

**Complete Streets and Context Sensitive Solutions**  
Web conference presented by  
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**Title: Forum on Livability**

**Date: 9/24/09**

**Kathy Olson: I work for Utah Transit Authority. Has consideration been given to designating funds that can only be used for transit oriented development? For example, we have some excellent locations for TOD but have been unable to find funds for converting 10 acres of park and ride lot to a non-revenue generating parking deck. Tiger funds went to BRT, and extending FTA funds went to building the light rail to the airport. Although funds are available for TOD, it is difficult to convince people that bike paths in a TOD are a better use of federal highway funds than improving a congested intersection or that a parking deck is more important than the airport line. If we want to make TOD a priority, it would be very helpful to have funds that can't be reallocated for something else.**

Discrete funding for TOD is being considered as part of surface transportation reauthorization discussions, as it requires a statutory change. If dedicated funds are provided, however, there will likely be some eligibility criteria for projects to receive funding. TOD projects should be included in regional transportation plans to gain the maximum funding advantage.

**George Webb: Transit - In our county it costs \$250,000 for each bus - and we recover less than 20% of that with fares. How do we expand with what dollars for operation?**

Communities across the nation are struggling with supporting transit operations during the current economic climate. The average farebox recovery ratio (across all transit modes) is only 34%, so it is incumbent upon state and local governments and transit agencies to be innovative in identifying transit financing strategies.

**Thomas Gotschi: What are FTA's thoughts on leveraging transit investments with active transportation investment to improve access, increase catchment area, and increase transit efficiency overall?**

One of the principles of the Sustainable Communities Partnership is to “coordinate and leverage federal policies and investments.” Under its livability initiative, DOT has renewed emphasis on multimodal/intermodal transportation planning to enhance mobility by fostering improved connectivity between and among modes (e.g., high speed rail - transit connections).

**Anne White: Are any incentives being considered to encourage transit planners to pay special attention to Environmental Justice communities that are in danger of being displaced by rising property values, etc?**

Increasing property values resulting from transit development is a double-edged sword for communities. While it fosters economic development, it may also displace communities during

the process. FTA and HUD have established a working group that is currently examining strategies for promoting (and retaining) affordable housing near transit.

**Jeff Springer 2: Can the speakers provide some insight on how to increase the awareness to local community leadership on implementing these concepts?**

Capacity building and outreach efforts are critical to increase awareness to local community leadership on implementing the concepts of livability. Reaching out, building an awareness on livability, and starting the dialogue on benefits of livability are key to advance the principles and concepts of livability.

DOT is pursuing various outreach efforts to inform stakeholders of the livability/sustainable communities initiative. In addition to the traditional transportation interest groups, we are also reaching out to state and local elected official constituencies, such as National League of Cities, National Conference of State Legislatures, and Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Our Federal partners in this effort, HUD and EPA, are also reaching out to their constituencies, which should provide a comprehensive cross section of local practitioners to increase needed awareness.

**Mike Nesbitt: What is being done to improve sections 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317?**

FTA recognizes the burden that many grantees face when obtaining funds from these key mobility programs. FTA is examining ways to simplify the Federal grant process while improving the performance and accountability of key funding sources. Ultimately, FTA is committed to ensuring that all segments of the population receive vital transportation services to get to work, housing, medical, educational, shopping and other essential activities. Any potential programmatic changes will reflect FTA's commitment to mobility for the populations served by these programs.

**Larry McAuliffe: What was learned from the community visits?**

The primary purpose of the Livability Tour was to visit livable communities that can inform how we shape our partnership and future programs. The two Secretaries and Administrator visited three excellent examples of livable communities that are making an impact in their region: Chicago, Illinois, Dubuque, Iowa, and Denver, Colorado. In Chicago, West Garfield Park was struggling and slated to lose its lone transit rail stop due to low ridership. Through the leadership of Bethel New Life and the Chicago Transit Authority, transit service was maintained *and* upgraded. The heart of the redevelopment is the \$4.5 million Bethel Center, a 23,000 sq. ft., two-story building built on a former brownfield. The building features green construction techniques and has applied for LEED Gold certification. In addition to the Center, Bethel also built 50 affordable homes within walking distance of the Center and the Green Line station.

