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 finalized and approved Mobilizing Tomorrow. The Planning for Fiscal and Economic Health workshop impacted Mobilizing Tomorrow in a few different ways:

- A preferred growth scenario was developed that built off of alternate scenarios created for The Tomorrow Plan. The preferred scenario limited outward growth seen in previous scenarios, focused growth along nodes and corridors, and discouraged growth in sensitive environmental areas. The MPO staff also highlighted demographic changes anticipated in the metro area that are likely to impact transportation modes and housing decisions.
- Plan goals and performance measures were developed that emphasized maintenance of the transportation, enhancing multimodal opportunities, protecting the environment, and enhancing safety and quality of life. Projects were scored against these goals, thereby reducing the number of projects in greenfield areas.
- A revised funding strategy was developed that created dedicated funding set-asides for transit and maintenance.
- The plan was fiscally constrained, and funding necessary for ongoing maintenance was considered before new projects were added to the plan.
- A set of technical resources were included in the plan that emphasize complete streets, transit oriented development, shared parking, and other similar best practices.
Other efforts undertaken that support the workshop recommendations include:
- Building off efforts on *Mobilizing Tomorrow*, the MPO staff completed a forecast of pavement conditions for the next 10 years under various budget scenarios. This study provided each member community a better understanding of their maintenance needs.
- An online natural areas inventory map was developed to assist member communities understand where sensitive environments are that should be avoided.
- Smart Growth America completed a fiscal impact analysis of alternative development scenarios in West Des Moines. MPO staff is in the process of making that study available to its MPO board and member governments.
- At least four communities in the metro – Des Moines, Polk City, Pleasant Hill, and Windsor Heights – are working on comprehensive plan updates. MPO staff is more engaged in assisting in these efforts, which will provide an opportunity to ensure issues related to fiscal and economic health are addressed.