



Federal Transit Administration

# SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT



*A Tool Kit for Maximizing Community  
Transportation Options*

August 2011

# *Livability...*

*means “being able to take your kids to school, go to work, see a doctor, drop by the grocery or post office, go out to dinner and a movie, and play with your kids at the park, all without having to get into your car.”*

*-Secretary Ray LaHood, U.S. Department of Transportation*



This Tool Kit was developed to provide essential information (tools) for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Transit Operators, Housing Developers, and Environmental Groups of individuals that are interested in the environment with essential information necessary to undertake the transformation of their present community into a Community that is both and Sustainable and Livable.

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## **Background**

On June 16, 2009, Director of the White House Policy Council Melody Barnes, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, and HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan held a joint press conference to highlight the creation of the DOT/HUD/EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities (aka “the Partnership”), to share information about grants and other assistance recently announced by the Partnership agencies. (The text of the White House press release is available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/10/21/partnership-sustainable-communities-awards-grants-build-infrastructure-n>).

During the August of 2010, FTA Region 4’s Deputy Regional Administrator, Tom Thomson, led the way in creating a Regional-level Partnership for Sustainable Communities Working Group. In the succeeding months the Working Group membership (which initially included FTA, FHWA, HUD, EPA, and the CDC) engaged in a variety of outreach efforts to educate the planning offices of Cities, Counties, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and Transit Operators throughout the Southeastern geographical Region’s eight States and two United States Territories about the six livability principles of the Partnership.

As recently as six months ago, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) joined with DOT, HUD, EPA, and CDC to become the fifth high-level member of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities initiative. USDA implements the Partnership principles through its Rural and Community and Development program.

## Livability Principles

Through a set of guiding livability principles and a Partnership agreement that will guide the agencies' efforts, this Partnership will coordinate federal housing, transportation, and other infrastructure investments to protect the environment, promote equitable development, and help to address the challenges of climate change. The six guiding livability principles of the Partnership are:

1. **Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
2. **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
3. **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.
4. **Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
5. **Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy
6. **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

## Tools for Sustainable Communities

### *Climate Change Tools*

1. [Greenhouse Gas Emissions Calculator for Individuals](#)  
This calculator can help communities educate residents about their personal greenhouse gas emissions and can help support community-wide efforts to reduce climate impacts.
2. [Clean Energy Resources Database](#)  
This searchable database describes key resources and documents relevant to the National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency, which addresses: evaluation, measurement, and verification; energy efficiency potential studies; cost effectiveness; program design and implementation; dynamic rates; resource planning; cost recovery and incentives; and codes and standards. The database also includes information on funding and incentives, emissions trading, state management best practices, air quality, clean energy supply, local government, and portfolio standards.
3. [Transportation and Climate Change Clearinghouse](#)  
The Transportation and Climate Change Clearinghouse (TCCC) web site replaces the DOT Center for Climate Change and Environmental Forecasting web site. In addition to new resources and content, the TCCC includes information from the previous site, as well as information about the center and its activities. DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration maintains the clearinghouse.
4. [Playbook for Green Buildings + Neighborhoods](#)  
Developed by a consortium of more than 20 local governments, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and utilities, the playbook provides strategies, tips, and tools that cities and counties can use to take immediate action on climate change through green buildings, green neighborhoods, and sustainable infrastructure.
5. [EPA's State and Local Climate and Energy Program](#)  
Provides technical assistance, analytical tools, and outreach support to state, local, and tribal governments. The program helps identify cost-effective policies and initiatives that address climate change, by promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and related clean technologies; measures and evaluates the environmental, economic, and public health benefits of climate change and clean energy initiatives; offers tools, guidance, and outreach support for assessing the options and benefits of actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and fosters peer exchange opportunities for state and local officials to share information on best practices and lessons learned about innovative policies and programs.

6. [Smart Growth and Climate Change](#)

This page describes how smart growth and climate change intersect in two main areas: mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions from development) and adaptation (making communities more resilient to the effects of a changing climate).

7. [EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality](#)

Offers information on greenhouse gas emissions from transportation sources, including information about relevant EPA regulations and what you can do to reduce your transportation emissions.

8. [EPA's Green Power Partnership](#)

The Green Power Partnership is a national voluntary program that supports the organizational procurement of green power by offering expert advice, technical support, tools, and resources. Partnering with EPA can help your organization or community lower the transaction costs of buying green power, reduce its carbon footprint, and communicate its leadership to key stakeholders. Green power is electricity produced from a subset of renewable resources, such as solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and low-impact hydro.

9. [Assessment of Greenhouse Gas Analysis Tools](#)

The Washington State Department of Commerce analyzed eight modeling, GIS-based, and spreadsheet tools that can help communities assess the transportation-related greenhouse gas impacts of development, from the site level to the regional level. While the analysis is based on Washington communities, the results can be useful for other places around the country, as the report describes these tools in detail and provides guidance to help communities choose the tool that will work best for their circumstances.

## *Land Development Tools*

1. **[Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes](#)**

A toolbox of the most relevant zoning changes that communities can make to their zoning codes and regulations based on common issues and themes confronting urban and suburban governments.

