Research Problem Statement

Title[1]

Success Stories of Effective Growth Policies and Model Growth Policies for Small Communities

Background[2]

Many communities throughout the country continue to face population growth. To help guide the type, intensity, location, and timing of new development, growth management strategies are sometimes used by government agencies at all levels. These growth management strategies take many issues into consideration such as the compatibility of new growth with surrounding uses and the need to minimize the costs associated with supplying public services to support new development. One of the strategies that promotes growth management at the local level is the growth policy (also known as comprehensive plans in many states). As one example, a growth policy may serve as an advisory mechanism to guide decisions about future development and public investments. Growth policies can also provide a framework for guiding development of multimodal transportation systems and supportive land uses and providing adequate funding.

A growth policy defines a community's long-term vision for how it would like to grow and spells out the steps that may be taken in order to achieve that vision. In many states, it is a nonbinding, non-regulatory document that serves as a general guide for decisions regarding the community's physical development. Growth policies can be useful to planners in rural and fast growing areas, especially resort areas, for phasing public infrastructure and services to accommodate growth. Although many municipalities and counties across the country have growth policies of one form or another, there remain an insufficient number of examples on how growth policies can effectively influence local land use and transportation decisions, and deliver tangible benefits to communities. Common features of successful policies in the form of "model growth policies" would also be a beneficial addition to this tool implementation.

Objective

The objective of the research is to identify smaller communities that have successfully used growth policies as one mechanism to improve transportation performance. A secondary objective is to identify any commonalities in these successes, and suggest model growth policies for small communities.

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[1] This section corresponds to "Problem Title" in the MDT and TCRP Research Problem Statements.

[2] This section corresponds to "Problem Statement" in the MDT Research Topic Statement, and "Research Problem Statement" in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

Potential Benefits[3]

While growth policies are a foundational growth management tool in many communities, the extent of their usage in smaller, growing communities is still somewhat limited. A recent research project conducted by the Montana Department of Transportation[4] concluded that additional examples and case studies that detail specific benefits that peer communities have achieved through growth policies may help further their usage and deliver tangible benefits.

Relationships to the Existing Body of Knowledge[5]

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) *Research in Progress* (RIP) database was searched in April 2010, and no citations were found relating to effective growth policies for small communities.[6] A search of the Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) database in April 2010 using the index terms "smart growth" and "case studies" combined with keywords "policy* OR ordinance" returned 17 records. Several citations relate to the role of state transportation agencies in supporting smart growth efforts by local and state governments. Several other citations are specific to the experience of large cities and megaregions. Among other citations, *Getting to Smart Growth II: 100 More Policies for Implementation* from the International City/County Management Association provides specific information on financial and technical activities and emphasizes case studies to show where the various policies, programs, and projects have been successfully implemented.

Tasks[7]

Additional examples of growth polices implementation is needed to provide specific examples of how such policies can influence local transportation and land use decisions, and deliver tangible benefits. One potential research approach might include outreach to local, regional and state transportation planners plus follow-up case studies to find the keys to successful implementation of growth policies.

Developing these examples and model policies will likely require focused investigation of growth policy usage in small and medium sized communities. Some topics to consider when conducting the research include (but are not limited to):

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[3] This section corresponds to "Urgency and Expected Benefits" in the MDT Research Topic Statement, and "Urgency and Payoff Potential" in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

[4] *Local Transportation and Land Use Coordination: Tools and Gaps*; http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/planning/smart_trans.shtml.

[5] This section corresponds to "Related Research" in the TCRP Research Problem Statement. This information is included in the "Problem Statement" section of the MDT Research Topic Statement.

[6] RIP search terms: model, growth, policy.

[7] This section corresponds to "Research Proposed" in the MDT Research Topic Statement and the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

- Keys to successful implementation of the growth policy;

- Public involvement process used in formulating the growth policy;

- Level of outreach and education needed to win the support from the political body, landowners, developers, and the general public; and

- Level of stakeholder input and technical analysis required to implement the growth policy.

Follow-on and Implementation Activities[8]

The end product of this research effort is anticipated to be tools and guidance for use in smaller communities. It is possible that this information could be integrated into existing on-line planning toolkits such as *Montana Transportation and Land Use: Resources for Growing Communities.*[9] The research products will also be useful additions for existing training programs, conferences and guidebooks on general transportation planning.

Estimated Funding Requirements[10]

The estimated funding needed for this research project is between $150,000 and $175,000. Estimated labor needs for a research team are about 250 hours for a principal investigator, 150 hours of senior-level research support, 300 hours of mid-level research support, and 300 hours of junior-level research support. A research period of about 12 to 15 months, including review time for draft products, is anticipated.

Relationship to FTA Strategic Research Goals and/or TCRP Strategic Priorities[11]

The proposed research directly supports both FTA Strategic Research Areas. Many communities have found smart growth and livability to be strongly linked, and policies that improve transportation and land use coordination can also deliver increased transit ridership and in so doing help improve transit agency performance. Increased usage of growth policies and other community-based planning approaches by smaller communities can help transit systems become more competitive in the multimodal environment (TCRP Strategic Priority 4).

Person(s) Developing the Problem[12]

<<To be completed at time of submittal to the research program.>>

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[8] This section corresponds to "Implementation Plan" in the MDT Research Topic Statement. There is no corresponding section in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

[9] http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/toolkit/.

[10] This section corresponds to "Estimate of the Problem Funding and Research Period" in the TCRP Research Problem Statement. There is no corresponding section in the MDT Research Topic Statement.

[11] This section only appears in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

[12] This section only appears in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

Process Used to Develop Problem Statement[13]

This problem statement is the product of the *Local Transportation and Land Use Coordination: Tools and Gaps* research project sponsored by the Montana Department of Transportation. The research topic was one of six high-priority gaps in practice identified by the research team and confirmed by a research panel comprised of representatives from city, county and state government agencies as well as transportation stakeholder groups.

IT Component[14]

The necessary software applications are already resident within planning offices. No new software is anticipated to be developed as part of this research effort. It is anticipated that the research product may be incorporated in an existing database within the *Montana Transportation and Land Use Toolkit*.

Date and Submitted By[15]

<<To be completed at time of submittal to the research program.>>

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[13]   This section only appears in the TCRP Research Problem Statement.

[14]   This section only appears in the MDT Research Topic Statement.

[15]   This section corresponds to "Submitted by" in the MDT Research Topic Statement.