



VIII. Beyond Local Boundaries: Cooperative and Intergovernmental Planning

In a state with 2,568 municipalities — each responsible for providing its residents with services — the practices of intergovernmental cooperation offer users considerable benefits. Among the gains that participating counties, cities, townships and boroughs can achieve from these voluntary liaisons are improved services, enhanced environments and significant savings.

A look at current cooperative practices in Pennsylvania reveals a wide variety of shared operations, services and visions. From multi-municipal zoning to regional comprehensive planning, communities are thinking beyond local boundaries — and when they do, they increase their ability both to offer services and to apply a larger vision to land use. Working together, local governments are effectively addressing many issues that cross municipal boundaries: transportation, schools, emergency services, recreation and resource protection.

Intergovernmental Cooperation was identified as the number one concern of the citizens who attended the Sound Land Use Forums. This interest in finding new and more effective ways to work cooperatively indicates a willingness to explore, adopt and implement the practices and tools that are described in this chapter. ■



A. Municipal Consolidation and Merger

DESCRIPTION:

This is a voluntary practice under state law that enables two or more municipalities to join together and become one municipality. As defined in state law, a merger is a boundary change where one unit goes out of existence and is absorbed by another, usually a larger unit. Consolidation is a boundary change where the separate lives of two units terminate upon their combination to create a new and different municipality.

BENEFITS:

This practice allows smaller communities to join together. It allows for more efficient use of land and financial resources.

IMPLEMENTATION:

This practice is often initiated by two or more municipalities in response to regional issues. It requires broad community support and voter approval.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Creation of the new **Township of Fairview, Erie County**, through the structural consolidation of Fairview Borough and Fairview Township, with implementation of a community visioning process leading to new comprehensive planning, official map and zoning and land use ordinances consistent with the community visioning citizen input.

City of St. Mary's, Elk County, was created through the consolidation of St.

Mary's Borough and Benzinger Township. A new home rule municipality was created with all new comprehensive planning, zoning and land use ordinances, which reinforce the vitality of the town center with environmentally conscious, cost-effective development around it.

Fairview Township, created through the successful merger of West Fairview Borough and East Pennsboro Township in Cumberland County.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Cumberland Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
(717) 234-2639

Elk County Planning Commission
(814) 776-1161

Erie County Department of Planning
(814) 451-6336

Assistance can be provided by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services. It can be reached at 1-888-2CENTER (223-6837). ■

B. Joint / Multi-Municipal Planning

DESCRIPTION:

Joint, or multi-municipal planning and municipal/county level planning is used across the Commonwealth to address a broad range of planning objectives including growth, economic development, infrastructure needs, education, preservation, tourism and recreation and community services. By working with neighboring jurisdictions, a municipality can increase its ability to address planning objectives that do not start and end within municipal boundaries — for example, traffic control or water and sewer connections.

BENEFITS:

This practice allows cooperating municipalities to direct uses to their most logical location throughout a larger geographic area, rather than providing for all uses within each municipality. It also allows municipalities to share technical expertise. By using a joint planning approach, a municipality can more effectively address issues that extend beyond its municipal boundary, such as transportation issues. And, it also allows for more coordinated planning within a school district.

Among the advantages to this type of planning, municipalities may:

- save money;
- reduce redundancy in infrastructure projects;
- minimize environmental impacts;
- preserve open space;
- maintain productive farmland, and
- balance population densities.

Projects with multi-municipal partners are often viewed more favorably for grant funds than single municipality projects. Joint zoning allows the transfer of development rights across municipal borders.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Multi-municipal infrastructure or resource preservation planning can be done either as part of joint planning or in a less formal planning approach such as through voluntary agreements. See the practice titled “Voluntary/ Intergovernmental Agreements” under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act in Section VIII, H.

