



ADVANCING COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Summary of a National Focus Group on Transportation and Economic Development



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About the NADO Research Foundation

Founded in 1988, the NADO Research Foundation is the nonprofit research affiliate of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). The NADO Research Foundation identifies, studies, and promotes regional solutions and approaches to improving local prosperity and services through the nationwide network of regional development organizations. The Research Foundation shares best practices, offers professional development training, analyzes the impact of federal policies and programs on regional development organizations, and examines the latest developments and trends in small metropolitan and rural America. Most importantly, the Research Foundation is helping bridge the communications gap among practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. Learn more at www.NADO.org and www.RuralTransportation.org.

This report was primarily authored by NADO Associate Director Carrie Kissel with assistance from NADO Program Managers Sara James and Brett Schwartz. We thank all the individuals who participated in the focus group occurring in March 2016 and others who have provided information to assist this research.

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This work is supported by the Federal Highway Administration under contract number DTFH61-15C-00022. Any opinions, findings and conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FHWA or the NADO Research Foundation.

ADVANCING COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

SUMMARY OF A NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP ON TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

On March 8 – 9, 2016, transportation and economic development professionals from across the nation gathered in Nashville, Tennessee for an in-depth discussion on the link between transportation and economic development, and how agencies can collaborate to advance planning and implementation on those issues. This focus group emphasized collaboration between state departments of transportation (DOTs) and regional planning and development organizations.¹ The discussion touched on several themes, including economic development impacts, resilience, and state department of transportation (DOT) and regional planning and development organization roles. During the conversation, the focus group participants developed a definition of economic development that can be used in transportation and related planning efforts:

Economic development in transportation involves deliberate interventions to produce tangible benefits that are specific to the context, are sustained over time, and make a place more resilient.

Focus group participants also emphasized that economic development efforts are diverse, beyond traditional industrial recruitment efforts. Particularly in rural areas, doing economic development differently means focusing on economic resilience and building upon existing assets or resources. By reducing costs for businesses and removing barriers to mobility for goods and people, transportation and economic development efforts can support a variety of economic sectors and root existing and future businesses more firmly within a region's economic network.

Although much of the focus group discussion emphasized collaboration occurring through the transportation planning process, participants provided examples and discussed how economic development interventions occur through transportation policy and programs and in specific projects through investment decision-making.

Economic Development Impacts

Focus group participants identified data and analysis related to economic and wider community impacts as important considerations in transportation planning and decision-making. This is especially important as the practice of economic development has changed over time, with a newer emphasis on developing economies that are resilient and rooted in their particular regions. Identifying broader impacts better reflects how transportation can affect the stock of assets that a region has, in addition to strictly economic measures, but that is not always easy to pinpoint. One participant noted, "Economic development isn't economic development unless it's quantifiable." Transportation works alongside workforce investment, housing, and other initiatives to affect the regional economy. Participants

¹ Regional planning and development organizations (RDOs) are multijurisdictional entities serving local governments through various program areas that often include regional economic and community development and transportation planning services through rural regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs).

discussed the importance of information such as the number of jobs resulting from an investment, the type or pay range of jobs, changes in local tax revenues, levels of economic activity, and private investment in a community or region to help tell the story of transportation's impact.

Other metrics are also an important part of measuring a region's economy. Participants noted that different places prefer different economic strategies and goals, so solutions to freight and passenger mobility challenges will not always look the same. Metrics such as population stability or growth, quality of life, consistency with a community's vision for the future, and the investment in community assets also demonstrate the impact of a transportation project, program, or policy. These impacts, along with traditional measures like jobs, often do not appear immediately after a transportation project is constructed. However, these types of metrics should ultimately have long-term effects and should contribute to economic resilience.

