Best Practices in Smart Growth and Transportation

2004 Competition

Revitalizing Communities and Corridors
Creating Statewide Strategies for Land Use and Transportation

American Association Of State Highway and Transportation Officials
Revitalizing Communities and Corporations: Creating Statewide Strategies

Economic Development
Partnership
Outreach
Environmental Protection
Smart Growth
Corridors for Land Use and Transportation

AASHTO Center for Environmental Excellence
Federal Highway Administration
Revitalizing Communities and Corridors
Creating Statewide Strategies for Land Use and Transportation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization/Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Ames</td>
<td>Illinois Department of Transportation</td>
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<td>Bob Grow</td>
<td>Greater Washington Board of Trade</td>
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<td>Michael Jackson</td>
<td>Maryland Department of Transportation</td>
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<td>Deron Lovaas</td>
<td>Natural Resources Defense Council</td>
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<td>Rosemary Monahan</td>
<td>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency</td>
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<td>Marya Morris</td>
<td>American Planning Association, Chicago</td>
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<td>Phil Selinger</td>
<td>Tri-Met, Portland, Oregon</td>
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<td>Beverly Ward</td>
<td>Center for Urban Transportation Research, Tampa, Florida</td>
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<td>Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO)</td>
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INTRODUCTION

TRANSPORTATION AS A KEY TO SMART GROWTH
2004 AWARD WINNERS

REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES AND CORRIDORS

Best Project—Maryland’s West Hyattsville Transit-Oriented Development Strategy

Best Program—Vermont’s Interstate Interchange Policy and Planning Initiative

NOTABLE PRACTICES

28th Street South Design and Construction Project, Boulder—Colorado

Anacostia Waterfront Revitalization—District of Columbia

Hillsborough Street Partnership—North Carolina

High Street Cap—Ohio

CREATING STATEWIDE STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Best in Institutional Change—California’s Context-Sensitive Solutions: Changing the Culture

Notable Practices

Statewide Transportation Visioning Process—Idaho

Integrated Transportation and Land Use Program—New Jersey

Action Plan on Transportation and Land Use for Economic Development—Pennsylvania

2004 Entrants and Points of Contact
Introduction

The term smart growth describes a variety of approaches aimed at targeting land use and development in a way that makes the most sense for communities, the economy, and the environment. A well-integrated transportation network is a key element of smart growth strategies.

AASHTO’s Center for Environmental Excellence, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, sponsored the 2004 Best Practices in Smart Growth and Transportation Competition to showcase outstanding examples of the work being done across the United States to successfully integrate smart growth principles with the planning and delivery of transportation projects, programs, and services.

AASHTO sent a solicitation to all State Departments of Transportation seeking examples of efforts underway to integrate smart growth and transportation. We received 34 applications from 21 states spanning the country. Our panel of expert judges selected three applicants as overall winners—one in each of three categories: best project, best program, and best in institutional change. These initiatives serve as models of the best innovations and collaborative efforts in integrating smart growth and transportation. Seven additional programs were recognized as notable practices.

This report recognizes the overall winner from each of the three categories. The winners and notable practices are grouped according to two themes emerging across the United States:

- Revitalization of communities and corridors on a project or regional level; and
- Development of broad, statewide, smart growth strategies for integration of transportation and land use.

These winning initiatives and all of the applicants from across the country convey the positive forces at work in helping America’s communities grow in a responsible manner—protecting vital resources and ensuring mobility, while encouraging economic development and neighborhood cohesion.

The projects documented in this report truly represent best practices in smart growth and transportation—practices that make the most sense for communities, the economy, and the environment.

John Horsley
Executive Director
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
Transportation as a Key to Smart Growth

2004 Award Winners
In response to concerns over sprawling development and traffic congestion, communities are increasingly focusing on transportation planning as a key element of achieving smart growth. State and local agencies are working together with citizens and environmental advocates to achieve smart growth by balancing community values and transportation needs. Across the country, new partnerships are being formed to better coordinate land use and transportation options, linking pedestrian and bicycles facilities with public transportation and roadways. New development is being targeted around transit facilities, auto-dependent neighborhoods and corridors are being converted into multi-modal centers, and transportation improvements are paving the way for sustainable community growth.

SELECTION PROCESS

The goal of the 2004 Best Practices in Smart Growth and Transportation Competition was to recognize exemplary efforts in achieving smart growth goals. The competition was open to all governmental entities—including state and local transportation agencies, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and resource agencies—as well as non-governmental organizations. Applications were submitted through the State Departments of Transportation, and applicants were asked to define smart growth principles in terms of transportation and the role of transportation in smart growth.

Projects were solicited in three categories:

- **PROJECT-ORIENTED ACTIVITIES**—collaborative efforts to plan, design, and construct a major project that reflected smart growth principles. Examples included but were not limited to projects that ensured connectivity between pedestrian, bike, transit, and road facilities and projects that increased the availability of high-quality transit service.

- **PROGRAM APPROACHES**—organizational policies and programs that illustrated smart growth principles throughout a program or function, i.e., applying to multiple projects. Examples included programmatic agreements with resource agencies or other partner agencies with respect to addressing environmental issues; programmatic design criteria for fostering a sense of community, i.e., systematically applying Context-Sensitive Solutions; and/or programs designed to connect transportation planning to local land use decision-making.

