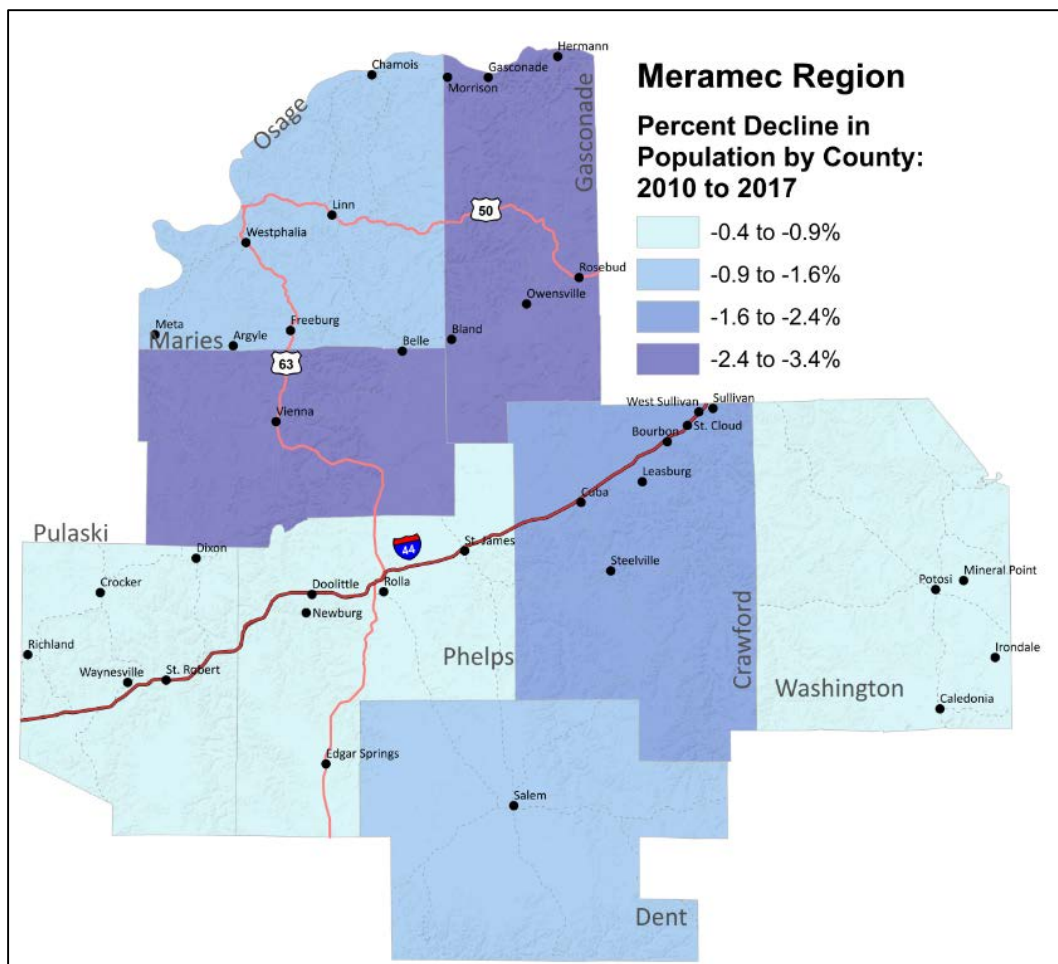


## CHAPTER TWO: TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

### 2.1 Population Characteristics

The Meramec region consists of eight counties located in the southeast-central parts of Missouri. The area covers over 5,131 square miles and includes 36 municipalities. The region, comprised of Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington counties, is marked with gently rolling hills, deep valleys and plateaus. Numerous rivers and streams traverse the region, creating a natural draw for outdoor enthusiasts. Many of the small towns still have major manufacturing plants. Wineries are scattered across the region making it a popular draw for tourists (Meramec Regional Planning Commission). The closest major city is St. Louis, about an hour-and-a-half north-east of the region. Two important institutions in the region are the Missouri University of Science and Technology with approximately 9,000 students located in Rolla (Phelps County) and a major military base, Fort Leonard Wood (Pulaski County) both of which offer many opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs.

