

COORDINATION OUTLINE

The coordination outline provides an overview of the Council's cross acceptance, dispute resolution, public participation, and related regional planning and coordination activities. It focuses on how the Council helps to resolve inconsistencies among the various (local/regional/state) plans and programs.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Council actively seeks public participation in all of its endeavors. Every meeting of the Council and its committees is advertised in Florida Administrative Weekly. Additionally, Council and committee meeting notices/agendas are distributed to the news media and directly to interested persons who have requested to be placed on the Council's notification lists. Agendas are also available to the public through the Internet via the World Wide Web. The Council's home page Internet address is <http://www.ncfrpc.org>.

Citizens participate in Council programs in a variety of ways. Ongoing citizen participation is accomplished by including eight non-voting citizen members on the Council and various Council committees. This format allows direct citizen input at the policy-making level. Also, citizen advisory committees are created for special projects in which more organized citizen input is desirable.

In developing the regional plan, the Council held one public workshop during the early stages of plan formulation to describe the regional planning effort and to receive input from the public regarding the content, structure, and application of the plan as well as to receive input regarding the process of plan formulation and adoption. Additionally, the Council will hold at least three well-advertised meetings at different locations throughout the region to describe the content of the proposed plan submitted to the Executive Office of the Governor and to receive public comment regarding the proposed plan.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Council has adopted a dispute resolution process (Rule 29C-8, Florida Administrative Code) designed to reconcile differences in planning, growth management, and other issues among local governments, regional agencies, and private interests. The voluntary process attempts to identify and resolve problems early, provide a range of dispute resolution options, appropriately involve all affected parties, and be both time- and cost-effective.

CROSS-ACCEPTANCE

Chapter 186.505(22), Florida Statutes (F.S.), states that regional planning councils have the power "to establish and conduct a cross-acceptance negotiation process with local governments intended to resolve inconsistencies between applicable local and regional plans, with participation by local governments being voluntary."

In order to encourage up-front compatibility among the various regional planning council and local government plans, the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council has established a voluntary cross-acceptance process which can be used to prevent high-profile conflicts between plans of two regional planning Councils, between the regional planning Council and local government plans, and between plans (and plan amendments) being developed by adjacent local governments.

HOW THE CROSS-ACCEPTANCE PROCESS WORKS

The Council's cross-acceptance process consists of an informal, non-binding, staff-level review of local government plans/plan amendments as well as strategic regional policy plans/plan amendments of adjacent regional planning Councils.

The process is initiated when a local government submits a plan or plan amendment to the Council requesting initiation of the process prior to submitting the plan/amendment for review pursuant to Chapter 163, F.S. For regional plans/amendments, the process begins when the Council receives a request by an adjacent regional planning Council to initiate the cross-acceptance review. Within ten days of receipt of the plan/amendment for review through the cross-acceptance process, the Council staff will make an informal, non-binding, review of the plan or plan amendment. In the case of a local government comprehensive plan/amendment review, the Council will communicate the results of the review to the initiating local government. In the case of a regional plan/amendment review, the Council will communicate the results of the review to the appropriate regional planning Council.

For proposed regional and local plans/amendments, staff review will consist of a determination as to its effects on regional resources or facilities identified in the regional plan and extrajurisdictional impacts on adjacent local governments. The review will include recommendations as to how the plan/amendment can be made to mitigate significant adverse impacts on adjacent local governments as well as ensure its consistency with the Council's regional plan.

The Florida Department of Community Affairs is considering use of the cross-acceptance process by including it in the new local government comprehensive plan Intergovernmental Coordination Element (ICE) rule 9J-5.015(4)(a)4.a.(iii), F.A.C., as an alternative means of demonstrating intergovernmental compatibility between plans. The Intergovernmental Compatibility requirement of 9J-5 states the ICE element must demonstrate consideration of the particular effects of the local plan upon development within adjacent and other affected local governments. Rule 9J-5 encourages local governments to accomplish this by demonstrating compatibility between local government ICEs, including the compatible identification of resources, facilities and community characteristics, definition of significant impacts, and description of mitigation criteria or standards in one of three ways, of which one is through the completion of the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council's cross-acceptance process.

