

FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series



North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning And Development Commission – Connecting Highways to Local and Regional Community Services that Support Livable Communities.

In response to the tremendous growth in the areas of energy, tourism, recreational development, infrastructure and municipal assistance, the Community Development Department within the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission has been charged with developing integrated strategies and policies for community development and regional planning activities that are consistent with the organization's Regional Action Strategy (RAS) and strategic plan. The intention of the RAS is to encourage the exchange of meaningful strategies on how communities can soundly manage growth and development to efficiently and effectively link land use, transportation, and economic development decision-making at a regional level.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania developed keystone principles for growth, investment, and resource conservation that include: redevelop first, provide efficient infrastructure, concentrate development, increase job opportunities, foster sustainable businesses, restore and enhance the environment, enhance recreational and heritage resources, expand housing opportunities, plan regionally, implement locally, and be fair.

The Community Development Department has identified the following strategic goals in support of livability:

- Promote cooperative efforts among the community (county, city, and municipal governments) and Economic Development agencies that advance individual and common interests in targeting commercial, industrial, and infrastructure development that is data driven and supported.
- Promote quality of life initiatives while safeguarding the region's assets.
- Assess and inventory regional infrastructure needs, including water, sewer, transportation, energy, utilities, education, healthcare, housing and site remediation.
- Expand community outreach and engagement in a range of regional planning and development topics.
- Establish and implement a communication plan to update stakeholders and the general public, share success stories, and promote community and regional planning
- Collect, compile, organize, analyze and disseminate data and data procedures needed for regional policy-setting and decision-making using the evolving capabilities of GIS.

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



In 2009, \$59.2 million was allocated to fund 50 community-led planning and construction projects. These projects were selected from an overwhelming response of over 400 applications requesting more than \$600 million in funding. The Federal Safe Routes to School initiative, included in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users authorized federal programs for highways, highway safety, and transit from 2005 through

2009. The projects were reviewed by Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations, the Federal Highway Administration, Penn DOT district, and others to facilitate project selection. Selected projects were jointly announced with 30 projects selected for the Safe Routes to School Program. The North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission received funding for three counties with related highway improvements from this effort:

- City of Altoona will receive \$300,000 to install bike and pedestrian amenities that connect the downtown to the Penn State Altoona campus.
- Centre County MPO, in conjunction with North Central RPO, will receive \$100,000 to study potential park and ride lots in the Moshannon Valley to provide commuter service to neighboring communities.
- Ferguson Township will receive \$2,970,000 to install a collector road between two arterial roads serving travelers within a proposed traditional neighborhood development that includes a highly connected local street grid.
- Jefferson County Punxsutawney Borough will receive \$607,200 to upgrade the local transportation network in the downtown area to better complement the inter-modal Punxsutawney Transit Facility.

Investments in smart transportation and creating safe routes to schools offer travel options that can help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Building more rational connections within communities can reduce vehicle use and attract pedestrians and bicyclists. The intention of the RAS for Central Pennsylvania is to encourage the exchange of meaningful strategies on how communities can soundly manage growth and development to efficiently and effectively link land use, transportation, and economic development decision-making at a regional level. This has resulted in a comprehensive planning process that promotes livability and community development.

Federal Highway Administration: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability
Partnership for Sustainable Communities: www.sustainablecommunities.gov/

