

DVRPC'S 17TH ANNUAL BOARD RETREAT ENVISIONS YEAR 2030

TO GET WHERE WE'RE GOING, WE NEED A GOOD MAP.

DVRPC's board members, invited guests and staff spent the day drawing a map to the Year 2030 at the 17th Annual Board Retreat on December 3, 2003. Held at the Lafayette Yard Marriot Conference Hotel in Trenton, NJ, the Retreat was designed to encourage discussion and debate of the current and future status of the economy, environment, transportation network, and area communities, and to launch the Commission's Long-Range Plan, *Destination 2030*.

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In the morning's keynote speech, well-known former news anchor and commentator **Larry Kane** challenged attendees to create a plan for a viable, sustainable future. He outlined the challenges and opportunities the region faces to the year 2030, and provided his own unique vision of what the region could achieve in the coming years.



Mr. Kane also served as facilitator for a series of visioning sessions to brainstorm ideas to attain our objectives. The 100 attendees were divided into break-out groups and charged with "looking backward" from the Year 2030, to describe the steps taken since 2003 to achieve our goals. Break-out groups focused on an array of regional issues, from urban revitalization to financing transportation projects to the environment. Though each group was given a preliminary vision for the issue they were assigned, participants were

●● *Story continued on page 2.*

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DVRPC'S 17TH ANNUAL BOARD RETREAT...

encouraged to debate its accuracy and make changes as they developed their strategies.

The results of these visioning sessions will be incorporated into the staff's work on *Destination 2030*. The goal is to assess where the region is today, where we want to be in the future, and establish a framework and priorities on which future land use and transportation decisions will be based.

The Retreat culminated in a bus tour of the revitalization efforts along the Trenton Waterfront. Hosted by Mercer County and Trenton officials, the tour



included both completed successes such as the renovated Trenton War Memorial and Waterfront Park, as well as current and planned revitalization projects like the redevelopment of the area surrounding the Sovereign Bank Arena. 🌱

“The goal [of *Destination 2030*] is to assess where the region is today, where we want to be in the future, and establish a framework and priorities on which future land use and transportation decisions will be based.”



LEFT_ The Honorable Allen Biehler, PennDOT Secretary of Transportation.

BELOW_ From left, John J. Coscia, DVRPC Executive Director; the Honorable Thomas Gurick, Camden County Freeholder; Dennis Gonzalez, City of Trenton; and Larry Kane, Television Personality and Retreat Facilitator





•• BOARD RETREAT... (continued) ••

BELOW_ John J. Coscia and Jerald Cureton, DVRPC Board Secretary.
CENTER_ DVRPC's ideas for the future on display.



ABOVE_ From left, Thomas Gurick; Cheryl Spencer, Port Authority Transportation Corporation; and the Honorable Colin Hanna, Chester County Commissioner.

DVRPC ANNOUNCES **TITLE VI / PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CONFERENCE**

*DVRPC will sponsor its first
Title VI /Public Involvement
Conference, to be held
June 2 and 3, 2004
in Philadelphia.*

*Focusing on the topics of
Environmental Justice and
Public Involvement in the
Transportation Industry, this
conference will train attendees
on effective public involvement
techniques and provide an
opportunity for attendees to
obtain Title VI training as well.*

*For further information,
contact: Ms. Kendall Lynn Miller,
Manager of Public Involvement
at 215-238-2871, or email
kmiller@dvrpc.org*



