

Transit, Smart Growth and VMT Reduction

Recommended Action: Implement a package of transit improvements and land use policies and incentives to reduce VMT (vehicle miles traveled) XXX% below the baseline. Implementation of the measures recommended here are estimated to reduce that growth to XXX percent.

This package of recommendations is aimed at increasing accessibility and low-GHG travel choices, such as transit (rail and bus), vanpools, walking and biking. It draws from more detailed “strawman” analyses and proposals, which are include in the appendix and listed at the end of this section. Notably, the Smart Growth strawman proposal is the primary source of information on smart growth recommendations, costs and benefits.

The recommendations consist of several complementary elements:

1. Increased transit ridership;
2. Consideration of potential funding mechanisms for new transit investments
3. Establish a coordinated, interagency program to promote smart growth:
4. Redirect at a percentage of new development (forecasted population and employment) to growth-appropriate locations,
5. Consider complementary VMT reduction incentives, such as commuter choice, location efficient mortgage, and mileage-based insurance.

Below we provide more detail on the core elements of the recommendation.

Results Of Assessments For 2010, 2020 And Beyond (Where Applicable)

GHG Emissions Reductions

2010: XXX MMTCO₂e
2020: XXX MMTCO₂e

The working group considered several different data sources and calculations in developing the reduction estimates. [cite specific sources]

Costs

- ***Cost of Transit Improvements***
[specific depending on type and scope of transit investment]
- ***Avoided Infrastructure Costs***
The Research Institute for Housing America estimated the potential cost savings of smart growth measures nationally could be as much as \$250 billion over 25 years.¹
[cite state-specific data where applicable].

¹ Linking Vision with Capital –Challenges and Opportunities in Financing Smart Growth, Research Institute for Housing America – Institute Report No. 01-01, September 2001.
(<http://www.housingamerica.org/docs/RIHA01-01.pdf>)

- ***Consumer Savings***

A 2000 analysis of household transportation expenditures in 28 metropolitan areas found that transportation expenses are greater in low-density areas with few alternatives to the automobile. The study found that families living in low-density areas pay roughly \$1300 more per year in transportation expenses than families in compact, mixed use areas.² Include avoid health care costs.

Cost of GHG Reductions: The estimated incremental cost of the Smart Growth and Transit Policy is \$XX per metric ton of CO₂.

Air Pollution Reductions

Although difficult to quantify, these emissions have real financial and social costs: treatment and hospitalizations for pollution-induced illness, missed work and school days, restricted activity, coping with symptoms of illness and premature deaths.

A XX percent reduction in VMT is expected to yield the following reductions in criteria pollutant emissions from CO, NOX, P10, SO₂ & VOC.

Other Benefits

- *Increased transportation choices to the traveling public.* In addition to fostering quality-of-life improvements, increased travel choices can help relieve traffic congestion, bolster economic development and aid urban revitalization.
- *Health benefits from increased mobility.* Auto-centric development patterns have decreased mobility among adults and children, reducing opportunities for walking and bike riding. Research suggests that people in compact, mixed-use areas reap benefits from increased opportunity to integrate walking and biking into the everyday routine.³ Smart growth seeks to encourage centralized, mixed use communities with well-developed pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Given the myriad of health costs associated with inactivity, creating opportunities for increased mobility through smart growth has a clear (although unquantified in this analysis) economic value.
- *Additional environmental benefits.* In addition to the air pollution benefits discussed above, there are other ways in which Smart Growth measures lessen the environmental impacts of development. Reduced impervious surfaces and improved water detention safeguard water quality. Clean-up and re-use of brownfield sites is an additional environmental benefit to smart growth.
- *Avoided costs of sprawl* that can be minimized through smart growth policies include: economic loss due to congestion, declining urban centers, disconnect between affordable housing and job location, quality of life impacts.

² *Driven to Spend: The Impact of Sprawl on Household Transportation Expenses.* Surface Transportation Policy Project (2000). (<http://www.transact.org/report.asp?id=36>)

³ *Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl: A National Analysis.* Barbara A. McCann and Reid Ewing, Surface Transportation Policy Project (2003).

Stakeholder Views

The Stakeholders agreed to transit and smart growth recommendations through unanimous consent.

Public Views

[Will vary depending on public participation and input].

Appendices and Support Documents:

- Smart Growth strawman proposal. This provides more detail on the smart growth recommendations considered by the working group.
- Transit Growth Scenario Assumptions (State DOT)
- Modeling results from reallocation of new growth (State DOT)