

Regional Intergovernmental Planning

California's Regional Blueprint Program

Consensus on Metropolitan Growth and Development

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SUMMARY FROM THE REPORT

For the past decade, California's cities, counties, and regional agencies have been engaged in a remarkable, if largely unheralded experiment in the governance of metropolitan urban growth. Although California has been developing rapidly for more than a century, certain eras comprise turning points in the state's approach to planning and investment for growth and development. The 1990s saw such a turning point. The existing planning system proved unable to address urban growth problems effectively, and what has become known as "blueprint planning" emerged as one result. The results of this experiment are still not entirely clear, but it is now advanced enough to merit serious examination. That is the purpose of this paper.

Blueprint planning emerged by the late 1990s as a means for local governments and regional agencies within metropolitan regions to coordinate long-range plans for transportation investment, air quality, and land use. Regional transportation planners faced a practical imperative to meet air quality mandates and address congestion problems with scarce resources – and they turned to land use as one lever for improv-

ing outcomes, promoting, for example, denser "infill" development near transit to increase ridership. Growing market interest in more compact housing development facilitated their efforts.

Blueprint planning has represented a way to reconcile "pro-growth" and "anti-growth" forces and attitudes, such as concerns about the need for housing production and regional economic development, on the one hand, and resistance to

EDITOR'S NOTE

Over the last 10 to 15 years there has been an evolution of metropolitan, regional planning taking shape in California, which has peaked in the last three to five years in a regional/state partnership, and now formally called the "California Regional Blue Print Program". This planning movement has particularly taken hold in the State's four largest metropolitan regions --- Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Francisco-Bay Area together containing about 32 million people. Further, they are in a State which is asserting a leading role in meeting the global environmental challenges of the 21st Century. Thus, we think it is timely and imperative to report on these planning efforts. We have done so with two lead articles.

The first article is, *Blueprint Planning in California: Forging Consensus on Metropolitan Growth and Development*. It is the Summary from a 80-page 2006 assessment and evaluation written by Elisa Barbour and Michael Tietz under the auspices of the Public Policy Institute of California which gave us permission to reprint this Summary. It provides a context by looking at the evolution of metropolitan planning over the last decade or so; it reviews the basic methodological steps in developing regional visions and scenarios in California; and then, it looks at some of the special environmental planning issues as well as State's role in this program.

The second article is, *California's Regional Blueprint Program: 2005-2007*. It is written by Sharon Scherzinger and Robert A Leiter, respectively, a state administrator, and a regional planning practitioner of the Blue Print Program, which had its formal start as a State-funded program in 2005. Their article provides an overview, the general contents of regional Blue Print programs, how grant proposals were handled, descriptions of planning activities in the first two years, and conclusions. □

community change and environmental disruption, on the other. It has appealed to many local governments as a means to build the local economic base and improve quality of life through coordination with neighboring governments. The blueprint process has provided a venue for broad-based regional "visioning" and consensus-building about preferred growth scenarios for the future.

The term "Blueprint Planning" was adopted by the state in 2005 with the establishment of CalTrans' California Regional Blueprint program. The Program provided \$5 million for grants to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) "to conduct comprehensive scenario planning that results in consensus by regional leaders, local governments, stakeholders on a preferred growth scenario - or 'Blueprint' - for a twenty-year planning horizon. It is anticipated that the regional blueprint planning grants will build capacity for regional collaboration and integrated planning that will in turn enable regions to plan to accommodate all their future growth, thereby reducing need for sprawl. The governor's current state budget proposal would renew funding for the program in the upcoming fiscal year.

We studied the blueprint planning process in the four major metropolitan regions of California - Sacramento, the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego - originally in response to a request from the California Resources Agency to assess best practices in multi-jurisdictional, multi-issue planning for growth and development, and subsequently in conjunction with both the California Center for Regional Leadership and the State Department of Transportation (CalTrans).

During and after the late 1990s, "visioning" processes were organized in each of the four regions to devise "preferred scenarios" for growth and development - land use projections that would then lay a basis for regional transportation investment and air quality plans. These processes involved multiple stakeholders - local elected officials; regional and local planners; representatives from interest groups such as home builders, environmentalists, and affordable housing advocates; and members of the public. They have enabled more coordinated, deliberative, and strategic growth planning than has been possi-

ble through most other governmental decision frameworks in the state in recent years. Most regions envision expanding the blueprint scope to include multiple infrastructure areas (energy, water supply) and environmental areas (habitat planning, parks). This expansion could turn the blueprints into truly comprehensive regional growth plans.

The potential for blueprint planning to articulate consensus and improve decision making on growth policy is promising, but the blueprint process entails certain weaknesses. Ironically, in spite of the comprehensive, deliberative nature of blueprint planning, it is undertaken by governmental agencies with no independent authority - namely, Councils of Governments (COGs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). COGs, established in most urban areas in the state, operate as voluntary forums for local governments to consider matters of common concern. They generally coincide with MPOs, which are designated under federal law for developing long-range plans for regional transportation investment.

COG/MPOs have been the institutional nexus for blueprints because they bring together regional systems-level planning functions (for transportation and air quality, in response to state and federal mandates) and the community-level land use authority of local governments (cities and counties). But COG/MPOs have no actual land use authority; they can only influence local policy through identifying funding incentives from their own resources, or through peer pressure, advice, or technical assistance. This lack of direct authority presents a difficult challenge for implementing blueprint land use objectives - that is, for translating the merely advisory "preferred scenarios" into reality on the ground. Currently, in the four regions we studied, blueprint planners are engaged in the implementation phase.

Our review of blueprint processes identified the following major components and best practices that may help ensure more effective outcomes.

