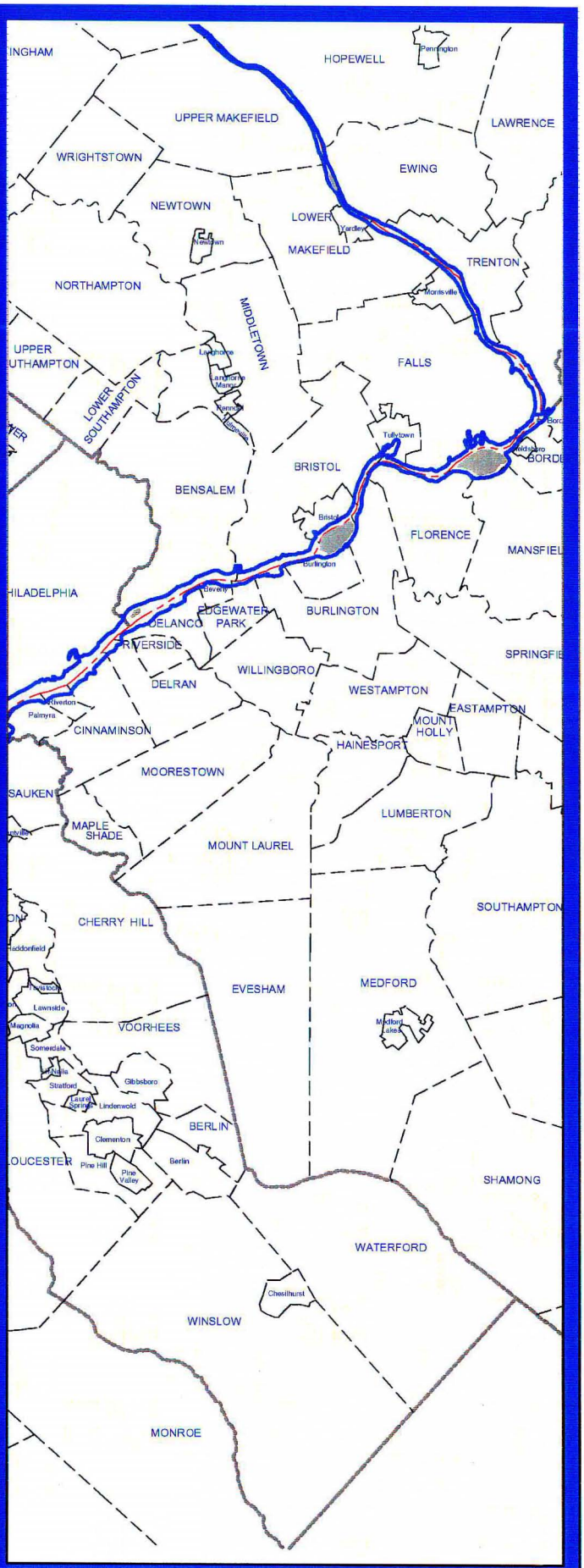
Inter-Municipal Cooperation Alternatives

Report 2

Highway and Transit Corridor Planning



Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

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Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
June, 1998

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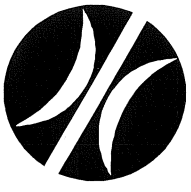
Created in 1965, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency which provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning for the orderly growth and development of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties as well as the City of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties in New Jersey. The Commission is an advisory agency which divides its planning and service functions between the Office of the Executive Director, the Office of Public Affairs, and three line Divisions: Transportation Planning, Regional Planning, and Administration. DVRPC's mission for the 1990s is to emphasize technical assistance and services and to conduct high priority studies for member state and local governments, while determining and meeting the needs of the private sector.



The DVRPC logo is adapted from the official seal of the Commission and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The outer ring symbolizes the region as a whole while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River flowing through it. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey. The logo combines these elements to depict the areas served by DVRPC.

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Publication Abstract

TITLE	Date Published: June, 1998
HIGHWAY AND TRANSIT CORRIDOR PLANNING	Publication No. 98011

Geographic Area Covered: Nine-county Delaware Valley region, including Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey.

Key Words:
Inter-municipal cooperation, highway corridors, transit corridors, joint planning, consensus planning, joint purchasing and services.

ABSTRACT

As part of a continuing project to foster inter-municipal cooperation, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is preparing a series of short "How-to" guides for elected and appointed municipal officials. The purpose of these guides is to outline how local government officials can launch specific cooperative ventures with their neighbors in adjoining municipalities in order to improve services and/or reduce costs. This is the second guide in the series and describes how municipalities can encourage compatible development, increase their efficiency in providing services and reduce their costs through cooperative highway and transit corridor planning.

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There are 353 cities, townships and boroughs in the nine-county Delaware Valley, each exerting their own local control and making independent decisions regarding land use in their own community. The populations of these municipalities range from tiny Tavistock Borough in Camden County (with only nine residents) to the almost 1.5 million people living within the City of Philadelphia.

The desire for local control often conflicts with other important goals, such as improving local services while simultaneously reducing local taxes. Many elected and appointed officials now recognize the cost efficiencies and other benefits of working together with neighboring municipalities to improve service delivery.

As part of a continuing project to foster inter-municipal cooperation, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is preparing a series of short "How-to" guides for elected and appointed officials. The purpose of these guides is to demonstrate how local officials can launch specific cooperative ventures with their neighbors in adjacent municipalities to improve services and/or reduce costs. Three key arguments in favor of cooperating with other municipalities include saving money, improving the delivery of services and gaining political clout. The first of these guides, released in July of 1997, describes how to create a regional recreational commission.

