

Promoting Smart Growth Texas Style: Implementation Workshops and Proposed Guidelines

Smart growth addresses issues related to transportation and land use that influence travel choices. Smart growth is a form of development that brings housing, jobs, recreational opportunities, and necessities together, and provides transportation options such as walking, bicycling, and transit to reduce the need to travel by personal vehicle. Increasingly, efforts are underway to integrate land use and transportation planning to reduce vehicle travel and emissions (Figure 1).

Smart growth is a basis for deciding where, when, and what type of growth should occur to maximize the long-term vitality of a community. Moreover, smart growth can be viewed by transportation agencies as the land-use component of a “smart” comprehensive transportation/mobility plan—a plan that arranges land use for more efficient use of transportation and improves compatibility between transportation and land use.

Smart growth can be an asset to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). It can promote efficiency of transportation through land use/development relationships. Smart growth includes

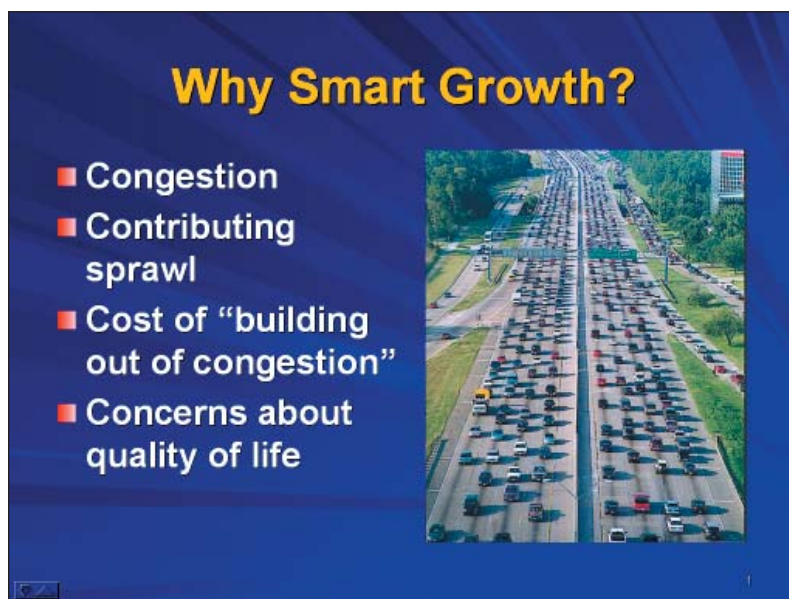


Figure 1. The workshop emphasizes that many growth issues faced by Texas' communities can be addressed through smart growth policies.

transportation and presents opportunities to transportation agencies. Smart growth can benefit TxDOT as a tool to improve the efficiency of transportation service by making land use/development more transportation friendly.

This implementation Project 5-4238 used workshop materials, including a Participant's Workbook, an Instructor's Guidebook, an introductory Smart Growth Primer, and a PowerPoint® presentation produced under Project 0-4238, *Smart Growth Texas Style*. The series of workshops

was designed to promote smart growth development considerations in major metropolitan areas of the state.

As part of this implementation project, a set of smart growth policies was created for TxDOT to cultivate a better understanding of smart growth within TxDOT and to foster cooperation between TxDOT and other entities wishing to implement smart growth in Texas.

What We Did...

A series of four *Introducing Smart Growth to Texas*



workshops were conducted in Austin, Houston, Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington, and El Paso, the latter three of which are air-quality non-attainment areas in Texas. These workshops defined smart growth (Figure 2) and presented the basic concepts of smart growth development and the transportation systems that support them. The workshops included examples of smart growth projects from Texas (Figure 3) and other states, as well as details of Oregon’s growth management plan and supporting regulations and legislation. Additional examples of state and local smart growth programs and policies from California, Maryland, and other states were also included in the presentation.

Each workshop concluded with an open question about how smart growth concepts and principles might be used by the workshop participants to further their organizations’ goals. This question encouraged group discussion about the applicability of smart growth to various local and regional developments and produced a list of suggestions and recommendations for Texas.

After the presentation, the instructor described a case study analysis, and workshop participants applied their newly acquired knowledge of smart growth to a downtown redevelopment plan. Groups of three to six participants each worked on the same scenario, using a large map to illustrate their smart growth solutions. This exercise produced varied and thought-provoking solutions and discussions of smart growth and how to achieve it.

In addition to the workshops, this project produced a guidance document (Report 5-4238-01-1) to help TxDOT support local smart growth initiatives through typical TxDOT projects or enhanced TxDOT policies. This guidance



Figure 2. Defining “smart growth” is important in conveying how smart growth works.

