Chair's Message:

Welcome to the Winter 2018 issue of the RIPD Newsletter!

Our division had some important accomplishments in 2017 and has some exciting plans for 2018. Here are some highlights:

- Following the release of PAS 586, *Emerging Trends in Regional Planning*, RIPD has committed to continuing staying on top of emerging trends in the field. Currently, we are focusing on three program areas as they relate to regional and intergovernmental planning: livable communities, climate change/integrated water management, and arts/culture.
- APA has updated our website to reflect our new directions. See: https://planning.org/divisions/regional/ It is a work in progress, and we will be collaborating with APA to make it more robust as the year progresses.
- Our membership tripled during the second half of 2017, thanks especially to APA’s new policy of providing free memberships to college students. We are now more than 800 strong!
- To help us engage effectively with our student members, we have created a Student Membership Committee and selected a Student Representative to our Executive Committee: Kyle Smith, an MS candidate in the community and regional planning program at the University of Texas-Austin. Kyle and his committee are crafting some strategies to serve our student members and find...
There will be many sessions relating to regional and intergovernmental planning at NPC18, the APA annual conference in New Orleans. Our Executive Committee has endorsed seven sessions submitted by members of our division, and will share those endorsements in a special NPC18 newsletter in March. To register for the conference, go to https://www.planning.org/conference/

Later in the year we will be surveying you, our members, to help us evaluate and fine-tune the work of our division, and generate ideas for new directions in 2018 and beyond.

Accompanying these changes will be changes in the regular format of this newsletter. Throughout the year we will feature columns focusing on notable new regional plans, on our current program areas, and on our student membership activities, as well as other topics that deserve coverage. I’ll be serving as the editor of the newsletter in 2018, so please feel free to contact me at markevds@gmail.com if you’d like to contribute to it in the year to come.

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Join us in New Orleans April 20th for the 5th Annual Regional Livable Communities Forum!

Our Division is pleased to again join with the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy to support peer learning among regional planners. The Regional Livable Communities Forum is designed by those of us working in regional planning to share emerging practices and lift up the ways we are addressing challenges often unique to regional agencies. Our goals are to share information on regional programs designed to support implementation of long-range plans, and strategies for integrating livable communities into regional work programs. Perhaps most importantly, the Forum is an opportunity to build stronger networks among planners doing regional work across the country in regions large and small.

In designing the agenda, we focus on the practical over the theoretical. The Forum is grounded in the intersection of land use and transportation, which is at the heart of MPO programs, but also recognizes the connection of land use and transportation to climate resiliency, housing, public health and economic development outcomes that by nature require regional approaches. In the words of a past participant, “The Forum is the one time of the year I get to talk about my work with peers and bring back to my agency strategies to improve the effectiveness of our programs to meet future challenges.”

This year’s Regional Livable Communities Forum will be held the day before the national APA conference begins in New Orleans. The Forum will again include sessions on emerging regional livable community program best practices and updates on federal policies that influence regional planning. We will also spotlight efforts in Gulf Coast regions to address climate resiliency and recovery; the emerging ways that regions are engaging in housing challenges that go beyond what single jurisdictions can influence; and spotlight innovative approaches by MPOs and regional agencies to integrate climate, health and environmental justice in long-range plans and performance metrics. Registration is limited to 60 participants and will be
held at the Holiday Inn Downtown – Superdome from 9 am to 5 pm on Friday, April 20, 2018. There is no cost to attend the Forum, but participants must register by April 1st at: https://tinyurl.com/ycv6kq26

The Lincoln Institute is providing a limited number of participants travel support. In most cases this involves a one-night stay at the Holiday Inn, but additional funds may be provided if needed. Online applications to receive either type of travel support are available at: https://tinyurl.com/y7gp7zm8 and must be submitted by March 23, 2018.

Those not needing travel support should book a room directly with the Holiday Inn or other hotel. Note: The Holiday Inn is not one of the APA conference hotels and is about a 20-25 minute walk from the Convention Center.

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**Arts, Culture and Transit Development**

Little Mekong

Little Africa

“Destination Anywhere: Where Will You Go First?”

Explore Poster

Northern Spark

Greening the Green Line

By Mark VanderSchaaf, APA RIPvD Chairman

A new program area for our division is regional planning for arts and culture. At the upcoming national APA conference, I’ll be moderating a session on this subject featuring innovative programs recently launched in the Boston, Chicago and Seattle areas.