1) Identifying goals and objectives

In each of the four regions, a first step was articulating smart growth goals and objectives to help focus blueprint visioning. The importance of the goal-setting stage was in allowing participants to exchange views and define shared values, ul-

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THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

timately translating them into quantifiable objectives and performance measures for modeling such regional outcomes as transportation mobility, environmental quality, and jobs-housing balance.

At this stage, one “best practice” is to include among blueprint objectives regional jobs-housing balance, in other words “housing our own,” by accommodating all housing growth associated with projected job growth within the region, rather than allowing commuting from other areas to function as an escape valve. Two regions failed substantially in meeting this objective in recent blueprint efforts. As metropolitan development extends beyond existing COG/MPO boundaries, and sometimes spills over to neighboring regions, jurisdictional boundaries may need to be changed and inter-regional planning frameworks strengthened. In any case, planning processes that fail to integrate anticipated housing and job locations with mobility strategies for metro residents cannot be considered fully comprehensive or effective.

2) Creating an effective decision process for blueprint development

Another key to success is gaining widespread support for goals and objectives, given that the whole process is largely voluntary. Leadership needs to be fully integrated across governmental and non-governmental boundaries, and across the COG/MPO and regional and local divides.

Although most COG/MPOs are coincident in California, a few are not, and the two entities actually reflect a fundamental tension between equally important tasks – to facilitate interaction and consensus-building among localities (broad participation), on the one hand, and to facilitate processes that identify clear regional objectives for transportation, the environment, and other functional regional systems, on the other. Combining these capacities is much easier in smaller regions. Devolving planning to sub-regional entities can help, but only if the same two capacities remain integrated.

Extra-governmental stakeholders have been an important stimulus for blueprint planning in most cases. Experience suggests that blueprint processes need to fully integrate governmental/non-governmental participation, or outcomes may be disappointing. Strong leadership from the COG/MPO governing board is critical to success, but extra-governmental actors also add

an important element, sometimes acting as “honest brokers” able to mediate long-standing inter-governmental political conflicts – even helping to rejuvenate COG/MPOs in the bargain – and sometimes pushing blueprint planning to tackle and integrate new policy areas.

Best practices we identified in governance arrangements include, first, establishing a regional policy committee of local elected officials that reports to the COG/MPO governing body and is responsible for overseeing blueprint development, and second, establishing other working committees of local planners, public works officials, and extra-governmental stakeholders to help implement the project at all stages.

3) Developing blueprint “visions”

The visioning stage of blueprint planning involves public outreach through workshops offered throughout a region. At

these workshops, invited stakeholders and members of the public work together to test outcomes of alternate land use scenarios in relation to local and regional

growth and quality of life indicators, such as traffic congestion, air quality, housing affordability, jobs-housing balance, transit use, and preservation of open space. Preferred scenarios from local workshops are then compiled and synthesized, and a small number of regional alternative scenarios are developed for final consideration.

An important best practice at the visioning stage is the use of urban simulation computer modeling, such as PLACE3S, which allows participants to visualize future land uses and gain immediate feedback in testing key indicators measured both regionally and locally. Such modeling educates participants on the impact of development choices; it may also facilitate conflict resolution by focusing on measurable outcomes.

Another best practice is to hold a workshop in each jurisdiction in the region, ensuring that elected officials play a key role and engaging local planners from all jurisdictions in helping synthesize workshop results into final alternative scenarios. These tasks are more difficult in very large regions of the state, and finding effective sub-regional coordinating mechanisms has proved to be a challenge. Below the metropolitan regional scale of the MPO, there are generally few institutions that act as “mini-COG/MPOs” – that is, by integrating both the functions.



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4) Selecting and adopting a “preferred scenario”

The blueprint development phase culminates with the selection of one “preferred” land use and related population and employment scenario, often at a large regional workshop. A principal goal of the process has been for the COG/MPO subsequently to adopt the preferred scenario as its official projected regional land use pattern, which forms a basis for regional long-range transportation investment and air quality plans. Three of the four COG/MPOs did adopt land use projections reflecting “smart growth” scenarios that diverged from current local policies.

COG/MPO projections are estimates of likely population and employment patterns looking ahead a minimum of twenty years; they are not actual plans or mandates. So-called “policy-based” projections (those that envision “smart growth” development patterns that differ from existing local plans and policies) must be translated into local development choices to be realized. The regions with adopted policy-based projections face a fairly short (less than ten-year) window of time in which to ensure that the smart growth scenarios are actually implemented in local government land use policies, or they risk losing federal approval of the scenarios as the basis for transportation and air quality plans. One region reverted to using current land use policy as the basis for its transportation plan after recognizing that localities had failed to alter land uses to conform to a desired smart growth scenario.

Experience suggests that the gap between current and preferred land use practice in the scenarios might be wide enough to provide a push toward new planning and resource allocation strategies. However, this gap should be narrow enough to be realizable in the medium as well as the long term.

The definition of what is “realistic” may well be a bone of contention, considering the unpredictability not only of market forces but also of state and federal policy. However, achieving a widely-supported compromise (if not a uniform consensus) on a desired outcome is a critical objective for blueprint processes; without such agreement the momentum needed for implementation is less likely to be achieved. Because COG/MPO

land use projections are updated continually on a four-year basis (in air quality non-compliance areas), blueprint visions need not be viewed as static and unchangeable. Rather, COG/MPOs are learning how visioning can be incorporated into iterative, ongoing processes for transportation, land use, and environmental planning.

5) Implementing the vision

The basic blueprint implementation task is to realize the region’s preferred growth vision by supporting local communities in undertaking and approving development projects, zoning and general plan changes, and other measures aimed at closing the gap between the preferred scenario and current practice. In the four regions studied, implementation strategies generally identify priority development areas and determine criteria for targeting resources to support projects in those areas. Resources range from basic technical assistance in updating local plans to funding development projects.