This is the second in the series, and describes how municipalities can save money and increase efficiency through cooperative highway and transit corridor planning. Transportation issues and problems are often regional in nature, transcending state and local boundaries. The region's municipalities are faced with common transportation issues, such as road maintenance, bridge repair and congestion. Moreover, the traffic generated by a development in one community along a corridor may impact other communities along the same corridor. Municipalities should therefore explore whether or not working and planning with adjacent and neighboring communities can help them to provide more effective and efficient transportation facilities and services while reducing costs.

INTERMUNICIPAL CORRIDOR PLANNING

Development has historically been concentrated along transportation corridors and at major crossroads. Highway and transit corridors typically pass through numerous municipalities, and the type and scale of development along these corridors impacts each and every one of these localities. A pattern of development initiated in one community and supported by local infrastructure improvements often spills over into surrounding areas. Similarly, traffic originating in one municipality can profoundly impact numerous other communities.

Corridor planning may be undertaken as one part of a single municipality's comprehensive planning process. Intermunicipal highway corridor planning, however, can assist adjacent municipalities in developing a common vision and action plan for the corridor. Many of the region's highways are the dividing line between municipalities, with different municipalities controlling the land development along different sides of the same highway. Significant issues within these corridors, including congestion and mobility, require the cooperation of numerous jurisdictions along the corridor.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's *Year 2020 Comprehensive Plan for the Delaware Valley* is based on a "Centers and Corridors" scenario that focuses future growth in and around existing communities (centers) linked by the region's primary highway, bus and train routes (corridors). The Commission has identified numerous highway and transit corridors which connect the region's identified centers, as illustrated on Map I. Detailed plans have been developed by DVRPC for several of these

corridors, including the US 130 corridor in Burlington County and the US 202/US Route 1 and PA 100 corridors, both in Chester County.

The Commission's long-range regional plan suggests that future growth along these corridors should be integrated with existing uses. The plan advocates better access management, improved pedestrian linkages, shared service roads and driveways, improved transit stops and sufficient densities to support additional public transit service. The accomplishment of these objectives will require cooperation between neighboring municipalities.

The Benefits of Corridor Planning

Each community located along the length of a highway corridor can benefit from defining a shared vision of what development along the roadway will look like in the future. Inter-local planning and development review can encourage compatible and physically integrated development across municipal boundaries. Some communities may want to share in the growth already occurring elsewhere along the corridor. If so, appropriate incentives can be offered and the infrastructure improvements necessary to support such growth can be programmed. Other communities located at the edges of a developing corridor may or may not want growth to progress as it has in other developed sections. If this is the case, appropriate regulations and growth management mechanisms can be implemented before the fact to guide or limit such growth.

Corridor planning also offers municipalities an opportunity to forge cooperative agreements with each other for necessary services and supplies. Municipalities that have participated in intermunicipal corridor planning will have discussed common issues and developed working relationships with neighboring communities during that process. They will therefore have laid the groundwork for developing cooperative purchasing and service agreements with their neighbors, which may help them to provide local services more efficiently and economically (see Figure I). Conversely, municipalities that have entered into successful joint service or purchasing contracts with neighboring communities may also be well positioned to participate in a cooperative planning process that would likewise benefit all of its participants.

Another benefit to intermunicipal planning is the advantage it can give to participating municipalities when petitioning for funding for necessary or desirable improvements (including highway infrastructure and transit facilities and services). Resources for transportation improvements are limited, and the cost of proposed projects, many of which are equally necessary and beneficial, almost always exceeds available local, state and federal funding. Funding agencies are most likely to support those projects with built-in support from the local community and that show intermunicipal cooperation.

