

ULI Land Use Policy Forum Report

National Roundtable on Smart Growth Policy and Practice

Linking Transportation and Land Development

Prepared by Deborah L. Myerson

Washington, D.C.
March 15, 2002



**Urban Land
Institute**

About ULI

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit education and research institute that is supported by its members. Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

ULI sponsors education programs and forums to encourage an open, international exchange of ideas and sharing of experience; initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development. Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 17,000 members and associates from more than 60 countries representing the entire spectrum of land use and development disciplines.

Richard M. Rosan
President

ULI Land Use Policy Forum Reports. ULI is in the forefront of national discussion and debate on the leading land use policy issues of the day. To encourage and enrich that dialogue, the Institute holds land use policy forums at which leading experts gather to discuss topics of interest to the land use and real estate community. The findings of these forums serve to guide and enhance ULI's program of work. The Institute produces summaries of these forums in its Land Use Policy Forum Reports series, which are available on the ULI Web site at policypapers.uli.org. By holding these forums and publishing summaries of the discussion, the Institute hopes to increase the body of knowledge that contributes to the quality of land use policy and real estate development practice throughout the country.

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Contents

Forum Summary 2

 Conflicts Between Transportation and Land Development 2

 Finding a New Approach to Regionalism 3

 The Clean Air Act: Smart Growth, Transportation, and Air Quality 4

 Breakout Groups 5

 Roundtable Discussion 6

Conclusions 8

Forum Agenda 9

Forum Participants 10

Forum Summary

Each year, the National Roundtable on Smart Growth Policy and Practice brings together representatives of the public sector, the private sector, and environmental and citizen groups to participate in an open and honest discussion on a smart growth topic. “Linking Land Use and Transportation” was the topic of the Urban Land Institute’s fourth annual roundtable. ULI hosted the event at the headquarters of the National Association of Home Builders on March 15, 2002, in collaboration with the National Association of Home Builders, the National Multi Housing Council, the National Association of Realtors, the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, the American Institute of Architects, the International Council of Shopping Centers, the Real Estate Roundtable, and the National Apartment Association.

Participants discussed ways to link land use and transportation and how they can contribute to smart growth. The lack of coordination between state-level transportation infrastructure decisions and local land use developments is a long-standing problem, and the regional council approach to planning for transportation and land use has not often worked. Forum participants examined the problems and considered solutions to this dilemma. This forum also discussed the federal Clean Air Act and the challenges that compliance poses in transportation planning that can accommodate growth.

Conflicts Between Transportation and Land Development

The lack of coordination between state-level transportation infrastructure decisions and local land use developments is often a problem. Local development can occur without adequate consideration of its impact on adjacent transportation facilities, or land development decisions may fail to adequately support existing or planned transit infrastructure. Three presentations examined the nature of the problem and possible solutions, and participants discussed how to better coordinate implementation.

John Horsley, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), introduced the presenters and commented briefly on three important opportunities for coordination between transportation and land development:

- determining mutually agreeable parking standards;
- considering infill versus greenfield development as part of the public policy debate; and
- consultation on location and access issues between state departments of transportation (DOTs) and local governments.

Horsley described a Charlottesville, Virginia, effort to develop a sophisticated modeling technique to simultaneously weigh land development and transportation considerations, thus reducing highway investment for the Virginia Department of Transportation. He also referred to an effort by the Florida Department of Transportation to work with local governments to create a more systematic approach to access management planning.

Marsha Kaiser, director of the Office of Planning and Capital Programming at the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), described MDOT’s efforts to work with local communities to solve transportation problems. She explained that MDOT, as part of a state-wide initiative to promote smart growth, coordinates with and supports local land use planning. To further assist these efforts, there is a land use planning unit in the transportation office, and MDOT regularly contracts with engineers, designers, and real estate professionals to consult on land use impacts.

Kaiser described implementation examples such as the Perryman Peninsula, where the future of 3,000 acres of land was up for consideration. The land, historically zoned for a mix of residential and nonresidential development, had been rezoned mainly for warehouse/light-industrial development following the county’s 1996 General Plan process. However, the plan for industrial uses came into question when Maryland highway agencies said they could not afford the transportation infrastructure needed to serve the warehouse development, but agreed to fund a community planning process to explore more sustainable development ideas.

To determine the future growth on this site, Harford County and MDOT partnered to establish a shared vision, while bringing other state departments to the table, including the Office of Smart Growth and the Department of Planning. Citizens also had an opportunity to participate in a visual preference survey and public meetings to gauge their views on future peninsula development. As a result of these efforts, the county revised the comprehensive plan, and transit-oriented development (TOD) became a key component.