Under current law there is no legally effective means for carrying out joint plans, other than joint zoning. Joint zoning must be based on a joint Comprehensive Plan adopted by all affected municipalities. And no municipality may withdraw from or repeal a joint zoning ordinance during the first three years of its adoption date.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Chester County — The Federation of Northern Chester County Communities adopted their regional land use plan in 1997. The Northern Federation has also cooperatively completed a wide range of planning studies on subjects including surface water runoff, wastewater facilities, transportation, scenic river management guidelines, and a feasibility study for the re-use of the Pennhurst Center.

(Joint / Multi-Municipal Planning, Cont'd)

Cumberland County — There are several significant projects involving county to county and county to municipality cooperation in economic development, sound land use practices, storm water control and greenways.

Greater Chambersburg Partnership — An important regional planning organization of public and private entities involved with education, transportation, water quality, the environment, and visioning.

Lancaster County Growth Areas — Cooperative effort of county and municipalities to designate growth areas to accommodate future development and conserve farmlands.

The Lancaster Intermunicipal Committee (LIC): Twelve municipalities are participating in a traffic congestion planning tool to develop major highway and roadway improvement plans. The LIC has recommended and will likely gain approval for a County-wide Lancaster County Transportation Authority.

Liberty Region Strategic Plan: A three municipality region centered along the corridor of improved US Route 15 is comprised of Liberty Borough and Liberty Township in Tioga County and Jackson Township in Lycoming County. The Strategic Plan was formulated to guide future growth and to capitalize upon the economic development potential of the region. Major recommendations of the Strategic Plan include: the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan, the preparation of the Act 537 Sewage Facility Plan, and the preparation of zoning, subdivision and development ordinances to guide anticipated future growth.

Mercer County Regional Council of Governments — Multi-jurisdictional organization involving programs in economic development, recreation and other projects.

Tuna Valley Council of Governments is preparing for regional joint comprehensive planning in the Bradford area, McKean County.

Warren Area Intergovernmental Co-Op is preparing for regional joint comprehensive planning in the Warren area, Warren County.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Chester County Planning Commission
(610) 344-6285

Cumberland Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
(717) 234-2639

Lancaster County Planning Commission
(717) 299-8333

Lycoming County Economic and Commercial Development Services
(717) 320-2130

Tioga County Planning Commission
(570) 723-8251

McKean County Planning Department
(814) 887-5571

Mercer County Regional Planning Commission
(724) 962-5787

Warren County Planning and Zoning Commission
(814) 726-3861

VIII. BEYOND LOCAL BOUNDARIES: COOPERATIVE AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL PLANNING

(Joint / Multi-Municipal Planning, Cont'd)

FUNDING SOURCE(S):

The **State Planning Assistance Program (SPAG)** provides funds on a 50-50 match basis for visioning and comprehensive planning projects involving multi-municipal efforts.

The **World Class Communities Program (WCCP)** also provides funds up to 50 percent for multi-municipal planning and visioning efforts.

The **Small Communities Planning Assistance Program (SCPAP)** provides up to 100 percent of the cost to prepare multi-municipal comprehensive plans and implementing ordinances. Program guidelines emphasize compliance with Community Development Block Grant Program requirements.

For more information, please contact the Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 1-888-2CENTER (223-6837). ■

C. Multi-Municipal Open Space Planning

DESCRIPTION:

This practice involves a voluntary approach to preserving and enhancing municipalities' open spaces for recreation and environmental protection.

BENEFITS:

Open space planning expands and protects natural open space linkages across jurisdictional boundaries, creates important planning and conservation partnerships, helps to preserve ecosystems rather than fragmenting them, and helps to create recreational facilities.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Multi-municipal open space planning requires broad community support and possible voter approval in each community. It helps to have incentives to encourage cooperation and also to have low-cost technical assistance to facilitate cooperation.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Capitol Area Greenbelt — The Greenbelt, a 20-mile recreation pathway that runs through the City of Harrisburg, Paxtang Borough, Pennbrook Borough, Susquehanna Township, and Swatara Township, was built in the early 1900's but never completed. Utilizing a dedicated pool of volunteers, grants, and donations, the Capitol Area Greenbelt Association has been able to work with the five municipalities in the Harrisburg area to complete the Greenbelt. In the

next two years the final 5.6 miles should be completed, connecting the pathway.