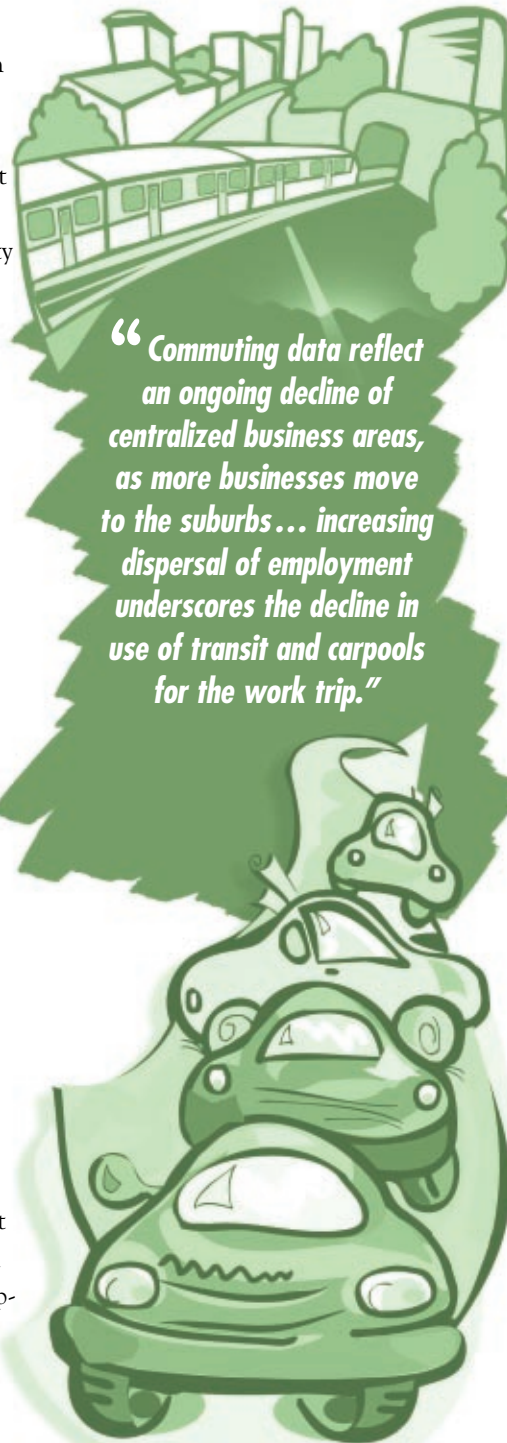


CENSUS DATA REFLECTS TRAVEL CHANGES IN THE REGION

Knowing where people work in relation to where they live is important for many regional planning, highway and transit decisions. Over the past year, the U.S. Census Bureau released County-to-County worker flows and commuting data from the Journey-to-Work information contained in the Year 2000 Census. The information provides the county of work and residence for all workers, age 16 and older, who commuted to work or worked at home during the census week. When combined with DVRPC's Household Travel Survey, which tracked travel times for all trips in the region, this data has profound implications for the regional transportation system, land use development and the economy.

The commuting data reflect an ongoing decline of centralized business areas, as more businesses move to the suburbs. While the number of workers living and working in the suburbs has increased, the number of those living and working in Philadelphia has seen a substantial decline. This increasing dispersal of employment underscores the decline in use of transit and carpools for the work trip. The data suggest an increasing need to examine the transportation system with the goal of efficiently serving current travel patterns with proper transportation modes, while providing a basis for developing policy decisions to reverse the trend toward dispersal.

At the same time, the number of vehi-



“With increased dependence on automobile travel, the region’s workers have seen a 13% increase in commuting times in this region.”

cles in the region has grown faster than the population itself. While the increase in population between 1990 and 2000 was about 3.9% (from 5,183,000 to 5,387,000 persons), the growth in automobiles was much higher at 8.5% (from 2,771,900 to 3,006,700 automobiles). In 2000, this amounted to about 1.5 vehicles per household. The region’s growing dependence on car travel has a resounding effect on traffic congestion, regional air quality and the efficiency of the transportation system. With this increased dependence on automobile travel, the region’s workers have seen a 13% increase in commuting times in this region. The data shows that although Philadelphia residents faced the longest commute in both 1980 and 2000, the largest increases in Pennsylvania commuting time were experienced in Bucks, Chester and Montgomery counties. The increase in time reflects the population and employment boom in those counties. In total, the Pennsylvania counties’ average commute time increased from 26 to 28.9 minutes, an increase of 11.2 percent. The increase in travel time in the New Jersey counties was larger than that of the Pennsylvania counties at 17.9 percent, although the average commute time in both 1980 and 2000 was smaller (23.6 and 27.8 minutes, respectively).²⁷



THE RATABLES CHASE

STUDY FINDS THAT PROPERTY TAX SYSTEM AFFECTS LAND USE DECISIONS

When a municipality's budget is based primarily on revenue from property taxes, wouldn't it be in that municipality's best interest to allow as much development as possible within its boundaries? And is "as much development as possible" really in the best interest of other residents, surrounding municipalities, or the region as a whole? To what extent does the quest for tax revenue lead to competition among adjacent municipalities for "good ratables" (uses that produce more tax dollars than they cost in services) as opposed to "bad ratables"?