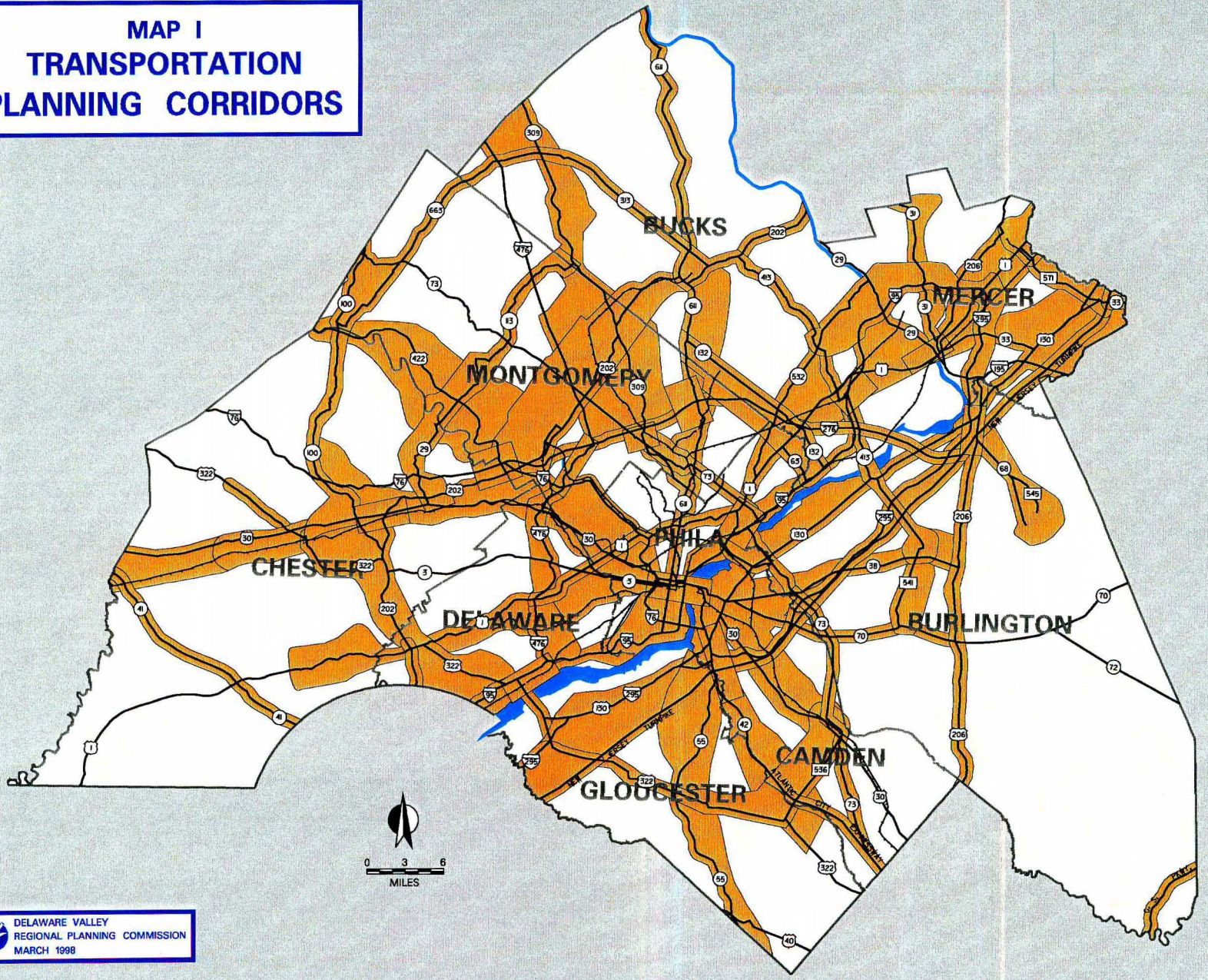
State DOT's are also more amenable to funding projects which emanate from a defined corridor plan, since these plans can illustrate the effect of the project upon a larger area. Given existing funding formulas, eligibility criteria and political reality, projects which have pre-existing, proven support from the affected municipalities have an undeniable advantage over applications from single municipalities without strong support.

Obstacles

The major obstacle to successful inter-municipal planning is the competition that exists between municipalities in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, spurred by the local chase for tax ratables. Corridor planning requires cooperation between municipalities, all of whom are accustomed to making their own land use decisions independent of any other community. These same municipalities depend heavily on their tax base to support their local government and services.

Intermunicipal corridor planning, however, may result in certain municipalities being characterized as better suited for additional growth and development than others, based on their existing land use patterns, available infrastructure and adverse impacts elsewhere in the corridor. Municipal officials that participate in

MAP I
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING CORRIDORS



DELAWARE VALLEY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 1998

Figure I
Joint Purchasing and Service Contracts

One means of improving service delivery and reducing municipal costs is through joint purchasing and service agreements. Communities that have participated in an intermunicipal planning process along a corridor will have already discussed many common issues and concerns and developed working relationships with neighboring communities. They will therefore be in a particularly advantageous position to develop cooperative agreements and in doing so work towards implementation of the corridor plan.

Municipalities can improve their efficiency while simultaneously reducing the overall cost of local service delivery through joint purchasing of necessary equipment and supplies. Cost savings often result from taking advantage of favorable economies of scale by buying supplies and equipment in bulk. Joint purchasing also minimizes the cost of advertising and preparing bid specifications, since only one set of specifications will need to be prepared and distributed.

Neighboring communities or school districts can also share necessary equipment and/or services. Sharing services (such as snow plowing and leaf collecting) reduces each community's costs for equipment maintenance and personnel. Adjacent municipalities may likewise find it beneficial to schedule routine maintenance work simultaneously.

Forging the Agreement

Inter-municipal agreements are relatively easy to accomplish and are often done very informally. Many of the services and equipment that can be shared or contracted jointly (snow removal, leaf collecting or landscaping, for example) are seasonal, however, and must therefore be accomplished simultaneously in adjacent municipalities, making informal sharing difficult. Other issues that must be resolved include insurance liability for personnel injuries or damaged equipment and the availability of back-up equipment in case of equipment failure. Formal contracts between municipalities can spell out the terms of the agreement and minimize potential disputes. PennDOT's Agility Program, for example, encourages formal cooperative agreements between local entities.

PennDOT's Agility Program

Under PennDOT's Agility Program, local entities enter into cooperative agreements for various purchases and work projects. This approach can be applied to transportation services traditionally split between different levels of government or between individual townships and boroughs. The Agility Program supports Governor Ridge's directive to give precedence to maintenance of the existing transportation system over new construction, and can result in significant cost savings for local municipalities. In addition, PennDOT has a vested interest in improving the ability of townships and boroughs to maintain their local transportation infrastructure, since the general public usually blames PennDOT for any problems on roads, regardless of actual ownership.

Under the Agility Program, temporary arrangements are established to complete specific tasks through shared resources, including facilities, equipment, personnel and services. This program was initially implemented as a pilot for highway maintenance projects in Northwestern Pennsylvania, involving partnerships between PennDOT and local officials in two counties and eight municipalities. Shared services included line painting, seal coating, mowing, tree trimming, sign maintenance, curb installation, grading, pipe washing and bridge design.