In general, best practices combine outcome-oriented performance objectives, flexible implementation, and incentives for participation. A common best practice is to devote a portion of regional transportation funds (either state and federal funds programmed by the COG/MPO or local funds raised through county sales tax measures) to incentive grants for localities that support regional objectives. Benefits of this competitive process include incentivizing better local planning proposals, creating “smart growth development examples” for the region, allowing the best ideas to float to the top, and retaining a voluntary participation framework. However, these grant programs also face pitfalls and challenges, in particular, a difficult trade-off between concentrating resources on fewer projects with greater impact and spreading resources more widely to maintain political buy-in.

Two MPOs adopted policies that go a step further, declaring that the extension of transit stops in their regions would be contingent on localities adopting supportive land use policies. Decisions about whether and how to bring this hammer to bear will test the voluntary COG/MPO governance model.

Organizational strategies are another key element of implementation; again, best practices establish stronger connections between regional and local objectives for transportation and land use,



combining performance criteria, flexible implementation, and incentives. Programs organized at the scale of transportation corridors provide good examples; this scale brings localities together around a shared resource. Another best practice is iterative “blueprint-style” transportation and land use modeling. In such a process, mutually supportive land use and transportation policies are developed, tested, and retooled. Increasingly flexible transit strategies being pursued in many regions facilitate such processes.

Finally, in multi-county regions an important organizational strategy involves engaging county-level transportation agencies. County transportation agencies control substantial transportation funding choices, but few have pursued integrated transportation and land use planning. Until their leverage is brought to bear, blueprint planning will not achieve its full potential.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING ISSUES

Environmental planning is sometimes called the third – and shortest – leg of the blueprint stool. Although regional environmental planning is a goal of each COG/MPO we studied, incorporating it into blueprint planning has not advanced as far as transportation or housing. However, a fully comprehensive regional plan requires more than designating priority areas for more concentrated development. The counterpart is designating natural resource and working landscape lands that are off-limits to development. Only through adding in this piece of the puzzle can political consensus be fully achieved between regional environmental and economic development goals. With most development in the state still occurring at the suburban and rural fringe of metropolitan areas, focusing only on infill development while failing to address how development proceeds in “green-field” areas may doom blueprints to failure.

In general, the state has established few planning requirements that link environmental mandates to local land use in regional frameworks. One significant exception provides a useful model for blueprint plans. The Natural Communities Conservation Planning Program (NCCP) was established in the early 1990s to create multi-species habitat preserves at a bioregional scale through cooperation among state, federal, and regional agencies; local gov-

ernments; landowners; environmentalists; and other stakeholders. It exemplifies the same recipe for success described earlier, combining clear outcome-oriented standards with flexible implementation techniques. By streamlining environmental review and mitigation at the project scale, this program provides a model for a blueprint approach to environmental planning.

THE STATE’S ROLE

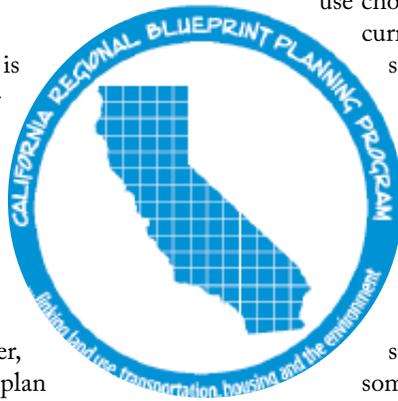
What, if anything, should the state government do to support blueprint planning?

Insofar as it provides a promising venue for resolving long-standing growth concerns, blueprint planning warrants state support. Without further support, blueprint planning may well prove ineffective. The state establishes the framework of regulatory and fiscal incentives and mandates that local governments face when they make land use choices, and to the degree that the current framework does not support smart growth principles, blueprints may be working against the tide.

Blueprints are fundamentally about re-distributing resources to promote certain objectives, and unless mutual benefits are very obvious to participants, policy consensus may be prone to collapse if some jurisdictions feel cheated. In general, when it comes to policies that redistribute resources, state action is likely to be necessary.

However, shifting resources to promote new outcomes requires some degree of consensus on desirable goals and objectives. Although smart growth strategies may not work well without state support, their success depends equally on gaining local support. For these reasons, the consensus-building aspect of blueprint planning could be very valuable to the state, which might mean the state government itself would choose to engage in blueprint planning as more participant than arbiter. State policies can support blueprint planning in certain basic ways: Supporting local smart growth activity, coordinating state growth policies, coordinating planning processes, and linking state goals and actions to blueprints.

Many blueprint participants advocate that the state provide incentives to localities that adopt smart growth strategies – in particular, building the capacity of local governments in inner ur-



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ban areas to support infill housing production and associated infrastructure and services. The legislature took a big step in support of local smart growth activity in the spring of 2006 by passing a multi-billion dollar bond proposal to be placed on the November ballot. It includes, among other things, \$300 million in assistance for transit-oriented development and \$850 million largely for grants for capital outlay related to infill development. As of this writing, it remains up to the voters whether blueprint development objectives get this substantial boost in state support.

Another useful step would be for the state to provide direct support for local planning.

Proactive community planning helps residents understand, evaluate, and obtain potential benefits of smart growth, for example by supporting long-term local development strategies to improve amenities, infrastructure, and services that new development could help finance.

However, many blueprint practitioners argue that the state needs to do more than reward local smart growth activities. They contend that the state should clarify and coordinate its growth goals, objectives, and policies to help ensure that its programs and investments do not work at cross-purposes. In this view, for example, it makes little sense for the state to direct either mandates or subsidies to locals to support housing production while state fiscal policies, particularly related to property taxes, serve to deter that production. Similarly, if the state wants to promote efficient development patterns and resource use, it might make sense to situate new

university campuses in built-up urban areas with transit access rather than in greenfield locations, in spite of higher initial construction costs.