John Gosling, vice president of the Washington, D.C., office of RTKL Associates, Inc., gave the next presentation, offering a private sector perspective on reconciling conflicts between transportation growth and land development. He noted that linking land use and transportation is an issue of particular concern for developers. He listed several considerations to improve coordination of land use with transportation for both the public and private sectors.

These recommendations included:

- flexibility in zoning to mix land uses;
- increasing the floor/area ratio (FAR) of development in the vicinity of transit;
- mitigating the impact of densification;
- managing the cost of parking;
- providing pedestrian connectivity; and
- understanding transit technology.

In the session's last presentation, Mayor John Mason of the city of Fairfax, Virginia, offered a public official's perspective. He noted the different roles of federal, state, and local government in transportation planning and land development. He also explained that in a "Dillon's Rule" state such as Virginia, local government has only those powers that are expressly granted by the state. As a result, autonomy is often an issue of concern for local governments. In Virginia, he said, the state is the key level of government, since it has the constitutional authority to set parameters. In addition, regional organizations—such as metropolitan planning organizations and councils of government—can leverage state influence for transportation decision making.

Finding a New Approach to Regionalism

Often, the traditional "regional council" approach to planning for transportation and land use has not been successful. Although the need for effective regional planning is almost universally recognized, few effective models exist. However, a number of communities have found ways to implement regional policies successfully. At one end of the spectrum are regions such as the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area that have taken regulatory approaches and at the other end are regions such as the San Diego, California, metropolitan area, with a more private sector-oriented entrepreneurial approach.

Regionalism in Portland

G.B. Arrington, senior supervising planner with Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade and Douglas, and Bob Stacey, chief of staff for Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), gave a presentation on Portland's regulatory approach to regionalism.

In the 1990s, Portland and the Willamette River Valley region experienced rapid growth. It is now the 22nd largest metropolitan area in the United States. Since 1979, the Portland metropolitan area has had Metro, an elected regional government, to oversee the region's 24 cities and parts of three counties. Metro is responsible for the region's transportation and land use planning. Today, Portland is the only large metropolitan area in the nation where urbanized land area is growing more slowly than population. Metro provides a regional framework, on top of which the local jurisdictions create their own plans.

Metro's 2040 Regional Framework Plan establishes transit corridors and regional centers, and provides general guidelines and minimum standards on issues such as density and affordable housing. "Regional centers" are designated throughout the region to identify where major commercial uses are appropriate. The framework seeks to create an economic balance throughout the metropolitan area and to reduce transportation problems by efficiently locating major retail and industrial uses.

A well-known feature of Oregon's statewide planning is the urban growth boundary (UGB). One primary purpose of the UGB is to protect farm and forest land from urban sprawl. In addition, a UGB promotes the efficient use of land and public facilities and services inside the boundary. Metro is responsible for managing the Portland metropolitan region's UGB. In 1995, the Oregon Legislature adopted a law that required all UGBs within the state, including Metro's, to provide sufficient buildable lands to accommodate housing needs for 20 years. It also required Metro to designate one half of the 20-year buildable land supply for housing needs by the end of 1998 and any remaining housing need by the end of 1999.

The Portland downtown plan has sought to coordinate land use with mass transit, in particular along the three operating light-rail lines for the Metropolitan Area Express, known as the MAX. MAX first began operating in 1986 on a 15-mile-long track between Gresham and downtown Portland. As part of the region's overall transportation strategy, MAX was extended 18 miles west into Washington County in 1998. In September 2001, the MAX system was expanded to 38 miles with the opening

of Airport MAX. Station area planning, funded by the Tri-Met transit authority, offers guidance for minimum densities, parking maximums, and building orientations. Tri-Met actively encourages development along the rail lines by facilitating the availability of sites and by streamlining necessary zoning changes.

As a result of the past 30 years of regional planning—in sharp contrast to the growth patterns of other major American cities—Portland has grown up, not out, and downtown’s employment share has remained the same.

The San Diego Model

In contrast to Portland’s regulatory approach to regional planning, S. Gail Goldberg, planning director for the city of San Diego, California, and Michael McLaughlin, director of land use and facility planning for the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), spoke to participants about San Diego’s “entrepreneurial” efforts to plan for the region’s future.

SANDAG is a voluntary organization governed by a board of directors and composed of mayors, council members, and a county supervisor from each of the region’s 19 local governments. Supplementing these voting members are advisory representatives from the U.S. Department of Defense, Caltrans, the San Diego Unified Port District, the Metropolitan Transit Development Board, the North San Diego County Transit Development Board, the San Diego County Water Authority, and Tijuana, Mexico. SANDAG serves as the forum for regional decision making, builds consensus, makes strategic plans, obtains and allocates resources, and provides information on a broad range of topics pertinent to the region’s quality of life.