Focus group participants viewed consideration of traditional economic measures along with community impact-type measures as a way to tell a credible story about transportation's effects on regional development. Although many states have specific funding streams dedicated to projects with economic outcomes, one participant said the overall transportation planning process should have less of a focus on identifying particular projects as "economic development projects" because "it is inherently within the transportation process that we are also generating economic development." Another stated the importance of recognizing that "planning is a conversation," noting that measures that convey context-specific impacts are more meaningful than just comparing numbers of jobs created.

The participants discussed the role of economic distress measures in transportation decision-making and in measuring success. Other federal funding sources for community and economic development programs use economic distress criteria based on unemployment rates or per capita income to determine eligibility or prioritize projects. Federal transportation funding streams do not have such criteria embedded. When state DOTs and other state agencies establish their own economic development funding programs, the programs are often intended to respond to development prospects or business retention rather than to address distress. States or regions can add economic distress to their own locally derived criteria to spend federal or state funds, depending on the consistency of such criteria with their adopted policy priorities and the interest of external decision makers such as commissions and legislatures. Match rates help to ensure a community is invested in a project even when most of the funding is not local, but they can also make it difficult for some distressed communities to access funds. Participants noted that jurisdictions often pass on applying for funds for needed projects when the match would be too difficult to obtain.

Transportation and Regional Resilience

Throughout the focus group, the discussion came back to the concept of resilience, the ability of a region to recover quickly from a shock, withstand a shock, and avoid a shock altogether.² Various kinds of shocks can affect economies, including economic dislocations, manmade disasters, and natural disasters. Participants noted that regional resilience often is discussed after the fact. When residents are engaged in the recovery phase of a recent economic shock or disaster, they tend to place a high priority on being better prepared in advance of the next event.

Resilient transportation infrastructure and services play a role in restarting economic activity following a disaster, connecting people to jobs and services quickly and allowing for the movement of goods and business operations. Participants noted that work related to extreme weather events and climate resilience is likely to benefit economies. Resilience strategies improve transportation's reliability, as investments are made over time to address vulnerability and risk to extreme weather events, sea level rise, and similar threats.

Advance planning that integrates transportation with economic development, land use, and workforce development was seen as an effective way to address economic resilience. By involving a wide group of stakeholders in developing a cohesive regional vision, regions and state agencies together can better target investments to anticipate impacts, or to lessen impacts of economic change or unanticipated developments. Economic resilience was a common goal for focus group participants, who discussed how diverse regional economies are, based on their geography, workforce, existing resources, and other types of assets. Participants discussed ways that economic resilience can be achieved, including through diversifying economies, developing adaptable economies invested in a particular place, support for the transportation needs of particular economic clusters, and strategies to build economic activity year-round in places that have relied on seasonal business. The focus group attendees agreed that resilient economies strengthen multiple regional assets along with building economic activity, jobs, and investment in communities.

Transportation, when coupled with workforce development strategies and investment in appropriate housing, can support sustained economic growth. Focus group attendees stressed that planning for resilience requires connecting transportation with other civic services and is an iterative process as communities adapt their strategies. Collaboration among states, regions, and their stakeholders allows for course correction through planning and implementation cycles.

² U.S. Economic Development Administration. (2015) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Content Guidelines. Washington, DC.

Roles of State DOTs and Regional Organizations

Planning Processes and Institutions

Focus group participants emphasized institutionalizing mechanisms for gathering input at the regional level to share with state DOTs. Regional transportation committees, economic development committees, coordinating councils, and other structures provide a regular forum for hearing different perspectives and collecting information. According to one participant, planning for transportation and economic development “is not just the type of projects that agencies are doing, but also the cross-collaboration and breaking down silos” that occurs through regular communication.

Specific roles mentioned for state agencies included supporting regional planning efforts that engage transportation and economic development stakeholders. This includes not only financial support for regional planning tasks, but also devoting state DOT staff time to participating in regional boards and committees, meeting with and training regional planning staff, and providing information and answering questions. It also requires the state to establish structures to use the input gathered through the region in ways that benefit statewide planning and decision-making. One participant noted that regional transportation planning organizations serve that state as “our eyes and ears, and we would be operating blind without them.”

