A Comparative Analysis of State Government Support of Regional Planning Between Michigan and Other States Nationwide

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Introduction

Throughout the past 40 years, Regional Planning Agencies in Michigan have endured despite economic instability. The level of services they provide, however, has been greatly compromised due to the elimination of state financial support. Presently, the regions' main sources of funding are subsidies from local governments and grants to carry out specific purposes (e.g., transportation, economic development). Many other states do provide funding to their regional planning agencies for the general use of planning and technical assistance, which aids the agencies in working towards regional goals and objectives. The goals of this policy brief are to look at the history of Regional Planning Agencies in Michigan in regards to their organization, and to examine how other states support their regional planning organizations (i.e., to see what funds are provided and how they're distributed throughout the regions).

Federal Legislation Promoting Regionalism

Throughout the later half of the 20th century, the federal government has made numerous attempts to promote regionalism and multi-jurisdictional coordination through legislation and incentives (Orfield, 2002). In 1966, the President issued a memorandum, addressing how federal departments and agencies can assist in the planning for regional governments (State of Michigan, 1968). In this memorandum, he requested that state and local development planning agencies work together in using common or consistent planning practices, as well as sharing facilities and resources. He also called for the development of appropriate boundaries for the planning regions, so that they would coincide with existing counties, and other regions, previously established (State of Michigan, 1968). In 1967, the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, Executive Order of the President, established a piece of legislation, known as Circular A-80, calling for the "coordination of development planning for programs based on multi-jurisdictional areas" (U.S. Bureau of the Budget, 1967). The policies and objectives are:

- To encourage and facilitate State and local initiative in developing organizational and procedural arrangements for coordinating comprehensive and functional planning activities.
- To discourage overlap, duplication, and competition in State and local planning activities assisted or required under Federal programs, and to maximize State and local resources available for development planning.
- To minimize inconsistency among Federal administrative and approval requirements placed on State, regional, and metropolitan planning activities.
- To encourage the States to exercise leadership in delineating and establishing a system of planning and development districts or regions in each State, which can provide a consistent geographic base for the coordination of Federal, State, and local development programs (U. S. Bureau of the Budget, 1967).

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Circular A-80 described a procedure for developing districts or regions throughout the state, which could achieve common or consistent goals and objectives. This procedure was used in Michigan, under the establishment of the Executive Directive 1968-1, from Governor Romney, which will be discussed later (U. S. Bureau of the Budget, 1967; State of Michigan, 1968).

Presidential Executive Order 12372 of July 14, 1982, allowed for intergovernmental review of federal programs (NARA Federal Register, 2002). The objective was to create and foster "intergovernmental partnership in order to strengthen federalism by relying on State and local processes for State and local coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance" (Georgia State Clearinghouse, 2002). In addition, "regional government entities were to be designated as a regional review office for reviewing federal grant applications for a variety of local, regional, and state projects in relation to regional plans and policies" (Michigan Society of Planning, 2002; Tri-County Regional Planning Commission Technical Memorandum Task II-I.9.3, 2002, p.28).

Several other pieces of legislation were passed between 1950 and 2000 that have had some effect on regionalism. The Housing Act of 1954 provided federal funding in the form of Section 701 planning grants to state agencies, cities, and other municipalities of over 50,000 to create planning departments and to initiate formal planning processes (Orfield, 2002, p.141). The Housing Act of 1961 made it possible for funding to be used in order to "facilitate comprehensive planning for urban development on a continuing basis" (Orfield, 2002, p.142). The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 developed the "3C" process, making the funds contingent on continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning by local and state governments. In addition, it provided federal funds to support regions in their planning efforts, as long as 1.5% of their funds be used to research and planning (Orfield, 2002, p.142).

The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 created HUD and restricted the funding of the 1954 Housing Act to regional organizations governed by "public officials representative of the political jurisdictions" within a metropolitan area" (Orfield, 2002, p.142). These types of regions are typically called Councils of Government (COGS). The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 focused on making transportation funds and other governmental be consistent with regional plans by areawide coordinating agencies (Orfield, 2002, p.143). The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 moved some of the funding away from highway development and towards regional mass transit systems (Orfield, 2002, p.143).