THE COUNCIL'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VOLUNTARY CROSS-ACCEPTANCE PROCESS

The Council is authorized to review and comment on local government proposed comprehensive plans and plan amendments by Chapter 163, F.S., and through contractual agreements between the Council and the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The Council's review of proposed plans/amendments is limited to the effects on regional resources or facilities identified in the regional plan and extrajurisdictional impacts which would be inconsistent with the comprehensive plan of the affected local government. Council review of adopted plans/amendments consists of a determination of consistency of the plan as amended with the regional plan. The Council's review findings are considered by DCA during its compliance review of local plans/plan amendments.

This process must be followed regardless of any agreements reached through or modifications made to local plans/amendments as a result of the Council's voluntary cross-acceptance process. Furthermore, any determination or recommendation made by Council staff through the voluntary cross-acceptance process is subject to review and reversal by the DCA through the Chapter 163, F.S., review process described above, with or without a recommendation to do so by the policy body of the Council.

The Council's cross-acceptance process does not obligate the local government or adjoining regional planning Council to change its plan/amendment as a result of the process; nor does it obligate the Council to find the plan/amendment consistent with the regional plan through the Council's formal review processes should the local government or adjoining regional planning council implement any or all of the staff recommendations contained in the cross-acceptance review.

REGIONAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

The Council conducts a number of various planning activities and programs. These activities and programs include intergovernmental coordination and review, developments of regional impact review, functioning as a regional information center, hurricane preparedness planning, regional public facilities planning, hazardous materials emergency management planning, staffing of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville urban area, staffing of county transportation disadvantaged programs, and local government technical assistance. These activities and programs are discussed below.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION AND REVIEW (IC&R)

One of the ways the Council implements its regional plan is through a federal/state/regional review process formally known as the Intergovernmental Coordination and Review process. The Governor has designated the state's eleven regional planning Councils as areawide clearinghouses for federally-funded projects that affect local governments in Florida.

The Council reviews these applications/projects to avoid and/or mitigate potential adverse impacts that may be created by an activity in neighboring communities or counties, insure coordination and consistency with local government and comprehensive regional policy plans, and to avoid duplication or conflict with other area programs.

DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL IMPACT (DRI) REVIEW PROCESS

The DRI review process provides state, regional, and local agencies the opportunity to evaluate the impacts of large-scale development projects. The potential impacts of a proposed DRI project on adjacent local governments and on regional resources and facilities are identified by the Council and measures to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts are developed for inclusion in the development order issued by the local government of jurisdiction.

REGIONAL INFORMATION CENTER

The Regional Information Center is the information service and publication center of the Council. It includes a library, a research service, and public information resources. The Center is often the starting place for many developers, consultants, marketing specialists, media representatives, students, and planners looking for regional statistics and information. The Council is a Florida Census Data Affiliate and an official repository for federal home loan disclosure reports. Data research requests are filled on a regular basis.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

In 1990, the Council completed its first five-year update of the regional hurricane evacuation and inland shelter studies. Both regional and county plans were prepared by the Council in 1985. The 1990 regional study focuses on updating the number and location of people who need to evacuate in the event of a hurricane, including any special needs created by disabilities or age. The study includes the location and type of shelter spaces available to accommodate evacuees. Evacuation routes and potential impediments, such as flooding, to the movement of vehicles are also discussed. A technical committee composed of county civil defense directors, representatives of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and the American Red Cross assisted in this effort.

REGIONAL PUBLIC FACILITIES

Since 1987 when its comprehensive regional policy plan was initially adopted, the Council has assisted the region's counties in creating regional landfills and regional library systems. In a time when economics, new technologies and/or other factors are forcing local governments to look for safe and cost-effective alternatives, the Council can provide the expertise and forum for developing regional solutions to a number of problems facing local governments in Florida.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), also known as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) requires the preparation of local emergency hazardous material response plans. In Florida, hazardous materials emergency response plans have been developed utilizing the eleven regional planning Council districts and state-appointed local emergency planning committees (LEPCs). The emergency response plan for the North Central Florida Region was adopted by the Local Emergency Planning Committee on June 9, 1989, and last updated on May 19, 1995.