Conestoga Greenways Study

— Funded in part by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), this study looks at all the important tributaries of the Conestoga River, which flow through the participating municipalities. The study recommends a series of linked trails and parks, along with preserved private properties to be built in stages over the next generation. The first phases of this system are funded for construction in 2000.

Elizabeth Area Comprehensive Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan

— A joint planning project between Elizabethtown Borough, Conoy Township, Mount Joy Township, and West Donegal Township to develop a Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan partially funded by DCNR. The plan develops a regional approach to providing enhanced leisure time facilities and opportunities including parks and open space. The plan recommends establishment of a regional recreation and park authority and makes specific recommendations regarding acquisition and development of parks and open space areas including linear parks and greenways.

Pennsylvania Route 6 Strategic Plan

— This multi-municipal plan covers 11 counties: (Bradford, Crawford, Erie, Lackawanna, McKean, Pike, Potter, Tioga, Warren, Wayne and Wyoming)

(Multi-Municipal Open Space Planning, Cont'd)

and was recently awarded \$6,000 in state Regional Marketing Initiative funding. The plan will be developed under the guidance of a multi-county task force consisting of representatives from the public and private sector. Tasks to be completed are the documentation and evaluation of corridor assets, documentation of the history of the corridor, development of an interpretation and educational plan and development of organizational strategies.

Sandy Lake-Stoneboro Multi-Use Trail

— In Mercer County, the Boroughs of Sandy Lake and Stoneboro, in cooperation with PennDOT, are constructing a 2.7-mile multi-use recreation trail.

Swatara Creek Greenway Study —

A county sponsored planning study partially funded by DCNR which included all municipalities along the Swatara Creek in Dauphin County. The plan developed an integrated approach to conserving natural areas along the Creek while at the same time developing the stream corridor for public recreation.

FUNDING SOURCE(S):

The State Planning Assistance Program (SPAG) provides funds on a 50-50 match basis for visioning and comprehensive planning projects involving multi-municipal efforts.

The World Class Communities Program (WCCP) also provides funds up to 50 percent for multi-municipal planning and visioning efforts.

For more information, please contact the Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 1-888-2CENTER (223-6837). ■

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For more information, please contact the Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 1-888-2CENTER (223-6837).

Additional information can be found by contacting PA DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation at (717) 772-3742.

D. Multi-Municipal Waste Planning and Recycling

DESCRIPTION:

Through the Municipal Planning and Recycling Act (Act 101) of 1988, responsibility for waste planning in Pennsylvania became that of the counties. Counties were required to do comprehensive solid waste planning and management, and were permitted to control and regulate waste flows within their jurisdictions. To do so, they were given the authority to enact necessary ordinances, and must provide adequate processing and disposal capacity for municipal wastes generated within their boundaries. Counties also provide the resources of a county recycling coordinator to support municipal recycling programs.

BENEFITS:

Multi-municipal waste planning allows individual municipalities to participate in the county planning process but not be burdened with waste planning on their own.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Counties and municipalities work together to successfully implement waste planning and recycling programs. Host local municipalities are authorized to take an active role in overseeing landfills and resource recovery facilities within their boundaries. A host municipality may adopt regulations concerning truck routes to the facility and the times when the facility is permitted to receive waste.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Every county in Pennsylvania has a solid waste plan and a county recycling coordinator.

The Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority is an example of voluntary cooperation of all the municipalities in Lebanon County to form a county solid waste authority that offers county-wide waste disposal capacity and comprehensive recycling services. All 26 of the municipalities in the County are represented on the Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority Board which was formed in 1959 and operates the landfill that receives waste from local haulers.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority
(717) 867-5790

FUNDING SOURCE(S):

Grants are available from PA DEP to support county waste planning and recycling programs.

