



CORVALLIS AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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Memorandum

To: Linda Modrell, MPO Representative on the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Task Force
From: Ali Bonakdar, Director
Date: October 14, 2009
Re: Staff Input to the Greenhouse Gas Emission Task Force

Section 10 of HB 2186 directs the Greenhouse Gases Reduction Task Force to (a) study and evaluate alternative land use and transportation scenarios that accommodate planned population and employment growth in areas served by Metropolitan Planning Organizations while reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions....

1. Role of MPOs

In essence, the intent of the new Oregon Legislative requirement is no different from the current federal requirement of Air Quality Conformity in the nonattainment areas. In nonattainment areas, such as Portland, Eugene, Medford, all transportation plans, programs and projects must demonstrate that they (a) would not exacerbate air quality conditions; (b) would help reduce emissions and improve air quality, and; (c) conform to the goals of the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for air quality improvement.

For this purpose, the MPOs conduct a series of scenario planning, using Travel Demand Forecasting Model that would project the vehicle miles of travel (VMT) generated by the implementation of proposed plans, projects and programs. The VMT, then, is entered into the EPA's emission models to estimate the emission impacts of proposed transportation improvements. The only variation is that EPA has long developed models for calculating the emission of Six Criteria Pollutants (carbon monoxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead), while similar models for greenhouse gases are just being developed.

As such, regulating transportation planning activities for the purpose of reducing noxious emissions is a familiar theme to MPOs and the MPO forum is well structured to undertake this additional requirement.

An issue deserving attention would be the applicability of state laws to the MPOs which are created by and are accountable to the federal government. While this is completely in the realm of legal experts, I would think the issue of compliance would be best addressed if the state provides necessary resources for the MPOs' emission reduction efforts.

2. Land Use Issue

HB 2186 requires evaluation of land use and transportation scenarios. Unlike the practice of emission reduction, land use planning is not performed by MPOs and with the exception of Portland Metro and the Minneapolis/St. Paul MPOs, no other MPO in the Country has been granted with such an authority.

Yet, maintaining the existing separation of land use and transportation decisions has been proved to be counterproductive and would not particularly work for the reduction of greenhouse gases. In fact, a comprehensive approach to the greenhouse gases reduction would require true integration of land use and transportation decisions.

Current Oregon planning laws are the only institutional attempt to the integration of land use and transportation planning processes. These laws could be elaborated to specifically produce the desired integration process. Again, the applicability of these laws to MPOs needs to be addressed.

Land use and transportation planning process could be required to be performed with participation of both land use planning authority and the MPO. In that, the adoption of the land use and transportation documents would require the endorsement of both entities. Also, development of transportation projects would require the endorsement of the Planning Commission (land use body) and construction permits would be reviewed for transportation issues by the MPOs. The two entities would strive to reduce greenhouse gases through their collaborative transportation and planning processes.

Obviously, the details of this approach need be worked out to achieve the desired level of integration.