- **INSTITUTIONALIZATION OR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**—efforts made to make permanent the changes in attitudes and organizational structure that help institutionalize smart growth practices in the agency’s program of activities. Examples included organizational decision support structures; changes in mission statements, policies, and design procedures; use of environmental quality assurance and control procedures; and use of performance measures.

Thirty-four applications were received from 21 states. The review panel evaluated each application based on five criteria:

- coordinated transportation and land use;
- intermodalism and multi-modalism;
- innovation and evaluation;
- environmental protection; and
- partnering and outreach.

An expert panel reviewed the application and selected three overall winners—one for each competition category. The panel also recognized seven additional applicants for notable practices.
Best Practices in Smart Growth and Transportation
2004 Award Winners

Best Project
MARYLAND’S WEST HYATTSVILLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Best Program
VERMONT’S INTERSTATE INTERCHANGE POLICY AND PLANNING INITIATIVE

Best in Institutional Change
CALIFORNIA’S CONTEXT-SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS: CHANGING THE CULTURE

Notable Practices in Revitalization of Communities and Corridors:
- 28th Street South Design and Construction Project—Boulder, Colorado
- Anacostia Waterfront Revitalization—District of Columbia
- Hillsborough Street Partnership—North Carolina
- High Street Cap—Ohio

Notable Practices in Creating Statewide Strategies for Integrating Transportation and Land Use:
- Statewide Transportation Visioning Process—Idaho
- Integrated Transportation and Land Use Program—New Jersey
- Action Plan on Transportation and Land Use for Economic Development—Pennsylvania
REVITALIZATION OF COMMUNITIES AND CORRIDORS

▶ BEST PROJECT
▶ BEST PROGRAM
▶ NOTABLE PRACTICES
REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES AND CORRIDORS

Best Project

MARYLAND

WEST HYATTsville TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Targeting development around public transportation is an ideal way to apply the principles of smart growth in revitalizing communities. In Prince George’s County, Maryland, state and local officials developed a model blueprint for community redevelopment centered on the West Hyattsville Metrorail transit station, just outside Washington, DC.

Dedicated officials worked to ensure that the strategy would honor local values and reflect the regional context. In a unique study process, officials developed three detailed, alternative scenarios with renderings of each; gathered input from developers; conducted financial feasibility analyses including assessment of public and private investment needed; developed a detailed parking plan; and provided detailed steps for implementation. Numerous meetings and design charettes held with representatives from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Prince George’s County Planning Department, the City of Hyattsville, Maryland Department of Transportation, and the Maryland Office of Smart Growth resulted in the “Transit Village” concept.

 Initially selected as a case study because of its strong community setting, its location along on a linear riparian park, its proximity to nearby activity centers, and its emerging real estate market, the West Hyattsville Transit-Oriented Development Strategy will transform approximately 80 acres of underutilized land and aging commercial space near the Metrorail station into a state-of-the-art “Transit Village.” Officials plan to use the strategy utilized in West Hyattsville as a springboard to promote transit-oriented development near other Metrorail stations throughout the county.

The West Hyattsville Transit-Oriented Development Strategy (TOD) provides for multi-use commercial and residential development, green spaces, and recreational opportunities that will increase real estate values. The TOD Strategy would also revitalize the area surrounding the underutilized Green Line Metrorail transit station, which provides access to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Model TOD Features

The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy developed for West Hyattsville provides classic transit-oriented development features that encourage residential and commercial development in the area and that preserve the natural environment and community values. The strategy envisions a compact, mixed-use, low-rise development that is pedestrian friendly and is designed to efficiently manage parking. Plans show that the Metrorail transit station itself will be part of a new “village green” and will also serve as a boarding point for bus transit.

An attractive system of parks will be situated along both sides of the Northwest branch of the Anacostia River and Sligo Creek. This park system will include “view corridors,” new amenities, and recreation areas, all fronted by residential buildings.
A revitalized “Main Street” will link new development directly to the transit station. The existing Queen’s Chapel Road will be transformed into a grand boulevard, skirted by attractively landscaped residential-scale boulevards.

The community will be laced with green, open spaces for recreation and visual appeal. A proposed lake will provide region-wide recreational opportunities, storm water benefits, and increased real estate values around the transit station. In short, this combination of attractive design elements will create an inviting, walkable environment for the entire community.

Feasibility Analysis
This TOD strategy is founded on several innovative approaches. Key among them is the use of feasibility analysis to address financial, design, traffic, and environmental concerns at an early stage of planning.

Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is defined as compatible moderate to higher density development, located within an easy walk of a major transit stop, generally with a mix of residential, employment, and shopping opportunities, designed for pedestrians without excluding the auto. TOD can be new construction, or redevelopment of one or more buildings, whose design and orientation facilitate transit use.

— West Hyattsville TOD Strategy
The study for the West Hyattsville area found that the project could be financed by modest public investment through grants and capital improvement funds. Assembling station-area land into a common development framework, streamlining planning processes and permits, moderately investing in public infrastructure, and implementing a comprehensive parking management strategy ensures that the project will be attractive to private developers. Officials project that construction of the West Hyattsville TOD will be completed within a decade.

**Implementation**

The West Hyattsville TOD strategy represented the county’s first attempt at a compact, mixed-use, “Transit Village” development, and Maryland DOT’s first significant attempt at such planning in an urban/suburban setting. The strategy required a collaborative, multi-agency approach that included the land use authority, the transit authority, and key state and local stakeholders. Officials stressed that a key element of success was the recognition that for a state DOT to achieve traditional transit-oriented development goals—such as pedestrian safety, preservation of highway capacity, and leveraging of past investments in transit—other government entities need to take steps outside the DOT’s authority. These steps included, for example, instituting appropriate zoning and parking standards for transit station development projects. The study demonstrated how to achieve the county’s goals for transit-oriented development.