PA DEP Recycling Program
(717) 787-7382
www.dep.state.pa.us. ■

E. Multi-Municipal Transportation Planning

DESCRIPTION:

This voluntary practice allows communities to address traffic operations along corridors that pass through more than one municipality. To enhance the validity of multi-municipal planning, the planning should be coordinated with the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or Local Development District (LDD).

BENEFITS:

This practice offers a group of municipalities, on a multi-municipal basis, the ability to address a problem that is too large or complex for a single municipality, or that crosses municipal boundaries. Early planning by several municipalities can assist those municipalities affected by regional transportation projects to anticipate and plan for growth and development.

IMPLEMENTATION:

To effectively use this practice, municipalities have to actively work together to establish and administer this type of planning. If this practice is based on the cooperating/voluntary efforts of municipal officials, such plans are not enforceable.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Lancaster Inter-Municipal Committee (LIMC) — Includes the City of Lancaster and 11 surrounding boroughs and townships, has used joint transportation planning to accomplish the following:

- Report of the Transportation Task Force of the Lancaster Inter-Municipal

Committee — Produced in 1996, this report looked at all modes of transportation and made a series of recommendations, which ranged from lobbying for an increase in the liquid fuels tax, to hiring an LIMC traffic engineer, to creating a transportation authority to do road improvements.

- **Traffic Congestion Management Study** — An outgrowth of the previous report, this study looks at site specific recommendations for major traffic corridors that flow through one or more municipalities and recommends low-cost and maintenance-type improvements that would improve traffic flow. In addition, the study also lists, in order of cost-benefit ratio, non-site-specific recommendations to improve traffic flow.
- **Transportation Authority** — The formation of an authority — expected to be functioning in 2000 — was a recommendation of the original report. LIMC has proposed, and the County Commissioners have agreed to create a county-wide authority to fund, engineer, and construct road improvement projects. Such projects would be those too large or complex for a single municipality.

Washington County Highland-Ridge Study — This revitalization master plan for the Route 19 Corridor in the City of Washington will guide the community's effort in

(Multi-Municipal Transportation Planning, Cont'd)

developing a sustainable village
concept in an urban setting.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Lancaster County Planning
Commission
(717) 299-8333

Washington County Planning
Department
(724) 228-6811 ■

F. Multi-Municipal / Joint Comprehensive Planning and Zoning

DESCRIPTION:

Multi-municipal/joint comprehensive planning and zoning is a practice that utilizes a cooperative agreement between contiguous municipalities that makes it possible to establish a joint planning commission and to plan and zone for all participating municipalities. Under the MPC, the joint municipal zoning ordinance must be based on a joint Comprehensive Plan and contain a statement of community objectives that includes the basis for the geographic delineation of the area.

BENEFITS:

This practice offers one legal mechanism that allows participating municipalities to spread fair share and all-use requirements over a broader geographic area.

IMPLEMENTATION:

To implement multi-municipal zoning, more time, effort and municipal cooperation are needed to establish and administer joint ordinances. Joint zoning must be based on a joint Comprehensive Plan adopted by all affected municipalities. No municipality may withdraw from or repeal a joint zoning ordinance during the first three years of its adoption date.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Allegheny County, Crafton, Rosslyn Farms and Thornburg Boroughs — Joint plans and joint zoning ordinance in place.

Berks County Joint Municipal Comprehensive Planning

— The County funds joint plans and joint zoning. Berks County currently has 10 joint plans with one-third of the County participating. The County contributes to the Center for Local Government at Albright College, which offers a municipal official training program that certifies citizens as “master planners” to prepare them for their roles on local planning commissions.

