

Research Problem Statement

Title¹

Approaches and Incentives for Smaller Communities to Promote Shared Development of Plans and Policies

Background²

Regional travel demand and economic growth do not confine themselves to jurisdictional boundaries. Decisions and activities from one community can have immediate, long-lasting and profound effects on neighboring communities. Therefore, neighboring communities of any size experiencing rapid growth and economic development may benefit from some level of coordination, though it is particularly beneficial to smaller communities that are often most in need of additional resources to handle growth. Demands for new services and fast-changing needs and problems associated with growth can often be more easily resolved by communities and agencies working together. A strong regionally supported approach toward the planning, design, and implementation of new development can also enable communities to mitigate impacts and gain improvements to local and regional transportation systems through public-private partnerships.

Sharing development of plans and policies depends on interjurisdictional coordination to develop comprehensive plans or growth policies that link transportation and land use. Many examples exist of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and state departments of transportation (DOTs) providing assistance for integrating transportation considerations into local comprehensive planning and land use considerations into statewide transportation planning. For example the Illinois DOT provided funding to help local governments develop plans that integrate transportation and land use/development decision-making, and the Cheyenne MPO led a comprehensive development plan for the City of Cheyenne and Laramie County, Wyoming.

However there is a shortage of examples of the shared development of transportation plans and policies strategy in smaller urban areas. The existing multijurisdictional transportation and land use examples of shared development of plans and policies are not at the range of scales to assist smaller communities in developing local street networks, assessing development impacts, and developing multimodal and transit options. With coordinated transportation and land use planning being a key feature of livability, smaller communities could benefit from a thorough synthesis of current practice focused on tools used to establish and maintain multijurisdictional agreements and cooperative strategies that promote regional transportation system development, operation, and maintenance.

¹ This section corresponds to “Problem Title” in the MDT and TCRP Research Problem Statements.

² This section corresponds to “Problem Statement” in the MDT Research Topic Statement, and “Research Problem Statement” in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

Objective

The objective of the research is to identify appropriate multijurisdictional approaches and incentives for smaller communities to promote shared development of plans and policies.

Potential Benefits³

Irrespective of the tool or topic, one of the major gaps facing smaller communities is a relative lack of information on how to build and sustain regional coalitions for transportation and land use decision-making. Without incentives to maintain regional cooperation, each community's transportation system suffers as developers jump between communities to win development approvals for minimum upfront cost. Smaller communities could benefit from a thorough synthesis of current practice focused on tools used to establish and maintain regional cooperation that benefits transportation system development, operation, and maintenance. The research product could serve as a vital resource as smaller communities learn to respond to sustainability and livability initiatives.

Relationships to the Existing Body of Knowledge⁴

The Transportation Research Board *Research in Progress* database was searched in December 2009, and one citation was found relating to shared development of plans and policies.⁵ A report for the Oregon DOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) assessed options for improving coordination and increasing effectiveness of Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs), formed by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC), to improve communication and interaction between the OTC and local stakeholders, to facilitate cooperation among local governmental jurisdictions, to help prioritize infrastructure investment, and to provide input on statewide transportation issues.⁶ However the study did not focus on transferable procedures for smaller communities.

A search of the Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) database in April 2010 using the keywords of “(partnership or collaboration) and (small or medium)” plus an index term of “transportation planning” returned 34 records. The conference paper *Synthesis of Transportation Planning and Economic Development in a Small City* reported on a pilot project to improve coordination between transportation and economic development staff in one Texas city. The paper *Arizona's Small Area Transportation Study Program: A Model of State - Local Partnership* from the 11th National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities reports on a funding and technical assistance program overseen by the Arizona

³This section corresponds to “Urgency and Expected Benefits” in the MDT Research Topic Statement, and “Urgency and Payoff Potential” in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

⁴This section corresponds to “Related Research” in the TCRP Research Problem Statement. This information is included in the “Problem Statement” section of the MDT Research Topic Statement.

⁵RIP search terms: multijurisdictional, agreements, regional, planning, development.

