

Regional Strategic Action Plan for Land Use, Transportation, and Economic Development Steering Committee

Third Meeting

April 10, 2007 Meeting Notes

SEDA-COG Board Room

6:30 p.m.

Attendance: Kathy Hummel (CSIU), Jim King (Northumberland County Industrial Development Corp.), Cindy Bower (Rose Valley/Mill Creek Watershed), Joan Sattler (DEP), Wade Keiffer (Clinton County Economic Partnership), Wayne Smutz (Penn State), Jerry Walls (Lycoming County Planning), Skip Wieder (Geisinger Health Systems), Otto Kurecian (Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau), Shawn McLaughlin (Union County Planning), John Mizerak (DCED), Leon Liggitt (PennDOT District 3), Tom Zilla (Centre Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization), Rachel Smith (Central PA Workforce), Jeff Stover (Joint Rail Authority), Jim Szyzborski (Tri-County Regional Planning)

SEDA-COG Staff Present: Kim Wheeler (CRC), Brian Auman (CRC), Mandy Burbage (CRC), Jerry Bohinski (ED), Ryan Unger (Admin), Steve Herman (TP), Dennis Robinson (Admin)

Introductions

- Kim welcomed the Steering Committee of the SEDA-COG Strategic Action Plan, introduced SEDA-COG staff, and recognized new attendees (Wade Kieffer, CCEP; Jeff Stover, SEDA-COG JRA).
- Kim referenced that recent outreach was completed with attendees of the 2005 conference on land use and transportation for economic development held in Williamsport. The participants provided comments and suggested additional revisions to the “Primary Objectives for the Central Region” document.

Review and Modification of Regional Objectives

- For validation purposes, Kim reviewed the recent revisions to the regional objectives stemming from further analysis and outreach with Central Region Conference participants. Kim went through the highlighted text signifying changes to the Objective statements, Regional Action Steps, and Recommendations for Commonwealth Support, which prompted additional comments from Steering Committee members.

Objective A – Create a regional plan identifying areas designated for development, redevelopment, conservation, and preservation:

- To improve understanding by all audiences that might read the document, Steering Committee members mentioned that jargon and abbreviations should be limited. For regional action step #1 it is preferred to write out

comprehensive plans rather than shortening it as comp plans. Furthermore, it might be worthwhile to reference the array of resources and services that comprehensive plans address or catalogue.

- It was shared that GIS inventories are often updated on a project-specific basis rather than as part of a routine or comprehensive schedule.
- Steering Committee members offered that public health should be incorporated into the GIS datasets and specifically listed in regional action step #1. Data collection and mapping analysis already in progress at Geisinger's Center for Health Research could feed into the regional datasets.

Objective B – Implement effective land use planning in the region:

- A question was posed as to how consistency among ordinances, comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision and land development ordinances can be required, as is supported in regional action step #1. A lengthy discussion followed regarding this point. A general consensus was reached to rephrase the wording by using “attain and maintain” in place of “require” when identifying action step #1 regarding consistency among plans and ordinances.
- It was proposed that a new #5 be listed under recommendations for commonwealth support. This recommendation could read as follows: “Enact legislation or revisions to existing statutes that enable consistency among plans and land use ordinances in areas designated for development, redevelopment, conservation, and preservation.” This recommendation gives more emphasis to the need for consistency and links back to Objective A. Members felt it was more conducive to address statutory changes under the commonwealth support section rather than as part of the regional action steps. Also, anticipated meetings between the Steering Committee and the State Planning Board could be used to further support the need for changes to specific statutes.
- While discussing a more effective land use planning process for the region, members provided anecdotes about vexing development projects that did not correspond with the local land use visions, but still managed to be implemented. These projects could serve as negative case studies for the Regional Action Plan. Some specific projects that were shared by members had received state financing, yet were not consistent with local land use goals, highlighting the need for improved communication and disseminating information to local officials sooner. Other members reiterated that this situation of local plans or visions being circumvented pointed to necessary statutory changes to increase the legal standing of comprehensive plans and the need for an overarching evaluation process in place of Pennsylvania's current fragmented permitting process that allows dubious projects to advance.
- Regarding the new regional action step #7 pertaining to the Keystone Principles, members suggested that each state agency or Governor's Office that uses the Principles should prepare an annual report on how the investment

criteria are being applied to each of their grant, loan, or other funding programs.