As a result, the county is adopting a new station-area plan for West-Hyattsville that is consistent with the study. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is offering the site for development and is in the process of evaluating proposals. In addition, the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the local zoning authority, is developing a new zoning code that will guide development in the area. The code will be presented to the County Council for adoption.

Officials say this successful strategy will be used as a model for development of communities surrounding the county’s 14 other Metrorail transit stations.
The West Hyattsville transit-oriented development incorporates the best qualities of a traditional village neighborhood and includes a mix of civic amenities, home choices, retail services, and employment opportunities. It is walkable and human scaled—a safe and pleasurable place to visit, live, and work. Through all aspects of its land use and transportation systems, it will advance community values and provide meaningful integration of the nearby parks and open spaces. It will create quality development while revitalizing surrounding neighborhoods.

— West Hyattsville Transit-Oriented Development Concept Statement

Maryland seeks to ensure that tax dollars, invested in transportation infrastructure such as Metrorail, are used to stimulate private investment, extend the benefits of transit, and support local land-use goals. Under the TOD strategy, the existing West Hyattsville Metrorail Station (shown at above) would be linked to the community through a re-designed mixed use, pedestrian-friendly development. Photo and sketch on pages 7 and 8 courtesy of Larry Levine, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. Sketch and photo on this page courtesy of Maryland Department of Transportation.

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The state of Vermont is known for its scenic mountain vistas, green farmland, and quaint villages. And the state’s planning and transportation agencies aim to keep it that way with a unique smart growth approach for planning and designing the state’s interstate highway interchanges.

Large-scale commercial development near some interchanges had led to increased congestion and accidents as well as reduced level of service along intersecting roads. State officials were concerned that dispersed, auto-dependent growth patterns were evolving at many interchanges, threatening the economic vitality of Vermont’s traditional downtowns and villages and impacting the state’s scenery, environmental quality, and quality of life.

To address these concerns, the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), the state Agency of Transportation (VTrans), regional planning commissions, and several municipalities worked together to implement a proactive policy and planning initiative for interchanges. The initiative focused upon strengthening local planning and regulation and encouraging communities and developers to plan for appropriate land uses in conjunction with transportation investments.

As part of the effort, the state developed a handbook, *Design Guidelines for Planning and Development at Interstate Interchanges*. This unique project included a land use inventory as well as a photographic catalogue and scenic analysis of each of the state’s 52 interchange areas; categorization of the interchanges into six “typologies”; a build-out of five interchanges and corresponding preferred alternative growth
scenarios based on smart growth principles; and implementation strategies.

**Appropriate Land Uses**
The handbook is divided into two parts: planning guidelines and design guidelines.

The planning guidelines, which are intended for use by local and regional planning officials, examine existing conditions at interstate areas in Vermont and outline specific issues that must be addressed to address future growth.

The design guidelines are tailored to each of the six interchange “typologies” based on existing conditions and development conditions. Using real-world examples for each category, the guidelines use simulated images to offer a glimpse of how new growth might look under current development.

Vermont seeks to retain the interstate system’s most valuable assets and still allow it to generate economic growth, including ’smart growth’ development near the interchanges. The key has been to engage citizens through planning, recognize community and state assets, and to promote development that remains sensitive to the assets and community interests.

— Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Transportation

Zoning revisions under consideration in Middlesex Village would establish a smaller commercial district near the interchange with a more compact pattern, providing space for light industrial as well as residential uses. The smaller building size, tighter layout, and interconnected street network create a more village-scale development. All aerial images are copyright Alex S. MacLean, 2002.
trends, and how it would change using a more compact and land-efficient design approach.

The design guidelines address elements such as access management, site development and layout, building design, lighting, signage, and landscaping.

The guidelines promote appropriate land uses for development of interchange areas. For example, development that could have a detrimental effect on a nearby downtown is discouraged near the interchanges, whereas development that requires significant large truck traffic is encouraged. Allowing for trucking and freight facilities near interchange areas helps provide a more efficient freight network, and helps to keep truck traffic away from Vermont’s historic village centers.

Land uses that benefit from or require access to the interstate include transportation and commuter facilities, such as multi-modal transit centers and park-and-ride facilities.

Where appropriate, the guidelines also encourage mixed-use development at the interchanges, connected by shared parking and pedestrian facilities.

**Implementation**

DHCA and VTrans made it a priority to support municipal and regional planning for interchange areas through grant funds as well as through education of local land-use decision makers.

Regional Planning Commissions began to address interchange area planning at the regional level. For example, the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission’s Regional Plan included policies to promote appropriate land uses and development concepts in interchange areas.

With financial and technical support from DHCA, 11 separate municipalities undertook interchange-area planning.
Some municipalities combined a regulatory strategy for land use with a transportation management strategy focused on corridor planning and access management. This type of effort was undertaken in Randolph, Vermont, for Interstate 99, exit 4, where proposed development near the interchange was viewed as a potential problem for revitalizing the downtown area. According to state officials, "an extensive community process resulted in an economic development strategy for the interchange area, followed by a development scenario compatible with community and landowner interests, and finally, draft regulations to implement the desired land uses in the area."

