



America 2050 Rebuilding and Renewing America Forums Summary of Forums in Seven U.S. Megaregions 2008-2009

Forum #1 – Chicago – November 17, 2008

Lead Partner Organization: Metropolitan Planning Council

“Rebuilding and Renewing America: Infrastructure Choices in the Great Lakes Megaregion”

Key Challenges

- The onset of a severe economic recession
- Disrepair, insufficient capacity or inefficiency of existing infrastructure in the Great Lakes
- Working across borders, including the U.S.-Canadian border
- Structural economic decline in the Great Lakes megaregion

Key Issue Areas

- Climate change’s impact on water supply and water quality
- The Midwest’s energy future and implementing a smart grid.
- Transportation and high-speed rail
- Coordination of transportation and land use between MPOs

Signs of Hope

- Multi U.S. state and Canadian consensus on water management and resource protection through the Great Lakes Commission and Great Lakes Compact
- Leadership in Chicago on Climate Action, energy efficiency and building retrofits
- Steps toward MPO collaboration around data collection and coordination
- Coordinated advocacy for Midwest High-Speed Rail
- The Civic Council of Greater Kansas City’s Heartland project is developing a vision and strategy for economic revitalization of the area from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River.

Toward Solutions

- The needs of metropolitan regions must be stressed in any national infrastructure plan.
- We must link investment decisions with national and regional goals like congestion relief, climate change mitigation, water conservation, and improving quality of life—and set objective criteria for rating projects.

Notable Quotes

“We need ‘inter-generational empathy’ in project decision-making to take into account how our decisions will affect generations to come.” – Val Jensen, VP, Marketing and Environmental Programs, ComEd

“The economic futures of Indiana and Illinois are “joined at the wallet.” We decided to jointly undertake a household pattern survey – not just home-to-work trips, but all trips. It doesn’t sounds like anything big, but it is something that

has never been done before.” -- John Swanson, Executive Director, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Forum #2 – Sacramento, CA – December 2, 2008

Lead Partner Organizations: Bay Area Council and SPUR

“Investing in America’s Competitiveness: An Infrastructure Strategy for the Nation and the Megaregion”

Key Challenges

- California’s fiscal crisis
- Managing water and flood risk in the Bay Delta
- Crafting the stimulus bill to address climate change and infrastructure needs
- How do we stop an economy in freefall while simultaneously saving the planet?

Key Issue Areas

- Goods movement and port development
- Transit-oriented development
- Water resource management
- Preserving the Central Valley’s agriculture economy
- Raising revenue in California for infrastructure

Signs of Hope

- A joint planning effort for the trade corridor infrastructure program among COGs in the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, and Sacramento, which secured \$800 million in state bonds
- The plan of the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force

Toward Solutions

- Building on megaregion planning to shift toward megaregion governance.
- “A strategic national defense sidewalk initiative” to invest in transit-oriented development around light rail and transit.
- Short-term: crafting the stimulus; medium-term: reforming the surface transportation bill with federal incentives for meeting performance goals.

Notable Quotes

“The state of California finances its infrastructure through general obligation bonds. There is a disconnect between the decision to build infrastructure and the funding stream to actually get it built. People like what general obligation bonds can buy, but often do not realize that they have to pay for them.” -- Paul Rosenstiel, Deputy Treasurer, Office of California Treasurer

“People are desperate for confidence in their government. We need fiscal reform for transportation. Can we come up with a dedicated source of revenue for transportation funding?” -- Darrell Steinberg, Senate President Pro Tempore, California

“We need to expand this conversation about infrastructure in the megaregion to include unions and business leaders.” -- Phil Tagami, California Transportation Commission & California Commercial Investments

“If the region can grow more compactly, they keep cars off the roads, freeing up space for truck-based goods movement, which benefits the economy. Congested goods movement in the region drags down their economic competitiveness.” -- Mike McKeever

“For a brief moment, we have the nation’s attention on infrastructure issues.” – Earl Blumenaur

Forum #3 – Atlanta, GA – March 23, 2009

Lead Partner Organization: Georgia Tech Center for Quality Growth & Regional Development

“The Case for a National Infrastructure Policy – The Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion in the Global Economy”

Key Challenges

- Forming megaregion identity
- Ability to deliver projects and results with megaregion collaboration and infrastructure investment
- Water supply and interstate competition over resources
- Designing high-speed rail to connect to local and regional transit services, when those services are absent in some areas of PAM
- Need for constant communication with stakeholders to maintain support for long-term projects

Key Issue Areas

- Water infrastructure and drinking water supply management
- Transportation – auto congestion, goods movement, high-speed rail, airport development
- Natural resource protection and development
- Social equity and access to opportunity
- Economic development projects that draw workers from more than one region

Signs of Hope

- Leaders in PAM have met together again on August 11 in Charlotte, NC to continue the discussion of megaregional coordination, and will meet again in Greenville, SC in November.
- The states of South Carolina and Georgia are working together to create a marine terminal in Jasper County, South Carolina on the Savannah River to increase shipping channel depths.
- Preliminary talks to create a Southeastern States Water Resources Alliance have begun, with the support of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Toward Solutions

- American Rivers estimates Atlanta could meet its water needs through 2035 with water efficiency.
- Six universities from four states have formed a Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion University Consortium to collaborate on fund raising and research of PAM-related issues.
- PAM states have sent letters of support for high-speed rail in the PAM corridor, replacement of the I-85 bridge over the Yadkin River, and green space/trails in the megaregion
- Identified next steps: outline process for creating a vision; scenario planning-best case/worst case; inventory of current resources; and discussion of organizational structure.

Notable Quotes

“The Recovery Bill is the opening act for Reauthorization.” – Mort Downey

“There won’t be a subway line to every farmer, but there should be some type of demand response.” – Bill Millar, President, American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

“Water is a human right, but water services must be funded and managed.” – Bruce Stiftel, Professor, College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology

“Nature does it better and cheaper. Don’t waste money; use multi-benefit green infrastructure solutions for water.” – Rebecca Wodder, President, American Rivers

“There will be high-speed rail from D.C. to Charlotte. My fear is that it will not come down to Georgia and Alabama.” – Sam Williams, President, Metropolitan Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

“If you wait until the pain arrives and implement change then – it will be an easy sell – but most likely you’ve waited too long, and it will be too expensive. Or you can anticipate the pain, and change now, and most likely the change will work and it will be less expensive.” – Mayor Pat McCrory, Charlotte, North Carolina

Forum #4 – ChampionsGate, FL – May 8, 2009

Lead Partner Organizations: Tampa Bay Partnership and Central Florida Partnership

“2009 Super Regional Leadership Conference: A Tampa Bay and Central Florida Collaboration”

Key Challenges

- Lack of long-range, strategic plan for the state.
- Housing crisis and loss of jobs
- Springtime defeat by state legislature of SunRail proposal (Tampa-Orlando commuter transit line)
- Transportation and supply chain connectivity
- Maintaining quality of life and environment

Key Issue Areas

- Economic diversification
- Quality growth
- Connectivity
- Regional cooperation

Sign of Hope

- State, business, and non-profit organizations have all identified common “drivers” for future growth that include: Quality of Life and Quality Growth, Infrastructure, R&D, Entrepreneurial Systems, World Class Talent/ Human Capital, Innovation, and Governance.
- Regional business leaders and the state are working together to aggressively advocate for their Tampa-Orlando high-speed rail plan and have created an advocacy website. <http://www.fastrailconnectus.com/index.php>

Toward Solutions

- Central Florida universities are collaborating around a life sciences cluster or “Medical City” at Lake Nona. In ten years, the economic impact of the life sciences cluster will be \$6.4 billion, growing to \$7.6 billion. \$1 billion in construction is currently underway, with another \$1 billion to come.
- A major push for high-speed rail is now underway in the Tampa-Orlando corridor.

Notable Quotes

“It’s no longer sufficient to go to cold climates and recruit.” – Stuart Rogel, President & CEO, Tampa Bay Partnership

Forum #5 – Los Angeles, CA – June 19, 2009

Lead Partner Organizations: University of Southern California's Bedrosian Center on Governance and the Keston Institute for Public Finance and Infrastructure Policy

“Rebuilding and Renewing America: Infrastructure Strategies for the Southwest Megaregion”

Key challenges

- California state finances: “a world of hurt.”
- Raising revenue for transportation and water infrastructure improvements
- Attracting quality jobs
- Overcoming regulatory and NIMBY hurdles to energy transmission, generation, and other infrastructure projects like high-speed rail
- Accounting for life cycle costs of infrastructure in the budgeting process

Key issue areas

- Transportation: high-speed rail, goods movement, border delays, access to airports
- Water infrastructure – real cost pricing
- Sighting energy transmission, renewable energy generation, and making transition to the smart grid
- Interregional cooperation

Signs of hope

- Passage of SB 375 is national model for coordinating land use, transportation, and carbon emissions reductions
- Southern California Edison is implementing 5 million “smart connect meters” by 2012 (8,000 meters a day) to build out the smart grid.

Toward solutions

- Options for raising revenues should focus on “full cost” pricing (water) and user fees (transportation), and in general, should end subsidies for inefficient use of our resources.
- High-speed rail must connect to urban and mass transit systems.
- Build on California's blueprint planning process to enter into contracts with state of California to reduce carbon, VMT.

Notable quotes

“Bonds are not revenue and financing needs to be paid back. It's time for California to have a ‘birds and bees’ conversation about where money comes from.” –Richard Little, Director, USC Keston Institute for Public Finance and Infrastructure Policy

“How do you get from a low-cost, low-efficiency system to a high-cost, high-efficiency system? Part of that equation is higher prices. People are used to resources being low cost and abundant.” –Donald Paul, Executive Director, USC Energy Institute

“Water is without a home in the federal policy structure. There is no comprehensive approach to national water policy.” – Timothy F. Brick, Chairman, Board of Directors, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

“Regulatory issues are not the barrier [in implementing energy infrastructure and other big projects], but rather the ongoing battle with single issue opponents.” – Neal Schmale, President & COO, Sempra Energy

“Public-private partnerships must demonstrate they will do a better job than traditional delivery of infrastructure. There must be a reason to use something other than tax-exempt bonds.” – Paul Rosenstiel, Principal, De La Rosa & Co. (former California Deputy Treasurer)

Forum #6 – Houston, TX – September 24 & 25, 2009

Lead Partner Organization: Houston Tomorrow

“Megaregions + MetroProsperity – Sustainable Economics for the Texas Triangle”

Key Challenges

- Building megaregion identity and buy-in
- Controlling sprawl and protecting natural resources
- Overcoming NIMBY resistance to expansion of light rail systems
- Reaching consensus on a high-speed rail route for Texas
- Allowing regions to raise their own revenues for transportation through a local option

Key Issue Areas

- Energy, Water, Food
- Greenspace
- Transportation
- How to create “genuine wealth”: health, happiness, well-being and sustainability
- Participant survey rated most interest in: transportation issues (26%), followed by quality of life (16%), water (15%), green infrastructure (14%), energy (8%), and climate change (8%).

Signs of Hope

- “Walkable urbanism” is under-supplied, despite demographic trends that will much greater market demand for these environments: this is an opportunity.
- 71% of conference participants believed a high-speed rail system will be in place in 15 years.
- Green infrastructure is gaining a foothold in Texas’s cities, such as the Buffalo Bayou in the City of Houston. The North Central Texas Council of Governments developed an integrated stormwater management system several years ago to combat erosion and flooding. Trinity Forest near Dallas is the largest hardwood urban forest in the United States. It reduces runoff, erosion, and flooding, helps to offset the urban heat island effect, and improves air quality.

Toward Solutions

- Three of the major regions in Texas – Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Austin, have visioning efforts underway to plan for future growth. Leaders of these efforts identified the need for implementation strategies beyond the visioning.

Notable quotes

“Rail clearly is going to be part of the future of what we’re finally calling the Texas Triangle.” – Harris County Judge Ed Emmett

“When we think about energy supply, the question is not really: can the oil companies go out and find enough supply so that we can waste this much fuel? The way we need to think about this is, why are we wasting this much fuel?” – Amy Myers Jaffe, the Wallace S. Wilson Fellow in Energy Studies at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy

“We must ‘keep it Texan’ to avoid top-down initiatives that could be criticized as communist or socialist.” – Karen Walz, Vision North Texas

Previous Forums – Northeast Megaregion

Baltimore, Maryland: February 29, 2008

Leader partner organizations: Regional Plan Association and Greater Baltimore Committee
“2nd Northeast Climate and Competitiveness Summit”

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: March 2, 2007

“The Northeast Climate and Competitiveness Summit”

Lead partner organizations: Regional Plan Association and Penn Institute for Urban Research

Key Challenges

- Building megaregion identity and shared goals among 12 states and D.C.
- Disrepair and insufficient capacity of Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor
- The threat and impact of rapid urbanization on valuable landscapes, drinking water quality, and health of coastal estuaries in Northeast megaregion
- Climate change impacts on flooding, sea level rise, resilience in disadvantage communities, agriculture, tourism and recreation
- Rising numbers of foreclosures throughout the Northeast

Key Issue Areas

- Transportation and intercity rail
- Landscape conservation
- Housing
- Local climate action plans, cap-and-trade, state renewable portfolio standards
- Building on the Northeast’s assets in a carbon-constrained economy: density, connectivity, and protected landscapes

Signs of Hope

- The Northeast became the first megaregion to implement a 10-state cap and trade program for carbon emissions: the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative
- The Business Alliance for Northeast Mobility has formed – a coalition of over 35 chambers of commerce and civic groups in the Northeast to promote investments in Northeast transportation infrastructure
- The Business Alliance played a role in the passage of the Passenger Investment Improvement Act, providing a much-needed 5-year federal authorization for intercity rail funding to states and Amtrak

Toward Solutions

- A new project for coordinating regional landscape conservation efforts and building capacity in the Northeast megaregion is underway by Regional Plan Association with support of the Duke foundation.
- The Business Alliance for Northeast Mobility is supporting a corridor-wide EIS for the Northeast to plan for doubling of capacity by 2030 and apply for federal stimulus funds
- Continued research, planning, and consensus building is needed to plan a robust Northeast megaregion passenger rail network and freight movement plan.

Notable Quotes

“We have the best rail Congress in my lifetime.” – Michael Dukakis

“Can the Northeast go from being viewed as old, cold, and crowded to green, connected, and creative?” – Petra Todorovich, Director, America 2050