

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: NOVEMBER 17, 2006

A meeting of the Steering Committee for DVRPC's Land Use, Transportation and Economic Development (LUTED) study was held on November 17, 2006, beginning at 10 a.m. Barry Seymour, Executive Director of DVRPC, briefly described the LUTED project, and invited the meeting participants to introduce themselves. He then introduced Richard Bickel, Director of DVRPC's Planning Division.

Mr. Bickel began by discussing the project's origin and scope. The goal of this project is to better integrate economic development decision-making with regional land use and transportation planning. The project is an outgrowth of a statewide conference held in 2003 focused on transportation, land use, and economic development, sponsored by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Secretaries of PennDOT, DCED, DEP, DCNR, and AG. The 2003 conference led to the development of a Statewide Action Plan in 2004. In May 2005, regional conferences were held throughout the Commonwealth, resulting in the development of a vision and the identification of primary and secondary objectives as well as a series of action steps for each region. Mr. Bickel referred participants to a handout summarizing the Southeast Regional Conference, and noted that one goal of this project is to further prioritize and implement these objectives and action steps.

Two key policy sets act as guides for the LUTED project: the Keystone Principles, which are intended to foster sustainable economic development and preservation through coordinated state investment; and SAFETEA-LU requirements, which direct that metropolitan planning organizations (MPO's) such as DVRPC consider economic development objectives when targeting infrastructure investment. The rationale behind this requirement is that economic development requires supportive infrastructure, in terms of both hard infrastructure (water, sewer, and transportation) and soft infrastructure (such as job training). It is therefore critical that investments be strategically targeted.

Mr. Bickel then discussed the scope of the project. The LUTED Committee will meet up to four times throughout the 2007 fiscal year. The project's tasks include a review of existing plans and policies; the development of a prioritized, manageable set of action steps; the identification of a prioritized list of transportation and non-transportation projects impacting economic development; the development of an implementation plan with a 5-year horizon; and the definition of a monitoring process. Mr. Bickel noted that a similar process would also be initiated later this fiscal year in DVRPC's four Southern New Jersey counties.

Mr. Bickel next introduced Mike Boyer, DVRPC's Manager of Long Range Planning. Mr. Boyer described the study's initial efforts, which to date include a review of existing state, regional, and county planning and policy documents related to economic development, land use, and transportation. Meetings have also been held with county-level planning and economic development officials, utilizing a set of questions that were included in the handouts for the meeting. Mr. Boyer then described the core principles of DVRPC's long-range Horizons 2030 Plan, which include creating and maintaining centers; promoting growth in identified growth

areas; maintaining and preserving rural conservation lands and a greenspace network; and implementing smart growth and smart transportation approaches to achieve change. Four planning area types (core cities, developed communities, growing suburbs, and rural areas) form the framework for regional planning. The Plan has a corridor focus, is multi-modal, and calls for context sensitive planning, recognizing that each of the region's places is unique. The Commission's Horizons 2030 Plan recognizes that transportation investments are not just for moving people and goods, but can also contribute to community and economic development. The Plan includes an assessment of the region's transportation needs, and advocates a "fix it first" policy. The Plan allocates funding by project category; Mr. Boyer referred the meeting participants to DVRPC's allocation matrix, noting that approximately 70% of highway funds and 75% of transit funds are designated for reconstruction and maintenance, leaving limited funding for additional capacity and new initiatives.

Barry Seymour noted that the regional plan has traditionally considered linkages between land use, conservation, and transportation, but has not historically considered the impact of land use and transportation decisions on the regional economy. He stressed that the Plan is fiscally constrained, and that the majority of funds are used to maintain and replace the existing system. Funding for new initiatives is therefore limited and very competitive, necessitating that the region be smart and efficient about its investments. Lee Whitmore asked what the reaction to this "fix it first" policy is from economic development officials; Mr. Boyer responded that while reconstruction is not very "sexy", most economic development officials seem to recognize the importance of rebuilding and maintenance, recognizing that a quality transportation network is itself attractive to new development. Mr. Bickel noted that, while some regions of the country are spending literally billions of dollars to construct single rail lines, the Delaware Valley has in place a superior system that needs to be maintained. Thomas Moore (Select Greater Philadelphia) noted that mobility is key to attracting companies to the region, although new initiatives tend to get the attention of prospective developers.

