Planning for Fiscal and Economic Health Workshop

The workshops facilitated by Smart Growth America focused on planning for fiscal and economic health in Greater Des Moines. This workshop helped area staff members and elected officials continue to think about the long-term impacts of their development decisions and the associated investments. The workshops dovetailed with the development of the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) next long-range transportation plan, Mobilizing Tomorrow.

Representatives from the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Iowa Economic Development Authority, the Greater Dallas County Development Alliance, the Greater Des Moines Partnership, Des Moines International Airport, the City of Des Moines, the City of Ankeny, the City of Carlisle, the City of Clive, the City of Norwalk, Polk County, and the Iowa League of Cities participated in the workshops.

Progress

Since the workshops took place, the MPO has continued work on Mobilizing Tomorrow. The workshops propelled the discussions around Mobilizing Tomorrow and helped regional leaders consider the true costs of various projects. As such, Mobilizing Tomorrow will be a fiscally-constrained plan to guide the region's future transportation investments.

In the past, the long-range transportation plan has included hundreds of projects that may not have been fiscally feasible. Using the SGA workshops as a starting point, the MPO implemented a scoring system aimed at ranking projects and determining what the best projects for the region’s long-term sustainability are.

While the team still is working to finalize this list, there has been a push by the technical committee as well as the Steering Committee working on Mobilizing Tomorrow to implement The Tomorrow Plan and the strategies discussed at the workshop. It seems that the speaker series events held during the development of The Tomorrow Plan coupled with this workshop have elevated people’s understanding of investment decisions significantly. For example, elected officials are seeing the correlation between affordable housing, access to jobs, and transportation investments in a whole new light since the workshop.

It is anticipated that Mobilizing Tomorrow will be complete in October 2014 and will reflect many of the principles covered in the workshop.