State support for regional planning also often includes financial support for special studies that identify priority projects or strategies that support the regional vision developed through planning and its economic development goals. State DOTs often provide regional organizations and localities with valuable transportation data and technical expertise. Having a feedback loop to provide local information to the state is sometimes missing or incomplete, however, even when communication with the state DOT might help localities with scoping projects or analyzing and planning for potential mobility and safety impacts of local projects and developments that fall outside the purview of state authority.

Participants stressed the importance of connecting statewide planning to implementation. Implementation is not simply project delivery, but ongoing communication about planning, programming, and project delivery that gives local governments and regional planning bodies the opportunity to give input, understand what happens with their input, and know how a project moves from concept to construction. Having a clear process and criteria for inclusion in statewide plans and programs and institutionalizing planning processes for identifying regional priorities were mechanisms that focus group participants mentioned as potential roles for state DOTs. Some states have found benefit in planning for a longer time horizon than the federally required four-year Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a plan that lists federally funded projects. For those states, developing a state plan with a longer timeframe (but with annual updates) gives them the flexibility and time to impact the scoping process and to communicate when priorities change and when funding scenarios are altered.

Regional planning and economic development organizations can play an important role in the transportation planning process. Particularly in places where states have invested resources in regional planning, the ability to bring together public and private sector interests with a stake in both transportation and economic development brings a beneficial perspective to the planning process. Regional forums provide an opportunity to “ask communities what they want, how they want to change, and what they want to protect,” remarked another participant. Prioritizing projects, strategies, and

issues at the regional level also helps to focus the process, with officials and stakeholders from one community supporting investment in another community for the benefit of the whole region.

Having a voice in transportation can be especially important to communities without planning and zoning, where there is a sense of community direction and a desire to shape the region's economic future and landscape even without an adopted plan or set of formal ordinances. Regional transportation planning organizations can often provide useful information to state DOTs about their regions, too, including sharing information on regional employers, local data, maps, and local jurisdictions' plans and ordinances. Focus group participants also made note of the local assistance that regions provide to communities that benefits statewide planning, including building local government capacity by providing traffic counts and assisting with local asset mapping, updating plans and maps, assisting with developing grant applications for transportation and related projects, and other technical assistance.

Education and outreach

Throughout the focus group discussion, participants returned to the topic of education and outreach as a particular set of roles that states and regions can play to improve planning for transportation and economic development. While local government officials and professional staff, local economic developers and site selectors, and the general public were the major audiences that the focus group attendees discussed, participants also recognized state DOT and regional roles to conduct outreach and provide information to one another.

Regional planning and development organizations often become a source of assistance for local government officials and jurisdictions' professional staff. Focus group participants noted the regional role of providing information and assistance was a critical one, making the regional organization a "go-to" resource for locals. Together with state DOTs, the regional agencies might be able to present information on trade-off analysis regarding the investment of limited funds and the effects of different investment scenarios on local priorities. Understanding how limited the funds are in their state and how difficult it would be to change a project with undesirable impacts after construction are key points to communicate to local officials and stakeholders. One focus group participant said, "A regional organization's role is to present viable options for meeting a transportation need, explain the impacts of each option, and explain why compromise is necessary." Another participant described how state DOTs also play an important role in "explaining to local governments what the agency is able to support" regarding new transportation demand that arises from school siting decisions and other land use determinations.

State DOTs, together with regional partners, also play a role in educating the general public. Explaining trade-offs of investment scenarios while asking for public input about their desired transportation outcomes is one method focus group participants mentioned. State DOTs and regional partners also need to use outreach opportunities to manage expectations and to ask the "right" questions about realistic priorities and desired outcomes given the limitations of funding and the state's need to focus on system-wide performance.

