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MEMORANDUM

To: CMAP Committees

From: CMAP Staff

Date: January 6, 2016

Re: Place-based approach alternatives

A foundational goal of the next plan's development is to provide actionable guidance for implementers by including more detailed policy recommendations and greater geographic specificity for some policy areas. Achieving the plan's vision will depend on partners that include counties, municipalities, and many others who could particularly benefit from greater geographic detail. To that end, the next plan should include an effective approach for translating broad regional policies into locally implementable strategies.

A "place-based approach" can be defined as a spatial framework for providing locally appropriate recommendations within the context of a regional plan. Such an approach can provide guidance on a range of topics such as land use, transportation, economic development, and natural resources, which local implementers can adapt to suit their contexts. A place-based approach must remain respectful of local land use planning authority and serve primarily as an advisory guide for implementers to help advance regional priorities in their local planning efforts.

To better understand the possible alternatives, CMAP staff reviewed approaches used by peer MPOs and identified two approaches -- typologies and layers -- as options for consideration (see *Table 1: Place-based approaches*). The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the two alternatives to inform a discussion on the concepts with the Committees.

Internal analysis and discussion yielded a staff recommendation to move forward with a layers approach, which would map data layers associated with particular policy areas of importance to the agency and provide guidance pertinent to local partners and others for each of the selected topics. The layers approach would integrate well with ongoing plan development, allow the plan to speak more specifically about a wide range of topics, and provide valuable data, information, and guidance to partners. Described below are the factors that led staff to recommend the use of layers rather than typologies.

Table 1: Place-based approaches

Place-based approach	Definition	Purpose
Typologies	Designated typologies (typically municipal scale) that group communities together based on like characteristics	Provide regional guidance on local planning, especially regarding land use topics
Layers	Data layers on topics of importance to the agency (may cross political boundaries)	Provide regional guidance to inform local planning on key topics (may expand beyond land use)

Typologies Overview

Typologies are common in the regional plans of peer MPOs, but the approaches vary significantly based on the particular MPO's authority as well as local factors. Conceptually, a typologies approach consists of a set of community typologies (typically between four and ten) that group similar areas together based on a series of criteria. For example, municipalities could be classified as "urban core," "regional centers," "maturing suburbs," "developing suburbs," or other similar terms. The typologies are then used to provide locally specific recommendations. Most MPOs using this approach designate typologies at the municipal scale but some also designate a non-municipal overlay of "centers" that may apply to regional employment, manufacturing, and/or mixed-use hubs (see *Figure 1: MAPC typologies* and *Figure 2: PSRC typologies and centers*).[1]

The following key takeaways emerged from staff analysis of other MPOs' use of typologies:

- **Link to MPO authority.** In general, MPOs with greater purview than CMAP has over land use -- for example, via expanded authority to ensure local concurrence with the regional plan, growth containment mandates from state government, or control over wastewater facilities or other infrastructure -- have more detailed typology elements than MPOs with authority similar to CMAP's.
- **Applicability to next plan policy areas.** Typologies are typically designated based on the characteristics of each community's built environment, which may limit their utility to recommendations about land use and development. However, greater spatial detail may be helpful for recommendations for many topics in the next plan, not all of which would depend on local government action.
- **Complexity.** The level of detail provided for recommendations associated with typologies can vary greatly and affect the utility of the approach. A high level of detail could result in an unwieldy regional plan or one that appears overly prescriptive. On the other hand, a low level of detail may not result in enough guidance to be useful. It would be challenging to construct a typologies approach that both suits the wide range of municipalities found in our region and provides them with sufficient detail to move forward with implementation.

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[1] Depending on the MPO, these centers may coincide with geographies for targeted infrastructure funding (i.e., geographic targeting).

