



LIVABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE: CONTACT SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES TO COSPONSOR LEGISLATION BILL PROVIDES RDOs DIRECT RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

AUTHORIZATION: Senate Banking Committee Chairman Chris Dodd (D-CT) has introduced legislation (S. 1619) authorizing the administration's proposed sustainable communities initiative. ***The Livable Communities Act of 2009***, which includes a prominent role for regional councils, Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), promotes sustainable regional development. The proposal aims to implement cross-cutting regional and local planning and project development strategies that better integrate community and economic development, housing, land use and transportation needs.

The bill, which is cosponsored by Sens. Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR), establishes a new Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer and oversee local and regional sustainable development efforts, including two new competitive grant programs. ***The legislation specifically recognizes regional councils, rural transportation planning organizations and metropolitan planning organizations as key partners in developing and coordinating sustainable development initiatives on a regional basis.***

The two new HUD grant programs would include:

- **Comprehensive Planning Grants** would be used to create long-term regional plans integrating transportation, housing, land use and economic development. Funds may be used to develop goals and concrete strategies for carrying out regional plans. Planning grants may also be used to help local governments make necessary changes to zoning ordinances and other codes to facilitate sustainable development. Consortia of local governments must work with a metropolitan planning organization, rural planning organization or regional council to be eligible for Comprehensive Planning Grants.
- **Sustainability Challenge Grants** to assist communities in carrying out sustainable development projects outlined in their comprehensive regional plans. Eligible activities include: investment in transit-oriented development, affordable housing, public transportation infrastructure and facilities, pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfares, redevelopment of brownfield and projects to spur economic development.

Grant funding limits are established based on the population of a region. Following are details of the maximum grant a consortium may receive by population threshold:

NADO LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT: LIVABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

	POPULATION BELOW 200,000	POPULATION BETWEEN 200,000 AND 500,000	POPULATION ABOVE 500,000
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING GRANTS	Up to \$750,000	Up to \$1,500,000	Up to \$5,000,000
SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE GRANTS	Up to \$15,000,000	Up to \$35,000,000	Up to \$100,000,000

APPROPRIATIONS: *As requested by the administration, the FY 2010 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations bills approved by the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate Appropriations Committee (H.R. 3288) contain start-up funding for the Sustainable Communities Initiative.*

Both House and Senate THUD bills provide \$150 million for the administration’s joint venture between the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and HUD to fund “regional planning efforts that consider housing, transportation and energy planning in a complementary and holistic fashion.” According to the President's FY2010 budget blueprint, \$100 million is reserved for Regional Planning Grants to support linking transportation, housing and land use. Eligible applicants would include metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and consortia of HUD formula block grant recipients (including through regional council).

The Senate bill contains language stating funding “can also be used to provide regions with the tools and technology necessary to conduct effective, integrated regional planning” and reserves “no less than \$25 million” for regions with populations of less than 500,000.

The remaining \$40 million would be for Metropolitan Challenge Grants “to foster reform and reduce barriers to achieve affordable, economically vital and sustainable communities.” Grants would be used to “facilitate changes in local zoning and land use policy and practice. The objective is to provide incentives to encourage sustainable growth and reverse counterproductive growth patterns that have evolved in many areas.”

ACTION NEEDED: **NADO members are urged to contact their Senators and urge them to cosponsor the Livable Communities Act of 2009 (S. 1619).** The legislation reserves a prominent role for regional councils and RPOs in regional comprehensive planning and project development. RDOs with Senators that serve on the Senate Banking Committee (*see attached roster*) are urged to contact their offices as soon as possible. ***Senators interested in cosponsoring should contact Mitch Warren with the Senate Banking Committee at 202.224.7391.***

While there currently is not a companion measure in the House, NADO is working to identify a member from the House Financial Services Committee to sponsor and introduce legislation. RDOs with House members on the Financial Services Committee (*see attached roster*) are asked to contact those offices and urge them to sponsor legislation.

Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

(members listed in order of seniority)

Democratic Members

Christopher Dodd (CT), *Chair*
Tim Johnson (SD)
Jack Reed (RI)
Charles Schumer (NY)
Evan Bayh (IN)
Robert Menendez (NJ)
Daniel Akaka (HI)
Sherrod Brown (OH)
Jon Tester (MT)
Herb Kohl (WI)
Mark Warner (VA)
Jeff Merkley (OR)
Michael Bennet (CO)

Republican Members

Richard Shelby (AL), Ranking Member
Robert Bennett (UT)
Jim Bunning (KY)
Mike Crapo (ID)
Mel Martinez (FL)
Bob Corker (TN)
Jim DeMint (SC)
David Vitter (LA)
Mike Johanns (NE)
Kay Bailey Hutchison (TX)

House Committee on Financial Services

(members listed in order of seniority)

Democratic Members

Barney Frank (MA), *Chairman*
Paul E. Kanjorski (PA)
Maxine Waters (CA)
Carolyn B. Maloney (NY)
Luis V. Gutierrez (IL)
Nydia M. Velázquez (NY)
Melvin L. Watt (NC)
Gary L. Ackerman (NY)
Brad Sherman (CA)
Gregory W. Meeks (NY)
Dennis Moore (KS)
Michael E. Capuano (MA)
Rubén Hinojosa (TX)
William Lacy Clay (MO)
Carolyn McCarthy (NY)
Joe Baca (CA)
Stephen F. Lynch (MA)
Brad Miller (NC)
David Scott (GA)
Al Green (TX)
Emanuel Cleaver (MO)
Melissa L. Bean (IL)
Gwen Moore (WI)
Paul W. Hodes (NH)
Keith Ellison (MN)
Ron Klein (FL)
Charles Wilson (OH)
Ed Perlmutter (CO)
Joe Donnelly (IN)
Bill Foster (IL)
Andre Carson (IN)
Jackie Speier (CA)
Travis Childers (MS)
Walt Minnick (ID)
John Adler (NJ)
Mary Jo Kilroy (OH)
Steve Driehaus (OH)
Suzanne Kosmas (FL)
Alan Grayson (FL)
Jim Himes (CT)
Gary Peters (MI)
Dan Maffei (NY)

Republican Members

Spencer Bachus (AL), *Ranking Member*
Michael N. Castle (DE)
Peter King (NY)
Edward R. Royce (CA)
Frank D. Lucas (OK)
Ron Paul (TX)
Donald A. Manzullo (IL)
Walter B. Jones (NC)
Judy Biggert (IL)
Gary G. Miller (CA)
Shelley Moore Capito (WV)
Jeb Hensarling (TX)
Scott Garrett (NJ)
J. Gresham Barrett (SC)
Jim Gerlach (PA)
Randy Neugebauer (TX)
Tom Price (GA)
Patrick T. McHenry (NC)
John Campbell (CA)
Adam Putnam (FL)
Michele Bachmann (MN)
Kenny Marchant (TX)
Thaddeus McCotter (MI)
Kevin McCarthy (CA)
Bill Posey (FL)
Lynn Jenkins (KS)
Christopher Lee (NY)
Erik Paulsen (MN)
Leonard Lance (NJ)