Oregon Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit:

Strategy Report

OREGON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

Plan and Code Amendments

This report summarizes comprehensive plan and development code provisions intended to encourage land use and development types that are supportive of greenhouse gas reductions.

What is it?

A community's comprehensive plan policies and development code standards can be amended to encourage development types and densities that help advance greenhouse gas reduction goals. For example, increased housing densities can be achieved in a number of ways, such as:

- Establish minimum density targets
- Allow smaller lot sizes in residential zones
- Encourage infill development through incentives
- Allow and encourage mixed-use development in strategic locations
- Allow attached housing, cluster and cottage developments in appropriate areas
- Allow home occupation permits with little or no permitting requirements

Design standards and guidelines can also be updated to facilitate alternative modes of transportation such as walking, biking and transit use. Those standards may include:

- On and off-site connectivity standards to ensure a complete biking and walking network
- Bicycle parking requirements for most types of land uses
- Provisions to require transit amenities for developments near transit routes
- Reduced off-street vehicle parking requirements to promote efficient use of land
- Reduced open space standards for multifamily developments to maximize available land for housing

Many jurisdictions have adopted such code provisions but do not necessarily identify them as greenhouse gas reduction tools. Rather, they are provisions that help communities achieve a variety of land use and transportation objectives and have the co-benefit of contributing to greenhouse gas reductions. Additionally, some jurisdictions include ordinances in their municipal code that limit idling of trucks and buses.

How well does it work?

Moving Cooler[1] identifies a set of land use strategies that includes the types of provisions listed in this report and indicates a 0.2 to 2.1 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050 based on the assumption that roughly half of new urban development uses these strategies (compact, mixed-use development with good biking, walking and transit options). These strategies can take some time to implement and the benefits accrue slowly; however, the effects of land use changes can be expected to endure many years beyond 2050.

1 *Moving Cooler: An Analysis of Transportation Strategies for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Cambridge Systematics, Inc. Urban Land Institute, July 2009.*

How can it benefit my community?

Plan and code amendments touch on a wide range of topics with numerous community benefits. For example:

- Improvements to walking and biking networks can help promote public health goals
- Transit-related amenities encourage transit use and increase efficiency of the transit system
- Attached and multifamily developments provide more affordable housing options
- Efficient use of land can help preserve open space and natural resources
- Reduced travel times and distances can provide transportation-related cost savings

What does it cost?

Drafting and implementing amendments to plan and code language involves a number of steps and could take several years to complete, depending on the scale of the amendments and political/citizen support for the project. For example, the City of Grants Pass recently underwent an extensive review of their development code to assess opportunities to increase densities and promote more efficient use of land, many of which are also strategies linked to greenhouse gas reductions. The process involved the following:

- Identification of project goals and assessment of existing opportunities and barriers to meeting those goals
- Exploration of different approaches to removing barriers and increasing opportunities in the code language
- Discussions with city staff, consultants, and technical advisors to determine the most suitable approach
- Drafting and re-drafting code amendments to implement the desired approaches

Amendments to the city's development code included provisions for smaller lot sizes, new standards for cluster and cottage development, reduced parking requirements, simplified home occupation standards, provisions for accessory dwelling units and reduced open space standards for certain multifamily developments. These steps (not including the adoption process) took about a year to complete, with the help of a land use consultant; the majority of the project was funded through a code assistance grant from the Oregon Transportation Growth Management program[2].

Where has it been used?

Many communities in Oregon have adopted plan and code language that addresses these land use and transportation strategies, often to achieve "smart growth" objectives. Oregon's Model Development Code for Small Cities is the state's go-to source of code provisions that support smart growth.[3] The Model Code includes many of the code provisions discussed in this report, including smaller lot size standards, design standards for multifamily and attached housing, bicycle parking requirements and pedestrian connectivity standards.

The City of Ashland includes idling restrictions in their municipal code that prohibit trucks and buses from idling while parked for more than five minutes. There are exceptions to the rule to allow for emergency vehicles and others that must run in order to operate. See: http://www.ashland.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=687

Where can I learn more?

- The Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute at the University of Denver, Colorado has created a Sustainable Community Development Code (Beta Version 1.5) that provides a comprehensive assessment of land use code strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. More information is available at: http://www.law.du.edu/documents/rmlui/sustainable-development/Climate-Change.pdf
- The Environmental Protection Agency produced a report to identify local zoning code topics that are important to promoting smart growth principles called Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Communities. More information is available at: http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/essential_fixes.htm
- The EPA also provides a helpful list of sample codes that demonstrate smart growth and climate-friendly elements: http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/codeexamples.htm

The Toolkit is a component of the Oregon Sustainable Transportation Initiative (OSTI), which was formed to address the requirements of Senate Bill 1059 (2010).

For more information, please visit:

http://cms.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/pages/ ghgtoolkit.aspx

Oregon Department of Transportation

2 *The State of Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program website: http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/Pages/index.aspx*

3 *Model Development Code for Small Cities, 3rd Edition. Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program. Website: http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/pages/modelcode.aspx*