Regional planning and development organizations, in partnership with state DOTs, also have a role in explaining to their constituents what the different perspectives are when priorities of the state-level

decision makers are different from local priorities, or when funding limitations lead to discussions about strategic disinvestment in the transportation system. Focus group participants emphasized education regarding resilience, as well. Even if ideal data and projections are available, unpredictable things happen, and outreach to the public needs to emphasize adaptation and flexibility and that priority issues and projects may change over time as contexts change.

Focus group participants agreed that states and regions might benefit from communicating to the public and local officials about the expected or actual impacts of implementing a program of projects more frequently based on projections, consistency with policies, or actual impact data when it is available. In statewide and regional long-range plans and other planning documents, agencies have an opportunity to weave the narrative of economic impact more seamlessly through the discussion of strategic investment policies, and to relate the policies more concretely to how transportation supports economic strategies. In programming, communicating to the public and local governments how projects are scaled, how criteria for ranking projects are selected, and how those criteria are weighted improves the transparency regarding investment decisions. Performance measures that communicate community impacts are a tool for education and outreach. One focus group participant stressed, “Performance metrics aren’t about carrots and sticks. They are about learning.”

These state and regional partnership efforts to conduct outreach to local officials and the public might occur through several different forms. It might involve state DOTs first educating regional planning staff about the state’s investment scenario analysis, results of recent planning studies, or about what the state’s upcoming outreach options are. With these types of information in hand, the regional planning and development organizations are better prepared to communicate with their boards, transportation and economic development committees, and other stakeholders. The regional agencies can also create a space for the state’s outreach to take place, such as inviting state DOT staff to address the local officials served at a regional meeting or assisting with and marketing state DOT events occurring within the region.

Focus group participants recognized the sensitive role that local economic developers and site selectors play in business recruitment and retention efforts that have an impact on economic activity, land use, and transportation demand. Attendees emphasized a need to try to have conversations early in project development processes rather than after site plans have been finalized. One way of achieving these conversations might be to conduct outreach to developers on transportation and land use processes, and to talk about how early communication can mitigate or completely avoid potential negative or unsafe impacts to mobility that arise after a project is built.

Regional planning and development organizations can also provide helpful information to developers on the location of assets that are not easily relocated, such as rail lines or other facilities that might improve certain types of developments but harm others. Regional planning and development organizations can also provide information on transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, or other amenities and destinations that might be of benefit to a new development. These conversations about development are helpful to local governments as well, by enhancing their knowledge about available funding to support a developer’s proposed project, participation in development processes like permitting, and analysis of how transportation demands expected from a proposed development would impact existing residents and businesses.

State DOTs might be involved in other statewide consortia across multiple state-level agencies that share information and coordinate on activities and investments. This presents an opportunity to conduct outreach to other agencies developing their own funding strategies. Through these state-level groups, state DOTs may have the chance to share input gathered from local officials and the public through the transportation planning process in order to discuss supportive investment policies and their impacts on economic and community-related measures across state agencies. It also presents an opportunity to share information with regional planning partners about the activities, policies, and priorities of other state agencies that might not interact with regions in the same ways as the state DOT.

Regional and state attendees alike agreed during the focus group that regional planning and development organizations also play a role in educating state DOTs. Because the regional agencies play an essential role in supporting individual jurisdictions, they are positioned to communicate to the state DOT the significance of considering community impacts in designing aspects even of functional engineering projects. Different offices within a state DOT or other state agency may not always have much reason to work together on a day-to-day basis, but when projects contain many different aspects, outreach to various state-level offices to bring them together can improve the planning and implementation process. State agency staff have different perspectives based on their experiences and professional backgrounds, but one focus group participant noted that state DOT staff are also citizens of communities and can appreciate the value that transportation projects have on local and regional impact measures, even if they work on other focus areas in their professional lives. The regions also play a role in educating the state on regional cohesiveness, demonstrating coordinated investment strategies and support for regional-level policies and projects rather than parochial concerns.