To plan for the future of the region, SANDAG has established the Region2020 growth management strategy, which calls for providing more transportation choices; promoting more compact, mixed-use development in existing cities and communities; increasing the housing supply; locating new homes in existing urban areas, closer to jobs, services, and transportation systems; and protecting the environment.

In addition to SANDAG’s accomplishments, the city of San Diego has pursued a long-term planning effort. By 2000, the city of San Diego was largely built out, with little vacant land and population predicted to grow by up to 350,000 people between 2000 and 2020. As a result, the city is updating its “Progress Guide and General Plan,” the guide for future development. The update will

revise the General Plan to show how the city will accommodate the projected growth. As part of this process, the public chose a “city of villages” strategy as the preferred growth strategy to help improve the quality of life for all San Diegans. This strategy includes building neighborhoods, leveraging growth to improve quality of life, and instituting a “pilot village” program that is transit oriented and pedestrian friendly. The presenters noted that some of the challenges with implementing this model included funding and a lack of public trust.

According to Goldberg and McLaughlin, the benefits of the entrepreneurial model include the following: local community ownership of the plan; streamlining the development review process for developers; and creating efficiencies through alliances.

The Clean Air Act: Smart Growth, Transportation, and Air Quality

The regulatory interplay among the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and state transportation agencies required by the Clean Air Act and federal transportation law has created a complicated process that can cause procedural delays to important transportation projects. The complications of the process are compounded by legal challenges to federally approved air quality and transportation plans that threaten further delays. As a result, states often have difficulty providing the transportation infrastructure to accommodate growth. This panel examined whether there are better ways to improve air quality and to provide adequate transportation facilities at the same time.

The first presenter, Kenneth Adler, special assistant with the EPA, offered a federal perspective on the Clean Air Act. He explained that the United States has successfully reduced pollutants in the last generation—except for greenhouse gas emissions. Although car emissions are becoming much cleaner, the number of vehicle miles traveled each year is increasing much faster than population. Transportation contributes to 32 percent of greenhouse gases, and fuel economy has been declining. One cause of this additional travel is that housing stock is more dispersed and sited on larger lots.

Adler referred to a U.S. General Accounting Office survey of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) around the country. The results of the survey indicated that:

- 75 percent of MPOs had not considered the effect of different land use strategies when assessing transportation plans.
- 52 percent of MPOs said that public education about transportation and air quality would help with conformity.
- 60 percent of MPOs believe that greater involvement of land use decision makers would help with conformity.
- 65 percent of MPOs said better access to information, models, and technical assistance would help in assessment of land use strategies and transportation planning.
- 85 percent of MPOs said that financial assistance for analysis and modeling would encourage more consideration of the environment in the transportation planning stage.

Next, Bob Chase, executive director of the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance, spoke about transportation and air quality considerations in the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. According to Chase, air quality will continue to improve in the D.C. metropolitan area thanks to a high usage of mass transit and a high rate of carpooling. However, he said, D.C. has one of the nation's smallest metropolitan freeway systems and ranks third nationwide in traffic congestion. Yet, he observed, 50 percent of the region's transportation funding is planned for mass transit, even though mass transit accounts for less than 10 percent of all trips.

He recommended that it is important to factor in how much various improvements cost and how they contribute to quality of life—noting that some see enforcement of the Clean Air Act not as improving air quality, but as an opportunity to cut off transportation funds.

Michael Repogle, transportation director with Environmental Defense, a national nonprofit organization, offered an environmental perspective on the Clean Air Act. According to Repogle, the Clean Air Act protects public health by setting standards and a timetable for air pollution and requires states to adopt plans for air quality. These transportation plans and programs must conform to a state implementation plan; in turn, conformity encourages sound emissions and traffic growth forecasts.

A problem, he explained, is inadequate conformity of implementation. He listed several conformity issues:

- EPA's attainment date extension policy, which continues to delay attainment goals;

- inadequacy of attainment demonstrations;
- lack of reasonably available transportation control measures;
- addition of new transit projects during lapses in attainment;
- need for enhanced travel models that support smart growth;
- addition of newly designated nonattainment zones; and
- inadequate time horizons for state implementation plans and regional transportation plans.