Many blueprint practitioners also believe the state could do more to align planning processes and to support ongoing planning coordination. A practical step would be to coordinate planning cycles, such as those for local government general plans, the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), and Regional Transportation Plans. Given the extreme contentiousness of RHNA in recent years, it also might make sense to devolve its implementation to the more flexible strategies encompassed by blueprints.

Another important aspect of planning coordination will be for the state to consider how to strengthen sub-regional and intra-regional blueprint planning – for example, how to build stronger linkages between county transportation agencies and regional blueprints, and between COG/MPOs in areas where development has spilled across jurisdictional boundaries and now overlaps substantially. Ultimately, the state must consider how to promote inter-connected, nested planning at multiple scales.

How and whether to explicitly link state growth goals, objectives, and resources with blueprints is a complicated issue. At a minimum, a useful step would be continuing – or increasing – the state budget allocation of \$5 million, provided annually for the last two years in the governor's budget, for grants to support regional blueprint planning.

Some blueprint practitioners argue the state should go much further and conform its policies and resources to blueprint plans and their objectives. Others counter that it is more important for the state to clarify and align its own goals, objectives, and programs. Those can then work in tandem with regional and local strategies when and where appropriate.

Perhaps a middle ground would be for the state to determine whether a blueprint advances a few key, clearly-defined performance goals (such as promoting jobs-housing balance and housing affordability, improving air and water quality and species preservation, maintaining working landscapes and open space, and reducing vehicle miles traveled compared to a projected business-as-usual scenario) and then direct resources to support the plan's strategies and objectives. This approach would exemplify the practices outlined above – establishing performance-oriented objectives and encouraging flexibility in implementation. □

California's Regional Blueprint Program

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OVERVIEW

The California Regional Blueprint Planning Program is a voluntary, discretionary grant program that provides seed funding to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to develop and implement integrated regional plans. The program contributes to the vision of improved quality of life within California by addressing future growth on a twenty-year horizon through the integration of transportation, housing, land use, environmental resources, other infrastructure, and services. This integration will result in a more efficient and effective transportation system and land use pattern to achieve the three outcomes (3Es) that define quality of life – prosperous economy, quality environment, and social equity (more equal opportunity) – for all Californians. The program incorporates the goal that each participating region and each jurisdiction, to the extent possible, should strive to “take care of its own” by planning for and being prepared to accommodate a sufficient housing supply to accommodate natural population increases and workforce needs for the full spectrum of the population, including all income categories.

The State's Regional Blueprint Planning grant program was initiated over two years ago after an initial evaluation of integrated regional planning programs that were being developed in the four major metropolitan regions in California: the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento, Southern California, and San Diego. Each of these four regions had independently decided to develop a long-range integrated regional land use / transportation strategy, utilizing a variety of different visioning and public participation processes. The primary purpose of each of these efforts was to provide a broader planning context to be used by the respective MPOs in the preparation of their Regional Transportation Plan updates. However, there was growing recognition that these regional plans could be used to address other pressing planning and infrastructure issues. The term “regional blueprint planning” was selected

to describe this evolving approach of preparing integrated long-range vision plans at a regional scale, and using them in collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders to formulate regional strategies and implementing programs.

FUNDING; AND STATE, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

MPOs are eligible to submit yearly applications for grant funds through this two-year program. Under the direction of the Secretary of Business Transportation and Housing (BTH), the State of California also established a multi-faceted support structure to assist applicants:

- Two workshops were held in June and August of 2005, at the initiation of the program, to help the MPOs prepare competitive applications by September 2005.
- Three “Blueprint Learning Network” workshops were convened, in May, September and November of 2006. This series of workshops is designed to provide a forum for MPOs to network with one another on how to overcome obstacles to regional blueprint planning. Each workshop focuses on specific issue areas that affect regional planning. To date, these issue areas have included: how to achieve consistency between housing projections and transportation forecasts; how to engage the public; how to improve modeling expertise; and how to protect environmental and agricultural resources. A Steering Committee, including the Executive Directors of several MPO grantees along with State agency staff, has overseen the development of the workshop agendas. The third workshop was planned to coincide with the annual meeting of the California State Association of Counties, in order to enhance opportunities for cross communication between the county officials and the Blueprint process. Three more workshops are proposed for 2007, focusing on additional issue areas such as energy and environmental justice.
- Members of the Governor's Cabinet have



supported the program. They have participated in three meetings, in June, July and November 2006, bringing an interagency context to the program. Staff from eleven different State agencies were designated to review grant applications and develop funding recommendations.

- A broad-based coalition of program affiliates has also been drawn together to provide their perspective and enhance the program. The affiliates include representatives from: the American Farmland Trust; Sierra Club; California Building Industry Association; California Affordable Housing Law Project; Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California; California Redevelopment Association; Housing California; American Institute of Architects; League of California Cities; California State Association of Counties; California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions; California Association of Councils of Governments; California Special Districts Association; and the Local Government Commission. They have participated in policy-level meetings with members of the Governor's Cabinet, and they have contributed to the Blueprint Learning Network workshops.
- The Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Community Development have partnered to cosponsor a Regional Forecasting Task Force. This task force has brought together technical and policy experts from the two hosting state agencies and from the MPOs, to deliberate

about a framework to achieve consistency in housing and transportation forecasts and projections in California. Based on its deliberations, the task force has prepared an interim proposal that is being vetted through the regional and state agencies for comment.