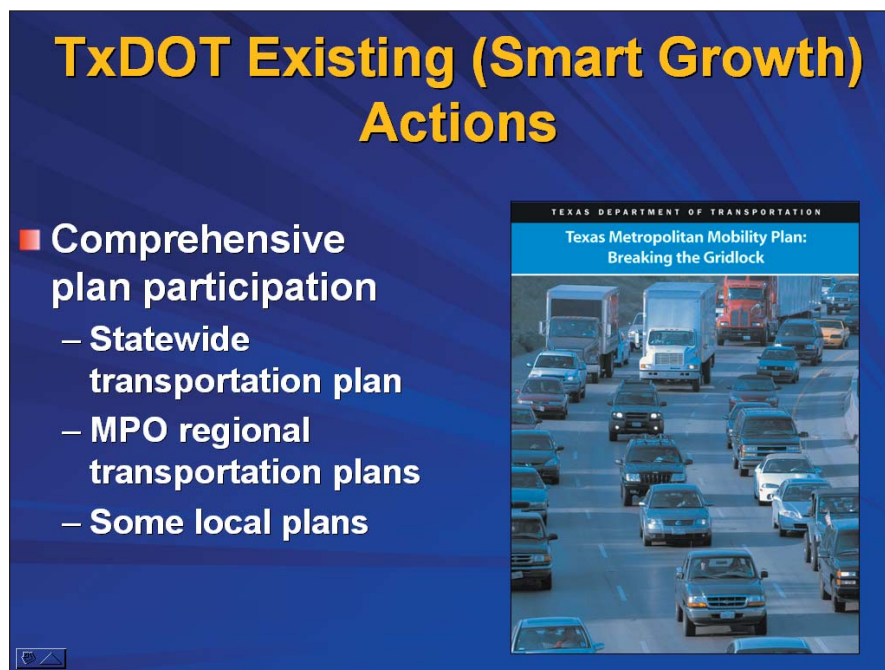


Figure 3. The workshop shows how many existing TxDOT policies are consistent with smart growth principles.

explains how smart growth can be an asset to TxDOT and relates how smart growth principles are consistent with TxDOT’s goals under its strategic plan. The following items are proposed as TxDOT policies employing smart growth. To help accomplish TxDOT

transportation program objectives and better support community objectives in smart growth communities, TxDOT should:

- support local growth initiatives by participating in local and regional planning processes;



- participate in local development review;
- incorporate smart growth concepts and principles into TxDOT projects and programs consistent with TxDOT goals and use the transportation-land use relationships to support community objectives while addressing transportation needs (Figure 4);
- incorporate flexibility into TxDOT procedures, guidelines, criteria, and standards;
- adopt new commission rules as needed to achieve these goals; and
- encourage local entities to assume control of highways that have been downgraded or replaced by new or parallel routes (Figure 5).

What We Found...

These smart growth workshops were well received throughout the state. The three workshops originally scheduled under this contract filled to capacity, and a fourth workshop in El Paso was added at the request of the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (this workshop was also fully subscribed).



Figure 4. TxDOT and the City of College Station collaborated on access management and context-sensitive design practices that follow smart growth principles along the city's major arterial where it passes through a high-activity center.



Figure 5. Martin Luther King Boulevard (State Highway 99) in Portland, Oregon, was a major state highway; it has been modified to four lanes with curb parking, landscaped median, and sidewalk landscaping in keeping with its new use as a local arterial.

Each workshop was attended by participants from a wide range of backgrounds, including TxDOT, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, various metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and city, county, and other officials, administrators, planners, engineers, and private-sector planners and developers. We found that there is interest in smart growth in several regions of the state.

The Researchers Recommend...

Workshop participants were asked what they would like to see added to the material discussed in the workshop. Suggestions included:

- expand the workshop to two days to include more details on how to plan and implement transportation aspects of smart growth,
- discuss how to change mindsets to encourage acceptance of smart growth,
- provide more examples of smart growth in Texas as they are implemented,
- provide examples of ordinances and design guidelines supporting smart growth,
- provide histories of areas with smart growth and information on how they overcame obstacles to achieve it, and
- create a checklist of do's and don'ts to achieve smart growth.

Accommodating these requests would require further research and an expansion of workshop material. The researchers recommend furthering the knowledge about how improving transportation by capitalizing on smart growth opportunities can be achieved in Texas through additional workshops expanded as described above.



For More Details...

The research is documented in [Report 0-4238-1, *Introducing Smart Growth to Texas: Research Report*](#). Workshop materials are contained in Product 5-4238-01-P5, *Introducing Smart Growth to Texas: Instructor's Guidebook* with CD-ROM and *Introducing Smart Growth to Texas: Participant's Workbook*. Proposed smart growth policies and guidelines are documented in [Report 5-4238-01-1, *Promoting Smart Growth Texas Style: Proposed Policies for TxDOT to Benefit from Local Smart Initiatives*](#).

Research Supervisor: Brian S. Bochner, TTI, b-bochner@ttimail.tamu.edu, (979) 457-3516

Key Researchers:

Robin I. Rabinowitz, TTI, r-rabinowitz@ttimail.tamu.edu, (979) 845-5932

Edwin N. Hard, TTI, e-hard@tamu.edu, (979) 845-8539

TxDOT Project Director: Andrew Griffith, TxDOT-RTI, agriffi@dot.state.tx.us

To obtain copies of reports, contact Nancy Pippin, Texas Transportation Institute, TTI Communications, at (979) 458-0481 or n-pippin@ttimail.tamu.edu. See our online catalog at <http://tti.tamu.edu>.

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