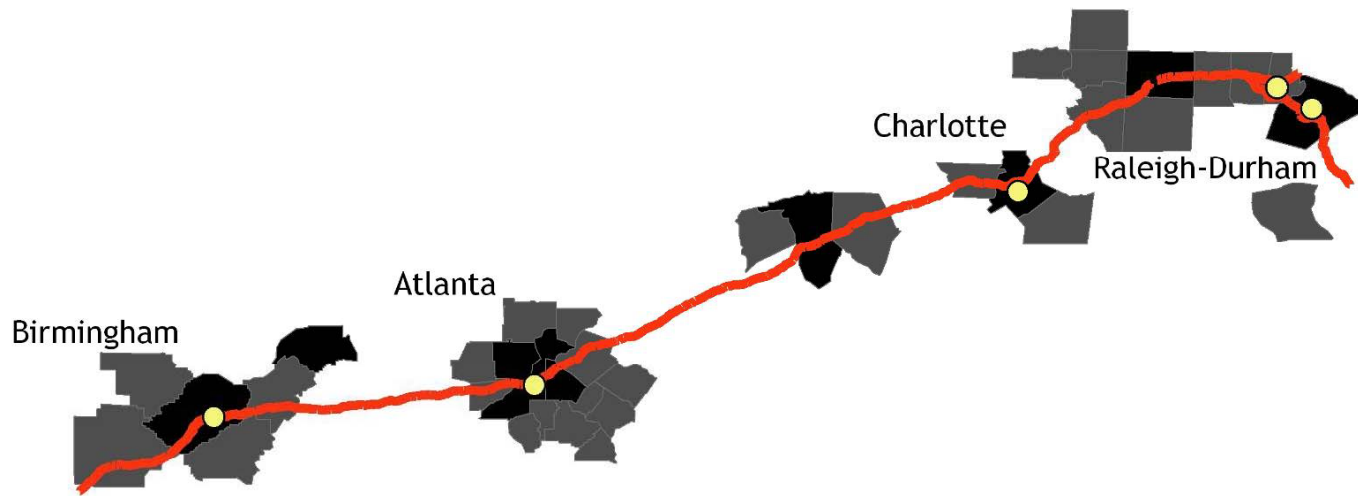
- Several megacities, often in a corridor
- Connected by infrastructure
- Substantial interactions between/among areas
- Southeast U.S. example