Innovative Tools
The interchange planning initiative was promoted through several innovative tools, such as development of geographic information systems (GIS) maps to inventory natural and scenic resources for each of the 52 interchanges along Vermont’s Interstate system.

Recognizing that scenic views were valuable both to tourists and residents in the state, the Scenic Evaluation of Interchange Views represented a unique tool to catalogue and preserve such views. The “Community Viz” computer technology used in Randolph, Vermont, helped citizens visualize future development with a three-dimensional simulation of various development scenarios.

The state also purchased conservation easements to protect valuable resources near interchange areas. Such easements were implemented with assistance from the state and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board in partnership with land trusts and private landowners as well as Transportation Enhancement Funds. For example, the Town of Newbury received $74,000 in Transportation Enhancement funds to purchase development rights on a scenic and highly visible 63-acre farm that fronts I-91 and Wells River.

Through this initiative
local planners and developers are given tools that will help preserve natural, cultural, and scenic resources as the land is developed. These tools include: non-regulatory options, such as the purchase of land; regulatory incentives, such as density bonuses; the use of designated building envelopes to concentrate development for each property; design guidelines to minimize visual impacts and to protect specific resources; and application of landscape design elements that contribute to the ecosystem.

— Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Transportation

Vermont officials stress that these types of innovative tools could be used to achieve smart growth development around interstate interchanges in similar rural areas across the United States.

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Notable Practices

COLORADO

28TH STREET SOUTH DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROJECT, BOULDER

When it came time to consider improvements to Boulder, Colorado’s central 28th Street Corridor, city officials worked with the community to develop a unique smart growth approach. The 28th Street South Design and Construction Project converted an auto-oriented roadway to a multi-modal transportation corridor, representing the first such conversion within the City of Boulder.

The project was part of a larger effort to develop an improvement concept for the entire 28th Street Corridor. A group including business owners, agency representatives, and bicycle, pedestrian, and transit interests worked together to develop a design concept. The committee worked on the bigger issues along the entire corridor and then focused in more detail on specific sections.

The goal of the 28th Street South Design and Construction Project was to support existing and future land uses by expanding pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities and by providing a more aesthetically appealing environment.

Key destinations for travelers in the area included the University of Colorado campus, a major commercial district, and junctions of Arapahoe Road and Colorado Avenue. The project involved approximately one mile of urban design, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements, and was designed to accommodate a large number of students and senior citizens in the area. Transit improvements included regional service between Boulder and Denver for the first time from this location.

Key features of the 28th Street corridor plan were seven bus transfer “Super Stops,” where new regional bus service intersected with local high-frequency service. These stops transformed the intersection or underpass into a pedestrian-friendly connection point, providing a park-like setting with sheltered waiting areas, integrated artwork, attractive architectural features, bench seating, pedestrian-scale lighting, and secured bicycle parking. The Super Stops helped to create a new “sense of place” for the community while encouraging a broader range of transportation alternatives.

The 28th Street South Design and Construction Project converted an auto-oriented roadway (left) to a multi-modal transportation corridor, including seven bus-transfer “Super-Stops” such as the one pictured here (center) and pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly connection points.
Following extensive public participation,

28th Street’s image of an auto-dominated highway will be transformed into a pedestrian and transit-friendly, multi-modal corridor. Improvements include a 12-foot wide multi-use path, bicycle lanes, and enhanced pedestrian facilities as well as aesthetically designed “Super Stops” connecting the transit modes.

— City of Boulder Public Works Department

The City of Boulder developed the corridor improvement concepts in partnership with other transportation and public agencies and area stakeholders, including the Colorado Department of Transportation, the University of Colorado, the Regional Transportation District, business owners, the arts community, residents, bicycling advocacy groups, the disabled community, and the community at-large.

The broader 28th Street-2000: Central Corridor Study included participation from the City of Boulder Planning Department and the Boulder Urban Renewal Authority. As a result, the city’s comprehensive plan and subarea plans coordinated with the project improvements.

The 28th Street South project is the first of three improvement projects planned to achieve the following goals identified in the Central Corridor Study:

- Improve safety and efficiency for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians;
- Improve traffic operations and business access;
- Provide new local and regional transit routes, facilities, and connections along 28th Street;
- Provide gateways to Boulder and improve its “sense of place;” and
- Enhance 28th Street’s regional significance.

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Photos courtesy of the City of Boulder Public Works Department.
REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES AND CORRIDORS

Notable Practices

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ANACOSTIA WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION, SOUTH CAPITOL GATEWAY AND CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT STUDY

The nation’s capital city, Washington, DC, is situated at the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, on a site personally selected by George Washington. French architect Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s plan for the city established a network of broad avenues radiating from the Capitol building, the White House, and other public locations.

However, L’Enfant’s early vision of South Capitol Street as a southern gateway to the city was never fully realized. Freeways and railways built to access the nation’s capital divided neighborhoods and left vast areas vacant, underutilized, and in disrepair.

The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative is a multi-billion dollar effort to transform this area, including 2,800 acres of parkland and adjoining communities, into a world-class destination for residents and tourists. The plan hopes to realize L’Enfant’s vision of South Capitol Street as a grand boulevard leading to the Capitol building and to remove the tangle of freeways now in the shadow of the Capitol dome.

