



## **ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS**

### **America 2050: Towards a National Strategy for Prosperity, Equity and Sustainability The Second Annual Policy Roundtable on Mega-Regional Development**

February 22 – 24, 2006

The Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Tarrytown, New York

## Introduction

From February 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>, a distinguished group of urban planners, academics and public officials gathered at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to discuss the America 2050 initiative and the emergence of mega-regions in the United States. The goal of the America 2050 initiative is to plan for the expected 40% increase in population in the U.S. before the year 2050 and to launch survey and research initiatives in the mega-regions, where most of the population and economic growth is expected to take place.

A summary of conference proceedings follows.<sup>1</sup>

## Wednesday, February 22

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Bruce Babbitt, the United States Secretary of the Interior during President Clinton's administration and former governor of Arizona, opened the proceedings on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> with a discussion addressing the role of the federal government in land use planning. After a brief introduction by Bob Yaro, Regional Plan Association president, Mr. Babbitt began with a history of the federal role in land use planning, drawing on case studies and insights presented in his new book, Cities in the Wilderness.

Mr. Babbitt discussed the federal culture of resistance to land use planning. For example, when he first became Secretary of the Interior he proposed a US Biological Survey, which Congress emphatically rejected. Other examples were the proposed National Resource Planning Board and the Supreme Court's limiting of the federal regulatory presence in the Clean Air Act.

On the other hand, Mr. Babbitt illustrated the benefits derived from focused federal involvement and cooperative state governments by citing his listing of the endangered gnatcatcher which resulted in a moratorium on development in Southern California. Even though it was controversial, this led to a successful collaboration between the federal and local governments and citizens, which created a "culture of doing" in land use planning in Southern California.

Moving from Southern California to Southern Florida, Mr. Babbitt referred to the 1928 hurricane to highlight the need for comprehensive solutions to land use planning. After the initial chaotic response, the state and federal government worked together to develop a solution, showing that disasters can impel land use regulation at the federal level. This eventually resulted in the allocation of \$8 billion for disaster recovery.

Mr. Babbitt introduced the idea of conditionality, a central theme of his book. In the context of receiving federal money, states can be motivated to plan at the local level if

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<sup>1</sup> This summary was written by the staff of Regional Plan Association based on materials prepared for this meeting and the discussions that took place there. The views expressed during the conference do not necessarily reflect those of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

incentives are imbedded in the federal programs. Federal courts, he noted, have never restricted conditions set on federal money to states.

While a unilateral federal approach to comprehensive land use planning is not part of our culture, targeted land use planning driven by conditionality and appropriations has proven successful. The Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act are strong examples. Emphasis should therefore be placed on motivating downward through the federal system and conditionality – that is the attachment of conditions to go along with federal funding on the state and local level.

Mr. Babbitt continued by citing the Army Corps of Engineers as the only true federal land use agency. Conditionality could be used if, for example, the Corps insisted that no more flood protection projects would be built without effective watershed management land use planning.

Mr. Babbitt offered the example of Louisiana, where global warming will raise the water by two or more feet in the future, as an opportunity to reform federal policy linked to conditionality.

He concluded by noting that the \$8 billion for Florida that was referenced earlier helped the rest of the area as well, demonstrating that mega-regional scale strategies can work and that a paradigm of conditionality can change the political climate.

Armando Carbonell kicked off the Q&A, asking whether Mr. Babbitt was discounting regulation as a tool for land use planning. Mr. Babbitt replied by defending the regulatory regimes in place, but argued that an expansion of regulatory powers was unlikely in the current political climate.

Mark Pisano asked what effect the changing price of energy will have on the federal role in promoting energy alternatives.

Mr. Babbitt noted that there will most likely be a yearly increase of federal energy spending, like the Farm Bill. Mr. Pisano then commented that the federal government might not need to regulate the situation, as rising prices will create a strong incentive for change. Mr. Babbitt concurred, and suggested that the Clean Air Act would be a suitable precedent.