CONTENTS OF THE REGIONAL BLUEPRINT PLANS

Each successful applicant uses the grant funds to prepare and/or implement a Regional Blueprint Plan, which is developed in collaboration with a broad range of public and private stakeholders, including local elected officials, city and county agencies, civic organizations representing business, labor, environmental, and community leaders, neighborhood groups, and the general public. Connection to existing interregional partnerships, studies in progress and modeling enhancements are essential. Each Regional Blueprint Plan shall be based on a twenty-year horizon and shall identify the most efficient and effective transportation system and preferred land use pattern that will:

- A. Improve mobility through a combination of strategies and investments to accommodate growth in transportation demand and reductions in current levels of congestion.
- B. Reduce dependency on single-occupant vehicle trips, fostering neighborhood and project designs that enable more walking and bicycling for healthier communities by:
 - i. Reducing the growth in traffic congestion and making more efficient use of existing transportation infrastructure through comprehensive transportation system management;
 - ii. Encouraging public transit usage, ride-sharing, walking and bicycling;
 - iii. Deploying transportation demand management practices, which may include economic incentives and value pricing;
 - iv. Promoting mixed-use development and increasing housing and commercial development around transit facilities and in close proximity to employment centers;
 - v. Promoting equity in growth and development by rehabilitating, maintaining and improving existing infrastructure that supports infill development and appropriate reuse and redevelopment of previously developed land.
- C. Accommodate a sufficient housing supply within the region (and within each sub-region and jurisdiction to the extent possible) to accommodate the projected population

and workforce needs for the full spectrum of the population (very low, low/moderate, and above moderate income households) over the next twenty years.

- D. Minimize impacts on valuable habitat and productive farmland.
- E. Increase resource use efficiency, including energy, water and building materials conservation.
- F. Establish a process for public and stakeholder engagement that can be incorporated into future planning processes.

Successful applicants are also required to use appropriate measures of performance designed to address program objectives and their own regional vision.

GRANT PROPOSALS

In June 2005, the Secretary of BTH announced the availability of a total of \$10 million in grant funds, \$5 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2005-06 and another \$5 million in FY 2006-07. Recipients were required to contribute a 20 percent local funds match.

Two workshops were held in June and August 2005 to help MPOs develop successful applications. Grant applications were available in July on the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) website and were e-mailed to all MPOs. Applications for the first year of the program were due September 30, 2005.

Ten proposals were reviewed and evaluated by an internal committee of staff from the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Community Development and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Staff made recommendations based on how well the proposed blueprint proposals addressed the program goals and work plan criteria. The internal review committee presented their analyses and recommendations to an Interagency Review Committee (IRC) composed of the following state agencies:

- CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
- STATE AND CONSUMER SERVICES AGENCY
- DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
- DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
- CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
- HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
- GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH
- RESOURCES AGENCY
- LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
- BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY
- OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

The IRC conducted a policy-level review of the proposed regional blueprint plans and focused on:



- Opportunities to broaden the scope of planning efforts as they relate to their program areas, to promote more comprehensive regional blueprint planning.
- Opportunities for additional State involvement and support for blueprint planning activities.

Recommendations for funding were submitted to the Secretaries of BTH and the Resources Agency for their final decision. Funds were subsequently awarded to seven applicants, including six individual MPOs and one team of eight MPOs in December 2005.

The request for Blueprint Grant renewal applications for FY 2006-07 funding was sent out in August 2006 and these applications were received November 1, 2006. All seven of the original applicants reapplied for a second year of funding. Three of the remaining four MPOs that did not receive funding in FY 2005-06 applied for their first year of funding in FY 2006-07. A request for these applications was sent out in August 2006, and these applications were received October 2, 2006. An individual application was also received from one MPO that is already a member of the eight-MPO coalition in the San Joaquin Valley. This MPO submitted an application on behalf of a partnership it has with two Regional Transportation Planning Agencies. Eleven applications were submitted with a total request for \$7,117,800 in grants funds.

The same review process was used again for the applications for FY 2006-07 funding. The total of all the funding requests for FY 2006-07 exceeded the amount available by over \$2.1 million. Both the Internal and Interagency Review Committees

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...there appears to be a growing recognition that addressing these issues at a regional scale – in collaboration with all levels of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders – may lead to better solutions than a “one-size- fits-all” approach...

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recommended reduced awards to all qualified applicants. The recommended funding amounts were based on assessments of each application’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to the program criteria. The recommendations from these two review committees were presented to the Secretary of BTH and the Secretary for the Resources Agency on November 27, 2006 for their final decision. The Secretary of BTH formally announced the grant awards for FY 2006-07 at the Blueprint Learning Network workshop on November 30, 2006. Each grant award for FY 2006-07 was made contingent on the applicant obtaining approval of a revised Work Element addressing program criteria. All tasks in the Work Element were subject to a determination of eligibility for Federal State Planning and Research funds by FHWA.

ACTIVITIES FUNDED IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS

The Regional Blueprint Plans are intended to address land use, transportation, housing, and environmental concerns in the region. The activities and processes funded under this grant program focus on development of plans, strategies and tools that will guide and assist the regions with various aspects of infrastructure development, in order to accommodate population growth in the region and the State. Coordination among agencies is a key element in dealing with future growth to meet housing needs, address congestion, reduce fuel consumption, protect habitat and the environment, improve air quality, protect the water supply, and preserve agriculture lands for future generations.

The grant recipients are at various stages of developing their Regional Blueprint Plans. All the grantees are taking a broad approach, starting with extensive outreach and networking to ensure public and private sector involvement. This is critical to efficient land use and sustainable development. Grantees are conducting outreach to city and county governmental agencies, the general public, private for profit and non-profit organizations, and special interest groups involved in infrastructure decisions. Examples include city managers, public work directors, congestion management agencies, Tribal Governments, senior citizens, disabled, developers, housing, agriculture and conservation entities.

Another planning activity that grant recipients are engaged in is data collection. They are using electronic data layers in Global Information Systems (GIS) formats to develop models and growth scenarios to identify priorities and devel-

oping plans and policies for the region. While the grantees have varying amounts of experience using GIS data and modeling tools, they are all using their grant funds to expand their technical abilities.

