

# Urban Thoroughfares Committee

## Status Report

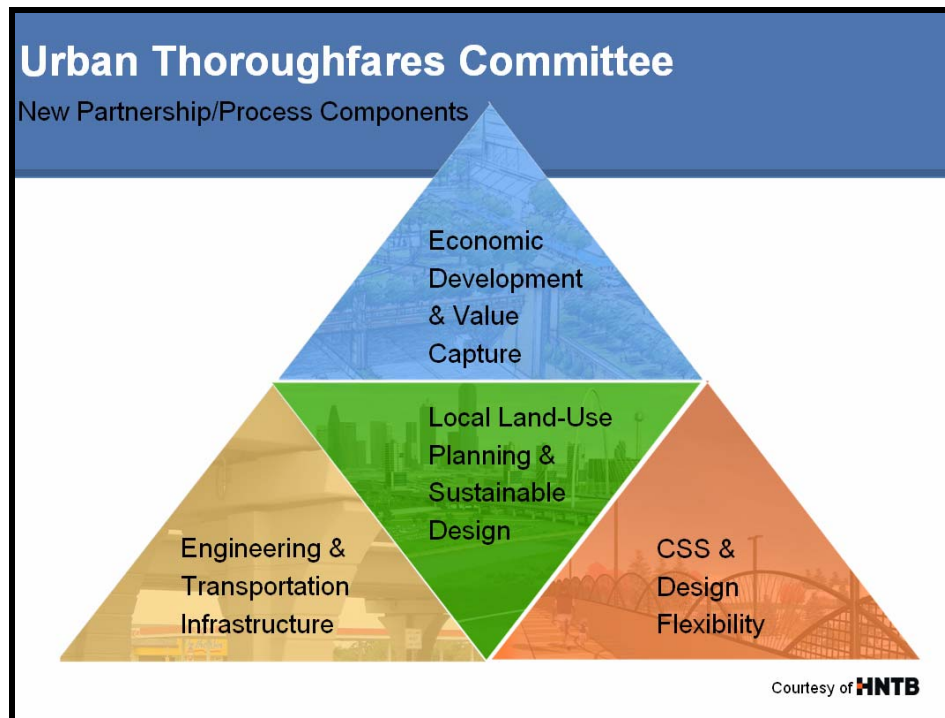
November 20, 2008

### Background

The Urban Thoroughfares Committee was created by the Texas Transportation Commission on October 25, 2007, Minute Order Number 111107. Created as an informal team, the Committee was tasked with the goal of creating and encouraging cooperative partnerships, context sensitive solutions, and design flexibility with respect to planning and developing appropriate transportation projects.

This effort is intended to encourage a connection, at the local level, between transportation project planning and economic development goals in the context of future land use conditions or redevelopment. The Urban Thoroughfares Committee is made up of local agencies, private sector participants, academia and TxDOT staff. This public-private approach positioned the Committee to bring together previously unconnected public policy and planning goals and discuss these issues in the context of regional and local decision making early in the project development process.

Those goals and their relationship to one another are represented schematically below:



The New Urbanism, or Smart Growth, has been gaining momentum for about a generation. The goal of New Urbanism is to remarry local land use planning, architecture, urban planning and transportation design. New Urban projects can include downtown

redevelopment, infill and large-scale new growth in suburban greenfield locations. Common types of New Urbanism include traditional neighborhood development (TND) and transit-oriented development (TOD).

In the context sensitive condition, the concept of value capture recognizes that with each transportation investment some marginal improvement or marginal decline occurs in the value of the surrounding land. A second form of value capture recognizes that planning and implementing development under the same vision and set of rules over multiple parcels or a larger planning area with a complete transportation network creates adjacency predictability and thus increasing value.

Under transportation-driven value capture, the actual value of a parcel might be affected by changes in access, noise, aesthetics, safety, reliability or other transportation issues. In addition, the impact of the land on the transportation system can create value and therefore more tax base providing greater opportunity for local match contribution for funding transportation. Thus, local governments may be in a position to provide greater levels of funding through public-private partnerships, special districts, direct grants or transportation reinvestment zones (TRIZ).

Before this Committee was created, John Norquist former Mayor of Milwaukee and President of the Congress for the New Urbanism ([www.cnu.org](http://www.cnu.org)) presented the underlying justification for this approach to the Commission at the invitation of House Transportation Chairman Mike Krusee. Mr. Norquist demonstrated through before-and-after case study examples how the appropriate design of roadways and complete networks in urban and cosmopolitan contexts can leverage and increase sustainable land uses and their corresponding value. After receiving Mr. Norquist's presentation favorably, former Chairman Ric Williamson asked his colleagues to support the creation of the Committee.

