

RAC Economic Vitality Committee Discussion

Summation: Communication and a truly collaborative, cohesive region are lacking. Metroplan could bridge the divide, share vital information, and create new relationships with more economically focused partners. Finding additional funding will be a challenge, but investing in alternatives, especially trails, will help the region attract and retain residents and the business that follow. Transportation investments should be made paying mind to all economic situations. Ultimately, we must brand ourselves and genuinely believe that we are one cohesive region to achieve maximum success.

Question 1: How can our transportation investments be used to best serve regional economic growth?

Key Discussion Points

1. There is a lack of connectivity in our regional trail system. Trails attract workers and business that follow them.
2. Metroplan could help with access to sites for companies wanting to locate in the region.
3. Communication between industry and government is key because people need to know where to get funds and efforts should be coordinated.
4. Current transportation plans and policies are good for longer commutes and cross town connections, but are not connecting communities at the neighborhood level. The “last mile” of a trip is not being served by current trends.
5. Cities don’t access Metroplan’s knowledge base for investments and decisions.
6. Metroplan’s reach doesn’t go beyond mayors and county judges. City councils and other government officials have less access. Mayors aren’t as able to think past short term issues “putting out fires,” but the alderman or commissioners have less time for public engagement.
7. Metroplan could become more engaged with local economic development staffs, chambers and city officials. Locals might be able to identify available resources better.
8. Bike paths can be a great recruitment tool, even in bedroom communities.
9. When courting the tech industries bike trails and transit are often on their short list for a community. Lack thereof, can eliminate that community.
10. Ozone Actions Days is a highly visible event that should be leveraged to draw more attention to Metroplan and its work.
11. More employment is needed in outlying locations, which may help reduce commuting.
12. Investments should connect commuters to the urban core. Ease of mobility to downtown core.
13. The LR port could provide opportunity to connect our region.
14. Transportation should be accessible for all economic classes.
15. Less car centric project investments. Maybe a rail system.
16. Arterial network could be better invested in to connect people to jobs.
17. Find ways to match federal funding.
18. Regional collaboration is key to come up with transportation funding.
19. Private industries need to be engaged in transportation investments.
20. Our region needs to brand, sell its diversity, and tell its story to change its perception.

Question 2: How are issues related to the economic vitality of a community similar between urban, suburban and small communities? How are they different?

Similarities

1. Walkability is essential for every place. Older and younger are drawn to this trend and are making decisions on where to live based on this. This provides choice.
2. Long commutes are no longer desired. People want to live, work and play closer to home.
3. Infrastructure condition is poor universally. Cost of new infrastructure changed development trends since the Great Recession.
4. All communities struggle with segregating themselves from a regional identity. Economic development should be a regional goal more so than an individual goal of each community.
5. Cities with the three characters above could benefit from regional collaboration.
6. Health and wellness, trail development and the medical community should be a centerpiece.

Differences

1. Small communities lack necessary infrastructure or transit access, which limits growth.
2. Small communities need utilities as well to attract business.
3. Inner city areas have infrastructure but it's in poor condition, bigger cities need to modernize.
4. There is a perception that suburban areas have land for more development, but core cities are lacking this space.