My interest in the subject originated in my previous career as the regional planning director at the Metropolitan Council of the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area, where my job description increasingly involved helping to promote arts and cultural activities connected to the work of my agency. There I discovered that we were not alone, as regional planners throughout the country were also beginning to engage with the arts and culture, often within the context of public art projects connected with transit and transit-oriented development.

This process was assisted by national organizations documenting and promoting best practices in the field during the past decade – notably the American Public Transportation Association’s “Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects” (https://www.apta.com/resources/standards/Documents/APTA-SUDS-UD-RP-007-13.pdf), Transportation for America’s “Creative Placemaking” interactive website (http://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org/), and their collaborative project with ArtPlace America, “Arts, Culture and Transportation” (http://t4america.org/maps-
APA has also been active in this field recently, partnering with the nonprofit Forecast Public Art to develop curricula for planners around public art and healthy communities, supported by National Endowment for the Arts 2016 “Our Town” grant. APA also received a 2017 “Our Town” grant to integrate the arts into planning processes throughout the country.

A Model in Minneapolis/Saint Paul

As is true in many places now, the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area exhibits a public art paradox. At the same time that new federal criteria prohibit the funding of public art in rail transit stations, cities served by transit are embracing public art as vital to their transit-oriented development strategies and are finding creative ways to include public art in their strategy implementation. How did this happen? What does it portend for the future of the art/transit/transit-oriented development nexus?

The Minneapolis/Saint Paul area currently has two light rail transit lines. The “Blue Line,” opened in 2004, connecting the Mall of America, the MSP International Airport, and downtown Minneapolis. Under old federal funding guidelines, this project invested substantially in public art at the station platforms, yielding a collection of 19 unique stations, each in effect a distinctive work of public art. But at that time, less attention was paid to public art in the adjacent neighborhoods in the cities of Bloomington and Minneapolis where the stations were built.

In 2014 the “Green Line” (located along the “Central Corridor”) began service, connecting the downtowns of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. In contrast to the Blue Line, Green Line stations are substantially the same, with tasteful but subdued works of public art embedded in each station. But also in contrast to the Blue Line, residents along the Green Line early began desiring public art as a way to strengthen the identity and livability of their neighborhoods, to affirm their historic traditions and to solidify a neighborhood brand to help guide future development. Unlike the government-funded public art of the Blue Line a decade earlier, neighborhood public art along the Green Line was supported by a variety of implementing partnerships, working to enhance each neighborhood while contributing to a “charm bracelet” that integrated thematically the entire Green Line corridor – a corridor consisting of a highly-diverse set of communities with rail service provided largely down the middle of a highway thoroughfare. Metropolitan Council, the regional planning agency, has filled several niches within these partnerships.

- Since 1995, the Metropolitan Council has awarded approximately $15 million per year in “Livable Communities” grants to local governments to support walkable, mixed use neighborhood development. The eligibility criteria have evolved over the years, but by 2017, included funds specifically set aside for transit-oriented development, and eligible uses that include placemaking and public art.

- In 2011, Metropolitan Council co-sponsored a community workshop with the British cultural consultant Charles Landry, “Unleashing the Potential of the Central Corridor: Building a Great Street with Creativity, Distinction and Economic Prosperity.” Landry’s 2011 workshop was followed by a week-long residency in 2012, where Landry worked mainly with neighborhood leaders along the route of the Green Line within the theme of “Creating 21st Century Intercultural and Creative Cities.”

- On the opening day of Green Line service in 2014, MetroTransit (a division of the Metropolitan Council) promoted art/culture-oriented festivals at nine different station area neighborhoods with the theme “Destination Anywhere: Where Will You Go First?,” providing a set of collector-item buttons, one available at each of the nine stations. MetroTransit continues to promote the diverse set of Green Line neighborhoods with its “Explore the Twin Cities on the Green Line” poster, often featured at Green Line stations. This “destination anywhere” identity for the Green Line is becoming well-established throughout the region and its arts community; in 2017, the annual Northern Spark all-night arts festival selected the entire Green Line for its set of venues. With 415 artists, 45,000 attendees, and 33,000 LRT rides, the Green Line admirably fulfilled its role as a multi-site host for this festival.
Partnerships are Key

Not all of the implementing partnerships along the Green Line involve the Metropolitan Council directly. The complete universe of such partnerships is too vast to be encompassed by this article, but I highlight one example that is a special favorite of mine. “Greening the Green Line” is a vision promoted by the Minnesota chapter of the Trust for Public Land, which works with communities to advocate for, and lead efforts to create new parks.

Although public art and creative placemaking can occur in non-public spaces, these new parks will provide important venues for art and cultural projects. They can also extend the vision into fields beyond transit including, for example, new forms of water resource management that also provide amenities to the surrounding community. I’m already seeing interest in combining innovative stormwater management with public art and I expect it to grow in the years to come.

The Minneapolis/Saint Paul area is now on the verge of extending both the Blue Line and the Green Line into northern suburbs and southwestern suburbs respectively. In both cases, the example of the existing Green Line is being tapped to prepare proactively for transit-oriented development that will prominently feature public art, both as a way to enhance each community served by the new transit line, and as a way to strengthen a region-uniting identity for the new transit corridor.

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Embracing Change Won't Be Easy For The New York Region

By Matt Assad

With a name like The Fourth Regional Plan, the 376-page document drafted for the tri-state region of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut might appear on its face as routine.

It does have the kinds of land use maps, traffic congestion models and job growth projections found in most every long-term regional plan, but scratch beneath the surface and it becomes clear the this plan by the Regional Planning Association is designed to make people, well, uncomfortable.

While calling the New York region a prosperous area loved by its residents, the RPA report states that congested roads, overpriced housing and the threat of sea level change will require drastic measures to plan for the near and distant future.

That means extensive tolling of roads and highways – including every road into Manhattan – installing a comprehensive cap-and-trade emissions program, and the future abandonment of major assets that will be swamped by climate change-induced sea level rise.

It’s the first plan update since 1996.
“Our last plan had a single line generally saying ‘keep an eye on climate change’,” said Moses Gates, RPA Director of Community Planning & Design. “This one operates from the assumption that sea level rise will have a major impact on our future.”

The Regional Planning Association is a respected, non-governmental planning organization that covers a tri-state region with 23 million residents and an economy that, at $1.8 trillion, represents 10% of the nation’s economy. And that economy is rolling right now, but that could change if the region doesn’t begin making tough choices now, the report states. The Fourth Regional Plan includes more than 60 recommendations designed to be a roadmap to carry the region through 2040 and beyond. It’s been criticized by some who have called it a scattershot approach of big ideas that can overshadow some of its smaller, more practical solutions, but Gates said the recommendations address issues in most every sector of the region and issues ranging from transportation congestion to social justice.

Because the RPA is not a municipal board, and serves entirely in an advisory capacity for the local governments it serves, the RPA’s recommendations are not binding. And because it’s not the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region – other agencies manage and dole out the transportation money – it doesn’t have the hammer of withholding funding to force municipalities to act.

But that kind of autonomy also gives it the freedom to be candid in its recommendations, Gates said, and that’s reflected in a document that’s been five years in the making. It advocates a change to a sort of user’s fee society that would raise as much as $5 billion a year for infrastructure improvements by charging motorists for entering Manhattan and tolling most major highways and another $3 billion a year by installing a cap-and-trade program – modeled after California – that would reduce pollution by forcing industries and even motorists to buy carbon credits for their emissions.

Working on the assumption that the region will experience a six-foot sea level rise by the turn of the century, the plan suggests expanding JFK and Newark airports, in part, because it projects that the region’s primary general aviation airfield – Teterboro Airport – will be swamped.

It also projects that sea rise will displace 4,000 to 8,000 residents and 51,000 jobs in the Meadowlands, so it recommends transitioning away from those homes and businesses and establishing a Meadowlands National Park.

Other recommendations include prioritizing people over cars on all urban streets by creating more space for pedestrians and bicyclists, removing highways that create blight, and building 300,000 accessory homes, particularly in areas around train and subway stations, to help address the affordable housing, equity and access problems. It also suggests a series of connections that would create a 1,650-mile tri-state trail network.

The plan is packed with recommendations that can’t be done easily, quickly or cheaply. And the ramifications of getting people to pay as they go could be dangerous for the leaders in the municipalities or agencies that choose to implement them.

But Gates notes that many of the recommendations of previous plans have been implemented, including some that seemed daunting at the time. For example, the 1996 plan suggested a connection from the Long Island Railroad into Grand Central Station, Gates said. The $10 billion project, including several tunnels, is underway and scheduled to be completed in 2023.

The Fourth Regional Plan hit the streets Nov. 30.

“We put this out there to drive conversation and it’s certainly done that,” Gates said
“We’ve definitely gotten some pushback, but we’ve heard support too. It’s going to take time and a lot of conversation.”

Matt Assad is Managing Editor at the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, a Metropolitan Planning Organization that handles transportation, community, land use and environmental planning for Northampton and Lehigh counties in Eastern Pennsylvania.

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