

**Blueprint Learning Network
Oakland, November 13, 2007**

**Making it Real: Public Engagement, Environmental Justice and Blueprint Printing
Peer-to-Peer Exchange
Breakout Session #1
Using Data to Define Regional Issues**

Discussion Questions:

- How can data be used to showcase key regional issues?
- How can data be used to mobilize target populations?
- What are some of the lessons that can be learned from regions that have crafted regional indicator reports?

The background for the discussion included reference to asthma rates being higher in neighborhoods around the port of Oakland, and also the California Regional Progress Report on indicators related to the Regional Blueprint Planning goals.

Key Discussion Points:

- Challenges of data in showing what happens below a county or regional level, at the neighborhood level: For example, in Alameda County there are different asthma rates geographically. The rates only show the tip of the prevalence. Spikes are shown in visits to the emergency room; there are differentials with preventative care. In this case the indicator is not sensitive enough to what is really happening.
- Define the problem you want to track, then collect the data or see what you have. The purpose of the data is to inform decision making.
- Data at the regional level – needs to be disaggregated at the local level. May need proxy measures at the city and neighborhood levels. This makes it more difficult to assess conditions – scale is needed to determine disparities.
- Challenges with data collection. Example – Measurement systems use air monitors that yields averages, but the monitors are not near certain roadways that could be environmental hazards. Thus, it is harder to determine neighborhood impacts. Note: Congress provided the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with funding to begin developing a nationwide environmental health tracking network and to develop environmental health tracking capacity within state and local health departments. This will help assess the links between health and environmental hazards. California has received funding to help establish an environmental health surveillance system. See www.catracking.com (Note: partners include Ca. Department of Public Health, Cal/EPA, U.C. Berkeley School of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Tracking Implementation Advisory Group).

- For air quality, traffic is sometimes a proxy measure. But in neighborhoods need to collect primary data.
- There are technical issues and process issues for indicators. Process issues include how to organize the approach, working with advisors to identify issues, review data, determine findings and engage stakeholders and decision makers. There are a lot of technical issues, especially relating to data and methodologies. Neighborhood data is hard to obtain and this is a challenge for the Blueprints.
- Indicators are about “Telling the Story” of what is happening and how to move to action.
- The Bay Area had a forum in October 2007 joining ABAG’s General Assembly with discussions on MTC’s Transportation 2035 Plan, discussing transportation, housing, climate change and other issues. MTC conducted a performance-based target analysis to help guide the development of the vision for the [Transportation 2035 Plan](#). The approach calls for first assessing three infrastructure scenarios relative to a set of five specific performance targets of congestion, vehicle miles traveled, emissions, and equity (affordability of housing and transportation). These targets call for improvements over current performance. The targets provide guideposts that allow them to test through models and other analytical tools what it might take to shape and achieve a different transportation environment 25 years in the future. These indicators will help to identify and gaps and strategies to close them. They are reflected in state statutes such as AB 32, the Governor’s Strategic Growth Plan, and federal air quality standards. MTC conducted a poll on approaches to achieve targets such as pricing strategies, and saw movement since 2003 in support. Options are needed. For example, the last plan assumed greater density in the transit corridors. More detailed planning is occurring. (See: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/2035_plan/tech_report.htm).
- Look at projections. There is a need for monitoring, set standards. Use modeling data. But it is hard to make it understandable for large audiences.
- Role of the State for supporting regional planners – through grant making to locals; some opportunities include new round of water planning (Integrated Regional Water Plans); vegetation data – mapping overlays with important habitat information; open space/farmland preservation and conversion.

Other Challenges:

- Caltrans is supporting a rural pilot Regional Blueprint planning process for three counties in the Sierra foothills – it is a challenge to normalize data for the region given (as with other rural areas and counties).
- It is difficult to get employment data (202 Employment Security data collected by EDD’s Labor Market Information Division). There is suppression of data for

confidentiality purposes and also needs to be accessed through local Workforce Investment Boards. The California Economic Strategy Panel has been conducting regional economic base and industry analyses with funding from the California Workforce Investment Board that includes regional data that can be obtained for counties – see <http://www.labor.ca.gov/panel/espcrepindex.htm>. Another possible data source might be tax data from the Franchise Tax Board.

- There is a challenge with getting regulators (such as FHA) to buy off on data methods/assumptions in forecasting and models, and to try to incorporate them into plans with locals and with statewide goals. Base case/policy assumptions for the future. The federal agencies have statutory requirements re: modeling (i.e., conformity determination). They will try to support the regions, if they monitor and show they are working, within current statutes. The models are moving beyond historic trends to try to capture what is really going on – things are moving so fast and changing. The Blueprints have challenges to the modeling because of the impact of local government decisions.

Other Comments:

- EPA has data sets – they need input from regional planners.
- Merced County resource agencies are looking at layers, trying to identify where to grow and not re: sensitivity of resources.
- It is important to demonstrate that information is being used in decision making.
- One of the State agencies should step forward to help the regions with the data – OPR would be good
- Good decision making hinges on good data. AB 32 is generating data needs; who and how will the goals be accomplished? Decision makers can't respond in an informed manner – need information resources.

Note: for regional and county level data on progress indicators linked to the Blueprint goals, see <http://www.calregions.org/regcivic/indicators.html>.