Implementation Steps for
Two Strategies Promoting Jobs/Housing Balance:
Local Preference Housing &
Shared Work/Communications Centers

Final Report

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Introduction

The Ventura Council of Governments (VCOG) received a grant from the South California Association of Governments (SCAG) in the spring of 2005 to advance the programs identified by the Santa Barbara-Ventura Inter-Regional Partnership report entitled "Taking Action Regionally".

VCOG chose to study 3 policy recommendations from the report as well as possible immediate next steps that would lead to defining implementable initiatives. This would allow for implementation leading to action on at least one or two policies, and possibly become a catalyst for advancing the inter-regional dialogue which the Partnership had initiated.

Background

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments with the support of the counties of Santa Barbara and Ventura received a California Housing and Community Development Department grant in 2002 to create an "inter-regional partnership" comprised of the local governments, government agencies, and business and community leaders in the two-county area.

The purpose of the grant was to identify and address issues related to mobility and jobs/housing balance, create new analytical tools and develop strategies for promoting jobs-housing balance in the future.

A report on the process and its findings was completed in July, 2004 for the Inter-Regional Partnership specifically focusing on jobs, housing and mobility entitled Taking Action Regionally. The report was prepared by John Jostes, Interactive Planning and Management, LLC along with several sub-contractors.

One of the key components of the report is the section on policy recommendations. In it, there are 52 policies for either immediate or near term actions grouped into 7 broad categories as follows:

- Inter-Regional Communication and Collaboration – 8 policies
- Advancing Housing Policy that Reflects Regional Priorities and Perspectives – 12 policies
- Integrating Regional Thinking into Job Creation and Economic Development – 4 policies
- Local Permit Processing and Streamlining Improvements – 5 policies
- Support Ongoing Programs to Address Congestion – 8 policies
- Public Education and Involvement Opportunities – 5 policies
- Legislative Advocacy for Change – 10 policies

Twenty-four, or almost half of the policies, were identified for immediate (within 6 months) implementation. Although the project identified a valuable set of policy options, there was no funding to develop steps necessary to implement its recommendations.

Recommendations Chosen for Implementation

Attaining jobs-housing balance as a congestion mitigation strategy was the foundation of the report recommendations. The goal of jobs-housing balance is to reduce the vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled associated with the journey to work. The basic idea is to get more people to live close to where they work.

It should be noted, if only tangentially, that jobs-housing balance can be seriously questioned as a means for reducing inter-regional traffic flows. For example, that the journey to work accounts for less than half of all trips in contemporary society and the fact that the number of two-worker families has grown substantially are just two of the issues. (See **Travel By Design**, Boarnet and Crane, Oxford University Press, 2001, for a more complete discussion of jobs-housing balance).

The policy recommendations chosen for study in this report are two opposite approaches to creating more physical proximity between home and work. One can help some people live physically closer to their workplace and the other can help move some workplaces virtually closer to where people live. The former is a strategy for the long run, the latter lends itself to benefits in the short run.

The recommendations are from those identified in the Report for *immediate action – within six months*.

Housing Policy #3
"Encourage local agencies, housing developers, larger employers, not-for-profit foundations, and others to jointly establish local waiting lists for below-market rental and purchase housing. Such waiting lists would be used to place local employees with less than 200% average median income in local housing to the greatest extent allowed by fair housing law." (Page 18)

This will be discussed as *local preference housing*.

- Local Preference Housing has been discussed at a number of meetings attended by elected officials and city and county staff of both counties since the report was published, but no plan for implementation has been developed.

Congestion Relief Policy #3:
"Initiate the development, funding and use of video conferencing centers as satellite work/conferencing stations by business, business parks, industry and government. These video conference centers would be designed to function as neighborhood work sites and

minimize unnecessary vehicle trips between Santa Barbara South Coast and Western Ventura County." (Page 21)

This will be discussed as *shared work and communications centers*.

According to John Jostes, there have been no formal attempts to advance this recommendation since the Report was published.