The pilot program increased the efficiency of local governments and demonstrated significant cost savings. Participating municipalities realized savings of nearly $25,000. Of the participants, 97% felt that the program was beneficial and that more cooperation between municipalities should be encouraged. As a result of these savings and benefits, the program is being expanded.

a cooperative planning venture must develop and implement a common vision for the entire corridor that will lead to economic vitality, an enhanced quality of life and improved mobility. An appropriate distribution of development density will ultimately yield rewards for all participants.

What authorizes municipalities to undertake intermunicipal planning?

There are several vehicles that facilitate intermunicipal corridor planning. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) contains provisions that *require* municipalities to coordinate their municipal planning and zoning activities with adjacent municipalities. For example, municipalities are required to state the relationship between proposed development within their locality and adjacent municipalities as a part of their comprehensive planning process. Municipalities are also required to notify adjacent municipalities if their official map shows any streets or public land leading into that municipality.

The MPC also *authorizes* municipalities to undertake joint planning and zoning. A joint planning commission may be established (with or without joint zoning) for the purpose of undertaking planning work, preparing a joint comprehensive plan and encouraging cooperation between participating municipalities. For example, several of these joint planning commissions have been established in Chester County (see Figure II).[1] In each county, the County Planning Commission staff is available to assist with establishing such a cooperative structure.

In New Jersey, the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) allows two or more municipalities to exercise joint planning and zoning powers (see Article 10). At the current time, however, only two regional planning boards have been established: the Princeton Regional Planning Board (which covers both Princeton Township and the Borough of Princeton) and the Lake Hopatcong Regional Planning Board, with four constituent municipalities in Morris County (in North Central New Jersey). The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) encourages planning within designated centers and the transportation corridors that connect these centers, but has no legal authority to impose cooperative planning regulations.

Figure II
Regional Planning Commissions in Chester County

West Chester RPC
Avon-Grove RPC
Oxford RPC
RPC of the Upper Brandywine Watershed
Octoraro RPC
Eastern Chester County RPC
Federation of Northern Chester County Communities
Central Chester County RPC
Kennett Area RPC

New Jersey's Transportation Development District Act of 1989 enables counties and municipalities to identify and create specialized transportation development districts (TDDs). The main reason for creating TDDs is to coordinate transportation improvements with land development through innovative financing that supplements traditional transportation funding. TDDs may be proposed by state, county or municipal governments. Applications for designation are reviewed and approved by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). Once a plan is adopted by the lead county and NJDOT, the county becomes the leader in implementing the specific projects identified in the TDD plan.

Once a TDD is formally designated by NJDOT, the lead county initiates a joint planning process involving the State, affected county and municipal governments, and the private sector. A District Transportation Plan and a financial plan

[1]See the Chester County Planning Commission's *Regional Planning and Other Forms of Multi-Municipal Cooperation* (Data bulletin # 47, 1994) for details.

are drafted and adopted, and should be consistent with NJDOT's current long-range transportation plan ***Transportation Choices 2020***, New Jersey's SDRP, adopted county master plans and local master plans and ordinances. Each district's financial plan should identify anticipated financial resources and recommend the type and rate of development fees that should be charged against future developments.

Highway access management planning presents yet another opportunity for municipalities to participate in and benefit from cooperative, inter-municipal planning. Access management planning enables municipalities to incorporate land development regulations and capital improvements into one unified strategy designed to manage traffic congestion and improve existing and future access, circulation and safety. Access management plans are typically focused more narrowly along a corridor than are other transit and highway corridor plans. They can, however, lead to balanced transportation services and compatible land development.

New Jersey's State Highway Access Management Act of 1989 requires NJDOT to regulate access onto state highways. Counties and municipalities are encouraged by the State to develop access management plans for state roads within their jurisdictions that are at least as stringent as the state's access code. In reviewing and approving highway access management plans, NJDOT stresses the importance of coordinating the local master plans of all the affected municipalities and counties, and of adopting and coordinating optional master plan circulation elements as well.

Other Vehicles for Joint Planning

Councils of Governments (COGs), multipurpose organizations which enable municipalities to work together on issues and programs of common interest, are another means of facilitating intermunicipal planning. Municipalities can also form joint authorities, usually created to invest in major capital improvements. These joint authorities are authorized to sell bonds, acquire property and sign contracts. Commonly established to facilitate inter-municipal provision of services such as water and sewer, they have also been created to provide airport and mass transit services.

Transportation management associations (TMA's) are yet another means of fostering inter-municipal cooperation, focussing specifically on transportation issues. TMAs are voluntary membership organizations or public/private partnerships that convene interested parties to discuss and resolve common problems. These organizations typically encourage cooperation between multiple municipalities as well as the private sector, including employers, landowners and developers. TMA members often band together to finance needed transportation services and improvements.

A transportation partnership, which enables municipalities to work together and with the private sector to improve highways, transit services and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, is another vehicle for cooperating to provide transportation services and facilities. Pennsylvania's Transportation Partnership Act (Act 47) enables municipalities to work with the private sector to improve transportation services and facilities within a designated area. Some of the necessary funds for these improvements are collected through assessments on properties that stand to benefit from the improvements.

DEVELOPING A CORRIDOR PLAN

Joint highway or transit corridor planning can be accomplished by adapting a basic planning process to the unique physical, economic and political characteristics of each given corridor. The process generally involves an initial definition of the corridor and organization of the participants; formulating a common vision for the corridor; identifying the corridor's primary issues, goals and objectives; identifying and evaluating the potential alternatives; choosing an alternative; and, ultimately, implementing the adopted strategy.