2. **[Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit](#)**

A set of tools to help your community grow smarter, including a quick diagnostic of existing conditions, a policy audit, a code audit, an audit summary mechanism, and a project scorecard to assess potential updates.

3. **[Smart Growth Scorecards](#)**

A collection of 18 scorecards that help communities assess their existing policies, current development patterns, and proposed development projects based on smart growth principles.

4. **[Examples of Codes that Support Smart Growth Development](#)**

Provides a sampling of effective, smart growth-supportive codes that could be used as models for communities trying to update their zoning. These examples include unified development codes, form-based codes, transit-oriented development, design guidelines, street design standards, and zoning overlays.

5. **[Transportation to Work: A Toolkit for the Business Community](#)**

With gas prices continuing to climb, many more employers are looking for ways to make commuting more affordable for their employees. In response, the Community Transportation Association of America and the Federal Transit Administration have developed a new online resource. This site is organized into four subject areas: *Good for Business*, *Getting to Work*, *Going Green*, and *Accessible Transportation*, and provides information on topics such as tax incentives, shared ride programs, support for a diverse workforce, green transportation, and vanpool options.

## *Tools from the Partnership*

1. **[Federal Transit Administration \(FTA\)](#)**  
This Federal Transit Administration (FTA) website provides information about Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), including TOD joint development, frequently asked questions, TOD publications, and TOD resources and training.
2. **[FTA Transportation Climate Change Clearing House](#)**  
This Department of Transportation website provides information about the Climate Change Clearinghouse including its history, revised charter, mission, vision, activities, and organization.
3. **[FTA Region IV](#)**  
This FTA, Region IV website provides an abundance of information about the Partnership for Sustainable Communities activities in Region IV of the Federal Transit Administration, including affordable housing near transit, art and design in transit, livability grant programs, livability policies and provisions, livability case studies and outreach.
4. **[Environmental Protection Administration \(EPA\)](#)**  
This Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) website provides information about the Partnership for Sustainable Communities activities in the EPA including Updates, Background, the six Livability Principles, the Partnership Agreement, and EPA resources that are available to communities.
5. **[Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)**  
This website provides an assortment of information about HUD and HUD programs including implementation of the “Recovery Act”, mortgages, the Open Government Initiative, how to apply for a HUD grant, how to request a debriefing from HUD about why a grant application was unsuccessful, how to contact the appropriate HUD office, how to invite HUD to a conference, reading about resources available from HUD such as articles about Sustainable Communities, the Sustainable Communities Partnership from HUD’s perspective, the Six Livability Principles, and how to gain access to HUD grant program webinars.
6. **[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)**  
This CDC website contains information on designing and building healthy places, the definition of a healthy place, recent accomplishments, conferences and events, fact sheets, key resources, news releases, select current projects, podcasts, publications, images, and additional resources
7. **[Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#)**  
This website provides voluminous information about rural and community development, single and multi-family financing, infrastructure financing, community facilities financing, rural energy financing, and rural development eligibility/contacts in your state.

8. **[Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#)**

Sustainable communities are places that have a variety of housing and transportation choices, with destinations close to home. As a result, they tend to have lower transportation costs, reduce air pollution and stormwater runoff, decrease infrastructure costs, preserve historic properties and sensitive lands, save people time in traffic, be more economically resilient and meet market demand for different types of housing at different prices points. Rural, suburban, and urban communities can all use sustainable communities' strategies and techniques to invest in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods, but these strategies will look different in each place depending on the community's character, context, and needs. This website also provides information about TIGER grants, about the Partnership, Partnership achievements, priority areas for 2011, sustainable communities grants, featured communities, open grant opportunities, ongoing Federal programs, tools and key resources, and how to get involved.

9. **[Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative](#)**

The Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative is a very high priority FTA initiative that seeks to provide transportation to both able bodied and disabled veterans who served our country most valiantly. This website provides information about the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative including the Supplemental Form and instructions on how to apply for available funds, the Notice of Funding Availability, Frequently Asked Questions, and Application Partner Resources.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a sustainable community?

Sustainable communities are places that balance their economic and natural assets so that the diverse needs of local residents can be met now and in the future.

Typically, these communities have lower costs for consumers and more value for taxpayers because they are more connected and efficient. Sustainable communities provide economic momentum and help America compete more effectively for jobs. Regions around the country realize this and are enthusiastically planning for them based on their own local resources, landscape, culture, and ingenuity.

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities, one of the Obama Administration's signature urban policy initiatives is enabling these regions to accelerate those plans and to jump-start private investment and implementation.

### 2. What FTA funds for sustainable communities are available to me to fund my goal of becoming a Sustainable Community?

In 2009, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), resulting in \$8.4 billion for public transportation. It included the Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program, a U.S. Department of Transportation intermodal grant program which resulted in FTA managing nearly \$500 million in new transit capital projects. In FY2010, funding for a TIGER II program delivered an additional \$160 million for public transportation projects. In addition, FTA's own Urban Circulator discretionary grants provided funding for five new streetcar and bus rapid transit projects. Together, FTA is now managing this high priority and high visibility portfolio of projects supporting vital communities, nationwide.