A third issue – permit streamlining - was briefly considered but due to limited time and funding the inter-county planning group encouraged a focus on the issues of local preference housing and shared work and communications centers.

Local Preference Housing (LPH)

Housing prices in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties have risen greatly and make it difficult for those who work in the area to live there. The idea of LPH is for local government to intervene in the housing market to provide opportunities for the essential employees who are priced-out of increasingly expensive local housing markets – the moderately paid teachers, store clerks, police and others. Housing affordable to these people tends to be available only at more remote locations. That robs the community of some of its most valued members and generates unnecessary vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

LPH requires local government to go a step beyond ensuring that new housing is produced and sold at affordable prices. It requires that local governments arrange to give local employees preference in buying the affordable housing that is produced. For example, the Ventura City Housing Authority reported that the affordable units in a recent large private housing development in the City of Ventura were purchased almost entirely by people who work in Santa Barbara County.

When looking closely at the theory and practice of LPH, it is clear that there are different opportunities depending on the context. LPH can be applied in the following housing programs:

First Time Home Buyers (FTHB)

Some local governments provide financial assistance to prospective buyers of their first home, usually in the form of a partial down payment in exchange for a long term residence commitment or a small equity position. Housing developers are not directly affected, unlike with inclusionary zoning programs. However, FTHB programs tend to target middle income rather than low income families.

Cities that offer FTHB programs can decide whether to add a requirement to give preference to local employees or residents. Of course, providing the preference for existing residents does not affect mobility. Two programs in Ventura County – Santa Paula and Port Hueneme – illustrate the difference in policies.

Santa Paula which is just beginning its FTHB program is planning to restrict eligibility to existing residents or employees of Santa Paula. Port Hueneme's policy is different. First time home owner assistance is available to any qualified buyers, regardless of their current residence or employment location. Port Hueneme has the lowest rate of home ownership in the county and the city wants to encourage anyone who is ready and willing to purchase. Of those in the program so far, only 16% previously lived in the city. Local employment status was not tracked.

The limiting factor on the reach of FTHB programs is the size of the fund that supports the loan program. Initial funding for the Santa Paula program is $400,000. It is distributed in $40,000 increments as a loan to buyers who stay in the house for 10 years. (Short of that, the city requires payback of 90% of the loan plus a percentage of the profit from the sale.) Therefore, only 10 buyers can be accommodated without additional funding for the program.

There is currently $230,000 in the City of Ventura's fund, with $450,000 having been invested in 2003 and 2004 together (to make 10 loans). Ventura loans $45,000 per family, so the current fund will support about 5 more families.

A second problem is that even that level of support is not enough in the current housing market. Houses in Santa Paula are selling for between $400,000 and $500,000 which requires $80,000 to $100,000 down payment and a substantial monthly mortgage payment. So Santa Paula staff is working with a number of other agencies in the county to create a package of financial aids that they can bundle to offer as part of its FTHB program.

Inevitably, the fund size versus the proceeds needed to make a significant contribution will always severely limit the number of beneficiaries.

Local Public Housing

Many cities develop a small amount of housing annually, usually working with community-based non-profit corporations. Community Development Block Grants, housing development fees (paid by developers in lieu of providing low or very low income units), redevelopment funds, condominium conversion taxes and other sources are combined to provide the funds for municipal housing projects.

It would appear clear that when a local jurisdiction pays to build a housing project, the jurisdiction can impose whatever public interest obligations it can justify. The main barrier is concern for *fair housing laws*. The Fair Housing Act requires that policies established cannot create the effect of denying admission to a program on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. While the appearance of discrimination is a legitimate issue, there appears to be no actual legal problem so long as preferences for residents or employees clearly do not have this effect and findings are made to address this issue.

A second issue is that there appears to be different interpretations as to whether or not a local preference can be established when federal funds are used in a project. Section 960.206 of Title 24 states that a local Public Housing Authority "may adopt a system of local preference for selection of families admitted to the authority's public housing program." The caveat, which may be the source of the conflicting interpretations, is that while it's okay, for example, to make residency a preference, residency should not be made a requirement. Any waiting lists established are acceptable so long as they do not have a discriminatory effect, as described above. Some of the agencies surveyed do allow anyone to be placed on waiting lists but then prioritize those lists to accommodate local preference.