This planning process may be fairly simple or quite complex, depending on the size and characteristics of the corridor, the number of

participants, and their goals and visions. A basic planning process is outlined below, which can be adapted or expanded to fit the needs of each individual corridor.

Organize the potential participants

- *Initial organization.* The planning process may be initiated by municipal or county officials, a regional agency or the business community. A preliminary advisory team should be established, composed of representatives of the participating municipalities, the business community and the planning profession (including county planning staff, local planners or a consultant).

Initial discussions should include a decision as to which agency will assume the lead in the process as well as potential funding sources. County planning agencies are well suited to coordinate an inter-municipal planning effort. Depending on issues such as the political climate and each individual corridor's unique characteristics and problems, the planning process might also be coordinated by the regional metropolitan planning organization (MPO), the state Department of Transportation (DOT) or an outside consultant.

- *Define the purpose and the geographic limits of the study.* This advisory team should clarify the corridor's problems and the reasons for undertaking joint planning. Generally, the goals of planning for a highway corridor may include improving the economic vitality and quality of life in the corridor; lessening congestion and improving mobility, either by improving traffic flow or by making the corridor more attractive for transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists; and improving aesthetics. The geographical limits of the study area should also be identified, considering current growth patterns as well as potential development based on existing trends.

- *Establish a larger steering committee of interested stakeholders.* Based on the purpose of the study and the geographical limits of the study area, interested stakeholders should be identified. These stakeholders should include government representatives from each municipality as well as the business community, landowners, area residents, transit service providers and operators, and any existing TMA's.

Key decision-makers, including elected officials, zoning board or planning commission members, and township or borough managers or mayors must be included. The county planning staff should also be involved from the start, given that any proposed infrastructure improvements will need to be coordinated and programmed through their offices. Other county agencies may also be asked to participate, such as the county engineer's office or redevelopment agency. The regional MPO and the state DOT should likewise be invited, particularly if the recommendations will include major transportation improvements.

- *Define the group's methodology and responsibilities.* The stakeholders should discuss the steps that need to be completed, assign responsibility for each step and establish a realistic time frame for their completion. Corridor planning involves numerous participants, and the actions of one may depend on the outcome of the actions of another. It is therefore critical that each player has a clear understanding of the group's expectations, and in turn can estimate their necessary commitment and responsibilities.

Studies and inventories that the group feels are absolutely necessary as well as those that are desirable but less critical should be discussed. Background data that may be necessary is listed on Figure III. More or less information may be valuable, however, depending on the character of the corridor.

Much of this data is available from various public agencies, including county and regional planning commissions, municipal governments, county agencies (such as the county board of assessments, redevelopment agency or office of housing and community development), state agencies (such as the departments of transportation, labor or economic development) and federal agencies (such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency). Other information may have to be obtained through private sources or field surveys.

Figure III
Background Data for Corridor Planning

Demographics	**Land Use data**
Population	Commercial
Employment	Industrial
Forecasted population	Housing
Forecasted employment	Community facilities
	Utilities/ infrastructure
Environmental data	Future land use scenarios
Wetlands	**Economic Conditions**
Steep slopes	
Floodplains	Market conditions
Critical habitats	Land values
Historic resources	Vacancy rates
	Tax structure
Transportation	Property ownership
Highway network	**Regulations and Plans**
Traffic counts	
Traffic forecasts	Existing land use plans
Public transit service and passenger counts	Transportation plans
	Zoning regulations
Pedestrian amenities	Subdivision/site plan regulations
Bicycle facilities	
Freight facilities	Access management plans
Accident data	

Expected interim and final products should also be discussed. Desired end products may include, for example, a comprehensive corridor plan and improvement program, proposed ordinances, amendments or site design guidelines. These planning objectives can be revised as necessary, based on the outcome of the background research as well as the group's available resources and commitment.

Collect the necessary background data

- *Prepare inventories and conduct studies deemed to be essential by the steering committee.* The basic purpose of fact-finding is to identify the corridor's strengths and weaknesses. The study analysis should include current conditions as well as past and forecasted trends. The background research should also incorporate the goals and objectives established in any existing municipal, county or state comprehensive or master plans.

Define a common vision and identify the corridor's issues, goals and objectives

- *Identify all relevant issues.* Based on the background information, strengths and weaknesses of the corridor can be determined and the corridor's most relevant issues and problems can be identified. Based on these strengths and weaknesses, the steering committee should formulate a common vision of how future development in the corridor should look.

- *Establish and prioritize goals.* The varying goals and objectives of the property owners, businesses, residents and pass-through travelers need to be weighed and balanced. These goals might include reduction of traffic congestion, improved access to specific sites, improved transit services, expanded pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and/or expanded freight opportunities within the corridor. Specific objectives that can be used to eventually measure whether or not a goal has been achieved should be discussed. Quantifiable performance measures can help to prioritize goals, and can assist in determining strategy and program effectiveness in the latter stages of the corridor plan's development.

Identify and evaluate the alternatives

- *Identify a number of potential solutions to the corridor's problems and challenges and then narrow this list down to those solutions that best meet the needs of the stakeholders.* Based on the identified key issues, alternative solutions to accomplish the goals and objectives for the corridor should be developed. These alternatives may include continuing existing policies along the corridor, changing the way programs operate, implementing new policies and regulations, or investing in public infrastructure.