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) have both been focusing on making existing transportation systems more efficient, while also expanding the network to include alternative modes of transportation from automobiles (i.e., buses, rails, and nonmotorized) (MDOT, 2002).

Emergence of Regional Planning in Michigan

Many public acts have assisted in the creation, development, and maintenance of the regional governments in Michigan. While these acts date back to 1929, the main piece of legislation was the passage of Michigan Public Act 281: the Regional Planning Act of 1945. This act established the creation of regions to represent multi-jurisdictional and multi-county areas, in order to better coordinate the conflicts and discrepancies between the state and the local governments. This is "an act to provide for regional planning; the creation, organization, powers and duties of regional planning commissions." This act also determined the provision of funds for the use of regional planning commissions and the supervision of the activities of regional planning commissions under the provision of this act." This act allows for regional governments to develop plans, conduct studies, and to coordinate services on behalf of its local government members (State of Michigan Legislation, 2002).

Several other Michigan Public Acts have assisted in the establishment of regional governments over the years. Michigan Public Act 312 of 1929: Metropolitan Districts Act provided for the incorporation of metropolitan districts made up of any two or more cities, villages, townships, or combination thereof. Included in this act was the development of boundaries, and the comprising of territory. This was done for the purpose of acquiring, owning, and operating parks, public facilities, supplying sewage disposal, drainage, water, transportation among others (Michigan Society of Planning, 2002; Tri-County Regional Planning Commission: Technical Memorandum Task II-I.9.3, 2002, p.28).

Michigan Public Act 46 of 1966: County/Regional Economic Development Commission Act provided for the development of such commissions and describes the powers, duties and obligations of these commissions (State of Michigan Legislation, 2002).

Michigan Public Act 7 of 1967: Urban Cooperation Act provided for interlocal public agency agreements and provided standards for those agreements and for the filing and the status of those agreements. In addition, this act permitted the allocation of certain taxes or money received from tax increment financing plans as revenues and tax sharing. Also, it provided for the imposition of surcharges, it provided for approval of those agreements, and prescribed and provided remedies (Tri-County Regional Planning Commission: Technical Memorandum Task II-I.9.3, 2002, p.28).

Michigan Public Act 292 of 1989: Metropolitan Councils Act provided for the establishment of Metropolitan Regional Council, (i.e, the formation, adoption of articles of incorporation, conditions, establishment of the board, appointment of representatives, and descriptions of powers and duties). This type of council has the ability to perform regional planning functions and to operate multi-jurisdictional public services (Tri-County Regional Planning Commission: Technical Memorandum Task II-I.9.3, 2002, p.28).

History of Regional Funding from the State

Three pieces of legislation in the late 1960s-early 1970s determined how the regions would be designated. Twenty-three years after the creation of the regional planning act, problems were occurring in regards to how the regions were designed. Boundaries between regions, counties, and local municipalities were not aligned (i.e., part of a county or a municipality may be in one region, while the other part may be in another region). They also overlapped, which often confused locals in regards to who was responsible for the provision of what services. These overlapping boundaries often resulted in large deals of conflict and disagreements as well as duplication of services.

In 1968, responding to Federal Circular A-80 from the U.S. President, Governor Romney established the Executive Directive 1968-1. This called for the creation of boundaries for the regions, so that they would align with the counties. Each county would be served under one region. The overall objective was to "better coordinate state programs with one another and with federal, regional, local and private sector programs" (State of Michigan, 1968, p.1). It was planned that ten regions would be located in the Lower Peninsula [three of which were already formed: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments or SEMCOG in 1948, Region II Planning and Development Commission (Jackson), and Tri-County Regional Planning Commission in 1956] and four would be located in the Upper Peninsula.

Governor Romney requested five things to be completed by the head of each principal department, agency and instrumentality of state government. These were to:

- Recognize and adopt the boundaries of the Planning and Development Regions.
- Take immediate steps to plan or modify programs to conform to the established regional boundaries.
- Review field services and operations to determine the extent to which they can be carried out on a regional basis.
- Review data collection and dissemination activities to determine the kinds of statistical data and information that can be collected and reported on the regional basis, or on a county-by-county basis compatible with the regional basis.
- Submit a written report to the Office of Planning and Coordination no later than March 25, 1968, outlining the features of existing programs that cannot be planned or implemented in conformance with the regional basis (State of Michigan, 1968).