Joanne Denworth, the Senior Policy Manager for Governor Rendell's Policy Office, next discussed ongoing efforts at the state level to coordinate land use, transportation, and economic development, describing the activities of the Economic Development Cabinet and the Interagency Land Use Team. She discussed the Keystone Principles and Criteria for Growth, Investment, and Resource Conservation, noting that these guidelines are the culmination of two years of effort by the Interagency Team and reflect an agreement forged between 23 state agencies. These principles and criteria, adopted in May 2005, are designed as a coordinated approach to fostering sustainable economic development and resource conservation through targeted state investment. The identified Criteria are intended for use by the Commonwealth's agencies when making decisions regarding grant and loan programs, either through their incorporation into existing program criteria or as additional favorable considerations in their program's scoring process.

Rich Bickel asked if the checklist provided in the handout on the Keystone Principles and Criteria for Investment had been used to evaluate individual projects. Ms. Denworth noted that some agencies have incorporated the Criteria into their decision-making processes. DCNR, for example, now asks applicants to discuss how their efforts relate to the achievement of the Keystone Principles. Ms. Denworth concluded by describing the efforts of the Governor's Action Team (GAT), the Community Action Team (CAT), and the Brownfields Action Team (BAT). In closing, she noted that while the Commonwealth has no authority over land use decisions, the State can strategically target their investments.

Gail Kronig, the Acting Regional Director of the Governor's Action Team-Southeast, described the role of the GAT, which is intended to be a single point-of-contact for prospective or expanding businesses. The office's priorities include both job creation and improving the Commonwealth's competitive climate. With six regional offices, the GAT is generally able to respond to businesses within two to three weeks, and requires a commitment as to the number of jobs created and/or the level of private funding committed in exchange for loans, grants, and/or other incentives. In response to a question from Rob Graaf (Pennsylvania Economy League) concerning how land use and transportation issues are integrated when reviewing projects, Ms. Kronig noted that both DEP and PennDOT are consulted as appropriate. When asked if the Keystone Principles are considered when reviewing projects, she noted that while they are not specifically applied, they are also not ignored.

The Honorable Judith Schwank, Chair of the Pennsylvania State Planning Board and the Berks County Commissioners, next distributed and discussed the Executive Summary of the 2006 Report of the State Planning Board to Governor Rendell. Historically, the State Planning Board was established in 1929, but remained dormant for a number of years before being reactivated by Governor Rendell in 2004. At that time, the Governor charged the Board with developing recommendations for state policies and actions (including possible legislation) addressing development, conservation, and land use. Specifically, the Governor asked that consensus recommendations be developed in three areas, including resolving conflicts among development, municipal, and conservation interests and needs; developing specific policies for achieving smart growth; and proposing options for improved governance that will allow Pennsylvania to compete more effectively for economic growth.

Ms. Schwank noted that the Board decided early on to focus on voluntary options and incentives rather than mandates, believing that citizens are ready for change and that their role is to provide a framework and create the necessary momentum for change. Three separate Committees of the State Planning Board worked on defining the issues and making recommendations in three areas, including governance; transportation and infrastructure; and economic development. The intent is to distribute the report, hold numerous public meetings over the next year; and, based on public input, present a refined set of recommendations to the State Legislature for eventual implementation.

In conclusion, Rich Bickel asked the participants to review the numerous objectives originally identified during the 2005 Regional Conference and identify the top five for the Southeast region, based on their personal and professional experience and information from the current meeting. Barry Seymour identified the LUTED project's next steps, which include identifying a set of priorities for the Southeast Region; identifying important points of agreement and/or conflict between existing economic development plans and policies; identifying priority regional transportation and non-transportation projects; and expanding this work into Southern New Jersey. When asked if anyone had questions, Joanne Denworth asked if local economic development officials have identified regional priorities in terms of industry types or clusters. Mr. Moore noted that their priorities center around specific industry clusters, including life sciences (such as biotechnology and health care) and IT. Carmen Italia (Montgomery County) agreed, but noted that the regional economy is very diverse, which is itself a strength but requires that the needs of several interests (in terms of job training, for example) must be served.

Primary materials distributed at the meeting:

- Project description: Integrating Land Use, Transportation, and Economic Development Planning in Southeast Pennsylvania
- Summary Report on the Regional Conference on Transportation and Land Use for Economic Development, Southeast Region (May 2005)
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment, and Resource Conservation
- Pennsylvania State Planning Board 2006 Report: Executive Summary (May 2006)