Noteworthy Practices

Throughout the discussion, participants shared information about practices they had used to advance understanding of and collaboration on transportation and economic development. The discussion emphasized that economic development initiatives include consideration of broad impacts that are consistent with a region's or community's vision and are context sensitive. Participants discussed the need for more analysis of impacts and the relationship of policies to actual investments, but also focused on improvements to the transportation planning process to maximize benefits and minimize negative impacts. These planning tools and techniques contain a variety of collaborative roles for state DOTs and their regional partners and are described briefly below.

Book-a-Planner Presentations

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) updated its long-range transportation plan (LRTP) over a 2.5 year period, releasing it to the public in spring 2016.³ TDOT used a very large public process to develop its LRTP, with 20,000 community inputs gathered in a variety of ways.

An effective and innovative method for receiving input was through outreach events TDOT called "Book-a-Planner Presentations." These meetings could be requested by any group or organization, often local and regional elected bodies, planning commissions, and other public and private organizations. This included transportation stakeholders convened by the state's rural planning organizations and other community members and leaders that engage in the state's regional development districts. During the LRTP process, the Book-a-Planner Presentation attendance ranged in size from four people to 200.

The content of the meetings began with an overview of the LRTP and its purpose. Following that, the TDOT facilitator asked pre-defined questions about attendees' preferences using audience response clickers, which gave attendees the chance to respond honestly and anonymously and to feel like their voices were heard. This process gave TDOT new insights into public desires and expectations; for instance, interactive questions gauged public preference about investing in either a smaller number of large, high-dollar value projects, or smaller projects in multiple places. The attendees provided an overwhelming response toward a larger number of smaller projects that can make an impact in more places, which affects the policy plan's connection to project investment decisions. The Book-a-Planner Presentations are still available for groups wanting to engage in transportation, although the LRTP has been released.

Regional Consultation Models

Several states participating in the focus group maintain a model for local official consultation that includes state support for regional-level transportation planning. Each state offers a unique model that fits with their local government context, state DOT organization, and the needs of the region. Kentucky's model is one that provides specific structures for nonmetropolitan local official and public input into statewide planning.

Kentucky is diverse in terms of its geography, transportation network, and economic regions. To accommodate this diversity, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) uses its 12 highway districts, 15 Area Development Districts (ADDs), and 9 MPOs to facilitate local input and priorities into statewide planning. Although some transportation planning had been happening in pockets around the state,

³ View the plan at <http://www.tn.gov/tdot/section/25-year-transportation-plan>, accessed on March 23, 2016.

working systematically through the ADDs to conduct rural transportation planning began following the passage of the 1991 surface transportation law, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Kentucky formed 15 regional transportation committees, one in each ADD region, to meet ISTEA's new requirements for consultation with rural local officials. The ADDs serve an important function in connecting to other local constituents and stakeholders, which occurs through their transportation work as well as other program areas, such as community and economic development, workforce development, and local technical assistance.

The ADDs' regional transportation committees are tasked with identifying needs and setting priorities every two years. Some projects are then funded and scheduled for construction; the remainder go on an "unscheduled projects list," where they are documented as local priorities that have no funding committed. The ADDs also collect other information that shapes the state highway plan, including identifying major traffic generators in their region, land use plans, and freight network opportunities.

Visualizing Outcomes and Comparing Results

In South Carolina, rural councils of governments perform regional transportation planning, including completing special studies, conducting outreach with local officials and the public, and programming regional improvements using an allocation of federal Surface Transportation Program funds from the South Carolina DOT. In this role, they have an opportunity to work with local communities on identifying transportation needs and alternatives appropriate to the context and in line with the community vision and local priorities. A recent road diet project at the intersection of U.S. 78 and U.S. 321 in Denmark, South Carolina, is one example where outreach activities conducted by the Lower Savannah Council of Governments helped to determine a low-cost option for improving truck turning radii, improving safety, and revitalizing the small town downtown. This was completed with the assistance and expertise of multiple offices within the South Carolina DOT.

