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Environmental/Health

PAVE THE WAY FOR LEED ND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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The purpose of this presentation is to illustrate how small and medium sized MPOs can 1) contribute to expand LEED ND eligible areas and improve ND scoring conditions; and 2) leverage the resources from LEED ND to accelerate the development of sustainable communities. The presentation attempts to answer three questions: 1) what is the role of transportation in LEED ND? 2) What are opportunities for small and medium sized metropolitan areas to achieve in LEED ND certification? And 3) How MPOs can use LEED ND to promote sustainable communities?

In 2012, the U.S. Green Building Council issued a local government guide to LEED ND. The guide mostly targeted on municipal government with land use authority. Very little has been discussed on the role of MPOs in LEED ND. This presentation intends to provide some thoughts to fill that gap.

Transportation planning agencies can make a significant contribution to the success of a LEED ND project; More than 25 percent of LEED ND credits are directly related to transportation, through which a project team can earn up to 38 points in the rating system (a minimum of 40 points is required for certification). Transportation issues included in LEED ND are: 1) Street connectivity, 2) transportation demand management; 3) multi-model traveling, and 4) streetscape.

Small and medium sized metropolitan areas have extraordinary opportunities to achieve their sustainability goals under LEED ND. Prerequisites for credits under the category of Smart Locations and Linkage strongly favor development projects at or near developed urban areas. The bulk of urban growth is forecast to occur in communities of 100,000 to 250,000 people. Most of those communities are considered small and medium sized metropolitan areas, where neighborhoods will be the fundamental units of urban change and innovation.

Transportation professionals at small and medium sized MPOs sit squarely at the intersection of transportation, community development, and the public interest and possess a unique position to catalyze sustainable community developments by paving the way for potential projects seeking LEED ND certifications. Specifically, the opportunities include: 1) Integrating the principles of LEED ND in to the policies of governing organization operation and system level planning. For example, a project selection and prioritization policy that encourages transportation investments in areas with sustainable characteristics; 2) using specific metrics in the LEED ND rating system as a guidance for subarea and/or corridor planning practices. This could include borrowing specific achievement thresholds from the prerequisites, such as minimum density levels, walk distance thresholds, and street connectivity levels; and 3) compiling relevant data and providing direct technical assistance for LEED ND developments. Transportation data necessary for a LEED ND certification process include highway network, transit service, intersection densities, parking, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.