Blair County – The Blair County Planning Commission was created in the early 1960s as a countywide regional planning agency with each of its 24 constituent municipalities plus the county unit of government as a participating member, each of which financially contributes to its operation. This structure substantially strengthens the communication, coordination, and the relationship between county level planning and local level planning.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

— Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties — along with four New Jersey counties — approach land use, transportation planning, and livability issues through a “New Regionalism” that relies upon regional design, an understanding of the Delaware Valley’s specific assets, a commitment to prioritize the reclamation of existing communities, and choice.

Lebanon County — In the absence of a county-wide ordinance, the County voluntarily administers local zoning

(Multi-Municipal/Joint Comprehensive Planning and Zoning, Cont'd)

if requested. Two-thirds of the municipalities participate.

Lycoming and Warren Counties —

The use of a county-wide zoning ordinance to aid local municipalities and their enforcement of regulations.

Newtown Area Joint Planning

Commission — Prior to their joint venture, Newtown, Wrightsville and Upper Makefield townships in Bucks County were each required to provide for all categories of land use. After joining to create a unified land use plan and adopting a joint zoning ordinance, they were able to redirect heavy residential, commercial and light development to one township, while conserving the other two townships for open space and farmlands. By creating a healthy regional mix of urban, rural and suburban environments, they were also able to save \$35 million in infrastructure costs.

Northern Montour Regional

Planning/Zoning — Three townships with small populations formed a Council of Governments and developed a Comprehensive Plan and subdivision ordinance.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
(412) 350-1000

Berks County Planning Commission
(610) 478-6300

Blair County Planning Commission
(814) 940-5978

Bucks County Planning Commission
(215) 345-3400

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
(215) 592-1800
www.dvrpc.org

Lebanon County Planning Commission
(717) 274-2801

Lycoming County Economic and Community Development Services
(570) 320-2130

FUNDING SOURCE(S):

The State Planning Assistance Program (SPAG) provides funds on a 50-50 match basis for visioning and comprehensive planning projects involving multi-municipal efforts.

The World Class Communities Program (WCCP) also provides funds up to 50 percent for multi-municipal planning and visioning efforts.

Small Communities Planning Assistance Program (SCPAP) provides up to 100 percent of the cost to prepare multi-municipal comprehensive plans and implementing ordinances. Program guidelines emphasize compliance with Community Development Block Grant Program requirements.

For more information, please contact the Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 1-888-2CENTER (223-6837). ■

G. Joint Municipal Services

DESCRIPTION:

Joint municipal services allows communities to voluntarily combine emergency services (police, ambulance and fire fighting services) to provide quality services for a larger area. Communities voluntarily practice joint recycling, which impacts how land is used/not used for landfill. Communities voluntarily enter into joint water and sewer treatment services.

BENEFITS:

This practice allows municipalities to share the costs of providing a variety of services.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Requires broad community support in all affected municipalities.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Allegheny Regional Asset District — The mission of the District is to support and finance regional assets in the areas of libraries, parks and recreation, cultural, sports and civic facilities and programs. In addition to providing grants from proceeds of the Allegheny County Sales and Use Tax, the District works with citizen boards and government officials monitoring the assets for effective operation and development.

Antrim Township, Greencastle Borough, Mont Alto Borough, Quincy Township and Washington Township — Worked together to implement a curbside recycling program for their residents.

Blair County — The Blair County Sanitary Administrative Committee was formed in the late 1960s to administer the enforcement provisions of the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act 537. This committee exists today with a dozen members of the municipalities of the county.

Chambersburg Ambulance Board — Franklin County, Chambersburg Borough, and Greene, Guilford and Hamilton Townships share ambulance services.

Chambersburg Borough and Greene Township — Have an agreement to allow the Chambersburg Police Department to serve the Chambersburg Mall, which is located in Greene Township.

Lancaster County — Joint services examples include intergovernmental grants supporting equipment sharing and charter school bus sharing.