- *Evaluate the effectiveness and consequences of each alternative, and estimate in general terms a time frame and cost for each alternative.* This evaluation may be relatively simple, involving, for example, visual comparisons between maps and site plans illustrating certain outcomes. Numerical indicators, such as forecasted employment or population under different scenarios or cost estimates, will also be necessary. Modeling, although more time

consuming and expensive than other evaluation tools, can predict outcomes based on interactions between different variables, and might also be useful in evaluating the alternative solutions.

Neither the estimated time frame nor the anticipated cost need be very specific. It may be enough, for example, to identify whether an alternative can be accomplished in a short time frame (one to two years), a mid-range time frame (from between five and ten years) or in the long term (10 to 20 years or longer). Similarly, the group should consider the relative cost of implementing each alternative, ranging from very little (municipal zoning or policy revisions, for example) to a several thousand dollars (for minor roadway or intersection improvements, for example) to several million dollars (for a major capital improvement).

Compare these alternatives and choose the desired approach

- *Based on this evaluation, rank the identified alternatives.* This ranking should reflect how well each of the alternatives meets the committee's goals. It should also take into account the interaction and compatibility between sets of alternatives (the impact that a roadway improvement will have on other recommendations, for example). As noted, the ranking should also take into consideration a general time frame for the implementation of each alternative and its estimated cost, as well as the anticipated resources that will be available.

- *Choose the preferred approach.* Choose an alternative that best meets the needs and priorities of the stakeholders. This alternative should be chosen based on a consensus of the stakeholders, since they will ultimately be responsible for implementing the plan.

Develop an action plan

- *Identify specific steps that must be taken to accomplish the goals and objectives laid out by the steering committee.* This analysis should include the identification of who is responsible for each action, additional funding that may be necessary, expected and potential sources of funding and a generalized time frame for these actions.

Implementation strategies may include new statewide or local legislation; revisions to master plans or zoning ordinances; purchases of land, easements or equipment; or changes in administrative policies or procedures. Necessary and/or desirable infrastructure improvements, including highway and intersection improvements, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities and improved transit service facilities, should also be defined. Some actions may need to be undertaken by individual municipalities. Others, such as the implementation of an overlay district to complement local zoning requirements, may require joint or cooperative actions.

Plan implementation will necessitate cooperation between both the public and private sectors, including local planning commissions and public works departments as well as county planning and engineering departments and state departments of transportation. Potential public and private funding sources should be identified, and budgets and capital improvement programs (CIPs) should be adjusted accordingly.

Monitor progress and update the plan

- *Decide which group or individual will monitor the progress made toward the corridor's goals, and how that monitoring will be undertaken.* Some provision should be made for periodic review and updates to the plan as appropriate, based on changing conditions within the corridor. Some studies suggest that this review be done every five years; as a point of comparison, New Jersey's MLUL requires municipalities to update their master plans, including their transportation elements, at least once every six years. The steering committee should be maintained and periodic meetings held to review progress toward implementing the plan. The county planning commission, for example, could be charged with reviewing changing conditions in the corridors and coordinating periodic steering committee meetings.

CASE STUDIES

Two case studies demonstrate the effectiveness and potential benefits of inter-municipal highway corridor planning. The first example involves cooperative planning along City

Avenue between Lower Merion Township and the City of Philadelphia. The second describes a plan developed through a consensus planning process involving 12 municipalities located along the US 130 corridor in Burlington County.

City Avenue District Transportation Study

In 1996, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission initiated and coordinated a project to evaluate and resolve the transportation problems along a 4.4 mile corridor along City Avenue (US 1) extending from the Schuylkill Expressway to Cobbs Creek. The resulting *City Avenue District Transportation Study* details a planning process that involved two separate municipalities located in different counties, encompassing several neighborhoods within these jurisdictions.

The corridor's study area consists of ten transportation analysis zones, including three in Lower Merion and seven in Philadelphia. These ten zones correspond to specific neighborhoods, including Overbrook Park, Green Hill Farms, Overbrook Farms, St. Joseph's, Wynnefield, Belmont Village, and Wynnefield Heights in Philadelphia and PennWynne, Merion and Bala-Cynwyd in Lower Merion. Although the area is heavily automobile-oriented, transit also has a major presence, with eleven bus routes in the corridor servicing communities in both the City and the suburbs.

An Advisory Group was formed at the outset, consisting of study area stakeholders from both the City and the adjoining Township of Lower Merion, located in Montgomery County. Committee members included municipal and community representatives as well as the business community, and are listed in Figure IV.

This Committee met throughout the process to identify key issues and discuss possible transportation improvements. The principal transportation problem identified by the group was traffic congestion, followed by issues of pedestrian safety and inconvenient transit service. Background information on existing and forecasted traffic, public transportation, potential new development and forecasted travel patterns by the year 2020 was collected and analyzed by the City Planning Commission staff, and potential alternatives designed to either improve traffic flow or stem the growth in automobile traffic(by improving public transit service and increasing pedestrian safety, for example) were considered.

Figure IV
Steering Committee Members: City Avenue District Study

City of Philadelphia:
Philadelphia City Council (3 representatives)
Streets Department
Office of Transportation
Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Lower Merion Township:
Township Commissioner
Township staff
Planning Department

Other Government Agencies/Authorities:
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
State Assembly representatives
SEPTA

Civic Associations:
Merion Civic Association
Overbrook Farms East Residents Association
Bala Cynwyd Neighborhood Club
Overbrook Farms Club

Other Community/ Business Representatives:
St. Joseph's University
Ingliss House
City Avenue Special Services District
Green Hill Apartments
Presbyterian Home
ElderNet of Lower Merion/Narberth
Individual residents of Lower Merion Township

After working individually with the City planning staff throughout the course of the planning process, the full Advisory Committee met again near the conclusion of the study to allow committee members to review and revise the study's findings and recommendations. The study's findings were presented at its conclusion to the first joint meeting of the Lower Merion and City of Philadelphia Planning Commissions.