These questions are the crux of DVRPC's recent study *The Ratables Chase*, which investigates the role and impact of the existing property tax system on local land use decision-making, and proposes alternatives to the current system.

"Land use and zoning decisions are often based on their fiscal implications rather than on sound planning principles."

The study was based on the premises that municipalities are over-reliant on property taxes; that the largest percentages of local costs are for education; that land use decisions may be made based on fiscal

"THE RATABLES CHASE proposes several alternate scenarios to reduce reliance on property tax, and to create a friendlier environment for cooperation among municipalities."



consequences; and that over-reliance on property taxes leads to an unhealthy competition between communities.

To find evidence that would either refute or support these premises, DVRPC surveyed municipalities in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey to determine how the existing property tax system affects their land use decision-making. Results of the survey confirmed that land use and zoning decisions are often based on their fiscal implications rather than on sound planning principles.

With municipalities so reliant on property taxes to fund services, it can be difficult for

local officials to reject development that will yield high tax revenue relative to the services that it will demand. Commercial uses are desirable (since they generate taxes without increasing demands on the local school system), regardless of their impact on issues such as traffic congestion.

Residential development is often viewed as a "negative" ratable, particularly if it is expected to attract families with children (a.k.a. students). When the need to balance the budget without raising taxes is weighed against the desire to curb sprawl, the money very often wins out. The need to cover municipal costs also leads to strong competition, rather than cooperation, among townships to concentrate growth within their own boundaries.

This reality results in an epic struggle when it comes to long-term planning for the region.

The Ratables Chase proposes several alternate scenarios to reduce reliance on property tax, and to create a friendlier environment for cooperation among municipalities. These alternatives include changes to the way we pay for education, which makes up the bulk of municipal costs; supporting regional tax base sharing; increasing the county's role in providing services and making land use decisions; and encouraging improved communication between municipal officials and school board officials. 🌱



DVRPC CREATES VISIONS FOR TWO NEW JERSEY ROADWAYS

ROUTE 70 TO BE STUDIED IN CAMDEN AND BURLINGTON COUNTIES

DVRPC is laying the groundwork for change along Route 70 in New Jersey. An eight-mile stretch of the roadway is the focus of a joint planning effort between DVRPC and the New Jersey Department of Transportation to increase mobility in the region.

The study area of NJ70 is between the Airport Circle in Camden County and the Marlton Circle in Burlington County. This stretch of the facility experiences significant traffic congestion, which is a major concern for local residents. NJ70 is an important facility for carrying traffic through the region, and for local trips to the retail and professional establishments within the corridor.

“Future meetings, planned for this spring and summer, will allow residents to offer continued input and feedback as the project progresses.”

The first public meeting, held in January, attracted over 60 people with interest in the project. At this meeting the study team provided the public with an opportunity to comment and make suggestions for improving the facility they use everyday. Future meetings, planned for this spring and summer, will allow residents to offer continued input and feedback as the project progresses.

DVRPC is coordinating public outreach for the project, which will explore transportation issues in Cherry Hill, Pennsauken, Haddonfield and Evesham Townships. While NJ DOT's project focuses specifically on the Route 70 facility, DVRPC's effort will take a wider view of surrounding development and feeder roadways.

This effort is the first phase of a two-phase effort to address some of the region's traffic concerns while enhancing access to the many businesses and commercial services located along Route 70. NJDOT is scheduled to complete its study by the summer of 2004, and DVRPC expects to be finished by January of 2005.🌱

HIGH HOPES FOR THE WHITE HORSE PIKE

Community leaders and area planning organizations have big plans for the White Horse Pike in Camden County.

Eight communities — Barrington, Lawnside, Magnolia, Somerdale, Stratford, Laurel Springs, Lindenwold, and Clementon — have come together to form the White Horse Pike Redevelopment Coalition. The Coalition partnered with the Camden County Planning Department and DVRPC to create a vision for revitalization along the corridor. The results were published in DVRPC's recent study entitled Intermunicipal Cooperation: *White Horse Pike Economic Development and Land Use Assessment*.