The MPOs in the larger metropolitan areas have had the most experience conducting comprehensive regional planning. They are focused on improving mobility, reducing vehicle miles traveled and increasing transit ridership by identifying opportunities for infill, developing transit-oriented communities, and by improving the proximity of jobs and housing. Installing databases and models to test various growth scenarios (to evaluate energy and air quality impacts of alternative transportation and land use scenarios) as well as training staff are some immediate activities taking place.

CONCLUSIONS

The rapid evolution of the concept of “regional blueprint planning” in major metropolitan areas throughout California, and the State’s growing commitment to this concept through the Regional Blueprint Grant Program and other related actions, reflect a promising trend in the way Californians are starting to address the daunting challenges of continued growth in the State. Some of the specific ideas being pursued that could provide further impetus to developing and implementing these regional blueprint plans are:

- Allocation of certain State infrastructure funds to projects that are consistent with regional blueprint plans;
- Utilizing the blueprint plans as the basis for determining regional housing needs in the State’s review of local housing plans;
- Developing collaborative approaches to integrated water resource management and air quality/energy planning at a regional scale;
- Utilizing regional blueprint plans as a basis for streamlining environmental documents for local plans and projects;
- Developing a Statewide system of performance monitoring that utilizes performance indicators developed through regional blueprint plans.

Overall, there appears to be a growing recognition that addressing these issues at a regional scale – in collaboration with all levels of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders – may lead to better solutions than a “one-size-fits-all” approach in a state as large and diverse as California. □



NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

WHERE IS YOUR REGIONAL PLANNING CURRICULUM?

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), through its' Educational and Professional Support Committee, has developed a model curriculum on regional planning. An effort is under way requesting universities and colleges that have a Masters in Regional and City Planning (MRCP) and Masters of Public Administration (MPA) program to consider integrating this course into their standard curriculum.

The committee, with the support of NARC and others, will contact key universities that offer these planning degrees in order to garner support for this initiative. Their intention is to partner with organizations such as the American Planning Association (APA), International City Managers Association (ICMA), National League of Cities (NLC), National Association of Counties (NACO), and others. MRCP and MPA programs offer such topics as budgeting, human resources, etc., which are all important to practitioners in the public sector; however, few if any, offer courses about regional councils. By developing this curriculum and providing other support regarding regionalism, this will assist universities and colleges in educating their students on regional councils and their importance and maybe even entice them to a career with a regional council. For more information or to help with this effort contact NARC through Vernon Martin at <vmartin@coastal-georgiadc.org>

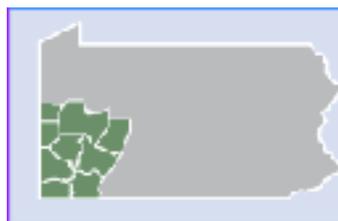
MORE NARC NEWS



Between 1995 and 1998 NARC sponsored a research journal in partnership with university research interests. The journal, "The Regionalist," has been a valuable reference and research resource for the few who retained copies of the limited printing. With the help of Vernon Martin, executive director and the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Commission, and several of his regional colleagues (especially those that saved their issues), the entire series of the Regionalist will be available through NARC both on their web site and on CD for a nominal charge. Special thanks also goes to Jim Reed of the Central Texas Council of Governments, who volunteered his resources and staff to do all the actual scanning and production.

As we were "going to press" with the newsletter, we learned that the NARC Board has appointed Fred Abouseman as their new Executive Director. Congrats Fred!

SPC'S REGIONAL PLAN: A REGION'S JOURNEY TO ENVISIONING THE FUTURE



The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) recently adopted its new long-range

transportation plan after an aggressive and expansive two-year community outreach process called Project Region that involved thousands of people from Southwestern Pennsylvania. SPC wanted to carry forward the momentum of the highly interactive planning process into the long-range plan itself. To this end, SPC developed a video that takes the viewer on a regional journey to envisioning the future. The stunning aerial views and spectacular photography in this video showcase the qualities that promote the region.

Partnering with public, private and non-profit organizations, Project Region engaged diverse groups and individuals to identify shared needs and priorities. Outreach efforts, including development workshops, partner meetings, and an innovative regional "town meeting" conducted via the Internet, allowed more people than ever to participate in the planning process and to play a part in developing the vision for our region's future.

The video has been used at public meetings, planning workshops, and is available online, along with the accompanying Executive Summary brochure for our Region's Plan, at: <<http://www.projectregion.org>>

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL VISION 2040

VISION 2040 is a regional strategy to accommodate the additional 1.7 million people and 1.2 million new jobs expected to be in the region by the year 2040.

The VISION 2040 (now out in draft form) will update the region's current 2020 growth strategy. Regional leaders were challenged to build on the current strategy's



key priorities and be better, bolder, more clear and more specific than VISION 2020.

ENVIRONMENTAL FRAMEWORK

A new feature of regional planning, the environmental framework, sets the stage for the rest of VISION 2040 to better assure that the region grows in ways that are consistent with an environment that supports a high quality of life well into the future.

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

The regional growth strategy defines the preferred growth pattern and explains a new feature in regional planning: regional geographies identified in VISION 2040 which provide a framework for how different parts of the region fit in to the overall regional plan.

The release of the draft VISION 2040 and Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement mark a key milestone in regional planning that will culminate in final approval of a new strategy in the spring of 2008.

You can review VISION 2040 and its review process at: <<http://www.psrc.org/projects/vision/index.htm>> □

DIVISION NEWS

THE DIVISION'S FUTURE AND YOU

Our Division is well-Positioned for the Development of Future APA Policy. The APA Policy and Legislative Committee will probably present two sets of policy documents to the Delegate Assembly at the upcoming APA National Conference in Las Vegas. The first, and the one that has received the most attention, is that on global warming and climate change; the second is for the reauthorization of the federal Surface Transportation Act (transit and highways), set to expire in October of 2009. Come the Delegate Assembly in Las Vegas, one or both may be presented as position papers; or, one or both may be presented as full policy guides.

