



## POLICY GUIDE

# Comprehensive regional planning

Although local governments have primary control over their jurisdictions' streets and roads, the interaction of transportation and land use happens at a regional scale. Regional plans help coordinate local land use decisions and integrate local decisionmaking with planning that crosses municipal boundaries. Transportation corridors, watersheds, air sheds, economic regions, and neighborhoods are more appropriate boundaries for planning than political jurisdictions.<sup>1</sup> Integrating public health concepts into regional plans is a promising method for ensuring healthy communities.

### Opportunities That Encourage Comprehensive Regional Planning

- » Create a best practices guide detailing the benefits of collaboration between state departments of health, environment and natural resources, metropolitan planning organizations, transit agencies, the private sector, and local governments.
- » Promote general land use plans that link transportation and development.
- » Promote developing and deploying the most advanced, unified, technology-based method of payment.
- » Raise awareness about regional goods movement, interstate highway corridors, and health impacts.
- » Involve rural communities in planning.

### Regional Blueprint Planning<sup>2</sup>

- Regional blueprint planning moves development in a more sustainable direction by examining scenarios and outcomes.

### Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)<sup>3</sup>

- MPOs are transportation policymaking organizations that often create regional comprehensive plans.
- MPOs are comprised of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities.
- Some federal funds for transportation projects are routed through MPOs.

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## California's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)<sup>4</sup>

RTP, a blueprint of a region's transportation system, provides an important opportunity for health promotion. In 2008, California enacted Senate Bill 375, which highlighted the importance of Californian RTPs by adding a new component.

SB 375 requires California's 18 largest regions to create a sustainable communities strategy (SCS) as part of their RTP. SCS is an integrated plan for transportation, land use, and housing that must meet, if feasible, greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for cars and light trucks set by the California Air Resources Board. SB 375 dramatically shifted the context and framework for RTP development, putting a new emphasis on performance and outcomes and creating significant opportunities to create healthier communities and regions.

During the Bay Area's 2009 RTP process, staff from San Mateo County Health System met with metropolitan transportation commissions to discuss how programs supported the county's public health goals. Various health departments also testified before the full commission about the impact and cost of pedestrian and bicycle collisions and air pollution, providing stories that humanized the health impacts and helped build support for funding those programs.

## Tennessee's Regional Transportation Plan<sup>5</sup>

The Nashville Area MPO is committed to policy, funding, and research that support the improvement of health outcomes through active transportation (transportation that requires physical activity) such as transit, walking, and bicycling.

In December 2010, the MPO adopted the "2035 Regional Transportation Plan," which marks a significant increase in support for active transportation projects. Sixty of the 100 points on which transportation projects are scored are based on positive outcomes for air quality, provision of active transportation facilities, injury reduction for all modes, improvement to personal health, and equity of transportation facilities in underserved areas.

The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan is featured in the National Prevention Strategy: America's Plan for Better Health and Wellness (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/initiatives/prevention/strategy/report.pdf>). The National Prevention Strategy, released in 2011, is a comprehensive plan that will help increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life by preventing disease. The plan is an effort of the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council (<http://www.healthcare.gov/prevention/nphpphc>), which is comprised of 17 federal agencies.

1. American Planning Association. "Policy Guide on Smart Growth." Available at [www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/smartgrowth.htm](http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/smartgrowth.htm).
2. American Planning Association. "Policy Guide on Surface Transportation." Available at [www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/surfacetransportation.htm](http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/surfacetransportation.htm).
3. U.S. Department of Transportation. "The Transportation Planning Process: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decision Makers, Officials, and Staff." Available at [www.planning.dot.gov/documents/briefingbook/bbook.htm](http://www.planning.dot.gov/documents/briefingbook/bbook.htm).
4. TransForm and California Department of Public Health. "Creating Healthy Regional Transportation Plans." Available at [www.transformca.org/files/creating\\_healthy\\_regional\\_transportation\\_plans\\_report\\_january\\_2012.pdf](http://www.transformca.org/files/creating_healthy_regional_transportation_plans_report_january_2012.pdf).
5. Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. "Health & Well Being." Available at [www.nashvillempo.org/regional\\_plan/health/](http://www.nashvillempo.org/regional_plan/health/).

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