⁶Brody, S. and Margerum, R.D. Oregon's ACTs, Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration, and Improved Transportation Planning. 2009.
http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP_RES/docs/Reports/2009/ACT_Report.pdf.

Department of Transportation (ADOT) to encourage periodic preparation of long-range transportation plans in Arizona's small and medium sized urban areas; this ADOT program may provide a good example for the proposed research of how a state transportation agency can encourage multijurisdictional collaboration. The paper *Florida Heartland Rural Mobility Planning Effort* from the same conference reports on bottom-up process followed in one Florida region to better link economic development and transportation planning. The paper *Technical Assistance: A Path to Better Interagency Cooperation* presented at the 2006 TRB Annual Meeting reported on a pilot project in Virginia in which the state transportation department provided technical assistance to the local land development authority. The authors report that the pilot program confirmed many previously reported characteristics that are believed to be essential for agencies to successfully collaborate, and also identified other elements that are needed to overcome inertial tendencies in a multiagency environment.

Tasks⁷

The shared development of plans and policies strategy can be useful to effectively manage growth, develop local street networks, assess development impacts, and develop multimodal and transit options at multiple scales. The research proposed for shared development of plans and policies should consider using interviews, an on-line search, case studies, and comparative studies to identify best practices and options for smaller communities. Based on findings from the *Local Transportation and Land Use Coordination: Tools and Gaps* research project sponsored by the Montana Department of Transportation,⁸ a potential focus area should be considered for non-transportation examples of multijurisdictional cooperation in topics such as water, farmland preservation, and open space conservation.

Follow-on and Implementation Activities⁹

The end product of this research effort is anticipated to be tools and guidance for use in smaller communities. It is possible that this information could be integrated into existing on-line planning toolkits such as *Montana Transportation and Land Use: Resources for Growing Communities*.¹⁰ The research products will also be useful additions for existing training programs, conferences and guidebooks on outreach and coordination techniques.

Estimated Funding Requirements¹¹

The estimated funding needed for this research project is between \$100,000 and \$125,000. Estimated labor needs for the research team are about 200 hours for a principal investigator, 150

⁷This section corresponds to "Research Proposed" in the MDT Research Topic Statement and the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

⁸http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/planning/smart_trans.shtml.

⁹This section corresponds to "Implementation Plan" in the MDT Research Topic Statement. There is no corresponding section in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

¹⁰ <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/toolkit/>.

¹¹ This section corresponds to "Estimate of the Problem Funding and Research Period" in the TCRP Research Problem Statement. There is no corresponding section in the MDT Research Topic Statement.

hours of mid-level research support, and 400 hours of junior-level research support. A research period of 12 months, including review time for draft products, is anticipated.

Relationship to FTA Strategic Research Goals and/or TCRP Strategic Priorities¹²

The proposed research directly supports FTA’s livability Strategic Research Area. Irrespective of income, age or disability status, people’s daily travel patterns are not confined to individual jurisdictions. Therefore, cross-jurisdictional planning is needed to increase ridership and maximize community-wide benefits. Effective multijurisdictional coordination is also a foundational activity to achieving all five of TCRP’s Strategic Priorities, particularly when it comes to institutionalizing the philosophy of putting the transit customer first.

Person(s) Developing the Problem¹³

<<To be completed at time of submittal to the research program.>>

Process Used to Develop Problem Statement¹⁴

This problem statement is the product of the *Local Transportation and Land Use Coordination: Tools and Gaps* research project sponsored by the Montana Department of Transportation. The research topic was one of six high-priority gaps in practice identified by the research team and confirmed by a research panel comprised of representatives from city, county and state government agencies as well as transportation stakeholder groups.

IT Component¹⁵

The necessary software applications are already resident within planning offices. No new software is anticipated to be developed as part of this research effort. It is anticipated that the research product may be incorporated in an existing database within the *Montana Transportation and Land Use Toolkit*.

Date and Submitted By¹⁶

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¹² This section only appears in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

¹³ This section only appears in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

¹⁴ This section only appears in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

¹⁵ This section only appears in the MDT Research Topic Statement.

¹⁶ This section corresponds to “Submitted by” in the MDT Research Topic Statement.