The efforts on the global warming and climate change, which has attracted close to 200 volunteers, is led by Bruce Knight, APA Board member from the Midwest. This effort, in turn, has five working groups. The working group on land use is led by Karen Walz, an active member of our Division. The working group on transportation is led by Bob Leiter, our Division's Vice-Chair for Metropolitan and Regional Planning.

The federal Surface Transportation Act effort is led by Dan Reuter, a member of the APA Legislative and Policy Committee. Dan is Director of Land Use for the Atlanta Regional Commission. A working group is guiding this effort, including at this time, three people from our Division.

For either of these two policy documents, we fully intend to seek the inputs of the members of Division. For example, if both subjects go forwards as draft policy guides, then some time in either late January or early February, they would then go out to the Divisions and Chapters for review.

DIVISION BY-LAWS UP-DATE

Our latest by-laws go back to the mid-1980s and they have served us very well. But they do need updating, if only to change the name of the Division in the by-laws, from the former "Intergovernmental Affairs Division" to the now, "Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division. Beyond that, it is a matter of bringing various different elements up-to-date. Within the next month or so, we will be distributing to each of the members through e-mail the draft revision. If after receiving comments back from our members, we decide to move forward with revised by-laws, they will then be voted upon at the Division's annual program and business meeting at the APA National Conference in Las Vegas. So, let us hear from you as your voice is important to the Division and its future.

DIVISION ELECTIONS

WINTER 2007-8

Division elections are tentatively set for March. Until then, the Division officers board will be soliciting, via e-mail, candidates for the six division position in the new year. There are six positions: Chair, Chair-Elect, Vice Chair for Metropolitan and Regional Planning, Vice-Chair for State

Planning, Vice-Chair for National Planning, and Secretary-Treasurer. At present at least five of the existing six officers intend to run again, though not necessarily in their present positions. It is important to note that the existing Division Chair will not be running again as he is term-limited under APA By-Laws. (In 2003, the APA Board amended its by-laws, limiting the APA President and AICP President to one term of office and APA Board Members and APA Division Chairs to two terms of office.)

NEW DIVISION

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

After nearly five years as the Division's newsletter editor, Robert Scott Taylor has stepped down from that position. Scott has done wonders as newsletter editor. When he took on the job in the latter half of 2002, he had to start from scratch. He was exceedingly creative in laying out articles, and as they say, "he could turn around a newsletter on

a dime." It was simply amazing how Scott could very quickly pull together a newsletter after receiving final copy. Much of the growth of the Division in the last few years can be directly attributed to Scott's putting out at least two good newsletters every year. Scott's stepping down as newsletter editor coincided with his acceptance of employment with the Moberly

Area Community College in northeastern Missouri. As a full-time Instructor, he has a very full teaching load in Marketing and Management. Over the next several years there are going to be a lot of very well-trained marketing and management graduates coming out of the Moberly Area Community College.

Our incoming newsletter editor is Ron Thomas, who until recently was the Executive Director of the former Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC). Ron was responsible for, Realizing the Vision: 2040 Regional Framework Plan. This NIPC vision plan won the APA Best Plan of the Year award in 2006. This year he received two regional community service awards from Lambda Alpha International and I-ASLA. Ron was and still is very active in leadership roles in the National Association of Regional Councils. We look forward to Ron's role in the Division, in general, and the application of his highly imaginative talents to the newsletter in particular.

ALABAMA REPRESENTATION

Norman Whitaker, Executive Director of the Central Midlands Council of Governments in Columbia, South Carolina, represented the Division at the 40th Conference of the Alabama Association of Regional Councils. This association, which consists of 12 regional councils, covering the entire State of Alabama, invited Mr. Whitaker to speak for our Division. He is the author of the lead article in our March 2007 newsletter titled, "The South Carolina COG Network: Collaboration on State-Wide Plans" In his plenary presentation at the Conference on October 24, he discussed how the

The first, and the one that has received the most attention, is that on global warming and climate change; the second is for the reauthorization of the federal Surface Transportation Act ...

South Carolina COG's operate, and then gave an overview of national and South Carolina trends in regional planning. Charles Ball, Executive Director of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, remarked that cities and regional councils in South Carolina and Alabama had a great deal in common. Whitaker's presentation was coordinated by Joey Hester, Director of Planning for North-Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments.

GROWTH IN DIVISION MEMBERSHIP:

A chart prepared by APA Chicago for the late September, 2007 APA Fall Leadership Meeting in Washington, DC showed that, between June 30, 2005 and June 30, 2007, the Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division had grown by 30 percent, making it the fastest growing Division. And then, the figures we subsequently received in mid-October from Chicago APA showed that we had again increased by another 7 percent in the last three months, reaching a membership figure in the mid 180s.

Contrast this with our membership figure in the upper 120's, per APA records, in early 2005. This membership growth is due to two factors. First was the Division name change in March of 2005 as approved by the APA Board of Directors. Second, various Division members are working hard to making the Division membership grow. (Please also note that, during this same two year period, June 30, 2005 to June 30, 2007 only three APA divisions grew. All the other 18 divisions had declined. In fact, overall membership for that two-year period for all 21 divisions combined was down by about six percent.)

APA DIVISION COUNCIL RESTRUCTURING REPORT

In late August, the four officers of the Division Council met in Chicago to deal with the serious issue of the overall decline in the collective membership of the 21 divisions. (The four Division Council officers are not Division Chairs, though all four were formerly chairs of divisions.) Added to this drop in membership, four new divisions have been created in the last six years with prospects for some further additions. New divisions do put an added work load on the APA staff.