The initiative is a prime example of smart growth development, spearheaded by an historic agreement among 20 separate state, District, and Federal agencies to revitalize the waterfront. A key element in this effort is the District of Columbia Department of Transportation’s completion of the South Capitol Gateway and Corridor Improvement Study, transforming South Capitol Street into a new boulevard lined with housing, shops, public buildings, and parks. A new bridge, tunnel, street improvements, and other transportation infrastructure provide the backbone for revitalization of the area and unite communities that have been divided by the...
freeway and by the existing bridge. The plan also calls for a multi-modal transportation center to connect Metrorail, light rail, and bus transit facilities with bike and pedestrian access to the waterfront and surrounding communities.

According to DC DOT Director Dan Tangherlini, "the new signature bridge will transform the South Capitol Street Corridor into a draw for people to live, work, and enjoy the waterfront and the river. It will be sensitively designed to connect travelers and the neighborhoods to the river. The new tunnel and interchange will funnel commuter traffic to the city center."

The completion of the South Capitol Gateway and Corridor Improvement Study paves the way for the next phase of work on transformation of South Capitol Street and a revitalized Anacostia Waterfront.

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Goals of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative

- Restore the Anacostia River’s water quality and its natural beauty by cleaning up the river and eliminating sources of pollution.
- Break down barriers to the river, particularly those created by intrusive transportation infrastructure, making the Anacostia easier to reach, travel alongside, and cross.
- Reclaim the river’s waterfront as a magnet of activity by providing places to live, work, and shop, as well as for cultural attractions and sporting events.
- Stimulate sustainable economic development in waterfront neighborhoods.
- Promote design excellence in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning.
- Engage all community members and stakeholders to foster river stewardship.

— South Capitol Gateway and Corridor Improvement Study
REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES AND CORRIDORS

Notable Practices

NORTH CAROLINA
HILLSBOROUGH STREET PARTNERSHIP

Hillsborough Street, separating North Carolina State University from retail shops and an historic neighborhood, is one of the most unique and historic corridors in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In 1999, a unique partnership was formed in an unprecedented planning and public collaboration effort for Hillsborough Street. The partnership included the North Carolina Department of Transportation, neighborhood groups, the City of Raleigh, Triangle Transit Authority, North Carolina State University, and local business and community leaders.

The community collaboration began with a series of "visioning" workshops that assembled over 500 residents, university personnel, business owners, and transportation officials. The workshops analyzed a 1.2-mile stretch of Hillsborough Street, looking for solutions to the area’s safety and growth problems. Led by a team of nationally recognized planners and walkable community experts, the participants poured over neighborhood maps and came up with ideas of ways to approach the communities’ transportation needs while maintaining the unique character of Hillsborough Street.

The community envisions Hillsborough Street as a destination rather than a thoroughfare. Converted from four lanes to two lanes with a median to block left turns, the street will include additional pedestrian crossings, more on-street parking, and roundabouts to keep traffic flowing. A five-foot wide buffer between the travel lane and on-street parking spaces will improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. The roadway improvements designed to slow traffic and eliminate left turns at all intersections will greatly reduce traffic crashes, thereby increasing safety and saving the state more than $4 million.

Adding to the visual appeal, new streetscape features will include sidewalk and crosswalk pavement detailing, granite curbs, plans, period lamps, benches, kiosks, bus shelters, and...
street directories, and directional signs. Relocation and burial of utility lines will also improve the aesthetics in the area and improve roadway safety.

The original feasibility study identified ten individual projects to achieve the goals for the corridor. Phased implementation will allow gradual construction and incremental changes to travel patterns. In the summer of 2001 the Raleigh City Council adopted the plan in its entirety. In early 2003, the first project, a roundabout at the southeastern section of the corridor, was completed. This project was Raleigh’s first roundabout and was jointly funded by NC State University and the City of Raleigh. Funding for the nine remaining projects will come from various stakeholders, including partner organizations and the private sector.

North Carolina officials believe the process by which the plan was developed will be a national model for community collaboration and involvement in transportation planning.

The Hillsborough Street Partnership was established to help this historic corridor in central Raleigh enhance its pedestrian and motorist safety while creating a more vibrant business, residential, and university district. The finished product will be a central destination that contributes to the city’s economy and the quality of life for its citizens.

— North Carolina Department of Transportation

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Photos courtesy of the North Carolina Department of Transportation.
REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES AND CORRIDORS

Notable Practices

OHIO

HIGH STREET CAP

Visitors strolling down an attractive promenade, past newly built storefronts and restaurants in Columbus, Ohio, may never know that they are standing over a busy interstate highway, thanks to a unique smart growth project recently completed by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The High Street Cap is a $1.2 million bridge-deck that “caps” the recently expanded Interstate 670 highway below. This extraordinary bridge—in which new retail buildings were built into each side of the overpass—is bringing a new sense of life to the community. In this unique design, the existing gap in the streetscape was replaced with continuous building frontage along High Street. The project created an attractive, pedestrian-friendly connection along the corridor, mitigating the impact of the highway while simultaneously adding valuable new retail space.

According to state officials, the High Street Cap project also allowed Ohio DOT and the City to right a past wrong. Although the interstate highway improved mobility and economic development in Columbus over the past four decades, it divided between the downtown corridor from urban neighborhoods. The High Street Cap offered a win-win solution, allowing the state DOT to address safety and congestion concerns on the highway while reintegrating historic neighborhoods with downtown areas. It also provided a link between shops and restaurants to the north of the highway and the convention center and arena to the south.

