

The two federal agencies that should go together like peas and carrots are finally making moves. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) [announced a new joint task force](#) to identify strategies to link affordable housing with transportation and to create sustainable communities.

The task force will set a goal to have every major metropolitan area in the country conduct integrated housing, transportation, and land use planning and investment in the next four years. To facilitate integrated planning, HUD and DOT seek, through HUD's proposed Sustainable Communities Initiative which it will administer in consultation with DOT, **to make planning grants available to metropolitan areas**, and create mechanisms to ensure those plans are carried through to localities. DOT will encourage Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to conduct this integrated planning as a part of their next long-range transportation plan update and will **provide technical assistance on scenario planning**, a tool for assessing future growth alternatives that better coordinate land use, and transportation planning.

This overdue partnership shows that the Obama Administration recognizes the importance of linking transportation to housing in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from driving, create more sustainable development patterns and save citizens money and time through sensible land use planning.

Fortunately for California, this process of linking housing and transportation planning has already begun — thanks to SB 375, which became law last year. But one of the key complaints that MPOs have had with SB 375 is that the state provides no new funds for them to conduct the integrated planning required by the new law. So having HUD and DOT provide grants and technical assistance will be a major help for California MPOs when it comes to complying with SB 375.

Once again, California is leading the country on a major environmental issue (pause while I pat myself on the back for paying taxes here). And the folks who brought us SB 375 are planning on taking their show on the road to DC to lobby for a federal version of the law. It looks like they'll find an ally with the new DC power couple, HUD and DOT.