Speaking generally about land use and transportation coordination, Repogle noted that the availability of transportation options can make a big difference in the reception of development proposals. For example, when Disney pursued its proposal to build an "America's History" theme park in Manassas, Virginia (which was ultimately defeated), the project would have required new transportation investments. An independent analysis of the project had determined that the location of the proposed development in rural-suburban Prince William County could increase total regional air pollution by more than 1 percent, a potential impact that became a subject of significant discussion. However, an important point for developers to consider, he suggested, is whether a proposal that is well located for transit can get potentially valuable support from the environmental community. For example, in Silver Spring, Maryland, ten environmental groups expressed their support for a proposed downtown development because it was to be located close to transit.

Breakout Groups

At lunch, participants divided into several interdisciplinary groups to discuss the future of regional approaches to linking land use and transportation. Their responses reflected remarkable agreement among a diverse group of associations, private developers, nonprofit organizations, and public sector staff, among others.

1. Should the next federal transportation bill address better transportation/land use linkages, or are there indirect methods that the federal government can use?

There was uniform support for strengthening the next federal transportation bill to make a more direct connec-

tion between land use and transportation. Participants agreed that the next federal transportation bill should:

- provide more funding for modeling, research, and strategic regional planning;
- acknowledge that transportation is more than planning roads; the federal government has a role to play in transportation planning for mass transit infrastructure;
- consider health and congestion difficulties generated by transportation;
- ought to reward good practices, rather than broad general programs;
- provide finance as a reward;
- offer incentives for linkages;
- require that metropolitan areas consider the regional implications of a given land use plan or transportation proposal;
- incentivize a connection between state-level transportation and local land use policy;
- stimulate transportation research and development;
- offer flexibility in the funding matches; and
- continue and expand the Transportation and Community and System Preservation Program, perhaps by supporting state versions of the program.

2. What alternative models for regional governance might provide a basis for regional land development policies, transportation implementation, and economic development?

- Give regional organizations a role in planning, finance, or governance.
- Let ad hoc organizations such as business and volunteer groups play an important role in aligning regional interests.
- Seek to strengthen existing bonds and alliances rather than inventing new layers of government.
- Establish a public/private partnership, perhaps with federal incentives.
- Consider a region in terms of the shared commuting and employment area.
- Use regional councils to leverage the pooling of funding from Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and the Surface Transportation Program (STP).

- Consider state-driven regional models; the state can provide incentives for regional planning and can establish organization requirements.

- The private sector offers the civic planning model. It may address issues better, and be less controversial than public regional agencies.

3. What methods have successfully engaged the private sector in linking transportation and land development?

- Inducements for private developers.
- Public money for infrastructure focused in particular geographic areas.
- Partnerships.
- Faster permitting.
- Targeting priority areas for investments.
- Support for mixed-use financing (perhaps with public subsidy), which provides more certainty for lenders.
- Land assembly—assisting the private sector through the use of eminent domain to pull together the necessary tools.
- Taxes on development and businesses, a portion of which are dedicated to regional planning, and engaging the private sector in the planning process.

Examples of where these methods have been applied:

- Envision Utah, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to helping guide the development of quality growth in Utah, has successfully engaged the private sector as part of its partnership of citizens, business leaders, and policy makers.
- The city of Boston has awarded bonus densities to develop mixed uses.
- The state of Maryland has established a “Live Near Where You Work” program to encourage a jobs/housing connection.

Roundtable Discussion

During the course of the roundtable, participants discussed a variety of topics related to land development and transportation, including smart growth, the costs and benefits of TOD, and environmental considerations.

Smart Growth

Participants agreed that establishing a more hospitable local climate for smart growth was important in resolving conflicts between land development and transportation.

Possibilities include:

- Changing zoning laws to allow for the integration, rather than the segregation, of land uses. In turn, state governments could create model zoning codes for localities to use and could provide technical assistance to adopt the codes.
- Demonstrating the economic benefits of smart growth.
- Establishing ways to recognize and reward good development.
- Providing more choices in housing.
- Considering ways, such as with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to adapt transportation models to measure smart growth. Most models are done on a county or regional scale—not a level for considering pedestrian- or bicycle-friendly development.
- Applying travel survey data to predict pedestrian and bicycle patterns. While the ease of walking in the vicinity of transit is an important consideration, state DOTs typically have not been especially active in promoting these modes of transportation.
- Considering how to make existing regional councils more responsive to land use and transportation needs. These councils can provide a voluntary forum for citizens and local officials to discuss transportation issues.

Costs and Benefits of TOD

TOD was frequently referenced in the discussion, including the benefits, how to evaluate the costs, and how to encourage this type of development. Participants noted the following:

- TOD reduces the number of auto trips and increases transit ridership.
- TOD provides economic and environmental benefits; the Sierra Club has expressed support for TOD and infill.
- When the importance of transit is being evaluated, usage should be examined at peak hours in congested corridors.
- Most TOD in Portland is market supported, not subsidized. As an incentive, the state of Oregon offers a tax abatement for residential development adjacent to transit facilities.

■ The development community supports the process established by the Portland transit authority because it provides a certainty factor.

■ State DOTs can be important funding sources: for example, Caltrans has provided grant money to San Diego for transportation planning, while Portland was able to flex transportation funds to pay for planning.

■ Describing where the public investment would go offers developers an incentive to build.

■ In San Diego, establishing a master environmental impact review process for neighborhoods streamlined the development process. However, environmental review should still be comprehensive.

■ In some metropolitan areas, developers are seeking out opportunities for TOD. However, deep subsidies that benefit car dependence still exist.

Environment

■ How can the private development community be engaged to support Clean Air Act compliance efforts?

■ How can developers become protectors of the environment? The public wants environmental protection and development. Perhaps communities can work toward exchanging a quicker permitting decision for a more environmentally friendly development proposal.

Conclusions

Forum Chairman Lee Hanley offered a wrap-up of the day's major themes. Participants observed many opportunities for collaborative efforts among private, public, and nonprofit organizations to better link transportation and land development. Coalescing the support of environmental organizations, in particular, as allies of transit-friendly development projects seemed to offer untapped potential. Many participants also expressed an interest in exploring a market-based approach to generate solutions.

Participants identified smart growth efforts as demanding a cultural change—one that will accept greater use of mass transit and more widespread infill development. Increasingly congested commuter patterns in metropolitan areas around the country, in particular, compel greater attention to expanding mass transit. However, one of the acknowledged problems behind conflicts in transportation and land use was “no-growth interests” that wind up forcing development further out—accomplishing exactly the opposite of smart growth.

Regional approaches seem to be essential in coordinating transportation and land development. Portland and San Diego offered examples of different paths—regulatory and entrepreneurial—toward successful regional organizations. Participants also recognized that community-level input, even with the existence of strong regional groups, is still necessary and appropriate for state DOTs, which control the majority of state transportation budgets.

Last, participants agreed that the Clean Air Act is an important—if not perfect—tool for leveraging changes in transportation patterns with demands for better air quality. Efforts toward compliance with air quality standards are compelling metropolitan regions to expand mass transit. In the Atlanta area, the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority has undertaken a variety of efforts, such as increased bus service, value pricing initiatives, and a regional transit action plan, to allow the region to attain Clean Air Act air quality standards.

Forum participants emphasized the opportunities for greater exchange among public agencies, private developers, and nonprofit organizations to jointly achieve better linkages between land use and transportation. They agreed that doing so under the umbrella of established smart growth plans and by strengthening regional organizations to lead these efforts would be the best approach.

Forum Agenda

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2002

- 8:30 a.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
Lee Hanley, *Forum Chair, President, Vestar Development Company*
- 9:15 a.m. **Conflicts in Transportation and Land Development**
Presentations and Discussion
- Introduction*
John Horsley, *Executive Director, AASHTO*
- State*
Marsha Kaiser, *Director, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation*
- Private Sector*
John Gosling, *Vice President, RTKL Associates, Inc.*
- Local Government*
The Honorable John Mason, *Mayor, City of Fairfax, Virginia*
- 10:30 a.m. **Break**
- 10:45 a.m. **Finding a New Approach to Regionalism**
Presentations and Discussion
- Case Studies from Successful Transportation and Land Use Programs**
- Regulatory Approach: Portland, Oregon*
G.B. Arrington, *Senior Supervising Planner, Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade and Douglas*
Robert Stacey, *Chief of Staff, Office of Congressman Earl Blumenauer*
- Entrepreneurial Approach: San Diego, California*
S. Gail Goldberg, *Planning Director, City of San Diego, California*
Michael McLaughlin, *Director of Land Use and Facility Planning, San Diego Association of Governments*
- 12:00 p.m. **Lunch with Breakout Groups**
- 1:15 p.m. **Reporting Out of Breakout Groups**
- 2:00 p.m. **The Clean Air Act: Smart Growth, Transportation, and Air Quality**
Presentations and Discussion
- Federal*
Kenneth Adler, *Special Assistant, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*
- Private*
Robert Chase, *Executive Director, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance*
- Environmental*
Michael Replogle, *Transportation Director, Environmental Defense*
- 3:15 p.m. **Wrap-Up and Next Steps**
- 3:30 p.m. **Adjourn**

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