

4.0 Conclusion

Since beginning work on the LUTRAQ project in 1990, all the participants in the project have witnessed a growing interest in transportation and land-use relationships. In this report, we have tried to summarize both the state of knowledge that has resulted from extensive and ongoing research, and the state of the practice in community and regional planning that integrates transportation and land use. Even as we write this concluding technical report, we are aware of both research and planning projects that will further advance the state of knowledge and the state of the practice. So, rather than this report being the last word on this important subject, we consider it the summary of perhaps the first stage of a revived interest in a series of important questions and relationships. Ongoing work in subsequent stages of planning both in the U.S. and around the world will continue, and we hope it will soon make the information in this report obsolete.

The individual places and projects named in this technical report are but a small sample of the places that might be described. Innovation in the integration of transportation and land-use planning is widespread today. We expect that ongoing communication between practitioners around the country will make possible continued learning in this field. Most major planning organizations host workshops on transportation and land-use issues. Major professional and research periodicals contain a steady stream of literature. Those readers who seek additional information should be able to find it quite easily in the future.

More importantly, as the practice of transportation and land-use planning moves more and more into implementation and, eventually, into evaluation of successful projects, it will not be surprising to find critics who point out that urban systems are exceedingly complex, that change in people's behavior is difficult to induce, that the dramatic changes in land-use or transportation policy implied by many of the studies summarized in this report are difficult to produce and may not be worth the price. It is common to oversell the benefits of public-policy initiatives, although we do not believe that we have done so in this report.

But none of these arguments should be reasons to ignore the fundamental relationships we have described here or the important evidence we have summarized. Urban regions are large and complex places, but people and policies do make a difference. The cliché to “think globally and act locally” is a reminder that public-policy decisions do have enormous impacts on neighborhoods and communities, on both “green fields” and “brown fields,” on the way we build our cities, and on the way we preserve them.

There will always be much to argue about, and there will always be many good reasons to become engaged in the debate about the future of the communities in which we live. We hope this report serves to inform this ongoing debate.