The planning process in Denmark was influenced by another intersection project in another nearby town, where an intersection was widened with the removal of some downtown buildings to achieve similar outcomes of truck mobility and safety, but at higher cost to construct and resulting over time in negative economic and community impacts for downtown development. Comparing how similar transportation needs in a nearby community were addressed gave local officials, business owners, and the public in Denmark an opportunity to visualize alternative scenarios for their downtown.

Collecting Project-level Information

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet uses a tool called Project Identification Forms (PIFs) to collect information about proposed projects to complete a small-scale scoping study. This includes information relating to economic development impacts of projects. Related questions on the PIF include whether local planning and zoning exist in the community where the proposed project is located (as a proxy for a community's development of a future vision), the impacts on existing businesses, whether it improves access to major traffic generators or points of interest (to accommodate demand for tourist destinations), if it will improve access to freight networks, and what economic opportunity would be generated from the project. PIFs are completed by ADD staff through their regional transportation committees and tracked through the state's project database.

Another approach to collecting project information has been used by the Des Moines Area MPO. In the past, the MPO has collected information about projects programmed by its member local governments in addition to those programmed through the MPO's own transportation improvement program (TIP). Transportation improvements programmed by a regional organization such as an MPO or RTPo are located on a relatively small portion of the transportation network within its service area. State-selected projects appear on a DOT's STIP and other highway plans that may be easy for regional entities to track, but local projects within the same network are typically only contained in each government's own capital improvement program or other plan. In Des Moines, tracking local projects across the region helped the agency and its stakeholders to anticipate local projects that might impact the larger system and to discuss land use and transportation decisions.

With a documented \$6 billion backlog of projects, the Tennessee DOT is systematically reassessing previously identified projects. TDOT is working with communities to analyze true needs and project contexts, and to identify whether a lower-cost project would meet the outcomes identified as transportation needs. This has the benefit of helping the state to reduce its roll of needed projects and to deliver projects more quickly, since the scope of some projects can be reduced.

Highway Access or Occupancy Permit Reviews

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has created an online permitting system for highway access for proposed new developments. Although PennDOT developed the online system and issues the permits, the local and regional partners also play critical roles in the process. The state's RTPOs and MPOs review and provide comments about transportation impacts to PennDOT and the developer. Developers are required to obtain a letter from the RTPo to be submitted with the permit request, and they must review and address RTPo comments or concerns regarding the proposed development. The online system gives local governments such as county planning staff the opportunity to comment on proposals as well.

The permit system serves as a tool to better link land use, transportation, and economic development decisions in Pennsylvania. It addresses concerns with investments' potential impacts on communities and gives communities a role in targeting investments and lessening undesirable effects. By institutionalizing a method for collecting input on specific developments, this tool has given more of a voice to communities that have not adopted local planning and zoning regulations, as well as sparked interest in reviewing and updating existing planning and zoning maps in other communities. The process encourages consideration of multiple perspectives as decisions and investments are evaluated.

Although the permitting process in Iowa differs, the interest in planning in advance for highway access is similar to Pennsylvania. The Trans-Iowa/Illinois Freight Corridor Study was completed in 2007 by three RTPOs and one MPO with funding support and active participation from Iowa DOT. After its completion, the freight corridor consortium of stakeholders promoted coordinated decision making regarding land use and access management policies among the jurisdictions located along the corridor. This effort has led to much of the corridor in the study area being expanded to four lanes, and the advance attention to access management preserves the route as a viable route for freight movement.

