MPO-RPC Joint Webinar Series
November 16, 2023 - Q&A
Housing Costs and the Transportation-Land Use Connection

	Question	Response
1	I would like to see all multi-unit housing developments have limited parking and a required in-house car share program. Car shares greatly decrease the number of cars and the space devoted to parking stalls; and greatly increase multi-modal travel and affordability. What do the panelists think?	MPO: Car-share is definitely a great way to support car-lite living and to reduce the number of parking spaces needed at multi-family developments. Providing car-share is one mechanism that earns developers points in the City of Madison's new Transportation Demand Management program. Car-share that is available to the public can also reduce private automobile ownership, and therefore reduce parking demand. Zipcar is currently the only car-share provider available in the Madison area. Zipcar is a business, so they will consider the use potential (return on investment) when evaluating new locations for cars. If they do not think a location will be successful, a subsidy would be necessary if the property owner wants to provide car-share on site.
2	We've heard from developers that lenders won't provide funds for their projects unless there is parking provided, based on the lenders' perspectives of what is needed. What are mechanisms we can use to engage lenders in this discussion?	MPO: Although some lenders may be hesitant to fund projects with what they deem to be too little parking, this is a different problem than municipal minimum parking requirements. Eliminating or reducing municipal parking requirements is a first step in allowing developers to base the amount of parking provided on the expected demand, which will vary by housing type, location/access to jobs and services without an automobile, and the market, none of which are considered when municipal parking requirements are applied. If developers are released from these requirements and can instead provide parking based on the factors listed above, lenders should be more confident funding right-sized parking in developments than they would be to fund the construction of parking that will be underutilized and increase rents beyond the target market's ability to pay.
3	How do these development ideas fit with efforts to expand the tree canopy in Dane County?	CARPC: More compact development in urbanized areas reduces development pressure on less developed parts of the county. Trees are also important components of complete streets as they reduce vehicle speeds and enhance the bike/ped user experience by providing shade and visual appeal and helping to mitigate the urban heat island effect.

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4	Getting infill sidewalks constructed in older neighborhoods is very difficult. Madison City Engineering constructs infill sidewalks very reluctantly due to being very conflict averse. What would it take to mandate infill sidewalk construction on both sides of every street within and near the transit overlay zone?	MPO: Mandating infill sidewalk construction would take political will, as elected officials would have to approve such a requirement. In some cases, construction of sidewalks on both sides of streets may be impractical due to topography, right-of-way width, and other factors. Madison recently amended their sidewalk assessment policy to remove the requirement for adjacent property owners to pay for a portion of sidewalk installation, which eliminates one reason that sidewalk retrofits often meet opposition. Other reasons for opposition to retrofits include the loss of landscaping (even when it is within the public right-of-way) and trees; requirements for property owners to maintain and clear snow and ice from sidewalks; and sentiments such as, "nobody walks in this neighborhood," or, "sidewalks will bring the wrong kind of people into my neighborhood." It is difficult to overcome opposition based on these mindsets, yet it is important to shed light on data that debunks these perspectives in order to achieve a safe pedestrian network.
5	It's not really surprising that retrofitting sidewalks is controversial since we require adjacent landowners not only to bear some of the capital cost of building them, but require them to maintain it, too. We pay collectively to clear the snow from streets for cars. why require individuals to maintain the facilities for pedestrians?	MPO: This is something that planners, engineers, and politicians hear in regard to just about every sidewalk retrofit project. Communities have taken a variety of policy positions to address it, see the MPO's Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Requirements, Policies, and Street Standards report and its addendum for a summary of Madison-area communities' policies. Some communities have focused more on building out their separated path networks, which are maintained by the community, instead of privately-maintained sidewalks. One of the biggest barriers to publicly-maintained sidewalks is the amount of staff and equipment that would be required to clear sidewalks community-wide after snow events. Minneapolis has been investigating municipal snow removal from sidewalks; a recent report estimates that this will cost the city approximately $40 million/year.

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6	One of the biggest land use/transportation challenges I see in Madison is central neighborhood opposition to infill development and densification (or at least artificially capping density) leading to increased densification in suburban areas, generating more VMT. Can MPO/CARPC influence this issue through allocation of funding/resources for transportation projects? More to the point, will you start to use VMT production as a performance metric and way to shape/force more sustainable growth patterns?	MPO: Neither CARPC nor the MPO have any regulatory authority to force this type of change. However, both agencies support policies that aim to reduce driving and increase use of alternative transportation. CARPC's Regional Development Framework promotes development that (1) reduces greenhouse gas emissions and fosters resilience to climate change; (2) increases access to jobs, housing, and services for all people; and (3) conserves farmland, water, natural, and fiscal resources. The Framework aims to achieve those goals through a set of objectives including, "increase the percent of development that is compact, mixed, walkable, and where feasible, transit supportive." The Framework further recommends three growth strategies to realize that objective: 1. Focus growth in centers and corridors; 2. Prioritize growth in already developed areas (also known as infill development); and 3. Plan complete neighborhoods Carrying out these strategies and generating more compact, mixed, walkable areas will reduce driving, or VMT. VMT is a measure of total miles traveled by motor vehicles per day. VMT is also expressed per-household or per-person to understand the amount people drive, separate from the effect of population change. Both CARPC and the MPO track VMT trends over time. VMT can be viewed on the MPO's Performance Measures Dashboard. The MPO can influence development patterns that would reduce VMT through funding allocation. Transportation projects requesting federal STBG-Urban funding will score more points and have a greater chance of being selected by demonstrating that they (1) support employment or mixed-use centers and/or serve mixed-use corridors; (2) enhance multi-modal transportation options; and (3) increase use of alternative transportation modes. Source: Selection Process for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) - Urban Program In summary, how much we drive is a function of the types of communities we live in. Creating more places to live in compact, mixed use, connected locations with many transportation options will reduce VMT.