



Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

July 25, 2013

Suburban Economic Development Research

Issue: An important part of the growth strategy of the MTP/SCS is the older suburban areas of the region, and a growth strategy for their economic and community success.

Recommendation: None, this item is information only.

Discussion: SACOG has contracted with the Metropolitan Research Center (MRC) at the University of Utah to conduct research on two topics relating to the older suburban communities in our region. One task is developing a measure of economic health and success based on similar communities throughout the country with more than a decade of actual data. SACOG staff is working with the consultant to apply the “Economic Health Index” to several areas in the region. The results of this task will have short-range and longer range benefits. We will develop important information on these “pilot study” communities to help in assessing their strengths and challenges during the economic recovery and, hopefully, provide useful insights to current projects like the Transit Oriented Development Loan Fund study. Over the longer term we will have a new tool, with its underlying data and metrics, to apply across the region that will help in the development of the 2016 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. The Index and data will also be available to our cities and counties in their own planning studies.

The second task, also based on actual nationwide data, analyzes employment near light rail stations to determine which employment sectors derive economic advantages due to close proximity to light rail stations. The MRC has developed a detailed database of the location of firms over time, combined with other spatial data on location, population, and access to all modes of transportation. By analyzing the location decisions, along with sales and employment changes, of firms near light rail stations, this task will develop useful information for efforts to build economic development and light rail ridership in suburban communities.

The study will be completed with a final report in the August/September time period. Staff will bring a summary report to the Board in November, with possibly a presentation by the lead consultant, Dr. Chris Nelson.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Chief Executive Officer

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