The High Street Cap was a direct result of a year-long process that involved neighborhood and community representatives in the design process for rebuilding the 40-year-old corridor. The project was built through a joint effort of the Ohio DOT, the City of Columbus, and downtown community groups. The community had the vision, Ohio DOT provided the $1.2 million to build the structure, and the
City of Columbus teamed with a local developer to build the $6.5 million in shops and restaurants.

Ohio DOT officials have received a great deal of praise from the public and the media for this new approach to urban transportation redevelopment. The project completed the missing piece of the northern downtown puzzle by reconnecting existing neighborhoods and businesses. In doing so, it maintained the economic viability of older communities while encouraging new community growth.

By providing design features that enhance the community, the project helped "heal old wounds within the community and forge new, better relationships between Ohio DOT and the public," officials said. As a result, the project prompted subsequent downtown development projects, including a multi-modal center and new housing to the south of the area.

The project is significant to the community’s smart growth efforts because it not only masks the existence of the eight-lane highway below, but it also reestablishes the essential pedestrian and visual links along the High Street corridor, which serves to reconnect the once divided Short North Arts districts with downtown Columbus.

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Photos courtesy of the Ohio Department of Transportation.
CREATING STATEWIDE STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

▶ BEST INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
▶ NOTABLE PRACTICES
Best Institutional Change

**California**

**Context-sensitive solutions: changing the culture**

Transportation officials across the country are increasingly working to make transportation facilities fit better into their surrounding communities and environment—a concept known as Context-Sensitive Solutions (CSS). For California’s Department of Transportation (Caltrans), CSS is more than a concept; it’s a new way of doing business that incorporates smart growth concepts into the agency’s mission.

Beginning with leadership from top state transportation officials, Caltrans is “changing the culture” through a collection of policies, directives, guidance documents, funding mechanisms, and training programs, all representing an agency-wide commitment to context-sensitive solutions as a tool in achieving smart growth. All of these efforts are initiating a host of impressive transportation planning and design features seen in communities across the state.

California’s CSS initiative fulfills smart growth goals on a broad scale by fostering early and continuous collaboration with stakeholders, balancing transportation needs and community values, and promoting interconnected, multi-modal transportation systems.

Some of the many tools the California Department of Transportation is using to “change the culture” include the following:

- The state policy on context-sensitive solutions, which establishes CSS as an official agency policy and outlines roles and responsibilities of top Caltrans officials in its implementation;
- The CSS Implementation Plan, which lists specific tasks and objectives and how they will be achieved;
- Directives on Accommodating Non-Motorized Travel and on Project Purpose and Need;
- Main Streets: Flexibility in Design and Operations, which provides guidelines that may be considered in developing “livable” communities within existing design standards;
- Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California, in which Caltrans conducted extensive research to address transit-oriented development as a solution for livable communities;
Context-Sensitive Solutions

The department uses context-sensitive solutions as an approach to plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate its transportation system. These solutions use innovative and inclusive approaches that integrate and balance community, aesthetic, historic, and environmental values with transportation safety, maintenance, and performance goals. Context-sensitive solutions are reached through a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders.

— Caltrans Policy on Context-Sensitive Solutions

Opposite, right: Caltrans is working to institutionalize context-sensitive solutions such as this pedestrian underpass are seen in communities across the state. Above: Transit-oriented development is a key smart growth tool, with a publicly accessible Internet database that tracks transit-oriented development projects throughout the state.

- A publicly accessible, searchable Internet database of transit-oriented developments statewide (http://transitorienteddevelopment.dot.ca.gov);
- Special funding for CSS activities, including $7 million awarded annually through the Bicycle Transportation Account; another $20 million to $25 million annually through Safe Routes to School grants; and up to $3 million awarded annually through the Community Based Transportation Planning grant and the Environmental Justice grant programs; and
- Numerous initiatives to promote public participation and community involvement.

Community Involvement Is Key

In describing the many efforts underway to instill smart growth through Context-Sensitive Solutions, state officials stress the importance of involving communities in transportation decisions.

An innovative $2.5-million task order contract provides “on-call” services to support community outreach statewide, encouraging early public involvement in transportation
decision making. Forty-nine task orders executed under the "Planning Public Participation Contract" provide critical services to support the Department’s CSS initiative.

These task orders cover planning activities throughout California. Examples include the Partnership in Integrated Planning Merced Pilot, which is supported through development of brochures and translation services, as well as workshop facilitation and electronic polling. In this pilot project, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Highway Administration, and Caltrans are partners with the Merced County Association of Governments to demonstrate that early participation of the environmental permitting agencies and the public in the planning process will provide the opportunity to resolve issues before project development begins.

In another example, a task order contract supports the San Joaquin Valley Growth Response Study, a joint effort to develop geographic information system—based analysis tools that assess land use and transportation alternatives in the Fresno metropolitan area.

Funding to Support Communities

Though community involvement is the key to smart growth through CSS, financial support to communities provides the foundation. Community-Based Transportation Planning grants seed planning activities that encourage livable communities. These grants help local agencies better integrate land use and transportation planning, develop alternatives for addressing growth, and assess efficient infrastructure investments that meet community needs. Examples include a $199,700 grant to the City of Corona for completion of the Santa Ana River Trail, Bikeway, and Greenway, and a $215,000 grant to the City of Monterey Park for development of a pedestrian circulation plan for redevelopment of the downtown area.

