

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platforms 2010

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platform on Intergovernmental Cooperation

POSITION STATEMENT 1

MnAPA supports fair changes to Minnesota Law requiring effective coordination, communication and cooperation among local government units for administration of land use planning, environmental controls, capital expenditures for infrastructure improvements, storm water management, and all corporate boundary adjustments.

EXISTING STATUTES

Municipalities - 462. Housing, Redevelopment, Planning, Zoning
Counties - 394. Planning, Development, Zoning
Cities & Townships - 414. Municipal Boundary Adjustments

POLICY RATIONALE

In order to achieve an effective means for orderly expansion of urban development and better planning of surrounding rural areas, intergovernmental cooperation must be fostered. MnAPA supports comprehensive and coordinated changes to enabling statutes that result in improved cooperation, ensure that good planning principles are applied, and are fair and equitable to all forms of local government.

ACTION TIMELINE

Research an effective process and standards in connection with broader planning enabling reforms within the next year.

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platform on High Speed Rail

POSITION STATEMENT 2

MNAPA recognizes that a high-speed rail network has the potential to reduce highway and airway congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and the nation's dependence on foreign oil. MNAPA supports the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) that includes the following nine states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin.

EXISTING STATUTES

Municipalities - 462. Housing, Redevelopment, Planning, Zoning
Counties - 394. Planning, Development, Zoning

POLICY RATIONALE

President Obama has established a vision for the rebirth of intercity passenger rail. To realize this vision the United States Department of Transportation is developing a strategic plan to improve and deploy high-speed passenger rail systems in the United States, as mandated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The MWRRI, in consultation with Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), has worked to develop a vision for a 21st century passenger rail network. The system was predicated on three key approaches: 110-mile-per-hour service;

significantly increased frequencies; and next generation trains that will bring a faster, more reliable, more service-focused mobility option to travelers. The 2004 Midwest Regional Rail Initiative Executive Report recommends that corridor segments with the highest potential ridership per dollar invested be implemented first. All of these corridors have Chicago as the hub, and in order to provide dependable high-speed rail service, rail congestion in Chicago must be addressed. Further, Chicago is also the freight rail hub and as a result, investment in passenger rail in Chicago will also positively impact freight rail traffic for the region and the country. These "Phase I" corridors are Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison; Chicago-St. Louis; and Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac. The MWRRRI states have outlined a number of Phase II projects, including completion of corridors that extend from Chicago to the Twin Cities, Indianapolis, Toledo, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Pontiac, Michigan. The MWRRRI states have expressed their support and consensus for the above referenced passenger rail projects to the United States Department of Transportation.

Preliminary engineering estimates indicate Phase I projects will require approximately \$3.4 billion for track and operating equipment pending final design and equipment specifications. With Chicago as the backbone, the Midwest regional rail network will promote regional and national economic development goals. It is a top priority for the MWRRRI that funding be awarded for additional Phase II projects in 2009 so the construction can begin as Phase I projects are completed. The funding needed for Phase II planning, environmental and design work is estimated to cost approximately \$130 million. In addition to the Phase II work, the top priority includes funding for design and consideration of ready-to-go segments of the MWRRRI.

ACTION TIMELINE

Support immediate efforts to secure federal funding (ARRA) of the Phase I & II and other ready-to-go MWRRRI projects. Support State of Minnesota immediate efforts to develop and update state rail plans.

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platform on Comprehensive Planning in Greater Minnesota POSITION STATEMENT 3

MnAPA supports a stronger and more well-defined role for comprehensive planning for local governments outside the Metro area. The content of comprehensive plans should be better defined and include requirements for intergovernmental coordination with regard to plan adoption and implementation. Enabling laws should mandate that zoning be consistent with an up-to-date comprehensive plan.

EXISTING STATUTES

Municipalities - 462. Housing, Redevelopment, Planning, Zoning
Counties - 394. Planning, Development, Zoning

POLICY RATIONALE

While planning in the Metro area is required and well-defined, planning in Greater Minnesota varies widely in substance, form, and quality. Planning between jurisdictions is often poorly-coordinated. Zoning adopted without the basis of a plan is less legally

defensible and more likely to be reactive in nature. While requiring local governments to plan does not seem feasible at this time, establishing some basic standards for local governments that choose to plan would be a step towards higher quality of plans and greater consistency among them. Requiring zoning to be consistent with a comprehensive plan, where one exists, would strengthen the link between policy and regulation.

ACTION TIMELINE

Initiate support for state planning enabling reform legislation within the next year. Seek incentives for non-mandatory planning, such as linkages with state-funded programs.

Alternate Action: Support mandatory comprehensive planning for counties and cities above a certain size in Greater Minnesota.

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platform on Land Use

POSITION STATEMENT 4

In order to effectively plan for and manage the use of land, it is the goal of MNAPA to develop policies that ensure the qualities valued by our state are sustainable for future generations.

EXISTING STATUTES

Municipalities - 462. Housing, Redevelopment, Planning, Zoning
Counties - 394. Planning, Development, Zoning

POLICY RATIONALE

In order to recognize existing land use patterns, plan for orderly expansion of urban development, support the continuation of rural land uses and protect the quality of living associated with our state, it is important that sound land use policies be part of MNAPA's mission. Such policies would support efficient land use, orderly growth of urban areas, provide for fiscally responsible infrastructure construction and protect the quality of our water, air, and open space.

ACTION TIMELINE

On-going policy position. No specific action planned.