The region experienced a slight increase in population during the 2000 to 2010-time period. However, in 2017, the eight-county Meramec Region was home to 198,662 people, a decrease of 1.3% since 2010 decennial census.



Population density is the number of people per unit of area usually per square mile (which may include or exclude bodies of water). Population density provides comparable information on how densely populated an area is. Based on 2013-2017 5-Year American Community Survey Census estimates, the Meramec Region has a low population density of 39.8 persons per square mile compared to the state and national density which is 88.4 and 92.6 respectively. Pulaski County is the most densely populated county within the region with 97.1 persons per square mile, followed by Phelps County with 66.8. Maries and Dent counties have the lowest population densities within the region with 17.0 and 20.7 persons per square mile respectively. While the numbers have shifted slightly, all population density remains relatively close to 2010 Census numbers.

In general, higher rates of density are concentrated around city centers and county seats within the region. Additionally, I-44 can be a focal point of density which is consistent with other interstate development patterns across the state. Outside of city centers, population density is generally scattered across each county. This could create difficulty in planning for future transportation projects. While many discussions center on needs in urban settings, servicing the rural population is increasingly complicated based on the dispersed population.

#### **POPULATION BY AGE**

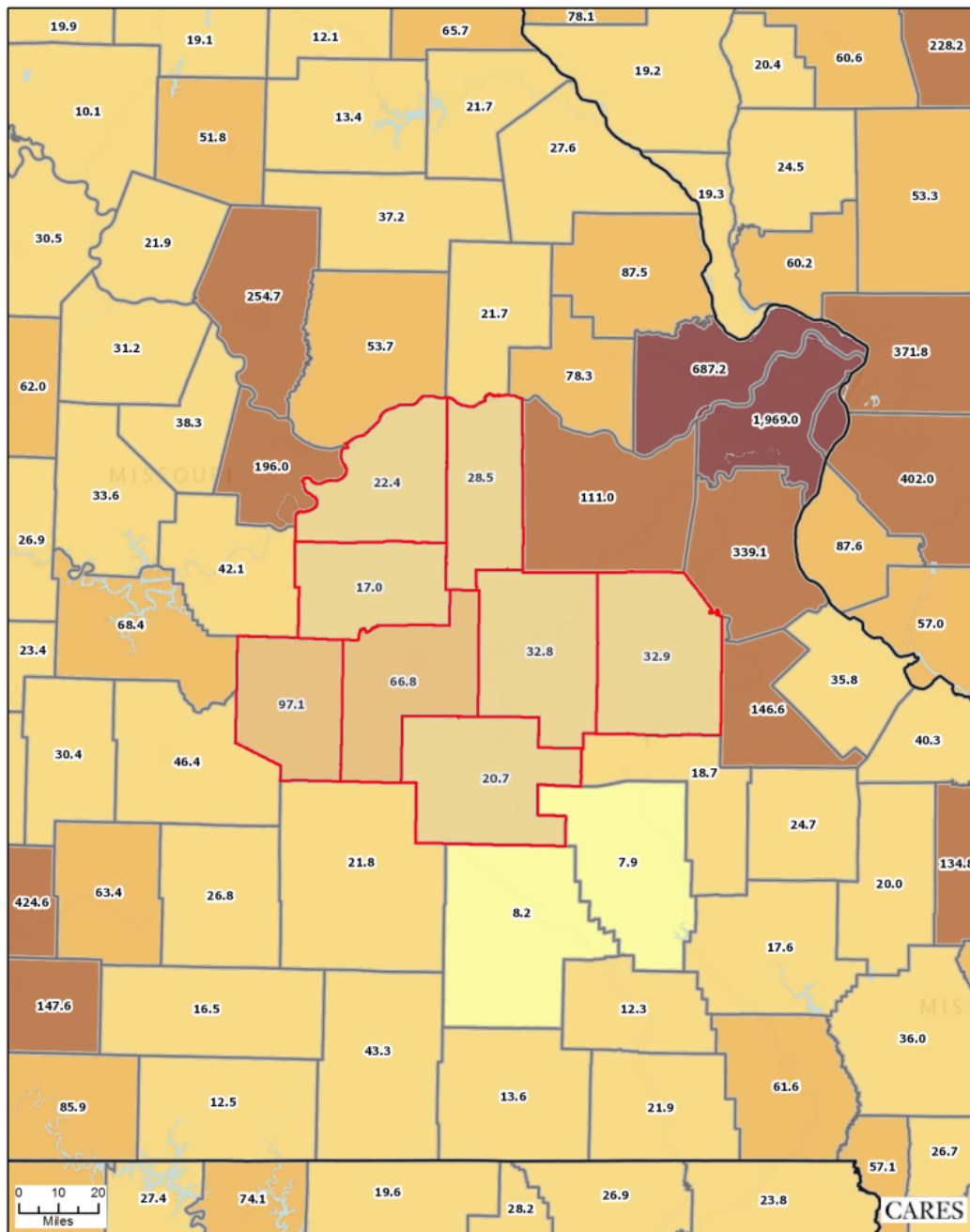
Under 5.....	5.9%
5-17.....	15.9%
18-24.....	13.3%
25-44.....	24.5%
65+.....	16.1%
Median Age.....	40.6 Years

Source: 2018 ACS data and StatsAmerica.org

While the region's population was reduced by 2,592, the State of Missouri's population increased slightly by 2.1%. Individual 2017 county populations range from a low of 8,867 in Maries County to 52,059 in Pulaski County. All counties demonstrated an individual decline from 2010 to 2017, ranging from a high of 3.4% in Maries County to 0.4% in Pulaski County. The largest city in the region continues to be Rolla, the county seat of Phelps County, with a population of 20,293 in 2017, an increase of 734 people since 2010. The smallest city is Morrison in Gasconade County with 91 residents.

According to the 2017 Census estimates, the Meramec Region deviates from the nation and state trends of population regarding racial groups. Only 9.7% of the region's population—19,264 people—are considered non-white, while the same group represents 26.7% of the United States' population and 16.9% of Missouri's population. The region's population is composed of 52.4% males and 47.6% females.

## Population Density by County, ACS 2013-17



### Map Legend

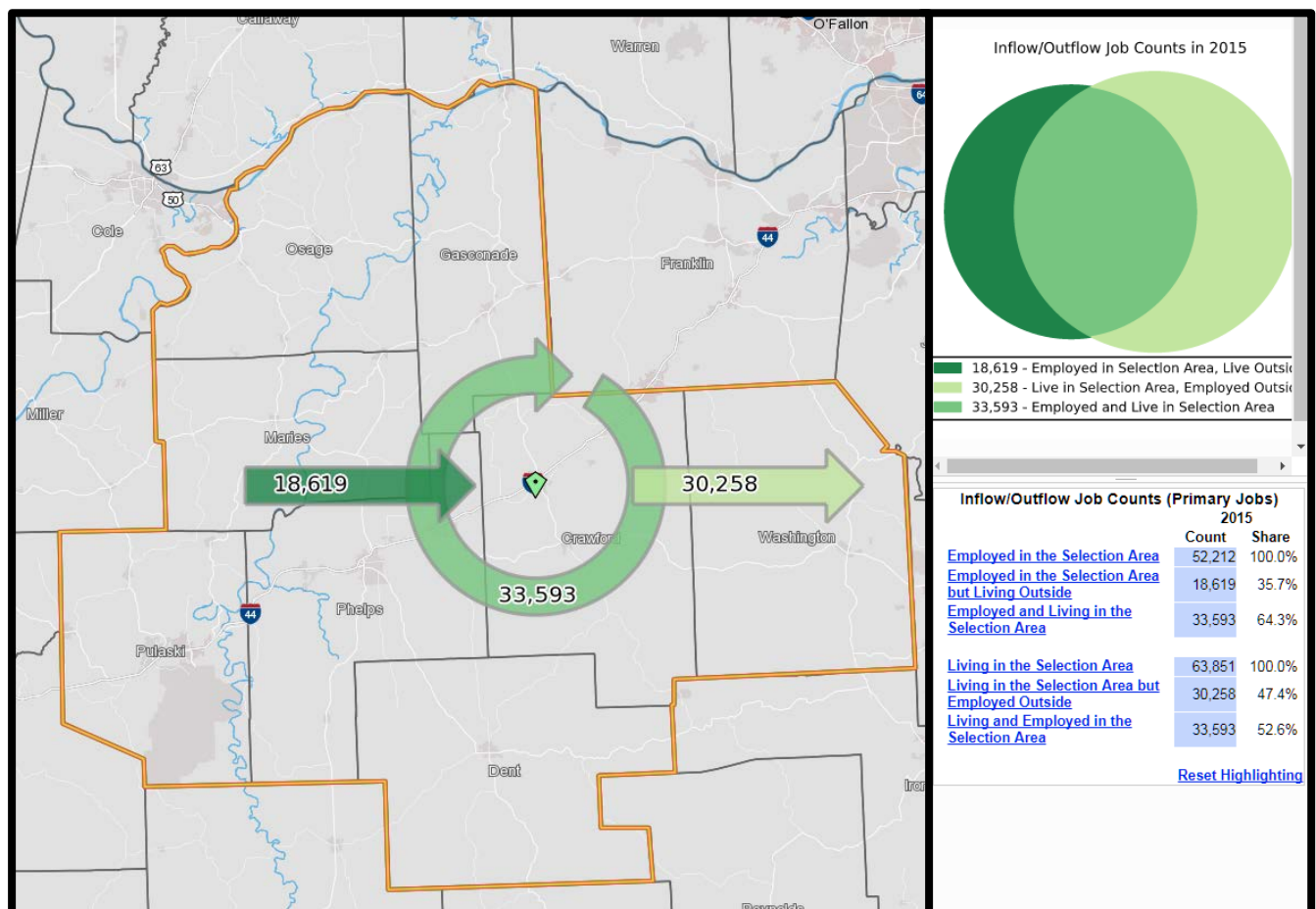
Population, Density (Persons per Sq Mile) by County, ACS 2013-17