Recommendations included transit fare changes, new bus shelters and restoration at the corridor's passenger rail stations; enhancing the pedestrian environment and improving pedestrian safety through signal timing changes, crosswalk markings, signage and a new pedestrian footbridge at one problematic intersection; enacting a zoning overlay to govern curb cuts, internal circulation, signs and facades; and initiating a Travel Demand Management (TDM) program. The *City Avenue District Transportation Study* recommends that this TDM program be implemented through a City Avenue Special Services District or, as an alternative, through a new TMA.

Results to Date

The completion of the *City Avenue District Transportation Study* coincided with planning for the formation of the City Avenue Special Services District, and it is anticipated that many of the study's recommendations will be implemented or supported by the District. The City Avenue Special Services District, modeled after Philadelphia's Center City District, was organized by a group of property owners as a way to collect supplemental property taxes from owners within a designated district that would be used to improve services and amenities within the district.

The group was assisted in their initial planning efforts through an inter-municipal planning grant awarded by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). A five-year plan for the district which includes many of the ideas advocated in the *City Avenue District Transportation Study* has been adopted by the Board of Directors of the new Special Services District, and a referendum deciding whether or not to implement the plan will be held among the affected property owners. If adopted, property owners within the district will pay an annual fee equal to approximately 6% of each property's 1996 assessed value.

This funding will be used for marketing, increased security and other enhancements. In addition to the initial planning grant, the DCED has provided an additional $50,000 to defray the costs of the referendum, and additional state funding has been promised to assist with implementation of the plan.

Other specific recommendations advanced in the study have not yet been implemented. Although SEPTA's transit service in the corridor has been enhanced and improvements are being made to the Bala Station, these improvements were initiated prior to the completion of the study and may or may not have continued regardless.

US 130 Corridor Study

Although the population and employment of Burlington County have grown significantly during the last few decades, the older riverfront communities located along US 130 have experienced a slow and steady decline. Originally the heart of the County's industrial economy, these communities have experienced the loss of manufacturing sector employers common throughout the region and the nation but have as yet been unable to attract new service-oriented employment.

In response, the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders identified a need to develop a vision and plan for revitalizing 12 riverfront communities along the US 130 corridor. In 1995, the Freeholders initiated a wide-ranging study of the US 130 corridor, in an effort to identify a strategy aimed at revitalizing the area by promoting economic development and improving the quality of life.

The County Freeholders established a series of goals upon which the strategic plan should be based, and charged the County's Office of Land Use Planning with the responsibility for coordinating the development of the strategic plan. These goals included improving the quality of life of the Corridor's residents; encouraging development and redevelopment while remaining sensitive to the environment and aesthetics; involving all of the corridor's communities in a consensus-based planning effort; coordinating planning efforts with county, state and regional agencies; and fostering the development of public/private partnerships while exploring other avenues to implement the plan's recommendations. A project manager was hired within the Office of Land Use Planning and

charged with coordinating the preparation and implementation of the US 130 Corridor Plan.

Unlike the City Avenue Plan, which focussed specifically on transportation issues, the US 130 Corridor Study considers a wide range of issues, including the environment, economic development, housing and mobility. The plan was developed through the work of a Steering Committee made up of local officials and other interested stakeholders. The County's role in the process was to facilitate, coordinating the Steering Committee and providing technical assistance in the preparation of the strategic plan.

The governing bodies of each of the Corridor's 12 communities appointed four representatives to a steering committee, including (at their discretion) local business people, elected officials, planning or zoning board members, economic, environmental or historic commission members and concerned citizens. Steering Committee members were then assigned to Task Groups, which performed more detailed work functions and prepared reports on the specific issues of economic development; transportation and circulation; housing; the environment, open space and recreation; community services; and utilities and infrastructure.

The Steering Committee met periodically to provide direction and make decisions on specific elements of the plan, based on input from each of the Task Groups. The plan was developed through a consensus-based planning method, whereby a conference of the larger steering committee was held, followed by individual task group work and followed again by additional conferences and task group meetings. Issues were discussed and resolutions and recommendations were decided at the conference level by consensus.

The transportation component of the study was conducted by DVRPC, with funding for the project provided by the New Jersey Department of Transportation. The Commission worked under the direction of the corridor's Transportation Task Group, reporting to the larger Steering Committee as appropriate. The product of the transportation planning process was the *US 130 Corridor Study*, a report completed by DVRPC which identified existing and forecasted conditions and proposed both short-range and long-range improvement concepts for 44 problem locations within the corridor. This transportation piece became one part of the larger plan for the Corridor prepared by the Office of Land Use and Planning, entitled *Route 130/Delaware River Corridor Strategic Plan* and released in draft form in December of 1997.

One obvious obstacle that must be overcome if inter-municipal corridor planning is to be successful is the conflict resulting from the political differences and varying goals of the participating municipalities and the business community. A second obstacle is the ever-present competition between municipalities spurred by the chase for property taxes. In this case, the process was aided by the strong support provided by the County Freeholders and the ability of the County's project manager to secure the trust and support of municipal representatives in each of the corridor's 12 communities.

