



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

J. ERIC BOYETTE  
SECRETARY

**Memorandum**

To: Don Adams, Jackson County Manager  
Mike Poston, Jackson County Planning Director  
From: Amin Hezaveh, Transportation Planning Division  
RE: Southwestern RPO Travel Demand Model Socio-Economic Data Projection

**Background**

The Transportation Planning Division has initiated a pilot study to develop regional travel demand models (TDM). Two regions (Southwestern RPO and Albemarle RPO County) have been selected to partner in its development and assist and support rural communities and local interests. The TDM is a long-range process that aims to study current travel behavior to predict travel patterns in the future and assist decision-makers in making informed transportation planning decisions. The strength of TDM is the ability to ask "what if" questions about proposed plans and policies and their effect on travel behavior.

**Population**

For this study, we selected 2021 as the Base year. Based on the historical trends in the Jackson County, Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) recommended a 0.3% growth rate for the 2020-2050 period which put the County population at 46,517 (more details in Table 1). The OSBM also recommended a 1.1% average growth rate (AGR) for the state of North Carolina for the same period.

Considering the unique characteristics of the mountain region, TPD recommends a 1% growth rate for the SWRPO pilot study. Based on the TPD recommended growth rate 14,995 people will be added to the Jackson County population, and population will reach 58,104 by April 2050. Table 2 and Figure 1 present both population trends and projected population in the future.

**Employment**

Employment information for Jackson County was retrieved from the Data Axle (InfoUSA) database. According to Data Axle, 19,603 employees worked in Jackson County in 2021. Countywide 2050 employment totals were based on maintaining the same population-employment ratios as present in 2021. Based on this projection 6,818 employment will be added, and Jackson County employment will reach 26,421 by April 2050.

**Request for Approval**

NCDOT and the Southwestern RPO respectfully requests your official approval of projected socio-economic data used to determine future deficiencies shown in the tables below. *Your approval can be documented as part of the official minutes of a regularly scheduled Board of Commissioners.*

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**SWRPO pilot Travel Demand Model**

- TPD recommends a 1% growth rate for both population and employment in Jackson County for 2020-2050 period.
- Average North Carolina State population growth rate is 1.1%.
- Jackson County's population will reach 58,104 by April 2050.
- Jackson County's employment will reach 26,421 by April 2050.

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Table 1 Details of changes in proposed population from OSBM

	2020 Census*	July 2050 Projection*	Numeric Change*	Number of Births*	Number of Deaths*	Natural Increase*	Net Migration*	AGR**
Jackson	43,109	46,517	3,408	1.08	10,563	15,971	-5,408	0.3%

\* Source: OSBM (<https://www.osbm.nc.gov/facts-figures/population-demographics/state-demographer/countystate-population-projections>)

\*\* This is OSBM recommended growth rate, TPD doesn't recommended this growth rate

Table 2 Historical population and future projection in population

Year	Census Year*					Projection Year			
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
Jackson	21,593	25,811	26,846	33,103	40,271	43,109	47,619	52,601	58,104
Statewide	5,084,411	5,880,095	6,632,448	8,046,668	9,535,483	10,439,388	NA	NA	13,800,000

\* Source: OSBM (<https://www.osbm.nc.gov/facts-figures/population-demographics/state-demographer/countystate-population-projections>)

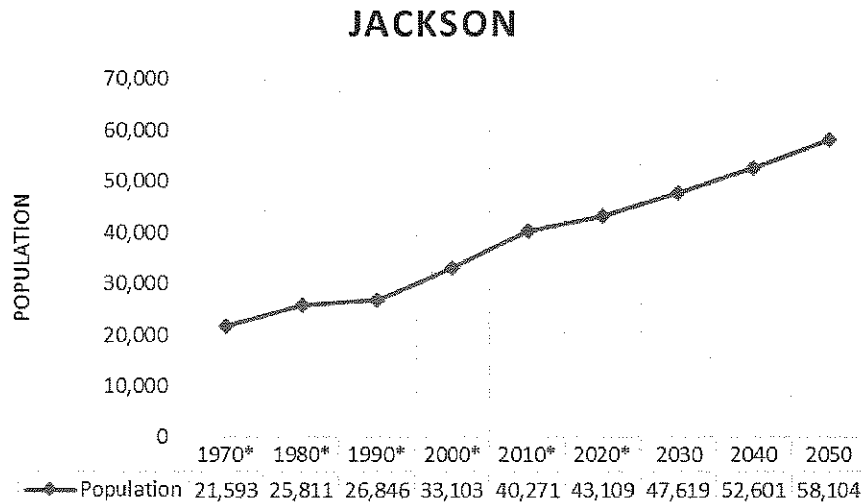


Figure 1 Historical population and future projection in population

(\* Source: OSBM (<https://www.osbm.nc.gov/facts-figures/population-demographics/state-demographer/countystate-population-projections>))

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