

Census Issues 2020 Urban Area Determinations

Prepared by Chris Zeilinger, Community Transportation Association of America

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For transit agencies, transportation planners, and many of their key partners, this is a long-awaited moment. On December 29, 2022, the Census Bureau published its determinations of urban areas under the 2020 decennial census.

- For the next ten years, these will determine which places are eligible for FTA Section 5311 rural transit funding, and which are eligible for FTA Section 5307 funding.
- These census determinations will be the basis by which urban areas are placed in the 50,000 – 200,000 population category for FTA’s “small-urban” Section 5307 funds, and which are placed in the 200,000 – 1 million and 1 million-plus categories for “large-urban” Section 5307 funds.
- The populations and population densities behind these urban area determinations will be the basis for the population-based components of Section 5307 and 5311 funding for the next ten years.
- The Census determinations apply, as well, to determining which places are eligible for which forms of Section 5310 funding of projects for the enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities, and eligibility for Section 5339(b) formula-based allocations of funds for urban areas’ bus and bus facility projects.
- FTA will begin using these census determinations when making formula-based apportionments and allocations in FY 2024.

Details about which census blocks are in, or not in, designated urban areas are not yet available. Those data, along with Census’ maps of its 2020 urban areas, will begin to be public between January and March 2023. For all the details you might want, make repeated visits to Census’ “Urban and Rural” website at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>.

Below are some highlights from these latest urban area determinations. As you scan the following, it’s important to recall that Census changed its nomenclature for the 2020 census; in 2010 and earlier counts, urban areas with populations above 50,000 were called “urbanized areas,” and in 2010, urban areas with populations below 50,000 were called “urban clusters.” For 2020, all places that satisfy the latest urban criteria are called “urban areas,” the smallest of which is Munds Park, AZ, with a population of 773. Despite the Census nomenclature, FTA “urban transit” funds continue to be available only to those urban areas with populations above 50,000.

New Urban Areas

The 27 newly-designated urban areas in the 50,000 – 200,000 population cohort are:

- **Amherst Town – Northampton – Easthampton Town MA** (separated in 2020 from the Springfield urban area)
- **Beaufort – Port Royal, SC**
- **Bozeman, MT**
- **Bullhead City, AZ-NV**
- **Castle Rock, CO** (separated in 2020 from the Denver-Aurora urban area)
- **Clayton, NC** (separated in 2020 from the Raleigh urban area)
- **Dededo – Apotgan – Tamuning, GU**
- **Eagle Pass, TX**
- **Enid, OK** (this was a small-urban area in the 1980 census, but had been below 50,000 from 1990 – 2010)
- **Fernandina Beach – Yulee, FL**
- **Four Corners, FL**
- **Helena, MT**
- **Kiryas Joel, NY** (separated in 2020 from the Poughkeepsie-Newburgh urban area)
- **Maricopa, AZ**
- **Minot, ND**
- **New Braunfels, TX** (separated in 2020 from the San Antonio urban area)
- **Paducah, KY-IL**
- **Pinehurst – Southern Pines, NC**
- **Poinciana, FL**
- **Sandusky – Port Clinton, OH** (this had been a small-urban area prior to 2010, but population dropped below 50,000 in 2010 census)
- **Spring Hill, TN**
- **Traverse City – Garfield, MI**
- **Tulare, CA** (separated in 2020 from the Visalia urban area)
- **Twin Falls, ID**
- **Valparaiso – Sherwood Forest, IN** (separated in 2020 from the Chicago urban area)
- **Wasilla – Knik-Fairview – North Lakes, AK**
- **Winder, GA**

“Graduated” Urban Areas

Several previously small urban areas now have populations above 200,000. The 14 new members of the 200,000 – 1 million urban area cohort are:

- **Amarillo, TX**
- **Bremerton, WA**

- **Clarksville, TN-KY**
- **College Station – Bryan, TX**
- **Deltona, FL**
- **Fargo, ND-MN**
- **Gainesville, FL**
- **Gainesville, GA**
- **Livermore – Pleasanton – Dublin, CA** (Pleasanton and Dublin were separated from the Concord urban area in 2020)
- **Navarre – Miramar Beach – Destin, FL** (was known as Ft. Walton Beach-Navarre-Wright in 2010 census)
- **Olympia – Lacey, WA**
- **San Rafael – Novato, CA** (not a “graduate”; this area is newly designated in 2020, having been separated from the San Francisco-Oakland urban area)
- **Santa Barbara, CA**
- **Phoenix West – Goodyear – Avondale, AZ** (was known as Avondale-Goodyear in 2010 census)

Three urban areas that had been in the 200,000 – 1 million cohort have moved up to the “millionaire’s club” of urban areas with populations greater than 1 million:

- **Nashville – Davidson, TN**
- **Raleigh, NC**
- **Richmond, VA**

“Disappeared” Urban Areas

A record number of places that had been designated as urban areas in 2010 and prior censuses no longer exist as urban areas in the 50,000 – 200,000 population cohort for 2020. These 15 places are:

- **Bloomsburg – Berwick, PA** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Carbondale, IL** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Cumberland, MD-WV-PA** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Danville, IL** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Delano, CA** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **East Stroudsburg, PA-NJ** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Monessen – California, PA** (Monessen and California-Brownsville were split into their individual urban areas in 2020, with neither urban area having a population above 50,000)
- **New Bern, NC** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Pine Bluff, AR** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Pottstown, PA** (urban area absorbed into the Philadelphia urban area in 2020)

- **Twin Rivers – Hightstown, NJ** (urban area absorbed into the Trenton urban area in 2020)
- **Uniontown – Connellsville, PA** (Uniontown and Connellsville were split into their individual urban areas in 2020, with neither urban area having a population above 50,000)
- **Villas, NJ** (absorbed into the Atlantic City-Ocean City-Villas urban area for 2020)
- **West Bend, WI** (urban area population fell below 50,000 in 2020)
- **Westminster – Eldersburg, MD** (Westminster and Eldersburg were split into their individual urban areas in 2020, with neither urban area having a population above 50,000)

“Relegated” Urban Areas

While none of the urban areas with populations above 1 million in 2010 lost that status in 2020, there were two urban areas that slipped below the 200,000 population threshold in 2020, and now are among the “small” urban areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000:

- **Norwich – New London, CT** (presumably lost population on account of Westerly, RI-CT being separated into its own urban area of 30,955 population in 2020)
- **Visalia, CA** (presumably lost population on account of Tulare, CA being separated into its own urban area of 70,628 population in 2020)

What’s In a Name?

The critically important details about specific locations’ urban area status won’t be available until Census releases its data and map files in early 2023. But there are hints of change in how Census adjusted the names it uses for some urban areas.

Urban area name changes in 2020 that may portend minor or major significance

- **Alton, IL** no longer includes the community of West Alton, MO.
- **Anderson – Clemson, SC** had just been “Anderson” prior to 2020, but Clemson and its environs were separated from Greenville, SC in 2020, becoming attached instead to Anderson.
- **Binghamton, NY** no longer includes any portion of Pennsylvania in its urban area.
- **Bonita Springs – Estero, FL** may have acquired portions of the community of Estero that had been included in the adjoining Cape Coral urban area prior to 2020.
- **Boston, MA-NH** no longer includes any portion of Rhode Island in its urban area.
- **Brunswick – St. Simons, GA** has grown in 2020 to incorporate the formerly separate “urban cluster” of St. Simons.
- **Cincinnati, OH-KY** no longer includes any portion of Indiana in its urban area.

