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Report

Report

Land Use and Planning Resources Report

Progress Report to the Minnesota Legislature

October 15, 2009

 **Metropolitan Council**

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Introduction

Earlier this year, the Minnesota Legislature directed the Metropolitan Council to develop a *Land Use and Planning Resources Report*. This initial progress report describes the Council's plans for the report and outlines proposed contents:

- Regional transportation and land use strategies and policies;
- Best practices for national transportation and land use policies;
- Baseline measure of regional and local carbon footprints;
- Measure of impacts on carbon footprints; and
- Collaboration and outreach.

How we grow in the region greatly depends on regional and local land use and transportation decisions. Traffic congestion and travel demand are forecast to increase significantly by 2030, despite improvements in the fuel efficiency of vehicles and other moderating trends. Managing travel demand through land use and access to transportation options is a core goal of planning in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area.

Timetable for Reports

The Council will complete a *Land Use and Planning Resources Report* by January 15, 2011. Progress reports will include this initial report due by October 15, 2009, and additional interim reports due by April 15, 2010, and October 15, 2010. Each report will be submitted to the chairs and ranking minority members of the Minnesota House of Representatives and Minnesota Senate committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance.

Regional Transportation and Land Use Strategies and Policies

The first part of the *Land Use and Planning Resources Report* will identify and assess land use and transportation planning strategies and processes in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area for:

- reducing air pollution;
- mitigating traffic congestion; and
- reducing costs for operating, maintaining or improving infrastructure.

A brief summary identifies the Council's primary strategies and policies, emphasizing approaches that reduce or manage travel demand through land use and access to transportation options. For most approaches, land use and transportation policies are interconnected and have combined rather than independent impacts. The effectiveness of strategies and policy actions will be assessed by annual regional benchmarks.

Air Pollution, Congestion and Costs

Strategies to reduce air pollution will address pollutants currently regulated by the federal government - carbon monoxide (CO), ground level ozone and fine particulate pollution - and carbon dioxide (CO₂). Including carbon dioxide as a pollutant acknowledges growing interest in climate change and uncertainty over the future course of federal regulations. Strategies to mitigate congestion will stress the link between transportation options and land use patterns, such as compact, connected development. Strategies to reduce infrastructure costs will focus on transportation, especially the costs of managing the highway system and expanding the transit network.

Sources of Strategies and Policy Actions

Comprehensive strategies and policy actions for regional transportation planning and land use start with the Council's *Regional Development Framework*.¹ In the *Framework*, policies to accommodate growth encourage development along transportation corridors and support land-use patterns that efficiently connect housing, jobs, shopping and other destinations. Transportation policies call for slowing growth in traffic congestion and improving access to transportation choices. Improvements to the highway system are planned to mitigate congestion and move more people more effectively. Expanding and enhancing the transit system is expected to double bus ridership by 2030 and build a network of bus and rail options, including light rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit.

The final report will include results from major studies outlined in the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan*.² The Council will update the Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) to provide new information on regional travel patterns and individuals' travel behavior. Preliminary results may be available by late 2010. Both the Council and Mn/DOT will develop an investment strategy in 2009 for metropolitan highways to define the most cost-effective means of optimizing highway performance. Two other collaborative studies conducted this year will help develop a regional process for managing congestion. A congestion and safety management plan will create a process for selecting low-cost, high-benefit projects to mitigate congestion. A travel demand management plan will define strategies to reduce demand for vehicle trips.

Best Practices for National Transportation and Land Use Policies

National policies and practices will inform regional and local strategies to mitigate traffic congestion, reduce air pollution, and reduce infrastructure costs. Diverse approaches employed across the nation will be reviewed to find land use and transportation strategies applicable to demographic and travel trends in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Policy actions selected from the national literature and other sources will concentrate on

¹ *Regional Development Framework*, Metropolitan Council, January 2004.

² *2030 Transportation Policy Plan*, Metropolitan Council, January 2009.

reducing or managing travel demand through land use and access to transportation options.

Baseline Measure of Regional and Local Carbon Footprints

The *Land Use and Planning Resources Report* will try to develop a methodology or tool for measuring regional and local carbon footprints from transportation and land use. Upcoming research and evaluation will determine how to produce current, baseline measures of carbon footprints. The purpose of the carbon footprint measure is to provide information, not to advocate strategies or mandate policies. Baseline measures of carbon footprints will provide a consistent starting point to aid land use and transportation planning.

Measure of Impacts on Carbon Footprints

After measuring carbon footprints from transportation and land use, the *Land Use and Planning Resources Report* will explain and demonstrate how local governments may choose to apply the measure. It is intended to serve as a tool, a voluntary tool, for communities to assess impacts. For example, a community could use the measure to see how a plan to cluster commercial development or housing near transit affects its carbon footprint. The carbon footprint measure may be employed to show the impacts of proposed development. Measuring impacts on carbon footprints will support informed decision making by local governments.

Collaboration and Outreach

To share ideas and gain feedback, the Council will seek input from key groups with expertise in land use and transportation planning. Council staff will meet with the Land Use Advisory Committee, the Technical Advisory Committee of the Transportation Advisory Board, and other stakeholders. Both the Land Use Advisory Committee and the Transportation Advisory Board include elected officials representing local governments. The Land Use Advisory Committee gives advice and assistance to the Council on land use, comprehensive planning, and matters of metropolitan significance. The Transportation Advisory Board serves as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization to comply with federal requirements, qualify for federal transportation funds, and evaluate applications for federal funding. As work continues on progress reports, Council staff may engage other stakeholder groups.

Legislative Background

In 2009, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill requiring a Land Use and Planning Resources Report.³ The bill specifies:

(a) By January 15, 2011, the Metropolitan Council shall submit a report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the house of representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance. The report must identify and assess the effectiveness of local level and regional level land use and transportation planning strategies and processes for:

- (1) reducing air pollution;
- (2) mitigating congestion; and
- (3) reducing costs for operation, maintenance, or improvement of infrastructure.

(b) The report must emphasize approaches that reduce or manage travel demand through land use and access to transportation options.

(c) The Metropolitan Council shall (1) identify and adapt existing information and resources that are found to be applicable to Minnesota, taking into account travel and demographic trends specific to the Twin Cities metropolitan area; and (2) collaborate with local units of government and other stakeholders interested in development and refinement of the resources.

(d) The Metropolitan Council shall submit progress reports on development and application of the land use and planning resources report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the house of representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance by October 15, 2009; April 15, 2010; and October 15, 2010.

(d) The Metropolitan Council may enter into a contract for up to \$375,000 with the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota for the Center for Transportation Studies to assist in creation of the report required under this section.

³ *Minnesota Session Laws*, Office of Revisor of Statutes, 2009.