Integrating Stakeholder Perspectives

Similar to other regional planning and development organizations, the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission's portfolio of programs includes conducting regional

economic development, workforce development, and rural transportation planning, among other program areas. Although their various programs' committees already provide for some overlapping membership, the commission strategically and intentionally invites members of its rural transportation planning committee and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee to participate in one another's meetings and to consider policy-level investment strategies and project impacts in the agendas of both groups. This approach allows the stakeholders to identify synergies among the program areas and planned investments, analyze the consistency of proposed projects with the adopted regional vision, identify different options for moving forward, ask targeted questions about the region's vision for development, and manage expectations about outcomes. The RTPO program is funded through a contract with PennDOT and draws upon deep relationships with PennDOT staff in the district and headquarters offices, who also serve on the transportation planning committee.

In South Carolina, an important function of the regional transportation planning work conducted by the Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG) is to connect stakeholders not just with the South Carolina DOT's planning staff, but with professionals within multiple offices in the state agency. LSCOG staff routinely conduct meetings about projects contained within the regional TIP that bring in staff from various South Carolina DOT offices for their expertise in bicycle and pedestrian issues, safety, engineering, or freight. The COG planning staff have developed a process for thoroughly considering a wide variety of impacts and design issues as projects move toward construction, which brings together multiple perspectives from within the state DOT and also brings stakeholder input to these various offices.

The Trans-Iowa/Illinois Freight Corridor Study conducted by three RTPOs and one MPO in Iowa led to the creation of freight roundtables at each of the regional agencies. The study effort involved significant outreach to the private sector through the public engagement process in order to gather business concerns, needs, ideas, and suggested solutions to the highway corridor. Following the completion and adoption of the study, the engagement continued at the regional agency level, with major employers, state DOT staff, and chambers of commerce and other business groups providing the RTPOs and MPO with input regarding freight movement impacts of projects included in each region's TIP.

Supporting Economic Clusters

Analyzing existing economic clusters is a tool that can reveal where a region or state's strengths already lie, in businesses with similar workforce needs or interrelated supply chains that may stretch across industry codes. Understanding employment and economic activity centers through clusters can help to reveal mobility challenges or solutions across a wide variety of economic sectors. South Carolina's Transportation Distribution and Logistics Council functions as a coordinating council for economic development focused on business recruitment and retention. The council's analysis of the state's clusters led it to focus on freight improvements serving aerospace, automotive, and tire manufacturing. These improvements have included supporting highway improvements in certain areas and developing an inland port that serves several businesses in South Carolina's Upstate, as well as attracting traffic from surrounding states using the inland port to access the Port of Charleston.

Through very different in nature from South Carolina's manufacturing clusters, tourism serves as a major economic driver in Colorado's Summit and Lake Counties. One notable initiative has been a multijurisdictional planning effort to create a separated bicycle route to connect existing systems in the

two counties. By involving diverse public and private sector entities such as a mining company that is a large land owner, Colorado DOT, local and county governments, U.S. Forest Service, and other stakeholders, the initiative is working to solve a mobility challenge in difficult terrain. By improving accessibility for visitors to the region, the bicycle route supports a major economic goal in the area's adopted plans: promoting summer tourism to support year-round economic vitality in communities best known as skiing destinations.

These two economic sector-focused initiatives in South Carolina and Colorado feature collaboration among different entities, and varied types of transportation solutions for the industries located in each place, but they share similar motivations: to resolve mobility challenges for the economic actors and to root that economic ecosystem more firmly into place with transportation assets or services.

Conclusions

The noteworthy practices discussed during the focus group are all supportive of doing economic development differently and integrating a new emphasis on economic resilience into transportation planning. Although all of the practices require an investment of time and resources to achieve, the diverse set of activities can offer models for states and regions with different institutions, different visions, and different mobility needs. By adapting these kinds of practices to meet processes, other regions and states can find new ways to collaborate with one another and conduct outreach to local officials, developers, and stakeholders. Over time, these efforts will help transportation planning efforts to better build broad community and regional assets and support economic resilience.

Focus Group Attendees

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