## **Committee Membership**

The Committee membership as appointed consisted of the following individuals:

- Scott Polikov, Gateway Planning Group
- John Norquist, Congress for the New Urbanism
- Eric Dumbaugh, Texas A&M University
- Mike Sims, North Central Texas Council of Governments
- Doug Mann, HNTB, Inc.
- Hazel Borys, PlaceMakers
- David Bartz, Federal Highway Administration
- David Casteel, TxDOT San Antonio District
- Brian Barth, TxDOT Dallas District
- Carlos Lopez, TxDOT Traffic Operations Division
- Mark A. Marek, TxDOT Design Division

Scott Polikov and Mark Marek have been serving as co-chairs of the committee.

Since the creation of the Committee, Clay Smith (TxDOT San Antonio District) has replaced David Casteel, and Greg Punske has replaced David Bartz as the FHWA representative.

Additionally, James Frye of HNTB and Brian Bochner of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) have been asked to serve as committee members for their respective expertise in using context sensitive solutions and design flexibility early in the project development process.

### **Committee Goals**

The three primary goals of the Committee are as follows:

1. Provide an avenue for institutionalizing the cooperative partnership model early in the planning and development process.
2. Expand stakeholder involvement in order to incorporate effectively local and regional planning goals and context; and
3. Educate and expand the design toolbox and flexibility available so that roadways and roadway networks support not only effective mobility but also the creation and sustainability of good urbanism and alternative transportation modes.

### **Committee Process**

The Committee initially met and reviewed the state of the practice for incorporating context sensitive design into the project development process, considering sources such as the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) *Manual for Context Sensitive Solutions for Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities* and other nationally accepted documents on the current state of the practice. The committee also looked into related issues such as traffic projections under different network and modal development scenarios.

The committee then proceeded with a case study process which was intended to accomplish two things. First, the case studies would show and document the benefits of this approach in the development of appropriate regional or local projects including the transportation component. Second, the case studies would provide a major component of the subsequent training efforts that are being developed.

The committee has identified four case studies, completing one of them and initiating two others:

1. **The Windcrest/San Antonio Case Study** has been completed wherein the Committee worked with the Jonathon Bean and Julie Brown of the San Antonio District to convene the stakeholders interested in the successful redevelopment of the Windcrest Mall into the Rackspace Facility with adjacent mixed use redevelopment. The result of the workshop was agreement by the City of Windcrest, the City of San Antonio, VIA, the MPO, the School District and the local developers to coordinate the redesign of Walzam Road (state owned) and additional roadway network needs within the IH35 Corridor in order to accommodate a sustainable growth strategy for the area.
2. **The 30-80-20 Case Study** has been initiated. This exercise will to examine the appropriate processes to achieve coordinated partnership goals in different local transportation/land use conditions with different jurisdictional entities. The 30/80/20 Corridor has been selected as a case study project to explore these opportunities along the Interstate 30, U.S. Highway 80, Spur 557, and Interstate 20 Corridor from Downtown Dallas, through Mesquite, Sunnyvale and Forney, to Terrell. An initial meeting has been set with stakeholders for December.
3. **The Leander TOD Case Study** has been initiated to review and understand how various local and state agencies worked together to integrate the transportation network supporting the 2000-acre Leander Transit-Oriented Development that will be the new town center of Leander where the 183A Tollway and the Capital Metro Commuter Rail Line terminate north of Austin adjacent to the existing downtown Leander. Representatives of the City of Leander, Williamson County, Capital Metro, The Central Texas RMA, TxDOT and local landowners will be convened to explore how the coordination was achieved to successfully marry local land use planning with a multi-modal transportation system.
4. **A fourth case study** is being explored in locations such as El Paso to understand the potential for the integration of transit corridors along major arterials.

## **Final Deliverables**

The Committee will complete its work in Calendar 2009. The Committee will support TxDOT staff to finalize the following deliverables:

1. **Revisions to the Project Development Process (PDP) Manual** so that local and regional planning and policy goals are incorporated into the PDP as early as possible with ongoing local partnership feedback mechanisms to achieve sustainable urban contexts around roadways and transportation networks for appropriate corridors or projects.
2. **Reference to the *ITE Manual for Context Sensitive Solutions for Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities* and other**

**appropriate national publications reflecting this state of the practice** into the TxDOT PDP Manual and the TxDOT Roadway Design Manual.

- 3. Development and initiation of a training program** for TxDOT staff, local government entities and private stakeholders on coordinated partnerships, context sensitive solutions, design flexibility and project development.

These training efforts will be joint exercises between TxDOT, local agencies and private partners. After the initial regional round of training opportunities, the class will continue to be offered by our partners at the Texas Transportation Institute. After the Committee's work is complete, these classes, along with the incorporation of these concepts into TxDOT design manuals, will institutionalize these practices into the normal project development process and allow local entities to consider future development opportunities; of which an effective transportation network is one component.

The Committee members wish to thank the Commission for the opportunity to participate in this exercise and for the opportunity to add value to the transportation component of livable Texas communities through cooperative partnerships.