

HUD, DOT and EPA Partnership: Sustainable Communities

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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Shaun Donovan, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Ray LaHood, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson today announced a new partnership to help American families in all communities — rural, suburban and urban — gain better access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs.

Earlier this year, HUD and DOT announced an unprecedented agreement to implement joint housing and transportation initiatives. With EPA joining the partnership, the three agencies will work together to ensure that these housing and transportation goals are met while simultaneously protecting the environment, promoting equitable development, and helping to address the challenges of climate change.

DOT, HUD and EPA have created a high-level interagency partnership to better coordinate federal transportation, environmental protection, and housing investments and to identify strategies that:

- **Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nations' dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.
- **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.
- **Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities — through such strategies as transit oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling — to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.
- **Coordinate policies and leverage investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.
- **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods — rural, urban or suburban.

The HUD/DOT/EPA partnership will:

- **Enhance integrated planning and investment.** The partnership will seek to integrate housing, transportation, water infrastructure, and land use planning and investment. HUD, EPA and DOT propose to make planning grants available to metropolitan areas, and create mechanisms to ensure those plans are carried through to localities.

- **Provide a vision for sustainable growth.** This effort will help communities set a vision for sustainable growth and apply federal transportation, water infrastructure, housing and other investments in an integrated approach that reduces the nation's dependence on foreign oil, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, protects America's air and water and improves quality of life. Coordinating planning efforts in housing, transportation, air quality and water -- including planning cycles, processes and geographic coverage -- will make more effective use of federal housing and transportation dollars.
- **Redefine housing affordability and make it transparent.** The partnership will develop federal housing affordability measures that include housing and transportation costs and other expenses that are affected by location choices. Although transportation costs now approach or exceed housing costs for many working families, federal definitions of housing affordability do not recognize the strain of soaring transportation costs on homeowners and renters who live in areas isolated from work opportunities and transportation choices. The partnership will redefine affordability to reflect those costs, improve the consideration of the cost of utilities and provide consumers with enhanced information to help them make housing decisions.
- **Redevelop underutilized sites.** The partnership will work to achieve critical environmental justice goals and other environmental goals by targeting development to locations that already have infrastructure and offer transportation choices. Environmental justice is a particular concern in areas where disinvestment and past industrial use caused pollution and a legacy of contaminated or abandoned sites. This partnership will help return such sites to productive use.
- **Develop livability measures and tools.** The partnership will research, evaluate and recommend measures that indicate the livability of communities, neighborhoods and metropolitan areas. These measures could be adopted in subsequent integrated planning efforts to benchmark existing conditions, measure progress toward achieving community visions and increase accountability. HUD, DOT and EPA will help communities attain livability goals by developing and providing analytical tools to evaluate progress as well as state and local technical assistance programs to remove barriers to coordinated housing, transportation and environmental protection investments. The partnership will develop incentives to encourage communities to implement, use and publicize the measures.
- **Align HUD, DOT and EPA programs.** HUD, DOT and EPA will work to assure that their programs maximize the benefits of their combined investments in our communities for livability, affordability, environmental excellence, and the promotion of green jobs of the future. HUD and DOT will work together to identify opportunities to better coordinate their programs and encourage location efficiency in housing and transportation choices. HUD, DOT and EPA will also share information and review processes to facilitate better-informed decisions and coordinate investments.
- **Undertake joint research, data collection and outreach.** HUD, DOT and EPA will engage in joint research, data collection, and outreach efforts with stakeholders, to develop information platforms and analytic tools to track housing and transportation options and expenditures, establish standardized and efficient performance measures, and identify best practices.