- **El Centro, CA** no longer includes the community of Calexico in its urban area (Calexico was separated from El Centro in 2020 as its own urban area with a population of 38,491).
- **Evansville, IN** no longer includes any portion of Kentucky in its urban area (Henderson, KY, which had been part of the Evansville urban area before 2020, is now its own urban area with a population of 28,430).
- **Galveston – Texas City, TX** reflects that the former “Texas City” urban area has grown to include the sometimes urban, sometimes less-urban, community of Galveston in this expanded urban area.
- **Gastonia, NC** no longer includes any portion of South Carolina in its urban area.
- **Lake Jackson, TX** no longer includes the community of Angleton in its urban area (Angleton was separated from Lake Jackson in 2020 as its own urban area with a population of 19,866).
- **McKinney – Frisco, TX** seems to reflect a 2020 removal of Frisco from the Dallas-Ft. Worth-Arlington area, adding Frisco instead to what had been the McKinney urban area.
- **Minneapolis – St. Paul, MN** no longer includes any portion of Wisconsin in its area.
- **New York – Jersey City – Newark, NY-NJ** no longer includes any portion of Connecticut in its area; Jersey City already was part of this urban area, and now has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Poughkeepsie – Newburgh, NY** no longer includes any portion of New Jersey in its urban area; as mentioned above, a new Kiryas Joel urban area has been carved out of part of the Poughkeepsie-Newburgh area.
- **Tracy – Mountain House, CA** has grown in 2020 to include what had been the separate “urban cluster” of Mountain House.

Urban area name changes in 2020 that seem, indeed, nominal

- **Allentown – Bethlehem, PA-NJ** already included Bethlehem in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Arroyo Grande – Grover Beach – Pismo Beach, CA** already included Pismo Beach in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Atlantic City – Ocean City – Villas, NJ** already included Ocean City in its urban area, but now incorporates the formerly separate Villas urban area, adding both those communities to the expanded urban area’s name.
- **Barceloneta – Florida – Bajadero, PR** had been the “Florida – Imbéry–Barceloneta” urban area until 2020, but now two of its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name; both Bajadero and Imbéry already were included in this urban area, but Bajadero has been added to the urban area’s name, and Imbéry no longer is part of the urban area’s name.
- **Bluffton East – Hilton Head Island, SC** already included Bluffton in its urban area, but now adds “Bluffton East” (which includes the town of Bluffton) to the urban

area's name (separately, what used to be the "Sun City Hilton Head" urban cluster is now termed the "Bluffton West" urban area, with a 2020 population of 31,096).

- **Bel Air – Aberdeen, MD** had been the "Aberdeen – Bel Air South – Bel Air North" urban area until 2020, but now its principal communities' names (unifying the "south" and "north" components of Bel Air) traded places in the urban area's name.
- **Benton Harbor – Lincoln – St. Joseph, MI** no longer includes the community of Fair Plain in its urban area name, for no readily apparent reason (and inexplicably adds Lincoln, MI, which is a small town on the opposite side of the state).
- **Beverly Hills – Homosassa Springs – Pine Ridge, FL** had been the "Homosassa Springs – Beverly Hills – Citrus Springs" urban area until 2020, but now two of its principal communities' names traded places in the urban area's name; both Citrus Springs and Pine Ridge already were included in this urban area, but Pine Ridge has been added to the urban area's name, and Citrus Springs no longer is part of the urban area's name.
- **Bradenton – Sarasota – Venice, FL** had been the "Sarasota – Bradenton" urban area until 2020, but now two of its principal communities' names traded places in the urban area's name; Venice already was included in this urban area, but now Ridge been added to the urban area's name.
- **Charleston, SC** probably continues to include the community of North Charleston in its urban area, but that latter community no longer is included in the urban area's name.
- **Concord – Walnut Creek, CA** already included Walnut Creek in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area's name. Note that Dublin and Pleasanton, which used to be part of this area, were added to the Livermore urban area in 2020.
- **Daytona Beach – Palm Coast – Port Orange, FL** had been the "Palm Coast – Daytona Beach – Port Orange" urban area until 2020, but now two of its principal communities' names traded places in the urban area's name.
- **Fairhope – Daphne, AL** had been the "Daphne – Fairhope" urban area until 2020, but now its principal communities' names traded places in the urban area's name.
- **Indio – Palm Desert – Palm Springs, CA** had been the "Indio – Cathedral City" urban area until 2020, but now Cathedral City has been dropped from the urban area's name, even though it remains part of the urban area, and Palm Desert and Palm Springs, both of which already were included in this urban area, have been added to the urban area's name.
- **Kahului – Wailuku, HI** already included Wailuku in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area's name.
- **Kennewick – Richland – Pasco, WA** already included Richland in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area's name.
- **Kissimmee – St. Cloud, FL** already included St. Cloud in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area's name.
- **Lafayette – Erie – Louisville, CO** had been the "Lafayette – Louisville – Erie" urban area until 2020, but now two of its principal communities' names traded places in the urban area's name.

