

Planning, Policy,
and
Programming

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Project Title:
Tools and Best Practices for Land
Use Efficiency and Equity in Cities

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Tools and Best Practices for Land Use Efficiency and Equity in Cities

This research will assess local governments to improve land use efficiency with the goal of promoting an efficient, equitable, and sustainable built environment.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

This research project aligns with Caltrans's goal of Sustainability, Livability, and Economy: to make long-lasting, smart mobility decisions that improve the environment, support a vibrant economy, and build communities, not sprawl. This research is needed to provide information that may help local governments avoid sprawl and promote compact, mixed-use, walkable, and affordable neighborhoods.

Prior research has either solely focused on measures of land use efficiency to reduce vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) or focused on measures of gentrification and housing affordability. This research project aims to address this gap, through the evaluation of existing tools that aims to address both land use efficiency and equity, promote sustainability and equity of the built environment.

The intent of the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375), passed in 2008, was to encourage California to achieve its greenhouse gas reduction goals. This bill directed the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to set regional targets for California's 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. SB 375 intends to ensure that local government officials are involved in the development of regional plans to reach these targets. Since local officials control land use decisions, local action is especially important to implement land use strategies that will minimize motor vehicle use and related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

This study will begin by drawing on literature from multiple sources related to existing tools and methods for analyzing sustainable land use, affordable housing, and gentrification. The research



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team will then conduct a workshop with key stakeholders to identify which tools are most effective for their needs, identify gaps in those tools, and establish a vision of future tools and methods. Multiple stakeholders will be invited to participate, including local governments across California, planning staff from Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Office of Planning and Research, Caltrans, California Air Resources Board, Institute of Local Governments, developers, and affordable housing advocates to understand their needs on how to measure land use efficiency, housing affordability, potential risk of gentrification, and strategies to reduce VMT.

The research team will also seek their input on the gaps of existing measures of land use efficiency and equity. The feedback obtained from various stakeholders will be disseminated in the form of a white paper or short report, and will inform the need for a second phase of work in which the research team would develop a new tool to measure and understand land use efficiency and equity.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The main objective of this research project is to assist local governments to improve land use efficiency and equity through the review and evaluation of existing tools related to land use, transportation, and affordable housing. The research team will conduct a needs assessment to understand the needs of local governments and gaps of existing data and analytical tools related to land use efficiency, housing affordability, and gentrification. For this research, the team will conduct a literature review of existing tools, identify promising practices and missed opportunities of existing tools, and address the gaps that could inform the potential development of new tools.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The benefit of this research will be to inform local agencies in California on efficient, equitable and sustainable land use practices through the development of a comprehensive best

practices toolbox.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

The research team and Caltrans held a kick-off meeting on July 11, 2022. The research team began the project with a literature review; the research team analyzed 12-13 tools, with a deep dive into 4 tools. The research team shared their analysis of the tools with a stakeholder group through a workshop that solicited input regarding the existing tools and any potentially missing functions. Tools were grouped into 4 categories: VMT; gentrification; gentrification and equity; and VMT and equity. The research team is working on the draft for submittal to Caltrans for review by December 2022.

IMAGES

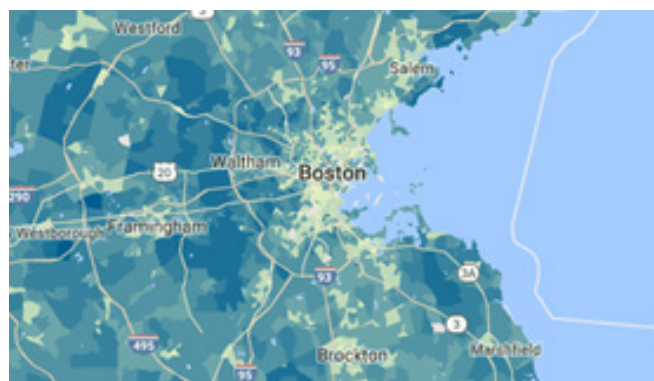


Image 1: Housing and transportation affordability index

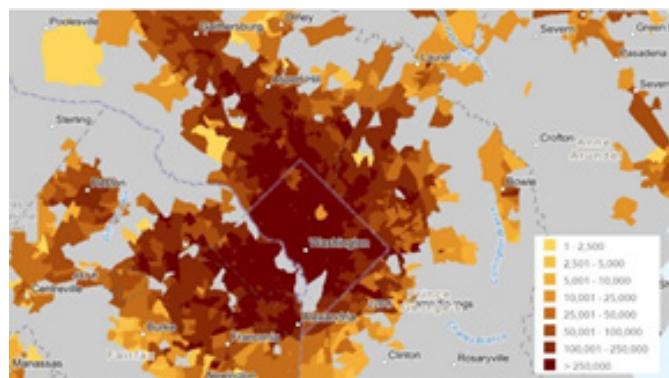


Image 2: US EPA Smart Location Mapping

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