In 1970, Governor Milliken established an Executive Directive 1970-4, which modified the boundaries for the regions by consolidating the 4 regions of the Upper Peninsula into 3, for a total of 13 regions (State of Michigan, 1970). Three years later, Executive Directive 1973-1 was established, further modifying the

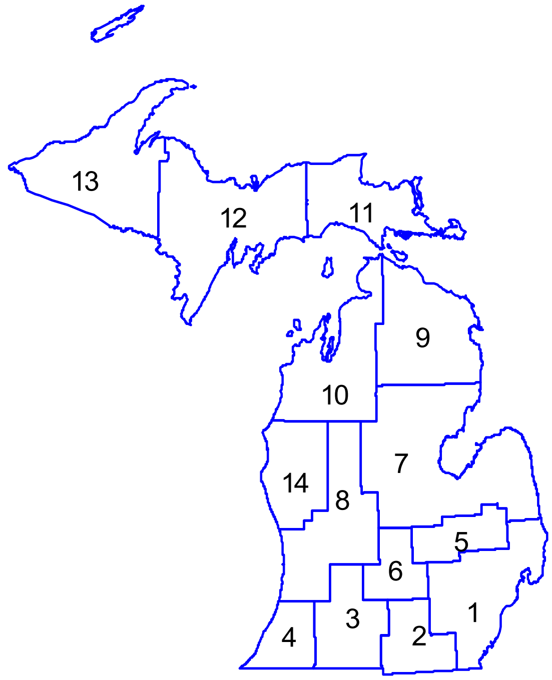

Figure 1. Michigan Planning Regions

regional boundaries, by separating Region 8 (Grand Rapids-Muskegon) into two regions (State of Michigan, 1973). Since then, Regions 8 and 14 have been re-aligned once again (moving Ottawa County back to Region 8, and moving Newaygo, Lake, and Mason counties to Region 14) (see Figure 1).

Though the boundaries for the regions were originally established in 1968, they were not all completely enacted and structured until 1974. However, the state began to appropriate funding to the existing regions as early as 1972. The State of Michigan funded the intergovernmental relationship through the provision of general purpose funds under the State Regional Planning Grant, administered through the Michigan Department of Commerce. These funds were to assist in matching federal funds and to provide support for regional operations and for the overhead costs of doing business. This resulted in the organization of the Michigan Association of Regions (MAR) under a standard enabling act, and the initiation of certain common work program activities (MAR, 1987).

The State Regional Planning Grant provided direct funding to the states, through 1993, with levels varying according to the State's budget. This act was originally established under Section 9 of Michigan Public Act 238 of 1974: Grants and Transfers Act (State of Michigan, 1974). In 1980, the regions received as much as $1 million (in total) from the state. By 1985, this amount was cut in half to $500,000 for the regions. There were numerous attempts in the late 1980s to increase funding back to $1 million, but the only increase was to $625,000 in 1987. Following this, in the early 1990s, the grant was eliminated altogether, leaving the regions with no direct funding from the states (State of Michigan, 1986).

After the regional planning grant had reduced its annual funding from $1 million to $500,000, MAR prepared its Governor's Initiative in 1985, attempting to re-establish a working relationship between the state and the regions (which had been declining since 1980). They re-emphasized the importance of the regions while trying to regain the funding that they once received. Using Governor Romney's Executive Directive of 1968, they sought to re-emphasize why they needed this funding. Their goals were to: develop a state/regional working partnership, to integrate state/regional programs, and to implement a framework model that can accomplish these tasks (MAR, 1985). There were some revisions made in 1986 and it was eventually adopted by MAR in 1987.