In its Historic Millwork District, the city of Dubuque is redeveloping the old factories and mills to create new mixed income housing, workplaces and entertainment. Sustainable transportation

options are important to this plan. The city's trolley bus now connects the District to downtown. The District plan includes provisions for redesigning the roadways to support bikes and pedestrians. Many of the buildings are being redeveloped with green building techniques. This district contains many contaminated properties that will be remediated and is largely low-income.

Denver's La Alma / Lincoln Park is a predominantly Latino neighborhood, also one of Denver's oldest, with an estimated 7,000 residents. The 10th and Osage station adjoins an industrial area, a diverse existing housing stock, and an emerging cultural. The station is serving as a catalyst for Lincoln Park's redevelopment. The plan calls for mixed-use, mixed-income development within walking distance of the station. This will create a more dense and walkable community and create better connections from the La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood and the Arts District to the station.

**Stan Clauson: What about working with significant NGOs like the National Complete Street Coalition?**

We believe that working with NGO's and incorporating their work and lessons into our Partnership can be very beneficial. Leaders from DOT and the other agencies within the partnership have been meeting with several leaders from NGO's, local governments, and the private sector to learn about their efforts in the field of livable communities. Specifically, partners like Complete Streets and Smart Growth America have been key in supplying research on the benefits of livability and local strategies for success, as well as case studies from around the U.S.

**Jason H: How does LEED ND and other rating systems that address sustainability at a neighborhood scale fit into this equation?**

LEED ND and other rating systems, whether they are on a neighborhood or building scale, are great tools that are available to help the development of livable communities. Such tools could be used by local builders or planners in the development of such communities, but cannot be required at a federal level, since the programs may not be appropriate for all localities.

**Juanita S Wieczoreck: Will the partnership be looking at the costs of living in sustainable communities and how they can be reduced to encourage more people to live in them?**

Many of the principles of the partnership focus on the need for affordable housing and transportation costs for consumers. By aligning federal programs to support the development of livable communities, we hope that their cost will fall. Also, federal support like HUD Sustainable Communities Grants will provide financial and technical assistance to communities that otherwise might not be able to afford an extensive regional planning process. These efforts, coupled with the fact that studies show that most people prefer Smart Growth developments, will hopefully provide the encouragement necessary to develop livable communities.

**Joanne Sender: It was pointed out by both Beth and Gloria that there is a disconnect between transportation and land use planning. Does the current administration have plans to develop a comprehensive, national transportation and land use vision statement and plan?**

Currently land use decisions are made at a local level, while transportation plans are made at a regional level. While a lot of attention is being given to this disconnect, currently there are no plans for a national vision statement or plan. Instead, the agencies are focusing on ways to align their programs, grants, and discretionary funding to incentivize partnership between the local authorities in order to promote integrated planning.

**Lisa Gentri: So, in starting this thought process with a rural gov. Would you combine separate task force into one? I don't ever really talk with anyone in Transit or Green Building.**

The Partnership is determining the most effective way to coordinate with local decision makers at all levels. We are still working out how to best incorporate rural areas, which in their essence are the perfect examples of livability. The lack of technical assistance is a concern that we are aware of and we are working towards developing a program to reach out to communities and provide basic tools to help develop livable community plans.

**Simon Pastucha: Is there going to be a funding emphasis on infill development, rehab or redevelopment instead of the conversion of natural land?**

This is a critical aspect of the Sustainable Communities Partnership. Preservation of existing green space is vital to neighborhood health and vitality. Redevelopment of existing infrastructure and encouraging the movement of suburban residents into the city cores will result in lower percentages of overall household income spent on housing and transportation – which is a key principle of the Partnership. Additionally, there is a focus on developing on existing Brownfield's. In fact, HUD has announced revisions to Chapter 9 of the MAP Guide. Under the revisions, developers can now employ relatively new but proven technologies and techniques to monitor and mitigate any subsurface contamination that may remain after clean-up and redevelopment of a site. Such technologies and methodologies will allow these often well-located sites to be reclaimed and recycled to provide affordable housing in transit-oriented developments and in other urban revitalization contexts. As the DOT prepares for Surface Transportation Reauthorization, we will be exploring ways to direct funding to these priorities. Similarly, HUD's Sustainable Communities Grants, which will be jointly administered by EPA and DOT, will likely place an emphasis on such development.