Florida follow-up legislation also requires the state's 67 counties to each prepare a county hazardous materials emergency response plan. The county plans, in turn, form the basis of the regional plans. Council staff completed plan updates for seven of the region's eleven counties in 1995. The updates include site-specific information on facilities that contain extremely hazardous substances. The plans identify the quantities of hazardous material on-site, the vulnerable zone that could be impacted by a worse-case release, and the probability of a release occurring.

The LEPC, with financial assistance from the state, also organizes free training sessions for emergency fire and rescue teams, police, and others whose job is to respond to accidents which may involve hazardous materials. Different levels of training are being provided to the "First Responders" with the first level focusing on how to safely recognize and make proper notifications for possible hazardous materials incidents.

THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR THE GAINESVILLE URBANIZED AREA

Through an agreement signed by the Florida Department of Transportation, Alachua County, and the City of Gainesville, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area (MTPO) was formed to conduct transportation planning activities in the Gainesville urbanized area. This program makes the area eligible to receive federal funds for transportation projects. The Council serves as the staff providing technical and administrative assistance in developing transportation plans and programs.

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM

Another major transportation planning activity of the Council is the Transportation Disadvantaged planning program. Counties are required to develop plans in order to receive state funds to increase transportation services to low-income, elderly, and handicapped persons. The Council serves as the designated official planning agency for nine counties in the region. The MTPO serves as the planning agency for Alachua County while the Taylor County Commission is the designated official planning agency for Taylor County. These agencies are responsible for conducting planning studies needed to increase transportation services to low-income individuals, elderly individuals, and persons with disabilities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Council also offers technical assistance to local governments which do not have available staff or expertise for certain activities. These activities range from comprehensive planning to community development.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ASSISTANCE

The Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act requires local governments to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans which are consistent with regional and state comprehensive plans. In addition, local governments are required to adopt land development regulations to implement their comprehensive plans. Since this legislation was initially enacted back in 1975, the Council has assisted nearly every local government in the region with preparing all or a portion of their comprehensive plans and development regulations. Technical assistance on plan amendments and general administration of local planning programs is provided on a continuing basis to many of these same local governments by Council under contract.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

The Council also assists local governments in assessing their community development needs, then applying for and administering Community Development Block Grants. The federal block grant program, administered by DCA, helps local governments address the need for housing rehabilitation of low-and moderate-income occupied dwelling units, the need for the commercial revitalization of downtowns, and the need for revitalizing public facilities in neighborhoods occupied by low-and moderate-income persons.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST GRANTS

The Council also assists local governments in preparing applications for Florida Communities Trust Florida Forever grant funds, a program designed to assist local governments in purchasing sensitive lands within their communities. The Council has prepared or helped to prepare six applications, five of which have been funded.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic development program of the Council consists of economic development planning and technical assistance, Areawide Development Company (SBA loan packaging) activities, and tourism promotion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (EDD)

Since the federal Economic Development Administration designation of the region as an Economic Development District in 1978, the Council has continued to maintain a high level of involvement in providing technical assistance to local governments and development authorities in order to promote economic growth.

CERTIFIED DEVELOPMENT COMPANY (CDC)

In cooperation with local businesses, financial institutions, and community organizations, the Council created a non-profit corporation in 1983 to package Small Business Administration 504 loans. The corporation is certified by the SBA to operate as a Certified Development Company to provide subordinated mortgage financing to eligible small and medium-sized commercial and industrial businesses in the area. The Council also assists businesses with Small Business Administration 7(a) loan packaging and is currently in the process of establishing an intermediary relending (revolving) loan program.

THE ORIGINAL FLORIDA TOURISM TASK FORCE

The Council developed a tourism strategic plan in 1992. Upon completion, the Council entered into a formal agreement with public and private agencies in the region's counties whose representatives form a Tourism Task Force to undertake promotional efforts and other activities for tourism throughout the region. The Council provides in-kind staff assistance to this on-going effort.