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Employment Trends and Recovery in the Columbus GA-AL Metropolitan Statistical Area, 2003-2011*

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Introduction

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included over \$800 billion of government spending targeted to stimulate the US economy out of the so-called "Great Recession". The third anniversary of the "Stimulus Bill" recently passed which provides us with a timely opportunity to look back and examine how our region was affected by the recession and how our recovery is progressing. In this report, we focus on a single measure, employment, which was the number one priority of the Stimulus.

Employment Statistics

There are two main types of employment statistics collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics; employment by place of work (CES measure) and employment by place of residence (CPS measure). Each of these statistics measures very different things

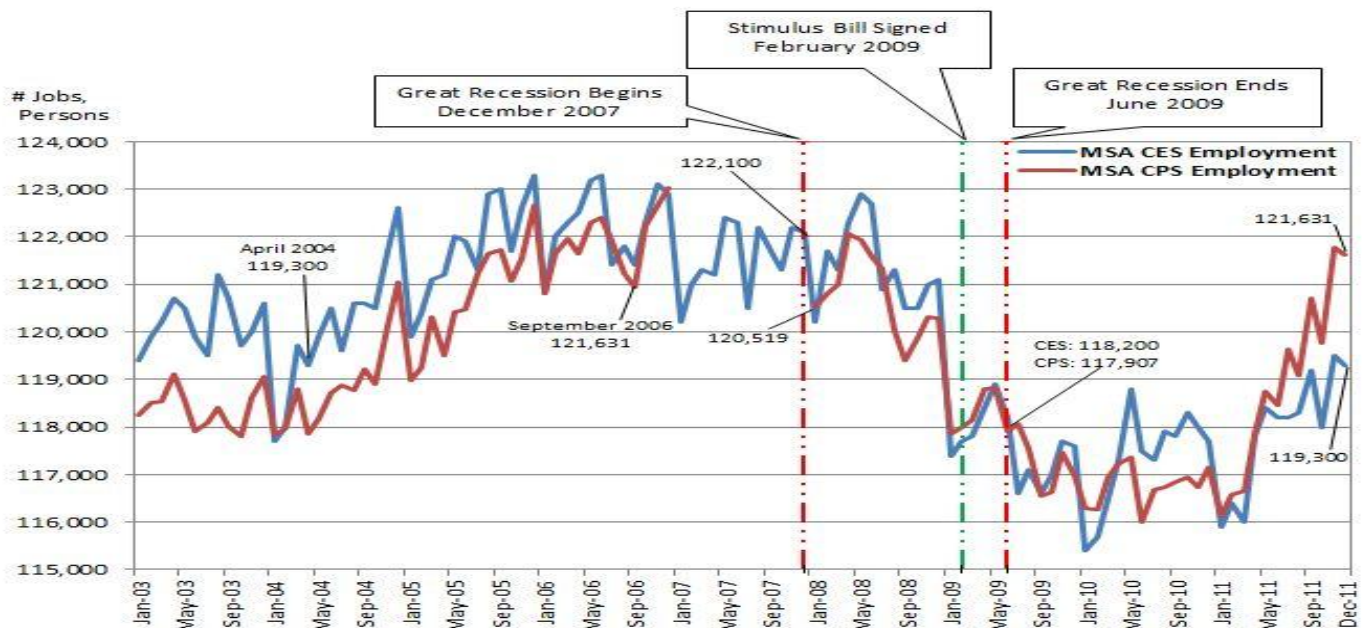
and both are needed to

state of the labor market in the local economy. To summarize the differences, the CES provides monthly estimates of nonfarm payroll jobs within a geographic region while the CPS provides estimates of the number of persons who live within a geographic region that have jobs no matter where the jobs are located.

Employment in the Columbus GA-AL MSA

The figure below shows the CPS and the CES measures of employment for the Columbus GA-AL metropolitan statistical area¹ (MSA) from January 2003 through December 2011.² The CPS measure of employment is missing for 2007 due to missing or inaccurate data for Chattahoochee County during that time period.

CES and CPS Employment Statistics for the Columbus GA-AL MSA, 2003 - 2011.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

*This fact sheet and the full report can be accessed at <http://butlercenter.columbusstate.edu>

¹The MSA includes Muscogee, Harris, Chattahoochee, and Marion counties in GA and Russell County in AL.

²In order to examine the actual employment levels the CES and the CPS are not seasonally adjusted.

Prior to 2011, it was typical for the CES measure to lie above the CPS measure. This was most likely an indication of the amount of in-migration of labor from outside the MSA to jobs that were located within the MSA. However, since January 2011 this trend seems to have reversed itself as the CPS measure is now above the CES measure. This is most likely the result of an increasing number of MSA residents finding jobs outside the region; for example residents of Harris County commuting to the KIA production facility in Troup County.

Over the course of the recession, jobs located in the MSA fell by 3,900 and continued to fall after the end of the recession by an additional 2,800 jobs to a low of 115,400 in January 2010. Likewise the number of residents in the MSA who were employed fell from 120,519 in January 2008 to 117,907 by the end of the recession and continued to fall to a low of 116,003 in June 2010.

As shown in the following table, the MSA has received an influx of over \$180 million in Federal funding from the Stimulus since February 2009. Since January 2011 the region has experienced an increase in both jobs located in the region and the number of employed residents of the region. As of December 2011, 119,300 jobs were located in the MSA, up 1,100 since the end of the recession and up 1,600 since the Stimulus. Using the other definition of employment, the number of MSA residents that are employed has increased from 117,907 at the end of the recession to 121,631 by December 2011, an increase of 3,724 jobs.

Geographic Region	Stimulus Funding ³
Muscogee County	\$122,317,231
Russell County	\$23,821,418
Harris County	\$12,940,317
Marion County	\$3,454,390
Chattahoochee County	\$18,826,305
Columbus GA-AL MSA	\$181,359,661

³ The locations of the projects that were funded by the Stimulus are based on how the recipient reported the location and may not be entirely accurate. If a location was denoted by a zip code then the location was taken to be the center of the zip code not necessarily where the project was located. This causes a problem when zip codes extend across county lines or the MSA boundary. As an example, zip code 31833 is centered in Harris County but also includes part of Troup County. As a result, some of the projects that are designated in Harris County are actually located in Troup County.

Relative to the State which has lost 7.2% of its jobs as a result of the recession, the MSA has lost only 3.2% (1800 jobs). However, the number of MSA residents that have jobs regardless of location has rebounded to pre-recession levels.

Concluding Comments

Compared to the State of Georgia, the Columbus MSA fared much better over the course of the recession and has recovered much more quickly.

Since February 2009, the MSA has received \$180 million in Federal Stimulus funding. While we cannot directly tie the region's job recovery to the Stimulus, it surely played some role, although the exact size is debatable. Also during this time the region was the beneficiary of several large economic development projects including the movement of the armor division from Fort Knox to Fort Benning, the opening of the NCR production facility in Columbus and the location of the KIA manufacturing facility just outside the MSA.

- *The Columbus MSA lost 6,700 jobs from December 2007 through January 2010.*
- *During to the recession the number of jobs in Georgia fell by 7.2%. The number of jobs in the Columbus MSA fell by only 3.2%.*
- *Since February 2009, the Columbus MSA has received over \$180 million in Stimulus funding.*

"...the number of MSA residents that have jobs ... has rebounded to pre-recession levels."

Author

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