**Mike Nesbitt: Are localities going to be able to use capital funds for operational costs?**

Currently, the Federal Transit Administration's Urbanized Area Formula Grant program limits funds to be used for capital expenses only in urbanized areas over 200,000 in population. Under 49 U.S.C. 5302, capital expenses are defined to include preventive maintenance, which can cover a transit agencies many maintenance and repair activities. Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), up to ten

percent of transit funds are available for operating assistance; a provision that is specific to ARRA funds. The Administration does not currently have a position on the issue of allowing operating expenses for transit agencies in areas greater than 200,000 in population. However, the Secretary of Transportation, in hearings before Congress, has remained open to discuss the issue.

**Ian Macek, WSDOT: How do we work to change the general paradigm of state and federal facilities being constructed as isolated campuses and offices rather than embracing livable communities and designing mixed-use facilities?**

This is a priority of the Obama Administration. The Federal Government is implementing Executive Order 13414: Federal leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance, which was signed on October 5, 2009. The order calls for federal agencies to, “increase energy efficiency, measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve water resources, prevent pollution, foster markets for sustainable technologies, construct sustainable buildings in sustainable locations, strengthen the livability of communities in which federal facilities are located, and inform Federal employees in achievement of goals.”

**Jennifer Horn: Where can we find information on training and educational opportunities for State DOT practitioners to implement livability strategies?**

Training and educational opportunities for State DOT practitioners to implement livability strategies are offered through a variety of sources including the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) National Highway Institute (NHI) and the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) National Transit Institute (NTI). NHI and NTI offer courses on transportation and land use and transit-oriented development. The transportation and land use course is designed to help practitioners develop a multimodal transportation system that supports desired land uses and helps them shape land uses to support the transportation system. The transit-oriented development course is designed to help participants explain the relationship between land development and the transit system and how it fits into the transportation planning requirements at the Federal, State, and local levels. Additional course information can be found at

<http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/Home.aspx> or <http://www.ntionline.com/>

A Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) Webinar on the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and CSS is available online at <http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org>, as well as a presentation from their Complete Streets Webinar. The following websites also offer educational materials on livability and related topics to State DOT practitioners:

FHWA Visualization in Planning

- <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/vip/index.htm>

FHWA Coordinated Land Use and Transportation

- <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/ppasg.htm>

FHWA Safe Routes to School

- <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/>

FHWA & Context Sensitive Solutions

- <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/context/index.cfm>

FHWA Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/)

Smart Growth America

- <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/>

Complete Streets

- <http://www.completestreets.org>

Center for Neighborhood Technology

<http://www.cnt.org>

**Michael Replogle: What about including some attention to pay-as-you-drive insurance as part of the livability agenda? A recent Brookings study showed that universal use of mileage-based car insurance would cut VMT by 8% and save 2/3s of households would save money on it with these saving an average of \$270/vehicle/year. That's money they could put to transit oriented housing, bikes, and clothes for their kids.**

States and local jurisdictions are increasingly discussing congestion pricing as a strategy for improving transportation system performance. In fact, many transportation experts believe that congestion pricing offers promising opportunities to cost-effectively reduce traffic congestion, improve the reliability of highway system performance, and improve the quality of life for residents, many of whom are experiencing intolerable traffic congestion in regions across the country.

Because congestion pricing is still a relatively new concept in the United States, the FHWA is embarking on an outreach program to introduce the various aspects of congestion pricing to decision-makers and transportation professionals. One element of FHWA's congestion pricing outreach program is the Congestion Pricing Primer Series. The aim of the primer series is not to promote congestion pricing or provide an exhaustive discussion of the various technical and institutional issues one might encounter when implementing a particular project; rather, the intent is to provide an overview of the key elements of congestion pricing, illustrate the multidisciplinary aspects and skill sets required to analyze and implement congestion pricing, and provide an entry point for practitioners and others interested in engaging in the congestion pricing dialogue.

Regardless of what, if any, incentives are offered, PAYDAYS and variable parking pricing strategies are beginning to garner appreciation for their potential to reduce congestion, while saving consumer's money and offering a plethora of other benefits.