- **Lancaster – Manheim, PA** already included Manheim in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Las Vegas – Henderson – Paradise, NV** already included Paradise in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Macon – Bibb County, GA** was renamed in 2020, possibly to reflect the unified Macon – Bibb County government of Macon (this nomenclature already is in place for the Athens – Clarke County and Augusta – Richland County urban areas in Georgia).
- **Miami – Ft. Lauderdale, FL** already included Ft. Lauderdale in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Mission Viejo – Lake Forest – Laguna Niguel, CA** removed San Clemente (still a part of the urban area) and added Laguna Niguel (already part of the urban area) to the urban area’s name.
- **Muskegon – Norton Shores, MI** already included Norton Shores in its urban area, but now includes that community in the urban area’s name.
- **Myrtle Beach – North Myrtle Beach, SC-NC** removed Socastee (still a part of the urban area) and added North Myrtle Beach (already part of the urban area) to the urban area’s name.
- **Oxnard – San Buenaventura (Ventura), CA** already included Ventura (the official name of which is “San Buenaventura”) in its urban area, and Ventura now has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Palmdale – Lancaster, CA** had been the “Lancaster – Palmdale” urban area until 2020, but now its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name.
- **Panama City – Panama City Beach, FL** already included Panama City Beach in its urban area, and Panama City Beach now has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Pascagoula – Gautier, MS** already included Gautier in its urban area, and Gautier now has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Port Charlotte – North Port, FL** had been the “North Port – Port Charlotte” urban area until 2020, but now its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name.
- **Seaside – Monterey – Pacific Grove, CA** already included Pacific Grove in its urban area, and Pacific Grove now has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Seattle – Tacoma, WA** already included Tacoma in its urban area, and Tacoma now has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Sherman – Denison, TX** already included Denison in its urban area, and Denison now has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **South Lyon – Hamburg – Genoa, MI** has been renamed to include two of the unincorporated townships, Hamburg and Genoa, in its urban area; the city of Howell may still be part of the urban area, but this no longer is named the “South Lyon – Howell” urban area.
- **Steubenville – Weirton, OH-WV-PA** had been the “Weirton – Steubenville” urban area until 2020, but now its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name.

- **Temecula – Murrieta – Menifee, CA** had been the had been the “Murietta – Temecula – Menifee” urban area until 2020, but now two of its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name.
- **The Villages – Lady Lake, FL** had been the “Lady Lake – The Villages” urban area until 2020, but now its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name.
- **The Woodlands – Conroe, TX** had been the “Conroe – The Woodlands” urban area until 2020, but now its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name.
- **Vero Beach – Sebastian, FL** had been the “Sebastian – Vero Beach – Florida Ridge” urban area until 2020, but now two of its principal communities’ names traded places in the urban area’s name; in addition, Florida Ridge remains part of this urban area, but no longer is part of the urban area’s name.
- **Victorville – Hesperia – Apple Valley, CA** already included Apple Valley in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Virginia Beach – Norfolk, VA** already included Norfolk in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.
- **Washington – Arlington, DC-VA-MD** already included Arlington in the urban area, but now that community has been added to the urban area’s name.