Environmental justice grants promote public participation in planning to improve mobility, access, equity, affordable housing, and economic opportunities for low-income, minority, and Native American communities. Examples include a $227,500 grant to the Yurok Tribe to support development of a comprehensive tribal transportation plan and a $269,400
grant to the City of Huntington Park for a public education effort and analysis of cumulative impacts of mobile-source pollution on communities in Southeastern Los Angeles.

These grant programs are intended to help meet statewide planning and smart growth goals, including improving the balance of housing and jobs, encouraging transit-oriented and mixed-use development, supporting infill development and redevelopment efforts, expanding transportation choices, reflecting community values, and including under-represented populations in transportation decision making.

Transportation Reflects Community Values
The results of these efforts can be seen across the state as transportation projects increasingly reflect community values. Caltrans cites a long list of projects as “symptoms of a healthy CSS process.” Some examples include the following:

- Caltrans let the citizens of Sacramento pick the color to repaint the 65-year old Tower Bridge on State Route 275. The new coat of metallic gold paint—selected through internet and phone voting—improved the bridge’s appearance and helped with waterfront revitalization efforts on both sides of the Sacramento River.

- On Interstate 5, north of Yreka, Caltrans helped the local community achieve its goal of developing the Collier Interpretive Information Center. The first of its kind at a California safety roadside rest area, the visitor information center was designed to fit into the environment and was funded with Transportation Enhancements money.

- Working with citizens and local and regional officials, Caltrans designed roadway improvements for a dangerous section of Highway 101, which winds through a beautiful stretch of old-growth redwood forest south of Crescent City. The project incorporated curve improvements, shoulder widening, a paved median, retaining walls, and viaducts, while avoiding impacts to hundreds of large redwoods.

- The City of Gridley used a Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant to develop a streetscape plan for State Highway 99. The resulting plan, which recommended landscaping, sidewalks, street furniture, bicycle lanes, and improved crosswalks, was developed through a public process including technical advisory committee meetings, public hearings and outreach meetings, and a public design charette.

More examples of context-sensitive solutions will be evident as Caltrans continues to encourage public involvement in transportation decisions while achieving smart growth in communities across the state.

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Photos courtesy of the California Department of Transportation.
CREATING STATEWIDE STRATEGIES FOR LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

Notable Practices

IDAHO

IDAHO STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION VISIONING PROCESS

What is the best way to develop a statewide transportation plan that will accommodate growth and ensure mobility for the next 30 years? To reach such a long-term goal, the Idaho Transportation Department decided that it must reach out to the transportation users—the citizens, business community, and agencies in the state—and find out what they want.

From 2002 to 2004, the Idaho Transportation Department engaged more than 750 people from public and private sectors in Idaho to envision their preferred future by defining a statewide transportation system for the next 30 years. In a unique outreach process dubbed "Idaho’s Transportation Future: Getting There Together," state officials relied on input from transportation users to develop a long-range transportation vision and plan for the state. The result was a comprehensive Vision Statement for the movement of people, materials, products, and information based on the community’s values and priorities.

Citizens set out their vision for a transportation system with convenient access throughout the state, multiple modes of transportation, efficient flow of freight and traffic, and integrated bicycle and pedestrian facilities. To achieve this vision, they established a set of mutual principles, including mobility for all users, compatibility with the environment, preservation of community assets, flexibility, and responsiveness.

Officials gathered input from all regions and all walks of life across the state. The process included creation of an extensive stakeholder database, ranging from high school students to fuel providers to bicycle advocates. An Executive Round Table that included leaders from business, economic development, university, and transportation communities also participated. Electronic keypad Town Hall polling was conducted in large regional workshops as part of the process of creating buy-in and commitment to community transportation goals. A scenario planning workshop used high-tech tools to project the future by analyzing for direct and indirect outcomes. The process also included a performance measurement workshop and the development of an implementation guide.

State officials developed a vision for a transportation system based on the community’s values and priorities that has become known as "Idaho’s Transportation Future, Getting There Together.

A scenario-planning workshop including input from a diverse group of stakeholders used high-tech tools to project the future by analyzing for direct and indirect outcomes.

Photos courtesy of the Idaho Department of Transportation.
Using a professional futurist, three exercises challenged participants to think about the breakthroughs, opportunities, and issues for getting to a preferred future. One activity, called backcasting, engaged participants by looking at the future from the perspective of the past. According to state transportation officials, all of these tools and approaches led to the creation of a very robust and highly supported Vision and approach to implementation that could be duplicated in other regions and states.


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Idaho’s Transportation Vision

The citizens of Idaho aspire to have a transportation system that provides convenient access throughout the state and region. They want different means of transport to support the vitality of the state’s economy, an abundance of family wage jobs, and “the Idaho way of life.” They recognize the need for the efficient flow of freight and other “through traffic” along highways and between airports. They appreciate the ability to slow down to enjoy recreational opportunities afforded by Idaho’s natural beauty. Across every region, they desire well-connected pedestrian and bicycle facilities so they do not always have to move in vehicles.

— Idaho’s Transportation Future: Getting There Together
New Jersey

Integrated Transportation and Land Use Program

Transportation officials in New Jersey recently came to the difficult realization that existing land use and development trends in the state were creating runaway congestion on the state’s major roads and highways. New Jersey DOT concluded that it could not address these concerns simply by adding road capacity; it required a new cooperative approach to coordinate transportation and land-use planning.

New Jersey DOT launched the Integrated Transportation and Land Use Program as a way to leverage the full value out of all infrastructure investments made in the state’s corridors.