**Ann English: How is the Green Highway partnership fitting into this livability effort?**

As the Livability trainings, guidebooks, and workshops come together, FHWA will ensure that lessons learned from the Green Highway Partnership (GHP) are incorporated appropriately. The GHP has focused on three theme areas: watershed based storm water management, ecosystem management, and use of recycled materials in the highway environment. Some of the activities and products have a direct relationship to livability issues in the built environment. Most notably are the challenges faced with aging infrastructure in older cities and addressing storm

water management through innovative design. In addition there have been some parallels between the initiatives: public-private partnerships, coordinating policies and leverage investments, and promoting sustainable development and addressing the challenges of climate change. We encourage partners to follow the progress at <http://www.greenhighways.org/> and sign up to receive the Periodic updates via the GHP Digest by contacting Robb Jolly at [robb@revisionsd.com](mailto:robb@revisionsd.com).

**John Fleming: Thinking of Gloria's comment that the federal partnership offers the opportunity to involve people up front rather than reacting to plans, is the federal partnership creating a mechanism to hear from grassroots organizations and local communities things that could be done to overcome barriers to sustainable community development?**

The DOT/HUD/EPA Partnership has already begun efforts to hear from grassroots organizations and local communities. In September 2009, the DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson traveled to Denver, Colorado; Dubuque, Iowa; and Chicago, Illinois to view projects that promote livability and hear from grassroots organizations and communities as it pertains to promoting livability. A critical activity of the Partnership is to examine successful programs and practices implemented in various communities. In September 2009, representatives of DOT and HUD attended a meeting of government agencies and non-profit organizations involved in the Baltimore, MD area on efforts to advance sustainable communities at which several community-based efforts were highlighted that have resulted in the successful development of transportation projects. For example, a "community compact" concept was discussed that conveyed the needs and interests of the local community for planning and designing a proposed transit project, so that local issues were proactively incorporated rather than in reaction to an environmental impact statement. We are also examining barriers at all levels of government in order to best facilitate sustainable community development.

**Joyce Meyers: How can we get our local DOT officials to embrace Livability and incorporate it into ALL their projects? I work in a very dense, walkable community, except for the barriers that are created by DOT-controlled arterial roadways. The DOT is beginning to change their attitudes toward pedestrians and bicycles, but we still have a long way to go.**

Capacity building and outreach efforts are critical in getting local DOT officials to embrace livability. Reaching out, building an awareness on livability, and starting dialogue on benefits of livability are key to advance the principles and concepts of livability. In addition, FHWA/FTA are developing training on livability via webinars and seminars with our field offices to raise the level of awareness about livability.

**Meredith Dang: I'm not sure if this has been addressed, but how do you think this partnership will impact MPO's and the Regional Transportation Plans? What will be the role of MPOs in implementing these strategies?**

The key to this entire effort is to do fully integrated comprehensive planning to match land uses, planned at the local level, with transportation facilities, planned at the regional level. Clearly States, MPOs and local agencies as well as regional planning councils and states for non-urbanized areas, will have a major role in implementing these strategies. We expect to examine this issue more closely as we approach surface transportation reauthorization.

**Patricia Nilsson: How does the local government engage the MPO and DOT is our question. We are updating city plan and zoning to align with transportation needs, but others hold the purse strings to help us make it happen.**

As part of the integrated land use and transportation planning approach, a broader array of local government officials will need to be brought into these discussions. MPOs are comprised of local elected officials, so it is incumbent upon local land use agencies to communicate their zoning and planning concerns to their transportation agencies and officials. At the MPO the metropolitan transportation plan is the focal point where transportation and land use interaction can be coordinated.

**Anne Fritzel: Is this partnership going to engage traffic engineers and the fire departments to support livable streets standards? AND Joyce Meyers: So far Fire Departments have resisted many of the traffic calming improvements suggested in our community.**

Safety and security are considered to be key points to a successful implementation of a livability initiative. The DOT/HUD/EPA Partnership will work with its sister agencies, directly with state, regional, and local governments as well as private and non-public sectors to develop models that most successfully encourage and assist urban, suburban and rural areas and regions to build sustainable communities. In a multiphase process, the Partnership will work with a spectrum of communities to develop and test best practices for overcoming key barriers to effectively implement sustainable development. During this process, the need to balance safety and sustainability will be crucial, and is an important part of the process for DOT.