Note, however, that the authors of this paper are not attorneys. Therefore, the first recommendation in the steps to proceed is for Ventura County cities to establish their own legal interpretation. See page 8.

Casa de las Fuentes, developed by the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara, was the best example found in our research to illustrate a useful and legal application of LPH for employees in locally produced housing. Casa de las Fuentes is a 42 unit downtown housing project that gave preference for all 42 units to downtown workers. Those who were downtown workers and who didn't own a car got additional preference.

There is no underlying policy document such as the General Plan supporting this initiative. The City Council mandated the policy as part of its project approval. Attorneys for the City and the Housing Authority reviewed the policy and approved it because it addressed a stated need. The building was financed by the Housing Authority and the Santa Barbara Redevelopment Agency. No federal money was used.

The attorneys found a legal precedent in other cases offering local preference. University student housing requires students to qualify for the housing if they are registered and carry a specified course load. Senior housing seems to be another example. Although a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) waiver is required, public housing can be targeted specifically for seniors.

As with FTHB programs, the limiting factor is the funds available to build public housing.

Section 8 rental housing

Section 8 is a federal rent subsidy program for those who meet the income guidelines. Section 8 programs are typically administered by the local housing authority and waiting lists are common. Apparently each housing authority is free to establish priorities for local residents and employees on the waiting lists but the practice is not widespread for at least two reasons.

We were told that HUD at one time gave bonus points to jurisdictions that did <u>not</u> have a residence requirement. And, of course, the Section 8 certification is portable. A candidate can be certified in City A, and once certified can search for housing in City B. In other words, the certification process verifies the qualifications of the individual; it does not allocate some specific set of housing units.

Like FTHB programs and public housing, the limiting factor is the pool of funds available to distribute. Section 8 funds originate with the federal government and the current administration has reduced support for the program, a situation expected to continue at least until 2008.

Private Developments

Private developments, of course, generate the most new housing units in every region. Local jurisdictions sometimes have inclusionary zoning ordinances and sometimes simply negotiate affordable housing units with the developer through development agreements in exchange for density bonuses, reductions in parking requirements or other waivers from adopted policies. Developers commonly agree to provide 25% of the project as low or moderate income units or 10% as very low income units (or in some cities they pay fees into a housing fund).

Local governments can use ordinances or development agreements to further impose local priorities on the moderate, low and very low income units developers agree to produce. In other words, the city could rationally argue that affordable housing needs to benefit either existing residents or people employed locally rather than people with no connection to the community.

The city or its housing authority can help by maintaining lists of moderate, low and very low income candidates who are also current residents or locally employed. Of course, every constraint sets up enforcement issues. For example, the City of Ventura is currently considering litigation against a developer who failed to actually sell the low income units at the price he promised.

The limiting factor is not available public funds for once but the volume of housing built in any particular city, as well as the political will to consider additional constraints on developers (low income units and local preferences) and the energy to enforce them.

The context in which LPH could have its greatest impact would be when applied to market rate housing. For example, if a local jurisdiction were to require some percentage of market rate housing to be dedicated to existing local residents or employees, the housing product itself and its prices could be affected. If a developer were required to build specifically for the local market, then the housing product would be tailored to the needs and income of that market segment.

This aggressive approach would fit conditions where local housing is being produced specifically for a distant upscale labor market and where low income long time residents are being displaced in the process. Salinas is an example where low income housing is being replaced by housing being developed for Silicon Valley professionals who cannot afford housing near their work place.

While we could find no cases where a jurisdiction has actually applied local preference requirements to market rate units, activists in this field such as the Executive Director of Monterey Land Watch believe that the policy is within the discretionary police powers of the city, if the underlying need is well documented.