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platform on Natural Resources and Land-Based Economies

POSITION STATEMENT 5

Minnesota's natural resources benefit the ecosystem, quality of life, and the economy. We should make prudent use of new funding from the Outdoor Heritage and Clean Water sales-tax to protect our habitat and water. We should also improve our tools to protect land important to our land-based economic sectors—agriculture, forestry, and mining—from loss due to wasteful land-use practices.

EXISTING STATUTES

Municipalities - 462. Housing, Redevelopment, Planning, Zoning
Counties - 394. Planning, Development, Zoning
40A Minnesota Agricultural Land Preservation Program
473H Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Act
80–17.84 State Agricultural Land Preservation and Conservation Policy
273.111 Minnesota Agricultural Property Tax Law (the “Green Acres” Differential Property Tax Assessment Law)
561.19 “Right-to-Farm Law” Nuisance Liability of Agricultural Operations
394 and 462 Purchase of Development Rights & Transfer of Development Rights
Multiple additional environmental laws & rules

POLICY RATIONALE

Natural resources are important, not only to our fish and wildlife, habitat, recreation, aesthetics, and clean water, but also to our land-based economic sectors: agriculture, forestry, and mining. While we have new tools to protect our habitat and water resources due to new dedicated revenue streams (the constitutionally-mandated Outdoor Heritage and Clean Water sales-tax revenues), our tools to protect land important for land-based economic sectors are in need of renewal and updating. These tools include technology and methods to map and prioritize important resource lands, land-use planning and regulation, and conservation easements.

ACTION TIMELINE

Build support for action and develop package of reforms in 2009-2010 for legislative action in the 2011 legislative session.

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platform on Housing Policy and Community Development

Policy Statement 6

The MNAPA supports careful use of comprehensive planning and demographic information to estimate current housing needs and potential future demand; encourages affordable housing, supportive housing and other housing options that meet current demand and plan for future housing situations; supports programs to stabilize neighborhoods affected by the current foreclosure crisis; supports programs that assist in neighborhood revitalization and economic development; encourages wise use of available resources for impacted neighborhoods in a manner that will leverage federal and state resources and programs and other resources to realize the greatest impact on these focus areas; promotes house building and renovation work that is environmentally friendly, energy efficient, and extends the life of the housing units; and encourages building techniques that make housing units affordable to maintain as well as purchase.

Existing Statutes

Municipalities - 462. Authority To Plan
Counties - 394. Planning, Development, Zoning
Minnesota Rules 1322.0015: Construction, Reconstruction, Alteration & Repair

Policy Rationale

As stated by the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association: “Planning involves the use of many tools, including economic and demographic analysis, natural and cultural resource evaluation, goal-setting, visioning and strategizing. Besides being the only profession specially trained to look at how these elements fit together, planners bring something more. Planners can offer options so communities and their citizens can achieve their vision of the future.” Housing and community development policy is directly tied to the above mission statement. Planners in this state are justified in concerning themselves with housing policy in their communities.

Planners should be mindful of the continuing need for affordable and supportive housing in their communities, and of future housing needs. Our aging population and current economic condition makes these efforts crucial to the health of our communities. In response to the current foreclosure crisis planners should also be mindful of available counseling and resources for at risk homeowners and be a resource to this population. Planners must also work to sustain neighborhoods at risk because of foreclosures or deteriorating housing conditions and have a plan for these neighborhoods to avoid significant disinvestment and blight.

As a small step to address vacancy problems that many neighborhoods are currently experiencing, MnAPA would support legislation to prevent rent-paying tenants from being evicted because the landlord has entered into foreclosure. Evicting renters through no fault of their own has extremely negative impacts for all parties involved.

- The action displaces individuals and families from their home.
- The community is faced with a vacant home which often leads to increased crime and blight.
- The vacant unit subject to looting and a much higher chance of fire and becoming uninhabitable.
- The banks’ investment (the property) is more difficult to sell and negatively affected by the above mentioned threats.

New Hampshire, New Jersey, and D.C. have passed legislation that would prevent seemingly irrational behavior from occurring. MnAPA supports legislation that would mirror this policy and protect neighborhoods from crime, disinvestment and blight.

Action and Timeline

On-going policy position. Specific action steps to be determined.

DRAFT MnAPA Policy Platform on Economic Development

Policy Statement 7

The Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association supports regional planning for economic development that recognizes the interdependence of multiple economic development activities and areas within a region. Recognition of this interdependence will result in planning for economic development that involves multiple communities within a region, and results in policies, supported at the regional and community level, that balance interests, provide mutual gain overall, and avoid promoting one economic development activity or area to the detriment of another.

Policy Rationale

Economies do not stop at community borders. Consumers drive distances for bargains or specialty items. Employees work in cities distant from where they live. Retailers and manufacturers send products to distant states and countries. However, many state, regional, and local economic development policies assume communities are self-contained economies. Little consideration is given to how local policies affect surrounding communities, or how regional investments may diminish the capacity of some economic development activities while benefiting others. Many once thriving main streets are checkered with abandoned storefronts while a strip of new commercial activity springs up on the edge of town supported by public infrastructure improvements or tax benefits. Planning for economic development must consider programs and policies that support investment to improve the overall economic health of a region, including small town downtowns, rural community centers, and regional centers. Regional cooperation is required for large infrastructure investments that benefit multiple communities to avoid inefficiency and redundancy. Likewise, regional cooperation should be applied to regional economic development planning.

Action and Timeline

Support voluntary efforts to plan for balanced, integrated regional economic development achieved through voluntary regional planning processes.

Alternate action: Support state legislation requiring and funding regional economic development planning.