

TESTIMONY OF LAKEWOOD, COLORADO MAYOR BOB MURPHY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACT
SEPTEMBER 23, 2010

Thank you Chairman Frank, and of course to my friend Congressman Ed Perlmutter, our terrific representative from Colorado's 7th Congressional District, for this opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Bob Murphy, the Mayor of Lakewood, Colorado, a first tier suburb of 150,000 located adjacent to the Western edge of Denver. I also serve as Chair of the Metro Mayors Caucus, a unique organization of 39 communities that collaborates regionally on the issues of transportation, economic development, sustainability and health and wellness.

One of our best known examples of collaboration is the manner in which we coalesced around the 2004 FasTracks ballot initiative. This voter approved measure launched the nation's largest current transit construction project: 122 miles of new Light and Commuter Rail, 54 new transit stations, 18 miles of BRT and enhanced connecting bus service.

The first line, the West Corridor, is currently under construction through Lakewood, connecting the major employment centers of downtown Denver, the Denver Federal Center (the largest concentration of federal employees outside Washington D.C.) and the Jefferson County Government Center in Golden, CO.

The West Corridor, indeed every new transit corridor, presents unique opportunities for community building and job creation, but along with it comes daunting challenges.

Simply put, transit and the communities we design around the new stations have the potential to create equal access to opportunity for everyone:

- Enhanced access to employment and educational opportunities
- More housing choices
- Improved access to medical care and healthy food options
- Reduced transportation costs
- Better access to regional amenities

These opportunities expand to benefit our regional economies and environment:

- Reduce auto trips and greenhouse gas emissions, thus better air quality
- Improved public health, lower healthcare costs resulting from more walking and bicycling.

- Job creation through design and building of infrastructure, housing and commercial centers
- Lower public subsidy of transit through increased ridership
- A “green dividend” for regional and national economies as savings on household transportation costs becomes discretionary income for food, clothing and education.

The average American household spends over 50% of their household budget on housing and transportation. This burden falls heaviest on low-to-moderate income households. These households use transit at more reliable rates than those with higher income, and they also stand to benefit the most from a wider variety of housing choices we build near transit stations. This new accessibility to work, schools, daycare, retail and recreational options results in better opportunity, productivity and more time with family.

And, affordable housing stimulates the local economy. A 2010 NAHB study in Denver measured the one-year estimated economic impact of building 615 new Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) units:

- \$57.6 million in local income
- \$5.0 in revenue to local governments
- 732 local jobs

Opportunities abound to plan and build livable communities along transportation corridors and rail stations, but significant barriers remain. The areas surrounding future FasTracks stations in our cities and first tier suburbs are encumbered by aging infrastructure, brownfield sites, lack of bike and sidewalk connectivity, absence of open space and fragmentation of parcel ownership. The costs for remediation are often beyond the scope of local governments, even in partnership with the private sector.

Historically, existing federal funding has been focused on specific aspects of the metropolitan landscape (transportation, housing, environmental quality) rather than comprehensively what it takes to build resilient communities that will sustain for generations. Many programs of DOT, HUD and EPA have a high-level focus on the same outcome- better communities- but are hamstrung by different regulatory requirements and embedded organizational cultures.

The 2009 formation of the Office for Sustainable Housing and Communities inspired the Denver region to once again take a collaborative approach toward meeting these challenges. The West Corridor formed a unique partnership involving the cities, their respective Housing Authorities, the Regional Transportation District and the GSA to comprehensively plan for station area land use, affordable housing, infrastructure needs and future economic development along the 12-mile length of the new line.

Through the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), the 55 member city and county jurisdictions are cooperating to update our *Metro Vision* plan with a new Centers and Corridors strategy aligned with the new urban centers developing along our new transit and key highway corridors. Through DRCOG, the Denver region recently applied for the first HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant. Many regions around the country did the same thing, and that is my exact point. It's already working! Applicants, even if unsuccessful, have had to forge the precise type of regional coalitions that will be vital to providing services in a future with restrained resources.

It's for this reason I want to recognize the incredible groundbreaking partnership that has already occurred between HUD, DOT and EPA. Secretary Donovan, Secretary LaHood and Administrator Jackson should be commended for their foresight in linking programs, policies and funding of these departments and agencies. Special thanks too, to Shelley Poticha, Director for Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities (HUD) for her advice, inspiration and on-the-ground implementation of these policies. Together, we will all build great communities that will serve future generations.

Thank you again, Chairman Frank, for the opportunity to address you today.