Because the current pattern of development in New Jersey often left its residents with no real alternative to driving, the program shifted investment to different modes of transportation and accommodated all transportation users rather than focus primarily on the needs of automobile travel.

The backbone of the effort was a multi-modal, context-sensitive, cooperative planning and design process for specific study areas or corridors. The goal was to balance the future development expectations of each community with all aspects of transportation. These aspects included accessibility, mobility, safety, multi-modality (auto, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle) and other physical environment characteristics of the corridor.

To achieve these goals, New Jersey DOT partnered with New Jersey’s Office of Smart Growth, Department of Environmental Protection, and Transit. Additionally, within each corridor, New Jersey DOT formed partnerships with local officials and the community. The program used an interactive community involvement process, first to establish the general vision and framework for guiding transportation and land use changes within the study area, followed by development of preliminary design concepts, local transportation network changes, and land use changes.

Examples of ongoing studies using the new approach include the Route 29/Capital City Redevelopment project in Trenton.
and the Cramer Hill study in Camden. Both of these efforts offer opportunities to link land use with the newly constructed New Jersey Transit River Line, a light rail facility connecting Trenton and Camden. They also afford numerous other opportunities for linking modes, including a possible ferry service between Camden and Philadelphia and shuttle service to and from the Amtrak/NJ Transit Northeast corridor service via Penn Station in Trenton. Another example, the Route 9 Ocean County study, seeks to further enhance the viability of N.J. Transit’s Route 9 Corridor Bus Service, which provides local service for shopping and recreational trips.

According to New Jersey DOT officials, the Integrated Transportation and Land Use program “accepts the reality that congestion and land use are unavoidably linked, and also recognizes that without sound land use planning, congestion will continue to spiral out of control and steadily decline the quality of life in our communities.” Under this program, New Jersey DOT shifted its focus of transportation and land use planning from reactive to proactive.

The Integrated Transportation and Land Use Program

for New Jersey seeks to foster transportation planning as an instigator and a positive force in change. Positive outcomes will be decided collaboratively, followed by development patterns shaped by plans and community designs that are sustainable. Officials of communities, counties, and other state agencies are full partners in the decision-making process, as is the general public.

— New Jersey State DOT

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CREATING STATEWIDE STRATEGIES FOR LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

Notable Practices

PENNSYLVANIA

ACTION PLAN ON TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Collaboration among government agencies and communities will be the key to achieving smart growth and sustainable development goals in Pennsylvania, and the state developed an unprecedented plan for reaching its goals.

The Action Plan Resulting from the 2003 Conference on Transportation and Land Use for Economic Development established a new approach to revitalize Pennsylvania through better land use planning and partnerships between state and federal agencies, local governments, and communities.

The Action Plan specified some 56 tasks officials will undertake to integrate sound land use planning with infrastructure investments for the Commonwealth. These tasks included a wide range of initiatives to encourage better planning at all levels of government, including leveraging and targeting funds to revitalize existing communities and reuse existing sites.

Development of the plan itself was a collaborative process. Four state agencies—the Departments of Transportation, Environmental Protection, Conservation and Natural Resources, and Community and Economic Development—held a conference with economic development professionals, state agency representatives, planners, and municipal officials, as well as business, civic, and community organization leaders. More than 230 stakeholders convened at the event to evaluate where Pennsylvania currently stood on integrating land use, economic development, transportation, and conservation policies and actions. Based upon input from that event, the four agencies along with the State Department of Agriculture and the Governor’s office developed a detailed Action Plan that identified strategic objectives and specific tasks for implementation, including responsible agencies, implementation dates, and performance measures.

The five strategic objectives of the plan were as follows:

1. Improve coordination of Commonwealth agencies’ policies, funding, and actions relating to economic development, transportation, conservation, and land use.
2. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of transportation and comprehensive planning, programs, project development, and review and approval by Commonwealth agencies.

3. Provide counties and local governments with funding and incentives to achieve mutual economic development, transportation, conservation, and land use goals.

4. Strengthen collaborative processes between and among counties, local governments, state agencies, and private sector organizations in order to achieve a more coordinated approach to economic development, transportation, conservation, and land use at all levels of government; a more efficient municipal service delivery; and the maximum use of available resources.

5. Provide comprehensive educational and technical assistance programs to various audiences in order to further the Commonwealth’s development and conservation goals.

As a result, PennDOT is now committed to target economic development funding on transportation improvements in existing communities and potential “brownfields” sites and to get communities involved earlier in major projects so that land use issues can be considered in the selection of transportation alternatives. PennDOT also plans to implement its context-sensitive solutions initiative to integrate environmental and community goals into transportation projects.

PennDOT considers their action plan to be a living document that will be revised and enhanced as tasks are completed. Regional conferences will be held to measure progress in implementing the plan.

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Left to right: Sprawling development in Pennsylvania was the catalyst for development of the Action Plan. The Pennsylvania’s Action Plan was developed from the recommendations of over 200 participants from a variety of sectors with an interest in better land use planning. Pennsylvania Transportation Secretary Allen D. Biehler spoke on the importance of considering land use issues at the 2003 Conference on Land Use and Transportation for Economic Development.

The focus of the conference

and the subsequent report was to gather input from local elected officials, community organizers, business groups, and local government on how the state could better manage its land use decisions. In implementing this Action Plan, it is the team’s hope that this meaningful partnering and outreach will continue in the future.

— Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Photos courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.
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