

Review of State and Regional Practices in Integrating Economic Impact Analysis into the Transportation Planning Process

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Transportation is vital to the social and economic development of any region as it provides the means by which residents of a region can fully participate in social and economic activities from which they are spatially separated. The undertaking of transportation planning process helps the society to identify the appropriate investments in transportation infrastructure and services required to address not only the current/short-term transportation needs of a region but also its long-term needs. Economic effects to the society generated by various transportation investments vary widely. To identify, quantify, and value the economic benefits and costs of transportation policies, programs, and projects over a multi-year timeframe, transportation agencies undertake an economic analysis. An economic impact analysis quantifies the effects that a transportation project or action will have on job creation, wage levels, business activity, tourism, housing, and tax base expansion. However, a study done for developing a guide for state DOT's to consider economic development potential in planning found that most transportation agencies do consider economic development plans late in the planning process which impedes to meaningfully affect the outcome.

The objective of this study is to identify the different stages of the transportation planning process in which an economic impact analysis can be incorporated to maximize its meaningful effect. This study explores the possibilities for integrating economic impact analysis considerations into both the short-range and long-range transportation plans at state DOTs and MPOs. The study anticipate to review the practice and experience of a number of DOTs and MPOs that are already or planning to incorporating economic impact analysis into their transportation planning processes and identify their successes as well as challenges faced by these agencies.