An interesting development applying preference strategies is Lagunitas, an innovative mixed industrial, commercial and residential project in Carpinteria that is at its final approval stage. As part of the development agreement with the city, the developer will market the project's housing units in tiers of declining exclusivity. The project's 74-unit housing component will consist of condominiums as well as both small and large-lot single family houses. These units will be marketed exclusively to employees of the project's commercial and industrial tenants during the first 45 days. Eligibility to buy will expand to include employees of the tenants of the adjacent one million square feet of commercial/industrial space during the next 30 days. Eligibility will expand again to include any employee or current resident of greater Carpinteria during the following 30 days. After that period of time, any remaining units will be sold to any interested buyer. The project is awaiting final approval contingent on construction of a highway improvement. If this project is eventually developed and if this complex eligibility arrangement is implemented, the practice should be evaluated for application elsewhere.

The Lagunitas experience notwithstanding, in order to pursue an aggressive LPH policy regarding private housing development in Ventura County, a candidate city with the right conditions and the political will would need to step-up and become a test case. It would be necessary to document the need for such a policy with a study of the dynamics of the local housing market. Such a policy might be considered for inclusion in the General Plan where it could be implemented by ordinance. Substantial legal assistance would be required for both steps, but the benefits would also be substantial.

Assessment of Potential

LPH programs will not be expensive to apply to first time home buyer programs, public housing, Section 8, or affordable units in private developments. And they will not prove to be administratively complex.

The recommendations in <u>Taking Action Regionally</u> were supported by various scenarios evaluated by a model designed to forecast inter-regional traffic in the year 2010. The Report states that "the only scenarios that significantly reduce commuting relative to the baseline are [those] which assume increased housing production, especially for the workforce." (Page 9) "Those scenarios were found to generate the fewest new commuters for many reasons, including lower job growth and higher housing production, which leads to lower housing prices than in the baseline. Also, the emphasis on affordable and workforce housing means more jobholders are able to afford houses near their jobs… Also, local preference is what really gives new housing policy some impact on commuting." (Page 10)

The scenarios described included assumptions about San Luis Obispo County, Northern Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara South Coast and Western Ventura County. While the forecast may well be realized for that extended region, the number of vehicle trips that could be saved by LPH in Western Ventura County appears to be relatively modest.

According to the report's Table 1, Baseline Scenario Implications, Western Ventura County will add about 11,500 dwelling units between 2004 and 2010. If there are 1.5 commuters per new household, 17,205 new daily trips will be generated to a variety of destinations. To put this in perspective, that total would be a little less than 10% of the 180,000 average daily traffic volume on Highway 101 between Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

LPH cannot be applied retroactively so these new units are the only candidates for local preferences. For simplicity, assume that all 11,500 dwelling units are privately developed, and that 25% are income restricted, that all of those units are reserved for local residents and employees, and that employees get half of those units. The result will be 1,437 of the new units will be owned by households with at least one person who works close by. One and a half trips per household (2,150 VT/Day) means that 87.5% of the newly generated vehicle trips (VT) would occur anyway despite a successful LPH program.

The actual number of VT reduced will probably be lower because of the following factors:

- Not all jurisdictions feel the need to apply LHP to FTHB and inclusionary private units.
- Where LPH programs have been adopted, they cover both existing residents and employees. We found no jurisdictions that monitored the actual split.
- While some of the 11,500 units added in the Western County will be public, an increasing portion of public units will be dedicated to seniors because of the aging population, for which employee distinctions are of little value.
- The confusion about the legal bounds for LPH is holding back the implementation of such programs.

LPH programs could have a very significant impact on jobs housing balance if they were applied to market rate housing. This however is legally and politically daunting and probably not feasible unless housing and traffic conditions dramatically decline.

Despite the likely modest traffic impact, LPH is relatively low cost and easy to implement in more places than it is now practiced. It can potentially improve the sense of community in those places by helping some of its service workers live locally.

Steps to Implementation

Even when the steps are clear, implementation still requires a lead organization or individual**,** i.e. a champion. A good choice would be a community-based non-profit housing advocate in Western Ventura or Santa Barbara South Coast. The Ventura Council of Governments could act as a facilitator to bring the stakeholder organizations together.

