

# **Regional Planning for the 21st Century**



**Oregon Chapter of the  
American Planning Association**

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# Executive Summary

**Introduction** This report takes a comprehensive look at regional planning in Oregon and proposes a new framework to improve regional planning statewide. There are numerous policy issues, including but not limited to, climate change, transportation, and land use, that may be addressed more effectively and efficiently through regional coordination than could be achieved by individual jurisdictions acting independently. As governance becomes more complicated due to complex intergovernmental issues, increased regulation and litigation, funding constraints, better science and technical information, and other factors, the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) Board recognizes that regional planning has an unrealized potential to improve decision-making in Oregon.

**Why improve regional planning in Oregon?** Crisis often highlights inefficiencies and weaknesses in our public institutions. The current economic crisis, compounded by cuts to state and local government, a significant backlog in public infrastructure construction and maintenance, along with Oregon's critical need to address climate change necessitate using every resource available as efficiently, effectively, and sustainably as possible.

OAPA recognizes that local and state governments are struggling to effectively address issues affecting multiple jurisdictions. Communities across the state are dealing with a number of inter-related regional issues with varying degrees of success, including:

- Climate change related issues, such as efforts to reduce green house gas emissions and adapt to climate change
- Energy facility and transmission siting across the State
- Jobs-housing balance in the Corvallis and Bend regions
- Water resources planning in the Deschutes, Klamath, and Umatilla Basins
- Destination resorts in Central Oregon
- Transportation corridors and commute-shed issues that exceed political boundaries throughout the State
- Urban and rural reserves in the Rogue Valley and Portland regions
- Urban growth boundary expansion issues
- Conservation of regionally important resource lands, natural resources and open space, transfers of development rights across the State

The OAPA Board believes that Oregon communities would benefit significantly from

a new policy framework that better integrates regional planning and decision-making. This missing element in the State's planning system could help local communities and the State by streamlining current regional efforts and in the process release the creativity of Oregon cities and counties. The authors of a recent study on regionalism in the West summed up the potential when regions come together to solve mutual problems.

*... if you bring together the right people in constructive forums with the best available information, they are likely to shape effective solutions to shared problems. What distinguishes regionalism from these other disciplines is its focus on the geography of human needs and interests.<sup>1</sup>*

A new policy framework can assist State, regional, and local entities in the implementation of regional planning and decision-making across the state, and transition from the current fragmented approach, to a more efficient, fundable, and politically feasible system. This initiative would bring a new regional focus to the core vision of Oregon's Statewide Goals: Sustainable urban centers and regions, conservation of natural resources, and prosperous agricultural and forest lands. A new framework could also adapt to existing regional structures and resources, and strengthen regional governance and state investments. The State of Oregon could use focused policies and programs to reward regional planning and decision-making and encourage its use in the future. A strengthened regional planning and decision-making body that adopts and implements a regional plan meeting state performance standards could be rewarded with a focussed state investment program and more regional control of its planning program in the future.

## Recommendations

Table 1 shows the recommendations—organized by statewide recommendations (not including the Portland Metro area) and specific regional recommendations. The recommendations are also organized by short-term activities that build capacity for regional planning (Phase 1, which should be implemented in 2011-2013) and long-term activities that employ new approaches and implementation activities (Phase 2, which should be implemented in 2013-15). We also indicated the type of organization that should initiate the activity:

- **Legis:** the Oregon Legislature, indicating that legislation is necessary to fully implement the recommendation
- **State Comm:** state commission, indicating that administrative rule changes are necessary by the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) or other state commissions
- **State Agency:** indicating that state agency policy change is necessary by the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) or other state agencies
- **Local/Region:** referencing cities, counties, special districts, Councils of Governments, or other types of organizations that work on local and regional policies).

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1. McKinney, M., Fitch, C., and W. Harmon (2002). Regionalism in the west: an inventory and assessment. *Public Land and Resources Law Review*. 23, p 3.

**Table 1. Regional Planning Recommendations, OAPA, 2010**

	Ph 1	Ph 2	State, regional, and local actions			
Recommendations	2011-2013	2013-2015	Legis.	State Comm.	State Agency	Local/Region
<b>S1. A new regional framework</b>						
S1A. The State and regions should actively work to create a new regional planning framework that is cost-efficient and effective, removes barriers to regional planning and decision-making, and increases regional coordination and cooperation.	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>S2. Addressing regional issues</b>						
S2A. The State should allow regions to work together to conduct a regional buildable lands analysis (including a housing needs analysis and an economic opportunities analysis) as the factual base for urban growth boundary expansion analysis for all local governments within that region.	X		X	X		X
S2B. Regions should consider (and the State should support) adopting regional plans.		X	X	X		
S2C. The State should adopt performance measures for regional plans.		X	X	X		
S2D. The State should empower regions that have acknowledged regional plans with planning review and funding authority.		X	X	X	X	X
<b>S3. Coordination of regional planning and decision-making</b>						
S3A. The State should enable regions to create Regional Planning Commissions.	X		X	X		X
S3B. The State should support an increased regional planning role of Councils of Governments.	X			X		X
<b>S4. Supporting regional planning and decision-making</b>						
S4A. The State should look for opportunities to audit and streamline planning (and other) laws, rules, and processes.	X			X	X	
S4B. The State should fund improvements to state and regional data collection, management, and analysis.	X		X			
S4C. The State and regions should prioritize some existing resources and consider adopting new incentive programs to support regional planning.	X		X	X	X	X
S4D. The State should authorize regions to create Regional Improvement Programs that coordinate state and other resources to effectively implement acknowledged regional plans.		X	X	X		X

S4E. The State and regions should track, provide input to, and prepare for federal legislation and programs in energy, transportation, housing, and environment that can provide new resources for regional planning.	X				X	X
<b>Regional Recommendations</b>						
R1. MPOs should consider expanding their boundaries to provide more comprehensive transportation planning within their travelsheds.	X			X		X
R2. The Central Oregon region (Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson Counties) should determine if it wants to address regional land use and transportation planning issues, and if so, what body should coordinate this activity.	X					X

Source: OAPA, 2010.