- Over 500
- 101 - 500
- 51 - 100
- 11 - 50
- Under 11
- No Data or Data Suppressed

<https://allthingsmissouri.org/missouri-map-room/>, 6/25/2019

A majority of workers, 16 and over, in the Meramec Region commute to work in single-occupant vehicle (77%). Only 0.4% of workers utilize public transit for their daily commute which is significantly lower than the United States average of 5.1% for 2017. Additionally, workers commute almost half an hour (approximately 26 minutes) to work each way. Inflow/Outflow analysis from 2015 Census.gov data also shows that almost twice as many Meramec Region residents commuted outside of the region for work as compared to those that commute into the region.

Commuting to Work, 2017				
	Meramec Region	Avg. % Of Total	U.S.	Pct. Of Total
<b>Workers 16 years and over</b>	88,256	100.0%	148,432,042	100.0%
<b>Car, truck, or van –drove alone</b>		77.0%		76.4%
<b>Car, truck, or van-carpooled</b>		12.1%		9.2%
<b>Public transportation (excluding taxicab)</b>		0.4%		5.1%
<b>Walked</b>		2.1%		2.7%
<b>Other means</b>		1.4%		1.8%
<b>Worked at home</b>		7.1%		4.7%
<b>Mean travel time to work (minutes)</b>	25.8		26.4	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, latest 5-year Estimates				



The educational level of the residents of the Meramec Region has increased significantly the last few decades. The percentage of individuals with at least a high school diploma increased between 2013 and 2017 (82.4% to 83.9%). The percentage of individuals 25 years and older with some college to a professional degree also increased. Currently, Phelps and Pulaski Counties have the highest percentage of college graduates 25 years of age and older, 55.2% and 61.4%, respectively.

Median household incomes in the region increased an average of 5.83% from 2013 to 2017. The median household income for the region is below the state and national averages, partially due to declines in median household income in Maries and Phelps Counties between 2013 and 2017. Additionally, the median household income increased at a slower rate for the remaining six counties, as compared to the state and nation.