- **Utility for implementers.** Providing more direct recommendations may enable local jurisdictions to interpret and incorporate regional goals relating to land use without requesting help from CMAP's Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, expanding the reach of the regional plan. However, since typologies are typically limited to land use and development policy areas, the approach offers much less flexibility for implementers to adapt regional recommendations to suit their individual interests and runs the risk of seeming too prescriptive. In addition, a municipally focused approach may not be the best vehicle to engage the many other stakeholders required to implement the plan. If such an approach could be applied by municipalities and counties as well as by civic groups, nonprofit organizations, transportation implementers, and others, it would have a higher likelihood of implementation.
- **Community perception.** Communities may have concerns about being labeled as a particular place type or being placed in the same category as another community that they do not want to be grouped with. Some may wish to be assigned an aspirational place type rather than one based on existing physical characteristics. And, there may be multiple place typologies that apply to one municipality, potentially complicating the designation process.
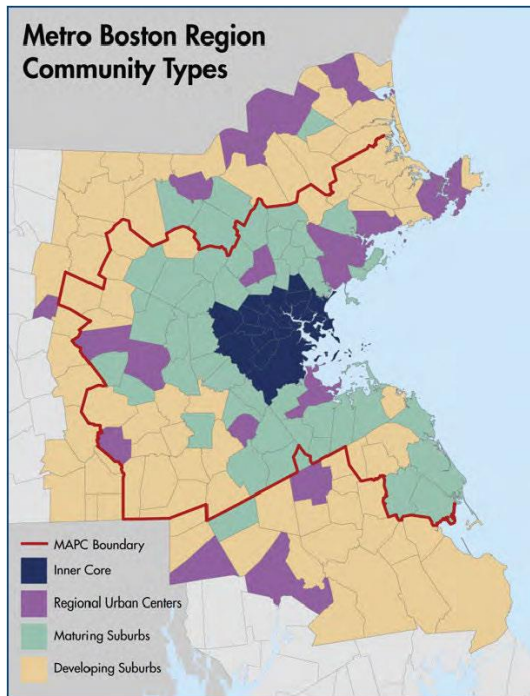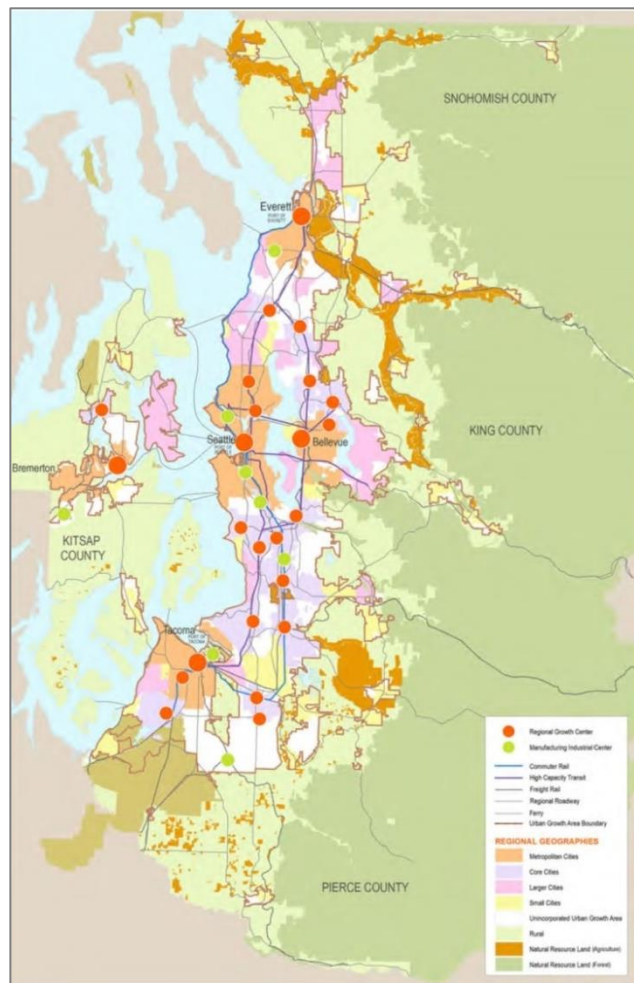
Figure 1: MAPC typologies

Figure 2: PSRC typologies and centers

Layers Overview

Unlike typologies, a layers approach has not been broadly used by other MPOs[2] but may be an innovative way to provide greater specificity on recommendations for municipalities and other stakeholders to use in their planning processes. A layers approach would provide guidance to areas of the region affected by various policy recommendations of the plan, such as increasing reinvestment and infill, supporting certain economic clusters, or preserving high-quality natural areas. For example, a layers approach could identify places that have been locally targeted for reinvestment, feature a concentration of manufacturing employment, or include sensitive and unprotected natural resources. Such an approach would map data layers at the regional scale by topic area; corollary recommendations could be provided in the plan narrative, or the map itself could depict recommendations geographically (such as high priority areas to focus reinvestment or increase access to parks). Recommendations could also be provided for sub-regions or the region as a whole.