In regards to re-establishment of a state/regional working partnership, MAR stated four advantages to why this would be beneficial for all governments. The first was to reduce duplication of services (i.e., distribution of funds for CDBGs, sewer construction, etc.) (MAR, 1987, pp.4-5). Second, there would be increased coordination and local input, so that the locals have a better idea of what direction their communities are heading in. They also pointed out that these regions provide a link between state and local governments in order to facilitate this (MAR, 1987, p.5). Third, this would lead to better decision making through the development of a local consensus building process. The regions would be ideal for overseeing this process, because they are the "only public forum where counties, cities and villages, and townships interact to address regional issues and problems" (MAR, 1987, p.5). Fourth, the regions can be a reliable, stable location for issue identification for state agencies and departments. In addition, they could be the link in the state/local issue and problem identification process (MAR, 1987, p.6).

In 1993, the Michigan Department of Commerce (which had previously funded the State Regional Planning Grant) was eliminated by executive order, and all business assistance functions were vested with the Michigan Jobs Commission (MEDC, 2002). The Michigan Economic Development Commission (MEDC) and the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) within the state took over the other activities within the MDOC. The grant had already been eliminated prior to the change in the State Government, but this further decreased the chances of that particular grant to be reinstated. The new departments decided not to reinstate the regional planning grant, and direct funding to the regions from this grant remains absent to this day.

Current Conditions of the Regions

Since the state regional planning grant was eliminated, the regions have not received direct funding from the state government. In addition, the fact that they are a non-mandated, voluntary association of member communities presents additional problems when it comes to funding. As a result, regions today have significant concerns and issues. These include that:

- Many regions (in particular, rural regions) often have difficulty funding for their normal operations;
- Local governments are struggling with budget problems and therefore, may have to reduce payments for nonmandated services (including membership in regions);
- The geographic size of some regions is extremely large, making it very difficult to serve the entire region (e.g., Region 7 contains fourteen counties which covers four metropolitan cities as well as three rural areas);
- The regions are having problems promoting or "marketing" themselves due to limitations in money and time (MAR Policy Committee, 2002).

In order to address these concerns, MAR is seeking to re-establish either the regional planning grant or to influence the State of Michigan to establish some other form of funding to the regions, so that they can provide the important and necessary services to its communities. An examination of how other states throughout the U. S. follows.

State Examples of Regional Funding

Other states that currently provide funding in one way or another to their regional planning commissions include: Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia (NADO, 2000). Whereas the majority of these states have received funding for up to 30 years, the amount provided has been cut drastically since the 1980s. Table 1 lists these states, the types of funds they provide, and how these funds are distributed throughout the regions.

Florida

The State of Florida is divided into 11 regional planning councils (RPCs). All eleven regions have received direct funding from the state legislature in the matter of appropriations since the early 1970s.

<u>Funding:</u> The amount of funding provided annually has ranged from as low as $1.3 million (in total) during the fiscal years of 1988-89 and 1992-93 to as much as $3 million (in total) during the 1985-86 fiscal year. Since 1995, the regions have received an annual total appropriation in the amount of $2.25 million (See Table 1). Originally, the appropriations came from nonrecurring general revenues, but since then, they have come from a recurring line of funding by the legislature. The distribution has traditionally included 70% split equally among the 11 RPCs, and 30% divided according to the size of the region's population. The appropriation is passed through the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

Local governments also subsidize the legislature's annual appropriation to the RPCs in the amount of 62.8% (or $3,772,079 statewide) of the actual cost of implementing the RPCs' mandated responsibilities.

Iowa

Iowa has 16 Councils of Government (COGs), which have received state funding since 1988-1989.

<u>Funding:</u> Each region receives funding for "local planning and technical assistance to communities" in various amounts according to the constraints on the

state budget. For example, in 1988, the regions received a total of $300,000, with each COG receiving $18,750. Today, they are receiving half of that amount ($150,000 in total, or $9,375 each).

Table 1. Summary of State Support for Regional Planning

State	Year Began	Type of Funding	Amount	Distribution
Florida (11 RPCs)	early 1970s	Appropriations	$22.3 million	70% evenly 30% pop
Iowa (16 COGs)	1988 1989	1. Local Planning and Technical Assistance 2. Appropriations	$150,000 $150,000-187,500	$9,375 each $9,375 - 11,718.75 each
Kentucky (16 ADDs)	uncertain	Appropriations	$2.5 million	Based on formula (approx. $156,250 each)
North Carolina (18 RCs originally; currently 17)	1986	1. Appropriations for Community and Economic Development Planning 2. Planning and Administration 3. Aging	$990,000 $850,000 uncertain	$55,000 each $55,000 each uncertain
Oklahoma (11 COGS)	uncertain	1. General Support 2. Economic Action Plan 3. Rural Fire Coord. 4. CIP/GIS	$440,000 $15.5 million $825,000 $286,000	$40,000 each 9 rural COGs - 1/10; 2 metro COGs - 1/12 $75,000 each $26,000 each
Tennessee (9 districts)	1970s	1. General Support 2. Solid Waste Planning	$1,050,000 $450,000	8 @ $120,000 1 @ $90,000 $50,000 each
Virginia (21 RCs)	1969	Grant	At least $1,984,437	$0.35 per capita or $94,497 each

The state also has provided funding in the form of appropriations to the COGs since 1989. Budget problems have reduced the amount provided since 1989, when the total amount was $300,000 statewide. Since 1993, the amount has ranged from between $150,000 and $187,500 statewide. It is understood that the funding for these appropriations are split evenly among the regions as well.

Kentucky

Kentucky has 16 Area Development Districts (ADDs).

<u>Funding:</u> The sixteen regions are currently receiving a total of $2.5 million per year from the state. This funding is allocated according to a formula to each of the Area Development Districts. An example of this formula is for the Cumberland Valley ADD, which currently receives a total of $149,510 on a contractual basis to match: the Economic Development Administration (EDA) ($17,100); Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) ($91,287); Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Community Development Block Grants ($17,286); and the remaining $23,187 for budgeting for board and committee maintenance.

Kentucky has special purpose contracts with various state agencies for transportation planning, water resources, housing, and some other programs.

North Carolina

North Carolina originally had 18 regional councils, but has since, reduced to 17. The regions have received state funding since 1986.

<u>Funding</u>: Funding from the state is to provide technical assistance and for the use of community and economic development activities. The bill that discusses this funding is found under a Special Provision of the State Budget, which outlines how the funding will be disbursed, and how it must be spent. The General Assembly provides $990,000 to the regional councils statewide, which has been divided equally among the regions at $55,000. This amount has been steady, except for between 1993 and 1998, when it was cut to $48,000 each due to budget constraints. The North Carolina State Association of Regional Councils is seeking to increase this to $100,000 per region, but to this date, have not succeeded (NADO, 2002).

In order to receive funds, regions must submit an annual work plan, which describes how funds will be spent, as well as a resolution from all the local governments within the region that releases their share of the funds. The funds are used for a variety of purposes depending on the region. The types of activities that they are used for includes: state and federal grant assistance, loan programs, data centers, and other community and economic development activities.

The states also provide $850,000 to the regions for planning and administration, which is divided equally among the regions at $50,000 each. They assist the regions in providing funding for the aging (NADO, 2002).

Ohio

Ohio currently does not provide direct funding their planning regions. However, since about 1990, the State of Ohio has provided $150,000 per year to their three Appalachian Local Development Districts for general administrative support.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma has 11 regional councils of government. The State of Oklahoma provides a wide-range of funds to their regional COGs.

<u>Funding:</u> The state currently provides the regions $440,000 in total (or $40,000 per region) per year for general support (most of which are funds to meet matching requirements for the Area Agency on Aging and EDA programs, but the funds can be used for any purpose related with community and economic development).

The state provides a total of $15.5 million to the Rural Economic Action Plan. The 9 rural COGs receive 1/10th of this (or $1.55 million), while the two metropolitan COGs receive 1/12th. COGS must retain 5% of their portion for planning, while the rest are awarded by each COG board to communities/ counties with less than 7,000 people. Gary Gorshing, Executive Director of the South Western Oklahoma Development Authority, stated that these funds were cut somewhat during this past year.

The state provides $825,000 in total ($75,000 each) per year to the COGs for rural fire coordination and rural fire defense activities.

The Department of Environmental Quality also provides $415,000 in funding for sewer lagoon reclamation and beneficial reuse of biosolids materials.

The State provides around $352,000 in total (or $32,000 each) in funding for digitizing local government capital improvement plans (CIP) for inclusion in the statewide system, by implementing the use of geographic information systems (GIS). It was raised to $440,000 ($40,000 each) in 2001, but reduced to $286,000 ($26,000 each) in 2002, due to budget constraints. Proposals have been raised in recent years; one of which is currently being considered for the state to provide $75,000 to each of the 11 councils of government (or $825,000 in total) to carry out capital improvement planning on behalf of the COG member governments.

Tennessee

The State of Tennessee currently has nine districts, which have been in existence since the late-1970s.

<u>Funding:</u> The state currently provides a total of $1,050,000 in general assistance in order to operate. The distribution of this funding is as follows: eight of the districts receive $120,000 and one gets $90,000, depending on local dues rates.

The districts also receive $50,000 per district for solid waste planning.

Virginia

Information on the state of Virginia follows in the case study described in the next section.

Virginia: A Case Study

The history of regional planning agencies dates back to the 1930s. The Regional Planning Association (RPA) was organized for New York City and its greater region. The RPA was a non-profit business community, which coordinated governmental planning.

In 1954, Virginia offered $10,000 grants to metropolitan local governments to establish regional planning commissions. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), both had been working to deal with the long-term population shifts from rural areas to metropolitan areas. It was believed that a regional approach to industrial redevelopment was the most efficient way to deal with these shifts, while improving the economy as a whole, throughout the state. The goal was to improve rural areas, and to use the regions as administrative districts for the states. Circular A-95, administered by the federal government, became a motivation for states to establish regions.

In 1968, the General Assembly passed the Virginia Area Development Act, which in 1994 became known as the Regional Cooperation Act. This legislation provided incentives for local governments to organize Planning District Commissions (PDCs) throughout the state. It was a rural development program to get counties, towns and cities to work together in order to achieve economies of scale. Also in 1968, the Virginia Community College system implemented as a rural and area development strategy.

The design criteria for the planning district regions were based on a regional community design. Four factors were included under these criteria. First, in order to achieve economies of scale, the goal was to have a population of 100,000 people in each region. A second goal in defining regions was a reasonable geographic size. Design criteria required a central place with a 45-minute travel time from the peripheral jurisdictions. A smaller population, under 100,000, was preferred over a longer drive time. Third, local government input was sought on the regional membership. A meeting was held with each county and city to get input as to which region they wanted to be a part of. Fourth, the original goal was to have 20 regions. However, the process ended with 22 planning district regions. Eventually, two regions were merged by General Assembly action and now there are 21 regional commissions. The planning districts (regional commissions) became the primary boundaries for state agency regions in order to coordinate planning and delivery of services.

Since the chartering of the regions beginning in 1968, there has been an evolution of the role of these regional councils. There has been a need for a shift from technical planning assistance to regional coordination to better deal with today's more sophisticated local governments. For rural regions, they remain a mechanism to help localities seek grants. For metropolitan regions, they coordinate and work across the political boundaries in order to support the trade and commerce of regional economies.

General Assistance and Planning

Planning District Commissions have received state funding since 1969. The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) funding goal since the early 1990's has been either a 35 cent per capita allocation or a $100,000 minimum, depending on which amount is more (a trade-off). The base had risen, but has been reduced to $94,497 each in the past three years due to State budget shortfalls. Metropolitan regions have never received their full funding, even that projected in the original legislation. Regional commissions have always been required to provide a work program at the beginning of each year, and an annual report at the end of the year, accompanied with an annual audit of how the money was spent.

<u>GIS:</u> The state has also provided a one-time allocation for Geographic Information Systems(GIS) in the amount of $34,000 each (or $714,000 in total).

<u>Rural Transportation:</u> To establish a rural transportation planning capacity, twenty regions (all of the regions, except for Northern Virginia) began receiving a $40,000 rural transportation planning grant in 1993, which requires a $10,000 match. Metropolitan regions receive the funds for use in the non-metro portion of their regions. In Virginia, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, other than for the Washington, D.C. region which includes the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission, are the agencies receiving MPO funding.

The Lord Fairfax Planning District Commission began advocating for a rural transportation planning program in 1985. Tom Christoffel, executive director for the Lord Fairfax PDC, led a delegation to the Secretary of Transportation in 1991, which resulted in a Virginia Department of Transportation commitment to establish a rural transportation planning program (NADO, 2002; Christoffel, 2002).

In 1994, regions were being asked to explain how they benefit the communities they represent, while also explaining how they benefit the overall structure of the State government. They were required to explain their existence, in order to maintain and to improve their standings in the governmental system. The regions needed to demonstrate to the General Assembly (the major contributor of funding), that they get value for their basic grant investment and for other State program grants. In addition, they were required to show objectively to the local governments, what they receive for their money at the current time, and how its benefiting these local governments in return. Finally, it was required to show the State and Federal Governments, that being a voluntary association, it must also be beneficial to both of them, in terms of efficiency (Christoffel, 1994).

The regional councils needed more investment and other changes from both the State and the local governments. State governments sought a philosophical change in their attitudes and beliefs towards the regions, to move towards sharing power with localities through regional arrangements. From the local governments, the regions needed to prove the benefits of cooperation and to be reliable sources of information, data, and to be able to show larger, broader pictures to the areas (Christoffel, 1994).

Virginia was able to accomplish this through the concept of working relationships and marketing their importance continually. It was extremely important to promote the region and to explain that the existence of the Commission was to serve the geography encompassed in that region. Strategies in this plan were: to include client databases of names, numbers, mailing addresses, etc.; to get all people in the region to use the same data for standardized and consistent purposes; use teamwork, strategic and program planning in-house to coordinate and to cooperate on internal issues (since this is essential for promotion to the local governments); to develop a mutual respect between the regions and both the State and the local governments (listen to all customers and show concern); and to be open and upfront on who you are and what you do. Services or provision of data was also to be at no cost. All of these have been beneficial in continuing funding for Virginia's regional councils to this current date.

Conclusion

There are a wide variety of ways that other states provide funding to regions. For the states discussed above, funding to the regions in appropriations or for general support ranged from $150,000 to $2.5 million. Michigan as well as other states in the northern part of the nation need to realize the importance of this funding, and how the elimination of the Regional Planning Grant has resulted in a weakening of regional organizations in Michigan at a time when their expertise is desperately needed. The regions play a vital role in the connection between state and local government. As stated by the Michigan Association of Regions in the 1985 Governor's Initiative, regional governments provide for increased coordination between the state and local governments. The regions are the only public forum where counties and all types of local communities can interact with one another to address regional issues and problems (MAR, 1987, p.5). As stated by regional planners in Virginia, they also provide reliable, stable locations for state agencies that can provide accurate data and other sources of information. (If the State genuinely values regional planning, funding should more adequately reflect all of the responsibilities that regions hold) Funding needs to adequately reflect all of the responsibilities that regions hold, so that they can provide all the services that can be beneficial to State and local governments.

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Our Mission at CEDP . . .

Michigan State University is the nation's premier land-grant university, and in that tradition the MSU Center for Urban Affairs Community and Economic Development Program is committed to developing and applying knowledge to address the needs of society—primarily urban communities. Specifically, our mission is "to facilitate the use of university and community resources to address urban issues that enhance the quality of life."

In carrying out the CEDP mission, we . . .

- Provide training and direct assistance designed to increase the capabilities of community-based organizations.
- Assist community-based organizations with identifying concerns in the community and developing adequate responses to urban problems.
- Conduct research that assists in the development and implementation of innovative problem-solving strategies.
- Promote and expand MSU's capacity to provide needed training, direct assistance, and research to address issues in urban communities.

How we reach out to the community at CEDP . . .

The CEDP was established in downtown Lansing, Michigan, in 1970. Since that time, the CEDP has expanded its outreach office to additional cities in Michigan and has a statewide capacity to initiate and support innovative problem-solving strategies to improve the quality of life in Michigan communities.

The Community and Economic Development Program maintains a full-time presence in targeted communities. Each targeted city has a resident community development professional who lives there and works with various community advisory committees. This university outreach faculty member fosters programmatic relationships with local development groups and organizations to facilitate the flow of new innovations and information between the university and the community.

To contact the MSU CEDP . . .

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