County	2017 Median Household Income	2013 Median Household Income	% Change
Crawford	\$37,171	\$35,897	3.55%
Dent	\$38,829	\$36,311	6.93%
Gasconade	\$50,687	\$41,392	22.46%
Maries	\$41,715	\$42,566	-2.00%
Osage	\$54,503	\$51,408	6.02%
Phelps	\$41,681	\$41,964	-0.67%
Pulaski	\$51,137	\$49,820	2.64%
Washington	\$37,810	\$34,702	8.96%
Regional Average	\$44,192	\$41,758	5.83%
Missouri	\$51,542	\$47,380	8.78%
United States	\$57,652	\$53,046	8.68%
2009-2013 ACS Data, US Census / 2013-2017 ACS Data, US Census			

The Meramec Region has 89,369 total housing units with 72,036 occupied (according to 2013-2017 ACS estimates.) The average household size in the Meramec Region is 2.55 people as compared to 2.47 for Missouri. Pulaski County has the highest per unit population with 2.83 followed by Washington and Osage Counties with 2.64 and 2.61 persons per unit, respectively.

According to 2013 - 2017 American Community Survey, 16.86% of the Meramec Region families are living in poverty. This figure is down slightly from the 17.06% in 2013. Washington and Dent counties have historically led the region in % of population meeting poverty guidelines for the past 30 years. In 1979, over 20% met the guidelines in these counties. These %ages increased considerably in 1989, with Washington County showing 27.2% and Dent County with 25.2% persons in poverty. In 2017, Washington and Dent counties continue to record the highest poverty levels in the region at 20.2% and 20.8% respectively. Osage County continues to have the lowest number of persons in poverty, with less than 7% for 2017.

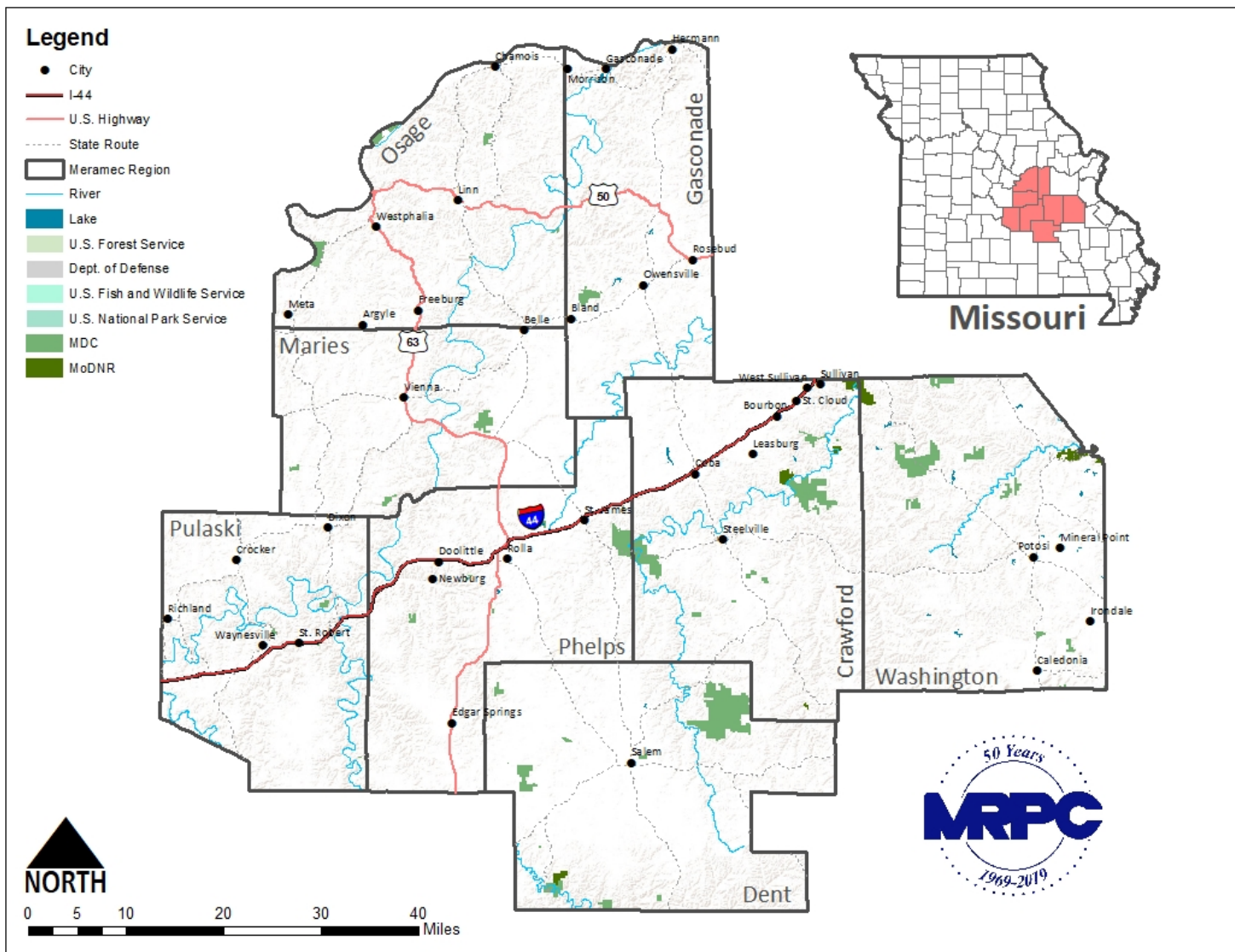
The following table provides an overview of household car availability for each county in the region. While a majority of households have access to at least one vehicle, a range of 4.5 – 7.7% has no vehicle availability at all within the Meramec Region.



