

## **Planning for Complete Communities in Transit Corridors**

On June 21, 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released an Advanced Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the second round of Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants. The Grant opportunities build on the partnership established in 2009 between HUD, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency. Building on COG's adopted vision of *Region Forward* and its multi-sector goals, targets and indicators, COG and the Region Forward Coalition will be applying for funds to preserve and enhance transit-oriented communities throughout metropolitan Washington. The Plan will address economic development, energy use, water quality, workforce development, and healthy communities around our existing and future transit investments. The initiative will have a particular focus on creating mixed-income communities by preserving affordable housing and providing access to economic opportunities and services as called for in *Region Forward*.

### **Historic Challenge and Opportunity:**

Our region is in a major transition period where we are emerging from the recession and realizing a new American Dream; a dream to live in transit-oriented walkable communities. We are witnessing robust real estate growth in the region's core markets around transit stations and walkable neighborhoods. At the same time, rising housing costs around many of our transit investments have displaced long-time residents and businesses, and forced many low- and moderate-income households to seek affordable housing in locations that are far removed from the region's transit network and major employment centers. Concurrently, housing on the region's fringe has lost significant value, posing a long-term challenge that may re-concentrate poverty in isolated suburban neighborhoods with limited access to jobs, services, and transit. Many people in our region are caught between an affordability and accessibility tradeoff: seek affordable housing further away from transit or face rising housing costs in order to remain near transit. We are at a critical time where the region needs to 1) get in front of this trend before development pressures around our transit stations force low-income families to move away from transit, and 2) create a regional plan to channel growth around our transit investments and create complete communities.

*Market demand:* Metropolitan Washington already exhibits the key demographic shifts that other regions will face in the next 10 to 20 years. These demographic changes are creating strong demand for transit-oriented walkable neighborhoods. Many suburban areas in our region already recognize this trend and are proactively planning to transform traditionally auto-centric places like Tyson's Corner into transit-oriented communities where people can live near their jobs and get around without relying on automobiles. Due to the growing demand by people of all incomes for transit-oriented communities, these communities are vulnerable to becoming completely unaffordable without careful planning and support.

*New Transit Investments:* The National Capital Region benefits from some of the best transit infrastructure in the nation and we continue to make transit a priority with new investments in light rail, bus rapid-transit, and a new streetcar network. The region will spend approximately \$9 billion over the next decade on new transit lines, and this expansion of the transit network will force us to reconsider land use to better support our infrastructure. These investments present a unique opportunity to reshape the region's urban form to support sustainable development and foster vibrant neighborhoods for all residents.

*New Regional Collaboration and Vision:* In many ways, the timing of this grant could not be better. Last year, the COG Board of Directors and all 21 local jurisdictions approved a regional vision, *Region Forward*, marking a historic first-step for the region. *Region Forward* establishes ambitious goals and targets to lead the region to a sustainable and prosperous future for all. The region has begun fulfilling its vision by establishing a new coalition, the Region Forward Coalition, which is working towards a future where mixed-income transit-oriented

Friday, July 08, 2011

## Conceptual Framework

communities become part of the fabric of the National Capital Region. The Coalition includes stakeholders that have been drawn from a pool of traditional and nontraditional regional governance participants. The Coalition

members share a commitment to implement our region's vision by advancing innovative and equitable community planning to create mixed-income, mixed-use, and transit-rich neighborhoods that are inclusive to households of all backgrounds and income levels. COG and the Region Forward Coalition are particularly unique in the ability to address these concerns as *Region Forward* builds on the achievements of the past such as the TPB Vision, the Greater Washington 2050 Coalition, the Climate Change report and extensive work in the areas of land use, transportation, the environment, and health and public safety.

*Key Accomplishments:* Coalition partners are currently developing the first of our implementation tools, a transit-oriented development affordable housing fund. The Coalition is also working to study regional affordable housing needs and preserve housing in transit-oriented communities that exhibit risks of becoming completely unaffordable.

### **Project Approach:**

The initiative will put into action our regional vision and build new capacity to secure equitable outcomes that guarantee everyone benefits from sustainable, equitable growth and access to social and economic opportunities. This planning initiative will bring much needed attention and focus on targeting the region's development around our existing and future transit stations to support our investments in transit, while also putting into place a framework for equitable transit-oriented communities. We have learned that without a plan focused on equitable transit-oriented development for our transit investments, these stations and corridors can become so attractive and unaffordable that long-time residents and businesses are often displaced. A key objective of this proposal is to ensure people of diverse incomes, particularly low-income residents near the region's existing and future transit investments have the choice to remain and reap the benefits of transit-oriented development, which include reduced transportation costs and improved access to jobs, services, and amenities. To achieve this, the initiative will address affordable housing, energy use, economic development, displacement of residents and businesses, water quality, workforce development, and healthy communities to strengthen our regional transit-oriented vision.

This *Planning for Complete Communities in Transit Corridors Initiative* will focus on the following activities:

- Convene or re-establish a regional equity network to facilitate broad participation by residents and community groups in identifying needs and priorities for the Action Plan and demonstration plans.
- Examine existing research and conduct additional regionally-focused research and analysis to address major knowledge gaps, such as a region-wide housing impediments analysis. Additional research will respond to the region's need to improve its equity, environmental, and economic conditions.
- Develop an Action Plan for the region's transit corridors and station areas. The Action Plan will identify Complete Communities priorities to enhance the equity, environmental, and economic conditions of the region and will recommend potential strategies to address these needs.
- Create a series of demonstration plans for planned and existing transit corridors to address key challenges in those locations.
- Develop and launch new programs and tools, and realign existing ones, to support the implementation of transit-oriented complete communities. One such tool, the Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Fund, is currently under development; this grant would help to seed the Fund.
- Identify and develop policy, administrative, and regulatory changes necessary to support transit-oriented complete communities after the funding period ends.

## Process for Planning for Complete Communities in Transit Corridors

