

Frequently asked questions on DRCOG’s small-area forecast

Last updated May 1, 2020

Questions

1. Land use planning is a matter of local control. Why does DRCOG make this small-area forecast? 1
2. How often will DRCOG staff be soliciting feedback on small-area forecasts? 2
3. We have a new plan or rezoning that has yet to be approved. When would we get a chance to see that included in the small-area forecast?..... 2
4. What changes can and cannot be made to the model based on my feedback?..... 2
5. I provided feedback on your initial map last year. How is this review opportunity different? How was my initial input used? Where can I find it? 3
6. We’re in a recession now. How is that reflected in the forecast? 3
7. How can I display this data in my own geographic information system (GIS) or otherwise download it? 3
8. Who should I reach out to with additional questions or concerns? 4

1. Land use planning is a matter of local control. Why does DRCOG make this small-area forecast?

DRCOG is required as **the region’s federally designated metropolitan planning organization** to serve as a forum for a collaborative transportation planning process. This process must “*promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.*”¹

In short, **DRCOG must develop and maintain a [regional transportation plan](#)**. To understand and evaluate the need for transportation improvements, DRCOG forecasts future travel demand between different parts of the region. **The first step in this process is to forecast the future distribution of households and employment.**

Local zoning and plans are integral in the development of DRCOG’s small-area forecast. They help DRCOG staff understand where there is allowed or planned capacity for additional household and employment growth, and are considered when our tools distribute the county-level forecasts out to the transportation plan’s horizon year, in this version, the year 2050.

¹ 23 CFR 450.306(b)(5)

2. How often will DRCOG staff be soliciting feedback on small-area forecasts?

While the regional transportation plan must look out at least **20 years into the future**, DRCOG:

- **updates the plan every four years** as part of a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive process and
- typically offers a window for **plan amendments annually** every fall.

DRCOG staff plans to **collect feedback on small-area forecasts annually** in advance of the plan amendment window to account for updated state forecasts, new zoning and plans, or other changing assumptions and forecast model improvements.

Outside of this annual consultation, DRCOG staff is always interested in new plans and major rezoning or annexation information.

3. We have a new plan or rezoning that has yet to be approved. When would we get a chance to see that included in the small-area forecast?

DRCOG staff plans to **collect feedback on small-area forecasts annually**. You can confirm the inclusion of that change **during the feedback period after local approval**.

In the meantime, please feel free to send DRCOG staff any interagency referrals or other information about the pending change.

4. What changes can and cannot be made to the model based on my feedback?

DRCOG relies on a predictive model, [UrbanSim](#), to take the state's county-level forecasts for growth and anticipate how those households and jobs would be distributed in small areas throughout the region. Because of this, DRCOG staff is unable to take comments for a given small area, known also as a transportation analysis zone, and simply adjust household employment numbers up or down

However, DRCOG staff can adjust model inputs in two ways to integrate feedback:

1. **Change the capacity.** Each small area has a limited capacity for households and jobs based on size, as well as natural and regulatory constraints, such as protected open space and zoning. DRCOG staff can adjust this capacity based on local input.
2. **Scheduled development.** The predictive power of a model where thousands and thousands of different individuals are making choices about where to live and create jobs is limited. Local knowledge about committed development-related investments and approvals can help DRCOG staff improve the results – especially as it concerns the near-term development pipeline.

5. I provided feedback on your initial map last year. How is this review opportunity different? How was my initial input used? Where can I find it?

This **current review opportunity is different because it provides the chance to identify more specific adjustments** to try and meet local expectations for household and employment growth.

In **September 2019**, DRCOG staff sought preliminary feedback after some major model improvements and changes. The feedback received **helped us identify additional high-level data and model improvements** that include:

- addressing an overestimate of allowed growth in zoning districts with manufactured homes
- identifying more cases where a single zoning district type actually regulates a wide range of custom approvals
- identifying areas where local knowledge or information on approved developments could be incorporated.

The [preliminary forecast map and comments](#) are still available for viewing. While it may be helpful to look back at the initial input given, direct comparisons are not advised because the preliminary forecast:

- used a single regional control total, rather than county-control totals
- was reported on at a block group-level in terms of change of density
- did not attempt to incorporate scheduled development information.

6. We're in a recession now. How is that reflected in the forecast?

DRCOG relies on county and regional forecasts of jobs and labor force that come from the State Demography Office. This small-area forecast relies on the latest available forecast produced by that office in 2019.

While that forecast did not anticipate the precise timing and depth of the current economic crisis, **it did account for a near-term recession** coming after one of the longest periods of economic expansion in the nation's history. DRCOG staff will seek to incorporate new forecasts from the State Demography Office, which are typically finalized each November, in small-area forecasting work in 2021.

7. How can I display this data in my own geographic information system (GIS) or otherwise download it?

If you would like to compare the forecast to data in your own local or enterprise GIS, **the data layer can be [found on ArcGIS Online](#)**. You can also search for it in ArcGIS Online using the system-generated ID: ca9e60f9948249d18046787bfa0b8c3a.

Please remember to provide any comments through the [interactive map platform](#).

Feel free to reach out if alternative formats or downloads would facilitate your review.

8. Who should I reach out to with additional questions or concerns?

Please direct any additional questions or concerns to:

Andy Taylor, Regional Planning Manager

ataylor@drcog.org

and

Brad Calvert, Regional Planning and Development Division Director

bcalvert@drcog.org