Meramec Region Household Car Availability (2012-2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates)				
	<b>Crawford</b>	<b>Dent</b>	<b>Gasconade</b>	<b>Maries</b>
<b>Total Households:</b>	9,290	5,889	6,168	3,642
<b>No vehicle available</b>	439	454	275	178
<b>1 vehicle available</b>	2,983	1,811	1,795	1,146
<b>2 vehicles available</b>	3,422	1,957	2,113	1,227
<b>3 + vehicles available</b>	2,446	1,667	1,985	1,091
	<b>Osage</b>	<b>Phelps</b>	<b>Pulaski</b>	<b>Washington</b>
<b>Total Households:</b>	5,046	16,838	15,298	9,045
<b>No vehicle available</b>	271	1,146	883	631
<b>1 vehicle available</b>	1,005	5,721	5,015	2,614
<b>2 vehicles available</b>	1,684	6,453	6,051	3,316
<b>3 + vehicles available</b>	2,086	3,518	3,349	2,484

According to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, there are 69,269 people who make up the 18-64 age group civilian labor force in the Meramec Region. This is a slight increase over the recorded 69,033 workers in the 2009-2013 ACS Census. In the region, the top three industries by numbers of establishments are health care and social assistance (641 establishments), retail trade (623 establishments) and other services (except public administration) (434 establishments) based on 2016 census data.

Three federal highways pass through the region: Interstate 44, U.S. 63 and U.S. 50. Interstate 44 bisects the region in a northeast to southwest direction and serves as the major highway between St. Louis and Springfield with Rolla being about the half-way point. U.S. 63 connects Vienna and Rolla with Jefferson City, and U.S. 50 runs east and west through Gasconade and Osage counties. A majority of the remaining highways in the region are maintained by MoDOT. Several Meramec communities also have airports: Rolla National Airport located at Vichy; Sullivan Airport; Washington County Airport in Potosi; Salem Airport; Cuba Airport; Hermann Airport; Waynesville-St. Robert Regional Airport in Fort Leonard Wood, and State Technical College Airport in Linn.



Four railways serve the region. Burlington Northern operates the most miles of track in the region. That rail line follows the general route of I-44 through Crawford and Phelps counties. Rail service in the region is not as prevalent as it once was. Several miles of the former Rock Island rail have been abandoned for many years; however, a decision is pending from the State of Missouri of accepting the former rail line from Ameren, the current owner. If the state assumes ownership, the proposed Rock Island Trail could be a major tourist destination for the region. Amtrak also crosses the Meramec Region and stops at its very northeast point at Hermann. Navigable water transportation is provided at three locations in the region, all on the Missouri River. Those sites are Hermann, Gasconade and Chamois.