

# **EVALUATING ALTERNATIVE LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION SCENARIOS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS**

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Today's transportation planning process is under increased pressure to expand its evaluation of public spending beyond traditional factors such as forecasted travel demand, air quality, and energy conservation. Federal planning guidelines now include the equitable distribution of benefits and costs, environmental protection, and community desires in the list of factors to be considered in the planning process. Transportation spending is also being measured in the context of linking agency goals with those of other agencies at the federal and state levels. Transportation planning is no longer just about improving mobility; it is also about promoting economic development, enhancing quality of life, and providing greater opportunities for minority communities, urban and rural. State agencies are being asked to be more accountable, efficient, and equitable in the provision of services. In doing so, they are being asked to provide greater opportunities for public involvement in the decision-making process.

In 2001, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) contracted with the Anthony James Catanese Center for Urban & Environmental Solutions at Florida Atlantic University (Catanese Center)<sup>1</sup> to review full cost accounting, a method proposed to measure the impact of new development on state, regional, and local infrastructure and services. This development impact accounting approach was first proposed by the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida in 1998. Later, the 2000 Florida Growth Management Study Commission reviewed full cost accounting and concluded that this type of evaluation tool would be both difficult and costly for local governments to implement. They recommended instead that the State develop a standard fiscal impact analysis model to assist local governments in determining the full costs and benefits of new development. Recommendations from both commissions demonstrate the State's desire to evaluate capital funding decisions in a fiscally efficient manner that will also take into account other costs and benefits of implementing local policies, plans, projects, and programs. In addition, a significant number of recommendations made by the 2000 Growth Management Study Commission were dedicated to enhancing citizen involvement in community planning and the decision-making process. They also demonstrate a growing desire for more democratic decision-making processes that provide citizens and planners with appropriate opportunities and tools.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the processes that FDOT and land use planners use to evaluate and select transportation and land use policies, plans, projects, and programs in Florida. It focuses on current evaluation methods used in Florida for land use and transportation planning at the state, regional, and local levels, and on how public participation can be used to enhance the planning process, particularly during the establishment of evaluation and selection criteria. The research provides examples of studies and initiatives from Florida and other states, and from federal agencies. Since land use and transportation evaluations are conducted separately, this report identifies linkages and gaps that influence a more holistic approach to land use and transportation planning.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Florida Atlantic University/Florida International University Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Several issues became evident throughout the research process:

- Greater expectations are being placed on the transportation process to consider impacts to other systems such as land use and the environment.
- Increased expectations of transportation planning seem to be occurring for several reasons, including the fact that more resources at the state and federal levels are dedicated to transportation planning than to other planning systems.
- The transportation and land use decision-making process should involve in a meaningful manner those who will benefit from or be impacted by the decision; therefore, the public should be part of the discussion very early in the process.
- Several obstacles to promoting greater linkage between land use and transportation affect the exchange of information between the two separate planning processes, and funding will be required to overcome those obstacles.
- There are several obstacles to meaningful public involvement, including the fact that from the public's perspective, vision, goals, and objectives are not adequately linked to the decision-making process.
- Regardless of the number of evaluations conducted, if land use and transportation forecasting are not linked to each other, there will be conflicts.

The FDOT continues to implement programs and procedures that over time will help to overcome some of these problems and issues, including the Community Impact Assessment process, the establishment of public involvement programs at the MPO level, and the development of an environmental streamlining process that incorporates public and resource agency involvement earlier in the planning process. However, other steps can be taken to support these efforts to provide greater linkage between land use and transportation planning to achieve improved environmental protection. However, some of these issues lie beyond the responsibilities of the Department of Transportation, while others involve greater collaboration with local governments and MPOs, and may require the oversight of other agencies.

## **BENEFITS**

This study will help transportation and land use planners, policy decision-makers, and the public to compare the costs and the benefits of alternative forms of design and development during the planning and permitting process. The findings also suggest the importance of collaboration between transportation and land use planners, as well as the importance of having public involvement at the beginning of the planning process.

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