Lehigh County — Lowhill and Weisenberg Townships share a zoning officer who is also the joint sewage enforcement officer. Lynn and Heidelberg Townships also have a similar arrangement.

Mercer County Regional Council of Governments — Developed and implemented a number of intergovernmental projects and programs, including Mercer County Community Transit, Shenango Valley Animal Shelter and Animal Control Program, the Joint Municipal Purchasing

(Joint Municipal Services, Cont'd)

Program and the Joint Municipal Traffic Signal Maintenance and Repair Service.

Quincy Township
(717) 749-5244

South Hills Area Council of Governments (Allegheny County) — developed a joint purchasing program comprised of 120 municipalities, saving local taxpayers millions of dollars.

South Hills Area Council of Governments
(412) 341-3750

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Allegheny Regional Asset District
(412) 227-1900

FUNDING SOURCE(S):

For more information, please contact the Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 1-888-2CENTER (223-6837). ■

Antrim Township
(717) 597-3818

Blair County Planning Commission
(814) 940-5978

Chambersburg Borough
(717) 264-5151

Greene Township
(717) 263-9160

Greencastle Borough
(717) 597-7143

Guilford Township
(717) 264-6626

Hamilton Township
(717) 264-2946

Lancaster County Planning Commission
(717) 299-8333

Lehigh County Planning Commission
(610) 264-4544

Mont Alto Borough
(717) 749-5808

H. Voluntary Agreements and Intergovernmental Agreements Under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act

DESCRIPTION:

Voluntary agreements, such as a Memorandum of Understanding, provide a mechanism for carrying out policies and programs that involve more than one municipality or municipalities and a county.

Such agreements can be used for a number of purposes, including:

- a) Economic development projects;
- b) Operation of some facilities and services; and,
- c) Planning for multi-municipal resources.

Pennsylvania's Intergovernmental Cooperation Act affords the Commonwealth's municipalities broad authority for intergovernmental cooperation.

BENEFITS:

A municipality is enabled to cooperate or agree in the exercise or transfer of any function, power or responsibility with any other municipality or district in Pennsylvania, the federal government or any other state or its governmental units. Multi-municipal or regional planning is promoted through such agreements.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Although the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act appears to authorize agreements for any purpose, their use for planning and zoning has been challenged on the grounds that the Municipalities Planning Code is

more specific than the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, and therefore is controlling over planning and zoning.

EXAMPLES IN PENNSYLVANIA:

Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority is another example of voluntary cooperation of all the municipalities in Lebanon County to form a county solid waste authority that offers county-wide waste disposal capacity and comprehensive recycling services. All 26 of the municipalities in the county are represented on the Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority Board which was formed in 1959. The Authority owns and operates the landfill that receives waste from local haulers.

Lancaster County Planning

Commission, by using municipal resolutions adopted by adjoining municipalities, has established the alignment of growth boundaries. It is also actively encouraging groups of two or three municipalities to enter into agreements to form water and sewer authorities and to engage in joint comprehensive planning and zoning.

Northern I-99 Enterprise Zone in Blair County is comprised of the City of Altoona, two boroughs, and two townships, and is utilizing inter-municipal agreements and tax-base sharing to advance economic development along the I-99 growth corridor.

(Voluntary Agreements and Intergovernmental Agreements, Cont'd)

South Central Assembly for Effective Governance — Adams, York, Franklin, Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry, Lebanon and Lancaster counties created a membership of over 300 individuals who serve on 14 committees to address specific concerns and undertake studies, examine innovative ways to deliver government services, and to recommend improvements.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For more information on the Northern I-99 Enterprise Zone, contact the Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 1-888-2CENTER (223-6837).

Blair County Planning Commission:
(814) 940-5978

Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority:
(717) 867-5790

Lancaster County Planning Commission:
(717) 299-8333

South Central Assembly for Effective Governance:
(717) 948-6324 ■