Another challenge to the corridor planning process is balancing the need to remain focused on the overall issues and goals identified by the stakeholders while still remaining open and responsive to additional planning and development issues which may arise. In the case of the US 130 planning process, an important issue which needed to be considered during the course of the study was a proposed commuter rail line which would run directly through the study corridor along an existing freight rail line.

This proposed rail service (which has since been approved and will be initiated within the next 2 to 3 years) was the subject of several public meetings and debates during the course of the study, involving citizens groups, municipalities and New Jersey Transit. Although it served as a common and unifying issue, it also became somewhat divisive and threatened to sidetrack the intent of the project, which was to develop an overall plan for the US 130 corridor.

Results to Date

The consensus planning process undertaken along the US 130 Corridor has resulted in the definition of a shared vision of future development among the 12 participating

municipalities, and local officials have indicated that future land use decisions will reflect the goals of the corridor's strategic plan. The transportation plan developed by DVRPC during the course of the corridor planning process will be particularly valuable to the corridor's municipalities, Burlington County and the State DOT when making future transportation investment decisions.

In recent months, private developers have submitted proposals or expressed their interest in developing various sites along the Route 130 corridor, including the site originally chosen by the County for a food distribution center, the vacant Willingboro Plaza and Burlington Island. This renewed interest is largely the result of the approved passenger rail service and other transportation improvements recently implemented or initiated within the corridor. Some of these improvements or this renewed interest in developing, however, may be attributable to the planning process undertaken in the corridor and the commitment to redevelopment demonstrated by participating municipalities. In any case, this process has provided these communities with a blueprint against which to weigh the merits of these proposed developments.

Burlington County is currently pursuing the designation of the entire US 130 Corridor as a center by NJOSP, which would give the corridor priority for future state discretionary funding. Additionally, a second report detailing an Implementation Strategy for the Corridor will be released by Burlington County by the end of 1998. This strategy will consider several options for revitalizing the corridor, including the creation of a county economic development authority.

POTENTIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Inter-municipal planning and joint services agreements can benefit both the public and private sectors. Thus, funding and technical assistance for inter-municipal transportation planning may be available from a number of different public and private sources, based on current resources and priorities. Potential sources of funding and assistance that should be explored include:

- **New Jersey's Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services**. New Jersey's "Interlocal Services Aid Act" awards program grants to municipalities covering, among other things, joint road maintenance. The Act provides full state funding of feasibility studies of joint services between municipalities as well as four-year implementation grants. Eligible municipalities are awarded grants covering all extraordinary administrative and operating costs resulting from the implementation of the joint service. Thus, municipalities have little to lose and much to gain.

- **New Jersey's Department of Transportation**. NJDOT can offer technical assistance in defining and developing a Transportation Development District (TDD). They Department has also initiated, funded and undertaken corridor studies as a part of their statewide long-range planning effort.

- **Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation**. PennDOT offers assistance in developing joint services agreements under their Agility Program; can assist municipalities interested in establishing transportation partnerships under Act 47; and has initiated and provided funding for various corridor studies.

- **Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development**. The DCED's Office of Local Government Services makes inter-municipal cooperation grants available which can be used for the planning and implementation of joint programs between municipalities. State planning assistance grants can be used by multi-municipal planning agencies or COG's to prepare and implement comprehensive, long-range development strategies.

- **The region's city and county planning commissions and departments**. Many of the region's planning commissions and departments have been actively involved in transportation corridor planning, and can offer municipalities technical and/or financial assistance to facilitate inter-municipal planning. The Bucks County Planning Commission, for example, has participated in three corridor planning efforts in recent years. The Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) offers technical assistance to municipalities interested in pursuing regional

planning through its local planning assistance program and provides planning cash grants to municipalities that seek the assistance of an outside professional planning group.

- **The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission**. Through its annual work program, DVRPC prepares detailed studies of identified corridors as a part of the implementation of the long-range Year 2020 plan. The Commission has worked with its constituent counties and municipalities to prepare, for example, studies of New Jersey's US 322 and US 130 Corridors and the US 202 and PA 100 Corridors in Pennsylvania.

- Other potential sources of technical assistance and/or financial resources for fostering intermunicipal transportation planning and service provision include county Boards of Freeholders or Commissioners, county improvement authorities and local Chambers of Commerce.

SUMMARY

Municipalities located along the region's highway and transit corridors can benefit from working with adjacent and neighboring municipalities to develop and implement a common vision and plan for the corridor. Inter-local planning and development review can encourage compatible land uses across municipal boundaries. Although competition between municipalities for potential tax ratables remains an obstacle to inter-municipal cooperation, reductions in congestion, improved mobility, increased economic vitality and an enhanced quality of life throughout each corridor often outweigh any perceived loss of local land use control.

Additionally, municipalities that have participated in intermunicipal planning will have already discussed many common issues and developed working relationships with neighboring communities. They will therefore have laid the groundwork for developing cooperative purchasing and service agreements with their neighbors, which may reduce their costs and improve their efficiency in providing local services.

Intermunicipal planning encourages municipalities to consider the impacts that a proposed infrastructure improvement will have upon a broad geographic area, and to generate local support for proposed projects. At a time when the cost of necessary improvements almost always exceeds limited available resources, the increased political clout gained by cooperating with other municipalities can improve a corridor's chances of securing necessary funding.

Additional information on inter-municipal highway corridor planning is available from many of the region's county planning commissions. Information on the case studies discussed in this report is available from:

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For additional Information on the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Agility Program, please contact the following:

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
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Agility Center, 9th Floor, Forum Place
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101-1900
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The following documents were utilized in preparing this report, and can be referenced for further information:

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