# MSAs 1950

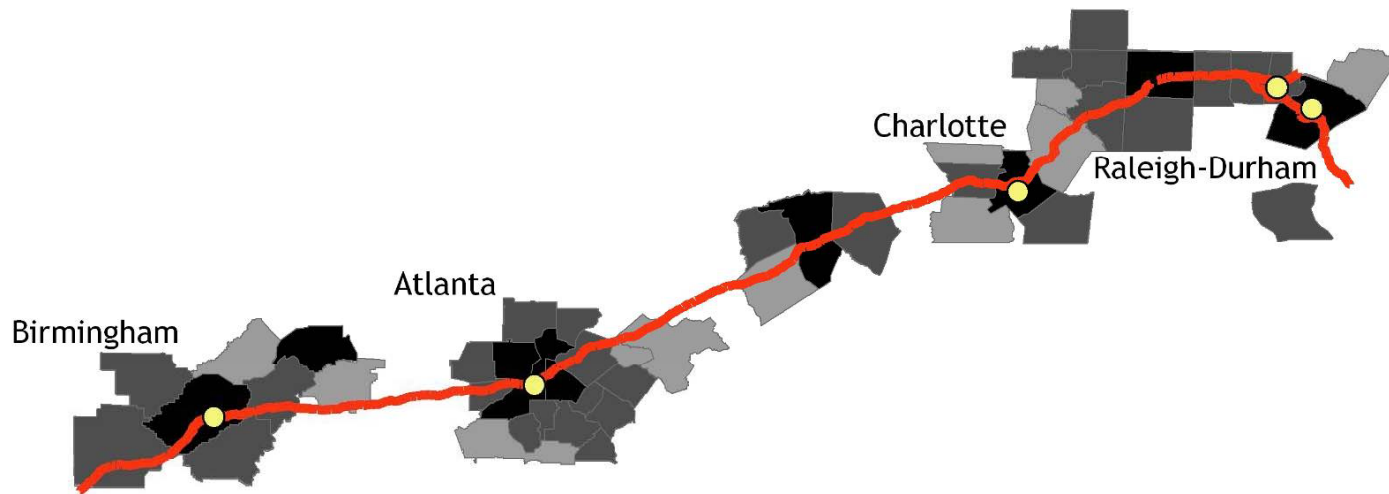




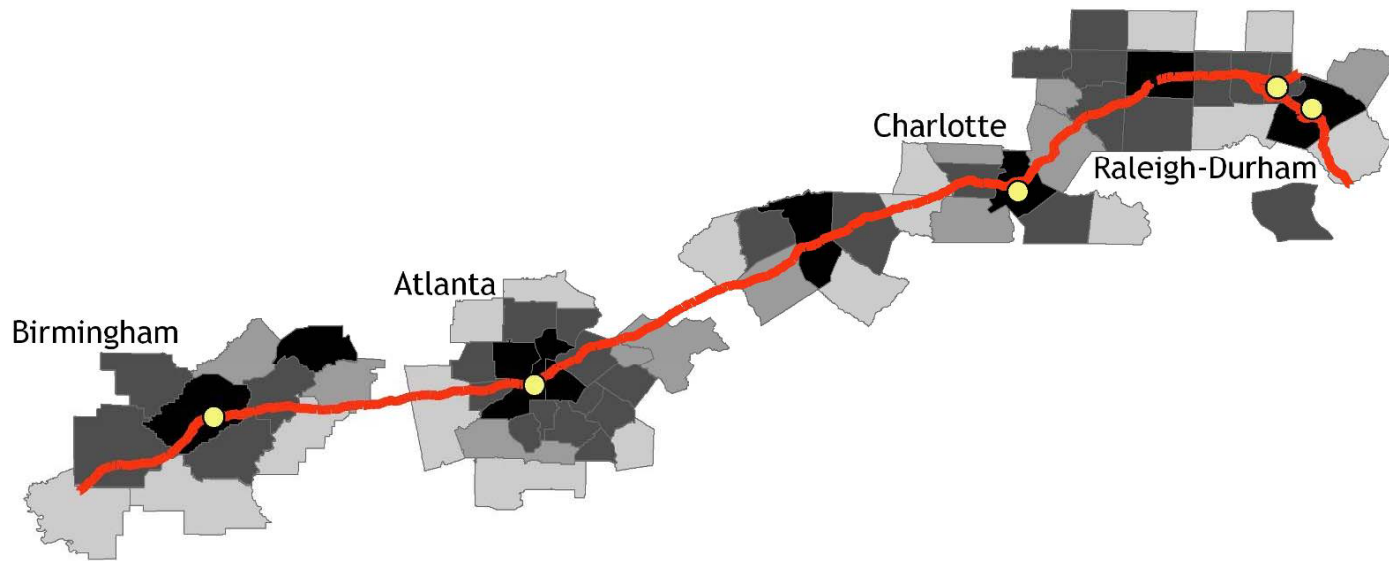
# MSAs 1973



# MSAs 1990



# MSAs 2003



# Useful Constructs

## ■ Megaregion

- Linked megacities and areas tied to them by
  - Natural environment
  - Flows of goods, services, and people
  - Shared resources (labor, infrastructure, federal funding, natural resources)
  - Social or cultural identity
  - Political boundaries (counties, states)
  - Weak boundaries

# Useful Constructs

## ■ Megaregion

- Captures the economic, social, and population core
- Delineates the natural, economic, and social connections between cities, metropolitan areas, and rural places

# Useful Constructs

## ■ Spatial Planning

- Intention approach to “coordinate the spatial and territorial dimensions of sectoral policies” (Nadin, 2002)
- Secures convergence and coordination between various sectoral policies.
- Explicitly draws attention to the location-based characteristics of importance to economic, infrastructural, social, and environmental policies

# Questions to Explore

- Why plan spatially at megaregional level?
  - Comparative advantage over status quo
  - Competitive advantage
  - Shared prosperity – greater social equity

# Questions to Explore

- How plan spatially at megaregional level?
  - Defining boundaries of megaregion
  - Lessons learned from elsewhere
  - Spatial plan look like
  - Changes to planning activities and policies
  - How implemented – top-down or bottom-up



# Questions to Explore

## ■ Implications

- How do megaregions relate to one another
- How do megaregions relate to non-megaregions
- Is planning at the megaregional level more “sustainable” than the status quo