Scott Bernstein agreed with the potential use of conditionality but pointed out that the federal government must enforce its conditions in order to make it work. He then cited the successful enforcement of carbon-trading in Europe. Mr. Yaro observed some examples of conditionality already in place, such as the national drinking age and seatbelt law, where modest federal incentives provided the impetus for action by all 50 states.

Mr. Babbitt noted that farm policy provides many examples of conditionality that are bad for subsistence farmers. The government, he noted, needs to move away from subsidies and decide what type of conditions should be in place.

Don Chen asked how conditionality could withstand the fluctuations of politics. Mr. Babbitt replied that being specific was essential.

**Thursday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>**

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**Welcome by Co-Chairs of America 2050: Armando Carbonell, Bob Yaro and Mark Pisano**

The session on February 23<sup>rd</sup> began with brief self-introductions by all the participants, followed by opening remarks by Bob Yaro, Armando Carbonell and Mark Pisano.

Mr. Yaro began with a short history of regional planning, citing the 1933 debate between Lewis Mumford and Thomas Adams over the role of regional plans in shaping metropolitan areas. He noted that Lewis Mumford believed that planners should redirect development once cities exceeded their capacity, contrasting Thomas Adams' goal in RPA's First Regional Plan of accommodating prospective growth in the New York Region.

He noted that the United States has a tradition of thinking at the regional and even national scale, highlighting initiatives undertaken by Presidents Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower to shape national scale development and investment strategies

The United States is projected to experience 40 percent growth by the year 2050, nearly three-quarters of which is expected to occur in a dozen large "mega-regions" – linked networks of metropolitan areas. This growth will occur at a time when many of the nation's large infrastructure systems, including metropolitan links in the interstate highway, commercial aviation and goods movement systems have already reached their carrying capacity. Most of the large metropolitan areas are also already reaching build-out. Mr. Yaro then asked how mega-regions should be defined and organized.

In conclusion, Mr. Yaro asked whether the group could agree on an agenda for understanding mega-regions. Since the mega-regions will contain 70 percent of the national growth and vast areas of the country are excluded, how can this result in a national agenda?

Armando Carbonell followed Mr. Yaro's remarks by commenting that the America 2050 project is a self-organized system without central planning or control. Therefore, there can be a diversity of conceptions on what America 2050 is.

Mr. Carbonell noted that the benefits of mega-regions lie in the development of large scale infrastructure, environmental, or "eco-structure" systems and economic performance, including equity, efficiency and competition.

Additionally, it is important not to remain frozen in scale and recognize that certain problems can best be solved at different scales, ranging from the community to the region, to the mega-region to the nation.

Mr. Carbonell concluded by stressing the need to provide practical government solutions to regional problems.

Mr. Pisano noted that Europe is promoting global integration zones by connected individual cities with high speed rail and Asian countries are using similar large scale strategies to promote polycentric development. Quoting Thomas Friedman, he agreed that the world is indeed flat and large mega and metro regions are crucial in improving quality of life and economic competitiveness.

To make the case for mega-regions, we must frame the issues effectively, highlighting why the emergence of mega-regions and accompanying trends are important and why what happens inside the mega-region affects people outside of the region.

The federal government, Mr. Pisano noted, responds well to the idea of global competition, as evidenced by the meeting at the White House one week prior to Pocantico. The mega-region issue could be part of the next election, and the group should recognize the need for federal policy.

Mr. Pisano concluded by posing three goals for the group to help find investors that consider America 2050 crucial to development.

1. Outline why this phenomenon is occurring.
2. Develop reasons why institutions and the federal government should be involved
3. Determine how to develop a support group of investors.

Finally, he asked, what steps can be undertaken to ensure that these goals are met?

## **A History of National Planning, Robert Fishman**

Robert Fishman began by noting the difficulty of national planning in a market society and the national “cult of private property.” However, Mr. Fishman insisted, there is another national story.

According to his definition of planning as “foresight in action,” it is clear that settling a continent, which necessitated incredible foresight, required national planning. The greatness of the first national plan correlated with the federal government’s weakness as Jefferson’s Land Ordinance of 1785 surveyed all of the United States Territory and created a continental grid. This divided the land into townships, but did not consider connecting the country and the location of the cities.

The unsuccessful Gallatin Plan of 1808 focused on canals and connectivity, as did the activity in the rest of the country. The completion of the Erie Canal made New York the key commercial city, thus making Chicago the main connecting point between the two river systems.

During the urban era of national planning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cities provided infrastructure out of a spirit of competition, using railroads as crucial instruments. Providing land grants to railroads brokered the connection between land use and transportation.

Not only did the cities provide infrastructure, but they promoted outward expansion by supporting public education, transportation and ports. To do this, the cities borrowed against future growth.

In 1929, the First Regional Plan of New York and its Environs coincided with a new focus on national government, which now controlled the borrowing power. Regional factors were central to the New Deal, as Jesse Jones, the head of reconstruction finance in the era, concentrated on the need to spread to less developed regions and finance infrastructure for expansion.

Ten years later, Thomas H. MacDonald of the Bureau of Public Roads conceived of the interstate highway system and envisioned toll roads in the developed parts of the country.

Referring to Bruce Babbitt's concept of "Cities in the Wilderness," Mr. Fishman described cities as self-sustaining with discernable outer boundaries, as the New Deal-era Greenbelt program showed. The Greenbelt Towns required time consuming land acquisition and advance planning and infrastructure investments. While the Federal Housing Administration financed Levittowns were much easier to build. This led to a new era of "corporate regionalism," as the lessons of the industrial age were translated into the tools of regional development: segregation of land uses through zoning, mass production of housing, and supremacy of the automobile.

Mr. Fishman concluded by discussing the United States' corporate regionalist heritage of single-minded land use and urged participants to recapture the spirit and audacity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century planners.

During the question and answer period, Carl Anthony asked about the conflicts between the north and south, including race, inequality and the destruction of nature.

Mr. Fishman replied that those questions could only arise on a national scale.

Eugenie Birch asked whether there are common evils to address in the urban expansion of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Mr. Fishman answered that sprawl and the threat it represents to the nation's natural environment is the most pressing evil.

Mr. Anthony raised the notion of respect for nature and an acknowledgment of the minority perspectives within the mega-regions. He argued that for this concept to take hold, it must address these twin legacies of corporate regionalism.

## **Progress Report on Selected Mega-Region**

### Piedmont Atlantic Mega-Region (PAM), Catherine Ross

Catherine Ross opened a series of reports on emerging mega-region strategies, with an update on the effort now underway to promote a framework for the growth of the Piedmont Atlantic Mega-Region in the Southeastern states.

She began by citing environmental, transportation, and economic features that unite PAM as a mega-region, specifically noting the negative features such as congestion costs of \$1.8 billion per year and 15 bad air days last year. Additionally, Ms. Ross mentioned commodity flows, human capital flow and water issues not confined by political boundaries as common to the region. The mega-regional framework would provide an opportunity to structure the approaches to solutions and shape the future.

Next, Ms. Ross mentioned that within the framework of the mega-regions, micro, macro and international developments can be discussed.

PAM's geography include critical landscapes and rivers, its infrastructure includes rail, interstates and an international airport, and its core cities are Birmingham, Atlanta, Charlotte and Raleigh.

PAM exceeds the United States' job growth rate, but still has to confront many regional issues, namely:

- Quality of jobs
- Growth
- Consumption and degradation
- Disparities between rural and urban poverty
- Car-favored infrastructure
- Competitiveness
- Fragmentation
- Population growth is focused in the centers

Since PAM is expecting a 70 percent increase in population by 2050, many of the current problems are expected to be exacerbated. There will need to be 84 billion square feet of new construction, but it is unclear who will benefit. Additionally, current water consumption is increasing faster than the United States, and the land consumption is almost double the current national average.

Ms. Ross then spoke about the regional symposium on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006 that she hosted in Atlanta, which included six states and discussed emergency preparedness and produced a Mayors' symposium bill. The symposium determined that the next steps for PAM should be a visioning process, promoting both leadership and "followership," advancing the mega-region theory and continuing research.

## Northeast Mega-Region, Petra Todorovich

Petra Todorovich began her presentation by defining the Regional Plan Association's dual roles for America 2050 as national organizer and leader of the Northeast research and planning.

The Northeast is the densest and most interconnected mega-region with five major metropolitan regions, surrounding counties and a supporting region of threatened land and watersheds.

The region's natural systems, including the Appalachian Mountains, and the Atlantic Coast's network of estuaries and beaches provide a shared natural framework for the mega-region's growth and development.

The extensive highway, rail and other infrastructure systems that connect the mega-region are threatened by increasing congestion, longer commutes and the lack of investment.

Ms. Todorovich mentioned that if the Northeast region were its own nation, it would be ranked fourth in the world with a 3.2 trillion dollar economy. Additionally, the mega-region's five major metro regions share similar cyclical economic patterns and have the same leading industry.

By 2050, the Northeast will add 18 million people to its population. Central city growth, however, has remained flat since the 1970s. Although extensive transit options are only available in the densest areas, there is increasing job dispersal to the suburbs.

Ms. Todorovich discussed the opportunities for mega-regional partnerships to meet these challenges, and precedents in the Northeast for multi-state collaborations. These include landscape and estuary protection, such as the New York/New Jersey Highlands, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, signed by seven states in the Northeast to reduce carbon dioxide, and a focus on inter-modal transportation. Curtailing sprawl and promoting infill development and center revitalization can also be collaborative efforts.

In order to build a Northeast network, Ms. Todorovich stressed the need to convene business and civic leaders to identify common policy goals. These goals include locating and emphasizing regional connections, protecting eco-structures and defining the region.

Scott Bernstein started off the question and answer period for both Ms. Ross and Ms. Todorovich by asking about the differences within and between regions, and how the mega-region framework benefits the individual. In response, Bob Yaro mentioned the need to emphasize the employment advantages and the heightened quality of life in the mega-regions.

Margaret Dewar asked how benefits could be spread from the cities and suburbs to the rest of the mega-region.



Ethan Seltzer noted that the presentations assumed that proximity was equated with connectivity. If that is the assumption, than the group needs to figure out the benefits of proximity.

Paul Farmer emphasized the need to move beyond description and utilize theory. Since people are happy within the current framework, the group will need to make a strong case for change in order to garner support for this concept.

Don Chen asked what defines competitiveness at a mega-regional scale and whether the regions can afford to have concentrated poverty.

Carl Anthony concluded by inquiring whether emphasis should be on moving towards sameness or emphasizing difference in and between the mega-regions.

#### Arizona Sun Corridor, Robert Lang and John Hall

Robert Lang began by pointing out recent articles in USA Today and Business 2.0 on mega-regions, noting that the business community has been the first to embrace the idea.

Mr. Lang emphasized that the Arizona Sun Corridor is in line to become a metropolitan statistical area in the U.S. Census 2010. Mr. Lang discussed its different components, explaining that the Sun Corridor is defined by two anchor cities, over 100 miles apart.

The Sun Corridor will be the largest-scale new place of the twenty-first century. Accordingly, there will be a trillion dollars invested in housing and common areas, providing numerous planning options and opportunities for the built environment.

In the second half of the presentation, John Hall described his interest in resilience ([www.asu.edu/resilience](http://www.asu.edu/resilience)) and in thinking about how a resilience perspective could be used to understand and build megapolitan regions. Mr. Hall discussed the studio course co-taught by Mr. Lang and himself at Arizona State University, which will produce a final report similar to the Northeast and Cascadia products. Students will use the latest graphic and mapping technologies to present their work in the wrap-around multi-media Decision Theatre at ASU.

Carl Anthony noted that the focus on newness was advantageous in providing competitive advantage, but also had the downside of potentially being considered old by 2050.

Frederick Steiner mentioned that 70 to 80 percent of Arizona land is public. With this amount of federal involvement, the relationships between the federal, state and local governments will be complex and possibly contentious.

#### Southern California, Mark Pisano

Mark Pisano stated that the economic growth of mega-regions is due to their status as global gateways, which require both a vision for growth and investment in infrastructure.

In a collaborative effort, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is currently partnering with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and Kern County and has begun to work with Mexico's state of Baja Norte.

Southern California is facing increased growth in population, container trade, urbanized land and truck traffic. Energy remains the most difficult issue to address.

Mega-regional efforts include proposals for an inter-regional high speed Maglev system that would help to distribute airport passengers, who will double in number by 2050, away from Los Angeles International Airport. Additionally, goods movement will become more integrated and efficient, aided by the completion of the Alameda Corridor.

Mr. Pisano asserted that every global gateway region needs to address goods movement and master logistical efficiencies since consolidated transportation can result in an 18 to 20 percent savings on inventory.

By 2030, one in six jobs in Southern California will be in logistics. Since entry level positions are available to high school graduates, this will help both the economy and social mobility.

Mr. Pisano concluded by delineating three governing and financing strategies, including support for the creation of partnerships between metropolitan areas, seeking federal support for coordination and incentives, and the encouragement of public – private partnerships. Focusing on the return on investment strategy will help transform the quality of life and equality of the mega-regions.

David Bragdon asked how private companies can be induced to pay for public works. Mr. Pisano replied that if the productivity gains are big enough, private investors will be willing to finance projects.

Chris Jones commented that he was intrigued by the potential for logistics to provide high-paying jobs for low-skilled workers, but asked whether technology would eventually replace the jobs in this industry. Mr. Pisano replied that the logistics sector is already highly automated and he doesn't foresee workers being phased out.

### **Discussion: Defining the Mega-Regional Geography**

Armando Carbonell moderated this session, opening with the question of how to define the mega-regions. Mr. Yaro proposed three factors for consideration, including culture and history, measurable systems such as transportation, infrastructure and economics, and shared landscapes and natural systems.

Robert Lang commented that producing maps of the mega-regions was necessary to develop America 2050 as common knowledge and gain acceptance of the idea.

Frederick Steiner pointed to "softer" issues that can define regions, such as sports teams and other unifiers. Ethan Seltzer introduced the idea of an atlas as opposed to a map in that

would incorporate the many layers of connectivity. He noted that the mega-region does, however, need a hard edge for purposes of governance and spending.

Catherine Ross underscored the increasing role of technology in commuting and travel, and asked, what has replaced traditional commutes? The group also mentioned the importance of mapping linkages and acknowledging the difference between cores and support regions.

Paul Farmer recommended looking at the desirable, measurable outcomes, such as saving time, energy and the environment, rather than at geography.

David Bragdon acknowledged that there is no right answer to the definitional question since although mega-regions should be loosely defined; city and county boundaries are fixed.

Matt Kissner asserted that the problems facing cities and regions are not being well enough defined to force the government to consider mega-regions a priority.

Moving the conversation to the Texas Triangle and the Gulf Coast, Carl Anthony recommended naming the “negative” areas between the cities and highlighting their assets.

It was acknowledged that there was a large difference between the perspectives of those within and outside of the regions. However, economic opportunities and threats can unify and create collaborations within an otherwise disconnected region.

The group discussed creating infrastructure maps which show gas lines, electrical grids and capacity measurements that delineate the producer and consumer.

Armando Carbonell suggested that the data on the maps be enriched with measurable outputs, overlapping and flow data.

Tom Wright concluded by noting that since most of the mega-regions are still emerging, it would be helpful to have alternative growth scenarios.

### **Taking the Long View: Restoration and Recovery of the Gulf Coast Mega-Region, Barbara Faga and Frederick Steiner**

Respondents: Carl Anthony, David Crossley, Paul Farmer

Frederick Steiner opened the session by noting that Hurricane Katrina made the relationship between the Gulf Coast and the rest of Texas more evident.

Barbara Faga introduced a series of maps and findings uncovered by EDAW and ESRI. The maps illustrated the total societal risks, including population growth, loss of land, and a rise in sea level, that would be posed by anticipated future hurricane activity in the Gulf region. Ms. Faga then raised the question of how to prepare and protect resources.

The data and maps included details of high wind risk, storm surge, impact on natural resources, population, historical hurricane patterns, displaced households, sea-rise vulnerability, and determination of total risk.

Ms. Faga identified certain designs and plans as tools for local and public planners, such as rebuilding the levees, restoring the barrier islands and wetlands, utilizing flood banking and implementing land planning.

Continuing to address long-term needs, Ms. Faga discussed housing, needs of displaced residents, toxic chemicals and known risks.

Concluding, Ms. Faga wanted to determine the most effective way to inform the public of the data.

Mr. Steiner added that the mega-region movement is the only one considering the larger implication of Katrina. Additionally, he believes that since we now have the diagnostic tools, the public should be informed of the potential risks.

Paul Farmer asked how to create a broader planning strategy for the long-term.

Carl Anthony questioned whether planning would be for the next event or just to remedy the current situation. Mr. Anthony proposed that all mega-regions let both their hazards and available opportunities be known. Additionally, a clearer articulation of the intersection between social and racial justice and environmental and ecological hazard preparation and management is needed.

David Crossley cautioned that images can carry misinformation. Addressing the situation in Houston, Mr. Crossley noted that people continue to move into hazard areas.

Mr. Yaro asked how we can accommodate the growth from people who are leaving low-hazard areas, such as the Midwest, to high-hazard areas like the Gulf Coast.

Don Chen asked, from a mega-regional perspective, how should cities accommodate the growth of the displaced persons, and pointed to the necessity of building resilience.

Hunter Morrison highlighted the implications of Ms. Faga's presentation: the power of GIS, a reason to think at the mega-region level, the worth of planners and geographers' skill and the acknowledgment that we are a visual culture.

Scott Bernstein noted the ethical issue of the right to available information and planners' responsibility to help the public use the data properly and engage in a dialogue.

Mark Pisano mentioned that governance and finance need to be established as an outcome-based process with a return on investment strategy that coincides with environmental justice.

Mr. Farmer highlighted the economic incentives for New Orleans recovery, such as its centrality to grain exports and its productivity in fishing and oil industries. Everyone should have the right to return, but not necessarily to the exact plot of land that they formerly held.

Mr. Anthony warned of disempowering people and wanted to distribute the information in a responsible manner, allowing people to make decisions based on their best interests instead

of on fear. Additionally, the group needs to decide whether the goal is to rebuild a community dependant on trust and empowerment, or a physical city.

Mr. Carbonell noted that the situation in the Gulf Coast confirms both the reality and the importance of mega-regions.

**Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup>**

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### **Applications of Mega-Regional Planning**

Armando Carbonell moderated this discussion, asking what types of phenomena occur at the mega-regional scale.

Carolyn Dekle asked how large-scale population change will affect the regions.

Mr. Steiner asked what global changes, such as connectivity, global warming, and politics, will drive change in the mega-regions.

Robert Fishman highlighted the economic division of functions, such as the garment trade in New York and the auto industry in Detroit. Mr. Carbonell added that more transportation allows for greater specialization.

Ethan Seltzer noted that there was a collective grassroots response in Cascadia to the endangered species act. At the economic level, there is also a very high number of LEED certified buildings and green building design.

Mr. Yaro acknowledged that the petroleum age is ending and questioned whether this would lead to more self-contained regional economies.

Ms. Faga discussed the social impact that the layering of public and private education is having in the Southeast. Mr. Carbonell responded that although education is not governed at a mega-regional level, characteristics of education do extend across the mega-regions.

Mr. Farmer noted that smart-growth regions will be more competitive on a global scale.

Gabriel Metcalf observed that regions can be connected by campaigns or projects, such as high speed rail between northern and southern California.

Margaret Dewar mentioned that moving towards a mega-region in the Midwest will help with competitiveness, venture capital, research universities and entrepreneurial work.

Mr. Steiner pointed out that regional identity is very useful in creating mega-regions.

John Hall concluded by noting that one function of mega-regions is dealing with inequities.

## **Breakout Sessions**

### **Session One: The Mega-Region and Federal Policy**

The group began by delineating the opportunities available for federal involvement, including guaranteeing value, durability, concurrency, capability and leveraging private capital.

Federal participation could also help finance transportation and housing legislation, such as the surface transportation bill, Hope VI and fair share housing. Additionally, it can ensure the proper implementation of ISTEA and other laws, hopefully providing regulation reform and administrative strategy.

The federal government can help meet upcoming challenges and disasters since it has the capability to demand performance and accountability. In terms of flood insurance and safety, the federal government could act as land owner and manager in order to provide an inventory of assets and shared natural resources and constraints.

The group acknowledged that although regional cooperation is not top-down, the federal government could provide technical and financial assistance for regional and city planning.

Specific areas where federal policy can aid mega-regions are as follows:

- Energy, which has thus far been all technology and no planning
- Environment, such as the Clean Water Act, although there is a current inability to regulate adaptively
- Housing
- Transportation
- Education
- Civil Rights

David Bragdon asked whether there is a mega-region agenda for suburban Republicans and proposed a role for the federal government as land managers.

Tom Wright asked what the next generation of big investments will be and noted that private equity and investment will be crucial. The key question, then, is what investments should be made.

Mr. Bernstein recommended focusing on intercity passenger rail, freight, and aviation, which can help provide spatial allocation to connect to geographically underrepresented areas as well as act as a screening principle for the alignment of federal, state and local governments. Durability is also extremely important. Additionally, the federal government needs to provide affordability and reverse the priorities between housing and transit.

Mr. Farmer noted a federal strategy for TEA in 2009 would be to provide a completely different framing structure that focuses on spatial geography.

## Session Two: Methods for the Mega-Region Survey

Moderator Chris Jones began by stating the session's objectives: identify information and methods that should be common to all surveys, discuss which methods and data sources have been most useful thus far, and explore how we can address the more difficult analytic questions. He also postulated three purposes for the surveys—to make the case that cohesive mega-regions exist, to establish benchmarks for measuring change, and to facilitate collaborative action. He distributed a table that compared methods of analysis and data sources used in each of the four completed mega-regional surveys for the Northeast, Piedmont Atlantic Mega-Region, Cascadia and the Southwest/Southern California.

Mr. Carbonell addressed the usefulness of an outcome-based approach and the need to show an atlas that included numerous maps.

Mr. Seltzer observed that the mega-regional surveys completed to date have contained much description but not much analysis. There should be data on flows, including migration, travel and trade data, as well as input-output models.

John Hall advised that a good case study should tell a story, highlight cause and effect, and have a “theme that runs through it like a steel rod.”

Mr. Anthony stressed the need for having a compelling narrative for the mega-regions that highlights differences as well as commonalities.

Ms. Birch reminded the group of the starting premise for this work, which was that most of the population in the next fifty years will be focused in these mega-regions and that we need to accommodate it while remaining competitive with China, Europe and India.

Mr. Seltzer noted the importance of looking at the flow of talented labor and venture capital. He used the example of his region, Cascadia, where a city like Seattle might have more in common with Austin than with Portland. He pointed to the burgeoning open source software industry, which should be tracked in the Northwest and better understood.

Mr. Jones noted that of four types of flows—people, goods, information and capital—the first two have data that the surveys have not sufficiently exploited while the latter two can probably only be addressed through case studies such as those in the Cascadia report.

Mr. Anthony asked who the mega-regions are competing with and what message the regions have for the nation. Gabriel Metcalf responded that mega-regions can change the terms of competition between cities by unifying. Mr. Anthony then added that the regions are contributing to national competitiveness by highlight their unique regional assets.

Mr. Metcalf asked about a situation where cities outside of the mega-regions are closer than within and how that affects the urban agenda for America.

Mr. Anthony advocated for a story of non-urban areas while Eugenie Birch mentioned a necessity for a mega-region theory. Ms. Birch also noted that propinquity provides efficiency and resilience, and has the ability to create place-based work.

Mr. Jones summarized, this time noting the need to focus on outcomes, tell a compelling story, document relationships, and provide case study research and scenarios, including a “do nothing” scenario.

Carolyn Dekle called for a meeting to take place among the research staff of different organizations to discuss the methods and data sources in detail.

### **America 2050: Looking Ahead**

Mr. Chen gave a report of the federal policy break out session. This should be an opportunity-based discussion that maintains a bipartisan agenda. There is an opportunity to rethink infrastructure investment and develop an agenda that appeals to suburban republicans.

David Bragdon noted the need for good federal policy and implementation based on conditionality.

Mr. Bernstein pointed out that to play in the federal policy arena, we must be rigorous and serious about it. He implored the group to think about its process for creating federal policy for mega-regions. In response, Mr. Yaro recommended a new set of financing methods and regional strategies.

Mr. Pisano suggested holding various studio exercises on federal and public policy. He urged the case study work on different mega-regions to continue, and for the America 2050 initiative to develop bold strategies, which are more effective in catching peoples’ attention than incremental ones.

Mr. Farmer asked how the federal policy discussion will be reintroduced into planning practice.

Mr. Yaro summarized with the upcoming goals for mega-regions:

- Mega-regional case studies
- Research projects focusing on key issues
- Federal policy
- Coordination, headed by RPA
- A formal steering committee of business leaders
- An informal steering committee of practitioners
- Defining terminology
- Fundraising

Mr. Anthony and Mr. Pisano both worried that the America 2050 was based too far in the future to capture public attention, and the group agreed that we needed to focus on short-term policy and legislative priorities as well as long-term goals.

Mr. Farmer concluded by suggesting a series in Planning Magazine about the mega-regions in order to raise interest and awareness.



## **Roundtable Participants**

Carl Anthony, Deputy Director of the Community and Resource Development Unit, The Ford Foundation

Bruce Babbitt, Former Secretary of the Interior

Frank H. Beal, Executive Director, Chicago Metropolis 2020

Scott Bernstein, President, Center for Neighborhood Technology

Eugenie L. Birch, Chair & Professor, University of Pennsylvania School of Design

David Bragdon, Metro Council President, Metro Portland

Armando Carbonell, Senior Fellow & Co-Chairman, Department of Planning and Development, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

Don Chen, Executive Director, Smart Growth America

David Crossley, President, Gulf Coast Institute

Carolyn Dekle, Executive Director, South Florida Regional Planning Council

Margaret Dewar, Emil Lorch Professor of Architecture and Planning, Taubman College of Architecture, University of Michigan

Barbara Faga, Chair of the Board, EDAW

Paul Farmer, Executive Director, American Planning Association

Robert Fishman, Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan

John Stuart Hall, Professor, School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University

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