The following are recommendations for implementation:

1. Convene a committee of city attorneys to develop a legal opinion on LPH in each of its various contexts, including the politically aggressive option of applying LPH to new market rate developments.

- Circulate the legal opinion to Ventura County and cities and possibly Santa Barbara County and cities, as well as housing authorities, non-profit housing developers, and leading for-profit housing developers.

- Assuming a favorable legal opinion, hold a half-day conference to promote LPH by explaining the legal memorandum and feature practitioners of LPH explaining their procedures. Encourage all practitioners to monitor the use of the program by residents and employees in order to facilitate evaluation.

2. Request that the Local Government Commission and the League of California Cities (Institute for Self Government) include LPH in the "toolbox" of housing policies and independently or jointly assemble resources that support the policy. As it now stands, neither organization recognizes LPH as a strategy that should be encouraged although both provide resources on other housing policies.

LPH is a policy with statewide application. It would be most practical and effective for statewide organizations to monitor the practices and collect the resources that would support individual cities interested in adopting the LPH policy. In addition to the examples previously mentioned in this report, the following experiences could be centrally and more thoroughly documented:

- The City of San Francisco targeted housing specifically for teachers and police in 1994.
- California State University Channel Islands is building housing for students, employees and teachers.
- The Santa Barbara School District is building employee housing on the site of a closed school.
- The Lagunitas Project in Carpinteria, described above.

Shared Work and Communications Centers

The prospect of moving work to the workers instead of the other way around has had great potential since it was first proposed in the mid 1970s. Ironically, the initial insight by the acknowledged father of telecommuting, Jack Nilles, occurred while he was commuting from his home in Santa Barbara to his job in the Goleta Valley.

The concept of telecommuting has broadened considerably in the intervening 30 years. Initially conceived narrowly as tactic for a few employees of an information business to work at home while connected to the office via a telephone line, the modern concept embraces the evolution of a mobile work force and an array of anytime-anywhere electronic services, all supported by virtual private networks and the Internet.

The concept of distributed organizations (de-centralized offices) - is the model for this family of innovations. Technology can be a facilitator but it is organizational change that is at the heart of the matter. This is both good news and bad news. The good news is that implementation of telework initiatives are not expensive, particularly when compared to road widening and street capacity expansion. The bad news is that corporate culture resists change. However, this may be overcome since corporate culture is becoming more open to change in reaction to new technologies and the public interest may be able to capture some of the benefits of those changes.

Public sector attempts to consciously support the telework movement rose and fell during the 1990s. Southern California was a national leader in those attempts although most regions developed some type of telework initiative. The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) invested at least $10 million in shared work facilities. The City and County of Los Angeles conducted high profile work-at-home programs.

From the perspective of 2005, the various initiatives can be seen to have either failed or achieved limited success and have mostly been terminated. Home-based telecommuting continues in many corporations but often as an informal practice. However, the failures were failures of execution rather than of concept. And there were enough successes for an interested region to build upon.

This section will briefly describe four basic options that Ventura County and cities can pursue in implementing the Shared Work and Communications Centers recommendation.

Home-Based Telecommuting

Telecommuting from home is the easiest and least expensive telework initiative since it does not require a dedicated facility and staff, outside of a modest training program. Santa Barbara County Association of Governments recently initiated a flexwork program that includes a home-based telecommuting component as well as flexible work hours. A consultant was retained to recruit employers, provide policies and procedures, and train participants. The initiative is expected to produce telecommuters starting October, 2005.

The ride-sharing unit of the Ventura County Transportation Commission is responsible for telecommuting. Staff reported that current marketing efforts include a double-sided information sheet on telecommuting in the employer marketing packet. Some of the old SCAG telecommuting handbooks are available upon request. A few employers currently offer the telecommuting work option. Based on 2004 Rule 211 survey data from the APCD, one employer in Thousand Oaks has used telecommuting to reduce about 5% of its total commute trips.