Other than TIGER I and TIGER II, FTA has no dedicated funding programs designed to provide financial resources to communities seeking to become Sustainable Communities. However, FTA has a large number of other funding programs and each of them could be a funding source for an eligible Sustainable Communities projects and the FY2012 President's Budget presented to Congress requests \$XXX of funding dedicated to Sustainable Community purposes.

Information about each of the FTA programs available to prospective grantees is available on the FTA web site at [http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants\\_financing.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants_financing.html).

After navigating to this link, click on the "Grants and Financing" Quick Link on the left side of the web page to learn more about the following FTA grant programs that may be used as Sustainable Communities funding sources for Sustainable Communities projects:

- [Metropolitan & Statewide Planning](#)
- [Urbanized Area Formula Program](#)
- [Clean Fuels Grant Program](#)
- [Major Capital Investments](#)
- [Fixed Guideway Modernization](#)
- [Bus and Bus Facilities](#)
- [Transportation for Elderly Person and Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Non-Urbanized Areas](#)
- [Rural Transit Assistance Program](#)
- [Over-the-Road Bus Program](#)
- [Transit Cooperative Research Program](#)
- [National Research & Technology Program](#)
- [Job Access and Reverse Commute](#)
- [New Freedom Program](#)
- [Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program](#)
- [Alternatives Analysis](#)
- [University Transportation Centers Program](#)
- [Flex Funds for Highway and Transit](#)
- [Tribal Transit Program](#)

### 3. What actions have DOT, HUD, and EPA agreed to take?

In the Partnership Agreement DOT, HUD, and EPA have agreed to the following actions:

1. **Enhance integrated planning and investment.** The partnership will seek to integrate housing, transportation, water infrastructure, and land use planning and investment. HUD, EPA, and DOT propose to make planning grants available to metropolitan areas and create mechanisms to ensure those plans are carried through to localities.
2. **Provide a vision for sustainable growth.** This effort will help communities set a vision for sustainable growth and apply federal transportation, water infrastructure, housing, and other investments in an integrated approach that reduces the nation's dependence on foreign oil, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, protects America's air and water, and improves quality of life. Coordinating planning efforts in housing, transportation, air quality, and water—including planning cycles, processes, and geographic coverage—will make more effective use of federal housing and transportation dollars.
3. **Redefine housing affordability and make it transparent.** The partnership will develop federal housing affordability measures that include housing and transportation costs and other expenses that are affected by location choices. Although transportation costs now approach or exceed housing costs for many working families, federal definitions of housing affordability do not recognize the strain of soaring transportation costs on homeowners and renters who live in areas isolated from work opportunities and transportation choices. The partnership will redefine affordability to reflect those costs, improve the consideration of the cost of utilities, and provide consumers with enhanced information to help them make housing decisions.
4. **Redevelop underutilized sites.** The partnership will work to achieve critical environmental justice goals and other environmental goals by targeting development to locations that already have infrastructure and offer transportation choices. Environmental justice is a particular concern in areas where

disinvestment and past industrial use caused pollution and a legacy of contaminated or abandoned sites. This partnership will help return such sites to productive use.

5. **Develop livability measures and tools.** The partnership will research, evaluate, and recommend measures that indicate the livability of communities, neighborhoods, and metropolitan areas. These measures could be adopted in subsequent integrated planning efforts to benchmark existing conditions, measure progress toward achieving community visions, and increase accountability. HUD, DOT, and EPA will help communities attain livability goals by developing and providing analytical tools to evaluate progress, as well as state and local technical assistance programs to remove barriers to coordinated housing, transportation, and environmental protection investments. The partnership will develop incentives to encourage communities to implement, use, and publicize the measures.
6. **Align HUD, DOT, and EPA programs.** HUD, DOT, and EPA will work to assure that their programs maximize the benefits of their combined investments in our communities for livability, affordability, environmental excellence, and the promotion of green jobs of the future. HUD and DOT will work together to identify opportunities to better coordinate their programs and encourage location efficiency in housing and transportation choices. HUD, DOT, and EPA will also share information and review processes to facilitate better-informed decisions and coordinate investments.
7. **Undertake joint research, data collection, and outreach.** HUD, DOT, and EPA will engage in joint research, data collection, and outreach efforts with stakeholders to develop information platforms and analytic tools to track housing and transportation options and expenditures, establish standardized and efficient performance measures, and identify best practices.

## Other Important Web Resources

### [The White House](#)

### [Department of Transportation \(DOT\)](#)

#### *Other Organizations' Resources*

1. [Center for Transit Oriented Development](#)
2. [Coalition for Smarter Growth](#)
3. [Community Transportation Association of America](#)
4. [Complete Streets Coalition](#)
5. [National Association of Development Organizations](#)
6. [Smart Growth America](#)
7. [Mixed Income Transit-Oriented Development \(MITOD\)](#)
8. [TOD Database](#)

#### *Partnership for Sustainable Communities Homepages*

1. [Department of Transportation](#)
2. [Federal Transit Administration](#)
3. [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)
4. [Environmental Protection Administration](#)
5. [United States Department of Agriculture](#)

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