The Division Council Officer's proposed recommendations to the Division Council were: put a one-year moratorium on new division creation; create a system of networks for small, newly emerging program interest groups, rather than creating a new Division; require 250 signatures for new division formation replacing the existing requirement of 100; and, terminate divisions which have less than 300 members at the end of a three-year period.

After the October 1 Division Council meeting, the Division Council sent only one of the recommendations forward to the APA Board of Directors---that of a one-year moratorium on new division creation. Further, the Division Council decided that a new Division Council Task Force would further refine the September 2007

recommendations of the Division Council Officers and that this refined report would again be put to the Council at their meeting at the APA 2008 National Conference in Las Vegas.

One could infer from the Division Council Officer's early September report that one of the reasons for the collective decline in memberships for the 21 divisions was because the small divisions do not adequately add numbers to the overall membership rolls. However, the drawing of such an inference would be incorrect. Working from figures supplied by Chicago

APA for the September Division Council meeting, which look at individual division gains and losses between the end of the third fiscal quarters of each of 2005 and 2007, a one-page analysis was prepared by the Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division.

Our analysis for this two-year period shows that each of the seven divisions of under 300 members collectively increased their membership by 15 percent; each of the seven divisions of between 300 and 600 members collectively declined by two percent, and each of the seven divisions of over 750 members collectively declined by 10 percent. Further, for those four new divisions added over the last six years, including the New Urbanism Division, the collective gain was 16 percent in this

same two-year period.

For those who might possibly be interested, we can make available by e-mail attachment any of the following: the immediate above analysis by our Division, the Chicago APA data from which this analysis was drawn, and as a paper which we have labeled, "Initial Draft Proposal", the initial Division Council Officers September 2007 draft. If interested, e-mail the Division Chair,

[<leeschoenecker@aol.com>](mailto:leeschoenecker@aol.com)

4TH MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL PLANNING ROUNDTABLE IN FREDERICKSBURG, VA

Over 50 people attended the Mid-Atlantic Roundtable to hear Gov. Parris Glendening speak on the Governor's smart growth institute he is leading. The conference hosted by the City of Fredericksburg and the University of Mary Washington included a wide array of speakers including Tom Christoffel, AICP from Northern Shenandoah Regional Commission; Leo Schefer of the Washington Airports Task Force; Robert Ruiz from Arlington County Planning; John Ward from Deleare Valley Regional Planning Commission (who, by the way, will host the next Mid-Atlantic Roundtable); Tigist Zegeye from WILMAPCO; John Staelin, Chair of the Shenandoah Valley Regional Water Resources Board with David Bulova; Paul Desjardin from MWCOG; Ron Thomas, AICP from Chicago; Dr. Stephen Hanna, University of Mary Washington; Dr. Lisa Fowler, George Mason University; Kevin Byrnes, AICP from the George Washington Regional Commission and David Costello from Smart Growth Maryland. And, yes, this was only a one-day conference. Plan on attending next year.

Our analysis for this two-year period (2005-2007) shows that each of the seven divisions of under 300 members collectively increased their membership by 15 percent....

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EDITOR'S CORNER

With great pleasure I have joined the Regional and Intergovernmental Division as its newsletter editor. A wonderful thing from today's technology is that it allows us to become increasingly responsive, targeted and interactive in our digital communications. So, to continue the commitment of Division Chair, Lee Schoenecker, and the division officers, this newsletter needs to be your venue for useful communication and exchange.

I come to you after eight years as executive director of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission in the six-county Chicago region. With some distorted pride that we claim to have the most complex and numerous system of local governments, with some 272 cities and villages along with another 1200 other units of government. This is to let you know I get "intergovernmental" and hope to see continued progress in the cooperative, cross-boundary interaction between the many levels and areas of government everywhere.

With the challenges that grow daily for those in elected, appointed and staffed public service positions, the absolute necessity is to overcome old divisions, borders and separations to address the problems, challenges and responsibilities that falls to local government.

These dynamics I see increasing interest in regional planning, driven by one of the oldest determinants of political expediency: staying in office. More and more government leaders and officials are being expected to deal with issues and problems that cross those old boundaries. In short regional success is becoming more and more hard-wired to success of local government.

For example, the tipping point planning seems to have been reached at this year's APA conference in Philadelphia by embracing climate change as a local planning issue. This we can attribute to the leadership demonstrated by the world's mayors in their exceptional commitment to take heed and take action, while national leaders debate the responsibilities of sovereign nation-states. Where the mayors go, the planners are likely to follow.

But - and the BIG one for our division - is

how can we facilitate what are usually big center city initiatives to make then shared regional concerns? I would hope our communications and exchanges here will make at least a small contribution.

We will need to continue to focus and strengthen our message, and overcome the semantics static on our issue airways. What words are we to use to effectively reach both our leadership and community membership across the national landscape? Specifically, I see great differences from region to region in the use of today's planning vocabulary: Smart growth, sprawl, sustainable development and green everything are bellwether examples. A scan of the journal articles, conference programs and exhibits reflect strong constituencies for these concepts within our planning community and strong resources of social capital to support them. But how the words are used, or whether they are spoken at all in public ranges from being creative catalysts to confrontational challenges.

One opportunity many of us have who gravitate to this regional division is that we live and function across many of these old lines. Many of us hold memberships in various organizations such as the National Association of Counties, International City Management

Association, National League of Cities, National Association of Regional Councils, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, National League of Cities, and American Institute of Architects for example.

As you think of communication with your peers in this division, also think of how we can help you reach your peers in these other associations and leadership organizations about regional affairs. For instance, I have used my network of executive director colleagues in NARC and AMPO to ask for their support for this newsletter and this division. I already have a growing list of agency and organization contacts I will be in touch with in putting together subsequent issues of this newsletter. Let me hear from you, too. We need your news and information here.

<ronthom@ameritech.net> 

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