Satellite Work Centers

Satellite work centers are facilities owned or leased by a single employer with work stations that are shared on a rotating basis by employees of that single employer. Facilities-based telecommuting provides an option for remote work for those employees who for a variety of reasons do not want to work at home but would like to avoid the commute and work close to home.

The problem with satellite work centers is that success requires a very large employer and a very central location. The federal government's program with centers in the suburban areas around Washington DC is the best example of currently operating satellite work centers. It is unlikely that there is a great enough concentration of employees of any single employer in Ventura County to support a satellite work center.

Shared work centers

Shared work centers are facilities with work stations that are shared on a rotating basis by employees of several employers. Various public agencies funded a number of such centers throughout Southern California in the 1990s. Caltrans in particular funded three such centers in the wake of the 1992 earthquake including one at the Simi Valley Transportation Management Association as well as one each at Ventura and Moorpark colleges.

Virtually all of those that existed in the 90s are now closed as the sponsoring agencies did not renew their seed investments. They were closed for two basic reasons. The first is that despite offering rates that were well below market or even free, occupancy averaged around 30%. The reasons for that were:

- There were operating inefficiencies. For example, despite the existence of a number of such facilities in a given region, there was no unified regional marketing effort that would have approached all major employees with all available work stations.

- The funding agencies (like SCAQMD) restricted use to telecommuters with regular offices in a central location. Free-lance, self-employed and home-based workers were not allowed.

- The facilities were often at locations convenient for the sponsors but not strategically located to attract telecommuters.

- The sponsors and their facility managers were generally inexperienced in the shared work center enterprise.

- The office product was not attractive – small cubicles were generally offered when the demand was for private offices.

- Recruitment was aimed at attracting individual telecommuters rather than at encouraging organizations to distribute their work sites.

The second reason that the facilities are now closed is the expense of operating them. Each paid their own marketing person, site management, maintenance expense, space rent, furniture expense and utilities expense. Operational subsidies were required but could not be justified beyond a demonstration period due to the low occupancy rate.

Projections based on figures available from the non-commercial shared work centers of that era suggest that a breakeven facility would have the following characteristics (costs expressed in the year 2000 dollars):

The facility would have about 60 computer equipped work stations mostly in private offices of about 12,000 square feet. That would require an initial capital investment of about $500,000 (for furniture, carpeting, computers, printers and other ancillary equipment, and signage) with operating expenses of $18,000 per month. Total investment needed for start-up and three years of operations would be almost $1.15 million. In order to break even over the three year period (including recovering the initial capital investment), the center would need to charge $590 per month for each work station and operate at 90% occupancy. Assuming rotating usage by one day per week telecommuters, the facility would accommodate 300 workers.

The executive suites industry provides a commercial version of a shared work center. A commercial shared work center typically serves the following markets:

- Micro-business – a single person with perhaps one or two employees that locates in an external office rather than in a home office.

- Corporate field office – two or three representatives/sales persons of a regional corporation share a field office in order to maintain a presence close to customers.

- Corporate outpost – one to three individuals from a corporation located in another region staff a remote office.

The economics of commercial executive suites and non-commercial shared work centers are roughly the same.

An alternative approach to a public shared work center was demonstrated between 1992 and 1995. The Telework Facilities Exchange (TFX) was sponsored by the Institute for Local Self-Government (ILSG - the non-profit research and education arm of the League of California Cities) and funded by the SCAQMD as part of the ILSG's Telecommunications for Clean Air initiative.

The TFX matched government employees working and living in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties to government work stations near their residence. So, for example, an employee of the Agoura Hills Public Works Department worked one day a week in a vacant work station located in a Metropolitan Water District office two blocks from his home in San Dimas in the San Gabriel Valley.

The advantages of the TFX over a designated shared work center include the following:

- There were no facility costs such as rent, furniture, maintenance and site management since the program used vacant work stations in existing facilities.

- There was no excess capacity since the system was demand driven. No work stations were procured until a telecommuter entered the system.

- All facilities were conveniently located for the telecommuter since the search focused on finding an available work station in a government facility very near the candidate.