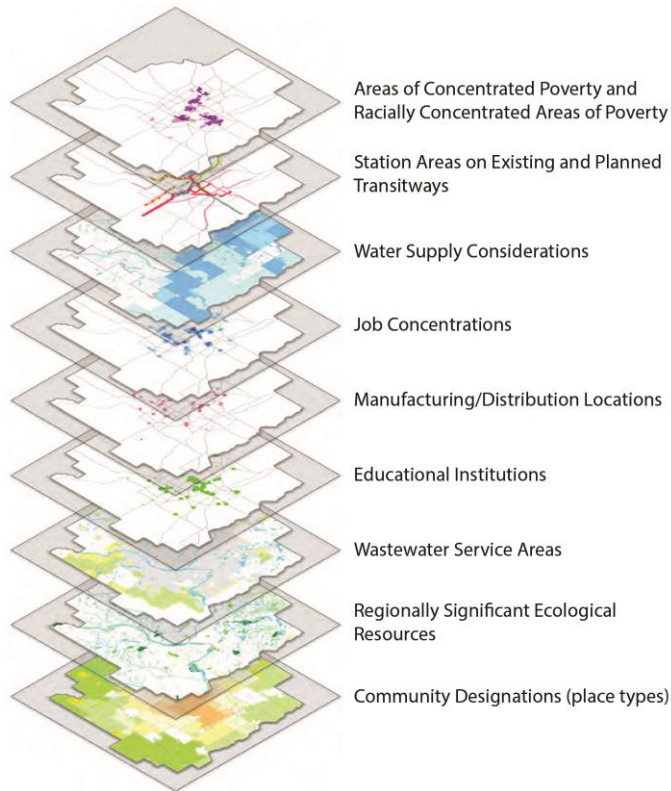The following key takeaways on layers emerged from staff analysis:

- **Applicability to next plan policy areas**. Nearly any topic area that can be spatially represented could potentially use a layers approach. Development of layers could occur in collaboration with partners that have expertise in a given topic area, enhancing the potential for implementation.
- **Complexity.** There are many layers that could be included in the next plan. Analyzing data and developing recommendations for layers, along with building consensus around those recommendations, would be a time intensive and complex effort. The layers ultimately included in the plan would need to be prioritized based on their relevance to the agency and its partners as well as their potential to effect implementation.
- **Utility for implementers.** A layers approach would increase the next plan's utility for the region's communities as well as other stakeholders more broadly. Since each layer would be mapped at the regional level, any community referencing the plan would be able to easily identify and use the layers pertinent to its specific context as a starting point for local planning, and would be particularly useful to guide projects supported through the LTA program. The use of layers would also allow issues and recommendations to be depicted without the constraint of municipal boundaries, encouraging interjurisdictional collaboration. Non-governmental implementers could also adopt and seek to implement layers that are specific to their particular issue areas.
- **Community perception.** Some layers may illustrate/map the plan's recommendations – for example, the Green Infrastructure Vision (GIV), included in GO TO 2040, spatially denoted recommended high priority conservation areas in the region. Other layers, such as areas of high housing and transportation cost, may graphically depict existing conditions, with recommendations included in the plan narrative. Detailed mapping of recommendations would likely require more intensive consensus building to facilitate

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[2] Many plans included some elements of layers, such as key employment centers, priority conservation/development areas, and TOD areas, but none used as extensive an approach as conceived of here.

local uptake. On the other hand, layers that portray existing conditions may be considered more innocuous and accepted more readily. A layers approach may also offer communities more flexibility to focus on the goals and recommendations most appropriate to their particular context. A thoughtful engagement strategy would be necessary to communicate the goals of the approach and give an opportunity for constituents to voice feedback.

Figure 3: Met Council Layers

Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty

Station Areas on Existing and Planned Transitways

Water Supply Considerations

Job Concentrations

Manufacturing/Distribution Locations

Educational Institutions

Wastewater Service Areas

Regionally Significant Ecological Resources

Community Designations (place types)

Met Council briefly discusses the eight layers (termed "special features") listed above the typologies layer as a way to identify features that have special policy considerations, but the Council does not use layers in a substantive way to cater the plan's recommendations.

Discussion

In addition to any questions proposed by committee members, staff request discussion on the following to help inform the agency's framework for a place-based approach:

- While typologies may not be the best approach for use in the next plan, are there elements of it that are valuable?
- How might you envision using layers (examples of layers may include high priority conservation areas, high infill capacity areas, or areas with low access to transit or parks and open space)? What information and recommendations could CMAP provide that would be most helpful from a local perspective?
- What topics could benefit from the use of layers?

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion