

**Building Communities Program
Planning Assistance Grant
FY 2009**

Purpose:

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) of Greater Birmingham, on behalf of the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), announces its second round of Building Communities Grants, designed to address the relationship between transportation and land use, recognizing that land use decisions have impacts to the transportation system and vice-versa.

Specifically cited under 23 U.S.C. 450.306 is that the metropolitan transportation planning process shall promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.

It is, therefore, the intended purpose of the Building Communities Program to provide grants to local communities within the MPO Planning Area of Jefferson and Shelby Counties for projects, strategies and services that support the SAFETEA-LU planning factors, including transportation and land use integration, economic vitality, safety and security, accessibility and mobility, environmental/air quality, and system preservation. It is also the purpose of the Program to identify physical projects that can be funded under a Building Communities Implementation Program.

Background:

Seven Building Communities Grants were awarded during the last round of applications. These include the following:

1. Birmingham City Center One-Way Street Conversion Study.
2. City of Fairfield Comprehensive Plan.
3. Form Based Code for Downtown Graysville.
4. Highland Park Neighborhood Assessment and Zoning Code Review.
5. Calera Comprehensive Plan Update.
6. City of Vestavia Cahaba Heights Neighborhood Plan
7. City of Vestavia Hills Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations Update.

Implementation of the projects is by a contract between the RPC and a consultant team, with an RPC community planner assigned as the project sponsor.

Eligible Project Sponsors:

Local governments located in the MPO area of Jefferson and Shelby Counties are eligible to sponsor a grant request. Collaboration among governments is encouraged, particularly where projects are located in corridors that link two or more jurisdictions. Public/private partnerships are also eligible.

Funding and Local Match:

Projects are eligible to be funded at 80% federal, with a 20% commitment to be provided by the local government.

Eligible Plan Types:

1. Comprehensive Area Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Comprehensive Area Transportation Plan is to develop structured, yet flexible, short-term and long-term strategies that can be implemented systematically to take advantage of

available funding to improve the transportation network. The Comprehensive Area Transportation Plan will serve as the blueprint to improve and maintain the transportation system, and will demonstrate how local government units (city or county) will provide an integrated transportation system that will serve the needs of its residents, support the local government unit's development plans, and complement the metropolitan transportation system. When adopted, the Comprehensive Area Transportation Plan will carry the weight of an official Thoroughfare Plan, and may be used by local decision-makers in making land use and transportation infrastructure investment decisions. Additionally, the Comprehensive Area Transportation Plan informs regional, state, and federal actions related to the local transportation system. The Comprehensive Area Transportation Plan is multi-modal in nature, and consists of four distinct elements:

- a. Roadways.
- b. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- c. Transit.
- d. Land use.

2. **Corridor Transportation Plan**

For the purposes of this program, a corridor is defined as being ¼ mile wide. Corridors should be roadways functionally classified as major collectors or higher. Corridor plans proposed to be funded under the Program should have logical termini which may or may not be political boundaries. Plans should address transportation and land use and:

- a. Consider transportation facilities at multiple scales (i.e. roadways, sidewalks, transit).
- b. Focus on developing "livable corridors".
- c. Address multiple travel modes.
- d. Consider strategies and/or policies that will effectively reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- e. Speak to the corridor's role within the context of the neighborhood, community, city, or region.

3. **Sub-Area Transportation Plan**

Similar to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, the Sub-Area Transportation Plan generally breaks out a smaller geographic area than a comprehensive transportation plan. The Sub-Area Transportation Plan may provide a narrower focus, concentrating on specific transportation system elements, development, and/or services. However, in order for the Sub-Area Transportation Plan to meet the intent of the Building Communities Program, the relationship between transportation and land use must be clearly articulated. Sub-Area Transportation Plans should evaluate the impacts that proposed changes to activity center's land use will have on the transportation network. Impact analysis should consider multiple development scenarios such as maturation (densification), expansion (outward), and redevelopment of the center. Additionally, the Sub-Area Transportation Plan will consider the impacts to "regionally significant" roadways as defined by 40 CFR 93.101. Sub-Area Transportation Plans may include:

a. **Neighborhood Transportation Plan**

For the purposes of this program, neighborhood planning areas should be delineated based on a walking distance from an identified geographic center (typically an intersection or group of intersections). The neighborhood transportation plan looks at travel characteristics to, from, through, and within the neighborhood and addresses both accessibility and mobility issues for both residents and goods.

b. **Employment Center Transportation Plan**

Activity Centers are defined as being high density employment centers that typically are urban in character or are becoming urban in character and are accessible by frequent public transportation; suburban employment centers that are more dispersed and have a lower density of jobs (measured in jobs/acre), are typically located in suburban areas and include "campus-style" office complexes that may contain a mix of office and light-industrial uses; mixed-use

centers that are generally urban in character and include a mixture of office, retail, service, residential, or civic uses that create a central focus for a larger area; and emerging centers that are not yet fully developed as a center or corridor, but are experiencing strong growth pressures and could develop as a mixed-use, multimodal center or corridor. Examples of this include interchange areas and areas experiencing rapid population growth.

c. **Station Area Plan**

Station Area Plans are focused on existing or planned public transportation stations. With the exception of the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority's Central Station and planned expansion to become an intermodal center, no other transit stations exist within the Birmingham area. There are, however, several planned "Super Stops" and Park and Ride lots, as well as local transit stations which will serve future bus service and proposed rail services.

4. **Non-Motorized Transportation Plan**

Non-motorized Transportation Plans identify the means to establish a physical and cultural environment that supports and encourages safe, comfortable and convenient ways for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel throughout their community. This would include walking, bicycling, small-wheeled transport (skates, skateboards, push scooters, and hand carts), and wheelchair travel. Non-motorized Transportation plans may address "Complete Streets" type activities to include, but not be limited to:

- a. The development of policies to ensure that walking and cycling travel needs are taken into account in all appropriate roadway projects.
- b. Planning to identify barriers to non-motorized travel.
- c. Identification of programs, projects, and funding to correct deficiencies.

5. **Administrative and Regulatory Tools**

Administrative and regulatory tools developed with Program funding shall implement and/or enforce all or part of an adopted plan document. In addition, administrative and regulatory tools developed with Program funding shall address the SAFETEA-LU planning factors and clearly demonstrate how it addresses those goals. Following are some detailed examples of the types of tools that are eligible to be funded under the Program.

a. **Traffic Impact Analysis Procedures**

The purpose of developing Traffic Impact Analysis Procedures is to provide local government staff with sufficient information concerning the transportation impacts of a project and to determine appropriate mitigation measures so as to inform decision-makers so that they make educated decisions within the development review and approval process. The Traffic Impact Analysis also assures that the applicant is aware of traffic and access conditions that may affect the use of, or benefit derived from the property, enabling them to make decisions about transportation system investments that will favorably impact their project. Impacts to the transportation system may include increased congestion, diminished safety, and conflicts with site access.

b. **Subdivision Regulations (Transportation Element)**

Subdivision regulations are a key component in ensuring that land uses complement and support transportation infrastructure investments and that plan documents are implemented as envisioned. Subdivision regulatory documents developed with the Program's Planning Assistance grant funds must demonstrate a consideration of the impacts of land use on transportation and vice-versa, and provide for mechanisms to ensure that each of these elements complement the other. These might include access management regulations and roadway design criteria.

c. Zoning Ordinance (Transportation Element)

Zoning Ordinances are another key tool used to regulate the type and placement of land uses, including but not limited to:

- (1) Limiting land uses to locations based on the functional classification of roadways.
- (2) Roadway access.
- (3) Parking regulation.
- (4) Provision of non-motorized transportation facilities.
- (5) Land development densities – useful for public transit planning.
- (6) Form based code.

d. Capital Improvement Plan

A multiyear Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is another key tool which is meant to guide local governments in implementing these plans by helping department heads, elected officials, and the general public to adequately anticipate capital improvement needs in order that plan elements, funding, and support might be secured in advance of the annual budgeting cycle.

Completion of Project Work

The RPC will be responsible for completion of the project, either through the use of its own staff, a third-party contractor or a combination of both. Third-party contractors will be selected by the RPC using the Alabama Department of Transportation's consultant selection process.

Submittal of Application

Five copies of Attachment A should be delivered, or received by mail, by 5:00 p.m., Friday, September 12, 2008 to the following:

Steve Ostaseski
Principal Planner
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
1731 1st Avenue North, Suite 220
Birmingham, AL 35203

Project Evaluation and Selection

All projects satisfying the eligibility of the SAFETEA-LU planning factors criteria and the eligible plan types will be selected by the RPC staff for funding, contingent upon the amount of funds required to fund the eligible projects and the amount available under the Building Communities Program Grant between the RPC and the Alabama Department of Transportation.

Contract

A contract will then be executed between the RPC and the project sponsor, outlining the scope of work and the obligation of the RPC to provide 80% funding and the local government to provide a 20% match.