“The study offers an assessment of the economic redevelopment potential along the White Horse Pike, and addresses aesthetics, traffic and commercial revitalization.”

The study offers an assessment of the economic redevelopment potential along the White Horse Pike, and addresses aesthetics, traffic and commercial revitalization. It also discusses the challenges faced by the boroughs, including zoning and land use inconsistency and costly municipal services.

Based on this analysis of the area's potential and its challenges, the study recommends several strategies for redevelopment, including enhanced pedestrian and public transit facilities, traffic calming techniques, tax incentives, and consistent zoning and land use policies in all communities along the corridor. The analysis also offers suggestions for how to implement these strategies over the next ten years, based on a prioritized timeline.

This multi-municipal planning effort, which will act as the first phase of the revitalization of White Horse Pike, supports DVRPC's multi-municipal planning efforts, as well as the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth's planning initiatives.🌱



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MARKETPLACE PUTS SPOTLIGHT ON TCDI COMMUNITIES

On February 4, DVRPC's commitment to the revitalization of the region's core cities and older suburbs was on display for over 250 planners, engineers, and developers throughout the region. DVRPC, in conjunction with the Philadelphia-area chapter of the Urban Land Institute, hosted the Community Development Marketplace, which highlighted local communities that received funding for revitalization plans through DVRPC's Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI).

“The Community Development Marketplace highlighted local communities that received funding for revitalization plans through DVRPC's Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI).”

The TCDI communities present—**Ambler, Bridgeport, Coatesville, Downingtown, Lansdowne, Lower Merion (Ardmore), Marcus Hook, Pennadel, and Upper Darby** in Pennsylvania and **Beverly City, Glassboro, Gloucester City, Pennsauken, and Woodlynne** in New Jersey—were all awarded planning funds in the 2002 round of the TCDI program. Funded projects included redevelopment plans, transit-oriented development, wayfinding programs, and waterfront master plans. Each of the municipalities displayed their innovative ideas for developers and investors that resulted from the initial planning done through the TCDI program. The Community Development Marketplace offered each of the communities the opportunity to display the assets and



“Funded projects included redevelopment plans, transit-oriented development, wayfinding programs, and waterfront master plans.”

advantages of investing in the region's older suburbs, as well as promote specific locations within the municipality that are primed for reinvestment. Building on the event's success, DVRPC will coordinate a second Community Development Marketplace in 2005 for more of its TCDI communities.🌱

DVRPC ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC DISCLOSURE POLICY ■ AMENDMENT ■

TO OUR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN AND THE RELEASE OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROTOCOL

DVRPC has opened a public comment period for the review of a **Public Disclosure Policy Amendment** to our Public Participation Plan, as well as the release of our **Draft Environmental Justice Protocol**. The comment period will run from Monday, March 1, 2004 until Wednesday, April 14, 2004. A public meeting was held in conjunction with and immediately following the March 16th meeting of DVRPC's Regional Citizens Committee (RCC) to garner input from the region's residents.

Copies of the Public Participation Plan, the Public Disclosure Policy, and the Draft

Environmental Justice Protocol are available for review at numerous libraries throughout the region, as well as in DVRPC's Library (located at the address listed above), and on the DVRPC webpage at www.dvrpc.org.

Written comments or questions regarding these documents should be mailed to Candace Snyder, Director of Public Affairs, c/o DVRPC, The Bourse Building, 111 South Independence Mall East, Philadelphia, PA 19106; faxed to 215-592-9125; or e-mailed to csnyder@dvrpc.org.

All comments must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 2004.



DVRPC NEWS

VOLUME 25, NO. 3

PUBLISHED BY THE DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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DVRPC NEWS

Published by Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Dept. of Transportation
Pennsylvania Governor's Policy Office
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Delaware County
Montgomery County
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DVRPC News is funded through grants from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Pennsylvania and New Jersey departments of transportation, and DVRPC's member governments.

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Design: Marketing Design Inc.
Board Retreat Photography:
Raymond Holman, Jr.



Since its establishment in 1965, DVRPC has been instrumental in ensuring the orderly growth of the bi-state region. As the federally-funded metropolitan planning organization, DVRPC also provides data and consulting services to public and private sector organizations, and fosters cooperation among all levels of government. Shown above is the nine-county Delaware Valley region.

SPRING 2004