The TFX was operated for 12 months. At the end of that period, there were 31 active telecommuters, 34 had been matched to a work station but had not yet started telecommuting, 23 had been approved by their management but not yet matched to a nearby work station, 2 were awaiting approval by their management and 220 were in some state of completing an application. Active participants reduced their commute distance by 88%. Detailed findings for the project are in the Final Report available from the League of California Cities or Siembab Planning Associates.

The SCAQMD made it clear that no continuing funding beyond the seed grant would be forthcoming. In the end, one year of operating subsidy was insufficient to develop a business plan and segue to self-sustaining operation. Should this type of project be tried again, the start-up package should include two years of full operational subsidy and a third year of partial funding.

Multi-Function Communications Centers

Multi-function Communications Centers (MFCC) are the most complex and potentially powerful option available – and they are more specifically what was implied by Congestion Relief Policy #3.

The idea of MFCC is to provide a public facility as a local delivery point for electronic services, many of which are now on the Internet. Examples can be found in virtually every sector, including e-government, distance education, telemedicine, e-retailing, e-commerce, and others. Electronic services are expected to grow substantially as public corporations and private enterprise transition to the modern model of distributed organizations. These shared public communications facilities would also offer meeting space equipped for video and audio conferencing; and would host meetings of all sorts by all parties – public and private.

The Greater Thousand Oaks Telecommunity (www.gtot.org) is a local facility originally funded by Caltrans which continues to operate in Thousand Oaks. It primarily provides video conferencing as a substitute for long distance travel (Trans-Pacific and Transcontinental) rather than intra-regional trip reduction. And it provides services to the local school district. It is not currently providing trip reducing services to the public. Nevertheless, the facility can provide a good building block for a MMFC initiative. It has a significant amount of unused capacity so the opportunity exists to program it for the functions needed by the public without disrupting its existing programs.

Making such facilities programmable – offering a variety of functions that can be changed over time in response to demand – makes them more functionally robust than a facility dedicated to a single purpose. To expedite this, most of the key institutions in the county will need to move some of their functions out of their central facility and onto a broadband network for delivery to the MFCCs. For example, the community colleges, colleges, and universities in Ventura County could aggressively offer a wide variety of classes with a distance education option. These video-conferenced or streaming video classes could then be offered to the public through the MFCCs. Organizations in the county that currently engage routinely in some form of video conferencing include the Navy, the county courts which use video in some aspect of their arraignment or parole processes, and some private corporations. None of these examples offer public access to their infrastructure or services to the public at large.

MFCCs could also offer shared work stations as an add-on function to its core services, thereby avoiding the large investments needed in speculative development of a large dedicated telework center.

MFCCs can then literally be *programmed* to provide the functions needed by the neighborhood in which they are placed. A center in the middle of a community of seniors could specialize in telemedicine while one in the middle of young singles could specialize in education and workforce preparation.

The Blue Line TeleVillage (in which the authors of this paper were directly involved) in Compton, funded by the LACMTA through the Congestion Management Air Quality (CMAQ) program, demonstrated the proof of concept. Its final report is available either from the LACMTA or Siembab Planning Associates (www.siembab.com).

Assessment of Potential

Currently, the use of network technology to reduce traffic is nearly non-existent in Ventura County and with some humble beginnings now being established in Santa Barbara County. Ironically, this means that almost any modest initiative has the potential to advance the goal of traffic reduction.

There are about 300,000 jobs in Ventura County. Assuming 80% of those jobs generate a vehicle trip (VT), there are around 240,000 job-related VT per day in Ventura County. If the journey to work makes up about half the travel in the County, then there are at least another 240,000 VT per day for a total of around 500,000 VT per day for all purposes.

The journey to work, journey for work (primarily work related travel to meetings, conferences and the like), and journey to acquire services are the main targets for trip reduction. Audio and video conferencing can have an immediate impact at low cost. The TFX and MMFC initiatives will require an investment but can still be deployed within a couple of years. It is not unreasonable to believe that a 1% reduction of about 5,000 VT per day could be achieved with two years. This is about twice the potential in the short run of LPH over a longer period of time. The eventual target for shared work and communication centers would be at least 30% or about 150,000 VT per day within 10 years, if all options were aggressively pursued.

Compared to LPH, Shared Work and Communication Centers have a potentially much larger impact on travel and can begin to have a significant impact in a shorter time frame – within 3 years. Partnerships with schools or other agencies for the shared use of their facilities could facilitate this timeline. A demonstration project involving a modest network of communication centers would cost a couple million dollars. County-wide expansion to achieve the potential would require a significant investment in network infrastructure which, in the current fiscal environment, would require diversion of some funds now used to increase road and intersection capacity. A Shared Work Exchange project could be accomplished for less investment, also within the timeframe.

As with LPH, capturing significant outcomes from Shared Work and Communications Centers will depend on a strong commitment and political will.

Steps to Implementation

As discussed in the LPH section, no progress toward implementation will occur without a key organization stepping up to provide leadership. In this case, that lead role can probably be best played by the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). VCOG could facilitate and coordinate as needed.

VCTC is a good choice because its mission involves planning for county-wide mobility and access. It also brokers the Congestion Management and Air Quality funds that are probably the best source of support for whichever initiative is pursued.

Three self-reinforcing projects should be considered.

The first is quickly and cheaply convert a meeting room in every government facility (city, county, state and federal) in Ventura County into an electronic meeting room with the addition of video and audio conferencing equipment. This network could be established within 3 months for about $2,000 a site. The equipment needed for the electronic meeting initiative can most likely be funded by the participating organizations themselves. Some funds will be required for marketing the new audio and video conferencing practices to each participating government office so that meetings that staff hold or attend will routinely be electronic rather than face-to-face. If aggressively pursued, inter-governmental conferencing could within the following 3 months reduce travel by government employees by up to 50%.

The second is some version of a Telework Facilities Exchange to cover at least Ventura County and the South Coast Region of Santa Barbara County. It could gradually grow to also include western Los Angeles County and southern San Luis Obispo County. This would be a relatively low cost measure and comparatively easy to implement. It could build on the progress being made in the Santa Barbara Flexwork initiative and the electronic meeting initiative.

Staging a robust demonstration project of at least three MMFCs is the third step. This would extend the same practices established in the electronic meeting initiative and the Telework Facilities Exchange to the public at large and the private sector, including especially small and micro businesses. This initiative could build on the Thousand Oaks Telecommunity Center facility and its experiences and knowledge. However, the start-up cost of this initiative will most likely be around $3 million for the initial three-year trial period.

We recommend that this report be transmitted to VCTC with the request that its Board consider these three initiatives in their work program for possible funding through the CMAQ program: electronic meetings, Telework Facilities Exchange and MMFC. VCOG should also request that its members communicate their support of this request to VCTC. VCOG should also consider holding a half day meeting of local agencies and business and community leaders to discuss implementation steps.

Initial implementation steps for the projects recommended include:

- All government agencies should be polled about the ability of each of their facilities to host electronic meetings and the status of their existing technology.

- Available work stations and candidate telecommuters in each government agency should be assessed as an evaluation of the potential for a Telework Facilities Exchange

- The services currently or near term network-ready by the post-secondary education institutions (community colleges, colleges, and universities), medical institutions, and government agencies should be assessed for the MMFC initiative.

- To better understand MFCCs, implementers should first familiarize themselves with this specialized field of practice. This could include field trips to the Greater Thousand Oaks Telecommunity Center and the Blue Line TeleVillage in Compton as well as literature searches that cover at least the LCC's Telecommunications for Clean Air program and the LACMTA's Blue Line TeleVillage Final Report

Post Script

The energy market may sooner rather than later force the issue of live-work-service proximity out of the realm of discussion and policy debate into short term action plans. If the price of oil continues to climb or carbon-induced global warming becomes a regional political priority, the responsible agencies in Ventura County should consider taking immediate action on as many of the recommendations in <u>Taking Action Regionally</u> as possible, particularly those that can be implemented and will realize an impact in a short period of time.