Objective C – Revitalize, reinvest, maintain, restore, and improve existing communities through economic development and the preservation of natural, historic, cultural, recreational, and open space resources:

- The last sentence of commonwealth support recommendation #2 about increasing barriers for greenfield development should be deleted. Some greenfield development is appropriate, and large acreage in greenfields is critical to certain manufacturing or other industrial businesses, so using an absolute regarding increased barriers for greenfield development should be removed from the document. Language on greenfield development should be presented in more positive rather than restrictive terms (e.g., not for retail land uses, but allowed for industrial). This is to be clarified under Objective F, commonwealth support recommendation #4.

Objective D – Develop a broad, regional educational outreach about economic development, land use, and transportation for students, general citizenry, municipalities, and legislators. Raise awareness, define avenues to get involved, and stress the need to be involved:

- Regional action step #4 should also reference using best management practices and case study examples in “developer” outreach and education in addition to public and municipal outreach and education.

Objective E – Encourage comprehensive regionalization of services (including policing, water and sewer, marketing and tourism, waste management/ recycling, and reduced government)

- It was noted that SEDA-COG staff and Steering Committee members might benefit from reviewing some draft Pennsylvania legislation on municipal services and taxation reform. The State Planning Board helped craft this draft legislation and recently announced it to the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. Since the legislation could be valuable for the Regional Action Plan, an update from the State Planning Board or an actual copy of the draft will be pursued.
- It was recommended that under Recommendations for Commonwealth Support a #3 be added to “Enact the proposed municipal services taxation reform act.”

Objective F – Capitalize on the location of institutions and industry clusters in our core communities (which are already supported by existing infrastructure) by providing for their growth, expansion, and modernization as a strategy for strengthening the local economy:

- Going back to the earlier discussion on greenfield development, it was pointed out that Commonwealth support recommendation #4 should be reworded to emphasize that greenfield development should be encouraged where consistent with local land use plans instead of saying that government

incentives for greenfield development should be eliminated in all circumstances or only for certain land uses.

Prioritization of Regional Objectives

- A working session was held, whereby members analyzed the priority of regional objectives, considering what was most feasible or made more valuable based on the foundation provided by the Keystone Principles. Poster size printouts of the regional objectives were displayed on the wall of the meeting room, and each participant was given a sheet of colored dots. The goal of moving toward actual implementation and informing state investment processes drove the work of members to affix dots to the objectives deemed most important. There was a great deal of unanimity in the work session responses, which will be summarized and sent out for review.

What's Next?

- Kim thanked everyone for their participation. She announced that the project website is now up-to-date and includes pertinent supporting documents such as meeting agendas, minutes, and presentations for downloading. The webpage can be found by going to the SEDA-COG home page (<http://www.seda-cog.org/>), clicking “Services” and then “Regional Strategic Planning” from the left-hand menu. Focus Group summaries and working session consensus on priority objectives will be completed shortly and distributed to the Steering Committee.
- Upcoming meetings will include sessions with the region’s elected officials, a 2-day mini-conference with other regional planning agencies completing similar Action Plans, and five sub-regional outreach forums. The meetings with elected officials will occur after primary elections, sometime in late June or July. The objectives and overall vision will be shared with elected officials to educate them on best practices, commonwealth support, and integration needed at the local level. Meetings with elected officials will probably occur during the day, with open public meetings held during the evening. Steering Committee members are requested to help arrange the meetings. The 2-day mini-conference is anticipated for June in the Lewisburg area. State agency staff will also be on hand to provide guidance to the regional planning agencies.

Next Steering Committee Meeting:
Sub-Regional Outreach Forums (TBD)