



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Calling Your Members of Congress

An advocacy toolkit

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Introduction

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is fundamentally about getting more out of every tax-payer dollar. When cities, towns and suburbs plan their future transportation, housing, water and sewer infrastructure and public services strategically, they save money and so does the federal government.

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities was formed In June 2009. This effort helps communities use proven cost-saving practices, coordinate federal investments in infrastructure, facilities, and services, and meet multiple community objectives with every dollar spent.

When contacting your members of Congress or their staff, you will be communicating two very important messages. Ask them to:

- Support funding for the Partnership for Sustainable Communities in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations.

And specifically to:

- Support continued funding for HUD's Sustainable Communities Initiative, which provides Regional Planning Grants and Community Challenge Grants.
- Support the DOT's Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program.

Each voice heard and each story shared is another step in the right direction toward creating communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live.

More information on the Partnership for Sustainable Communities is included in this toolkit. If you have questions, please contact Katy Hartnett, Director of Government Affairs at Smart Growth America: khartnett@smartgrowthamerica.org or 202.207.3355 x125.

About the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

Background

Two years ago, HUD, DOT, and EPA came together to form an interagency partnership in order to foster sustainability through better coordination of federal housing, transportation, and environmental programs. The partnership has worked to define core principles of livability, enabling communities to achieve economic growth by spurring private sector investment, removing barriers, and creating jobs at a time when we need them most. The initiative is working to integrate existing planning requirements and focus research and technical assistance programs on joint sustainability priorities.

Status

Through a number of federal grant programs, the Partnership agencies help communities across the country plan for and implement strategic growth. Thus far the three agencies have received applications for much more funding than they had available to give out:

- For TIGER II grants, DOT received nearly 1,000 applications for more than \$19 billion from all 50 states, U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.
- HUD received almost 1,000 applications totaling more than \$1.7 billion for the \$140 million available for Regional Planning Grants and Community Challenge Grants.
- 45 U.S. regions containing 80 million Americans in rural, suburban and urban communities are already benefiting from the Partnership programs.
- Another 29 regions are slated for support in the next round of grants through their “preferred status” of local leadership and excellence, only if funds are available.

Although it faced serious threat in the FY2011 appropriations process, funding was eventually preserved in the final FY2011 continuing resolution for the Partnership for Sustainable Communities.

As Congress begins work on the budget for FY2012, it is even more critical for us to advocate for continued funding for the Partnership for Sustainable Communities.

Supporting the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

How to Call Your Members of Congress

Not sure who your Congressional representatives are? Go to Congress.org to find out.

To contact your Senators' and Representative's Washington, D.C., office, call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for the office of Representative/Senator XX. You can also find additional contact information for your members of Congress, including his/her district office(s), by visiting the Member's website:

- Senate websites: www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
- House of Representative websites: www.house.gov/house/memberwww.shtml

Suggested Script for Calling your Representatives About the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

Hi, my name is [NAME] and I'm calling from [ORGANIZATION NAME] in [CITY, STATE]. I'm calling today as a constituent to ask Senator [HIS/HER NAME] to support the Partnership for Sustainable Communities in FY12 Appropriations.

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities is a joint program between HUD, DOT and the EPA that helps communities achieve economic growth by spurring private sector investment, removing government barriers, and creating jobs at a time when we need it most.

[IF A GRANTEE:] My organization received a [GRANT TYPE] and we are relying on this important funding to rebuild our economy and create jobs.

[IF A PREFERRED STATUS DESIGNEE:] My organization submitted an application for a HUD grant and our project was granted a special designation. As a result, we may be next in line to receive federal funds that will allow us to rebuild our economy and create jobs.

I hope the Senator will support the Partnership for Sustainable Communities now and in the future.

Thank you!

Supporting the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

Additional Talking Points

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities is an investment in more efficient and effective government. It helps communities break down barriers in existing federal housing, transportation and infrastructure programs while providing an incentive for improving regional collaboration among public, private and non-profit stakeholders. Projects supported by these grants are the product of local leadership driven by the vision and values of local residents, save households and their municipalities money and help to build a 21st century economy.

Key Reasons to Support the Partnership for Sustainable Communities:

- When cities, towns and suburbs plan their future transportation, housing, water and sewer infrastructure and public services strategically, they save money and so does the federal government.
- When communities are working with numerous federal programs at once, inconsistencies and contradictions arise. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities has worked to streamline these inconsistencies and reconcile different federal programs' requirements.
- The Partnership for Sustainable Communities encourages grant recipients to work with various local stakeholders to reflect the unique economic needs of the community.
- Rebuilding the economy and creating jobs are the most pressing issues facing the nation's communities. The grant programs included in the Partnership for Sustainable Communities provide direct support for job creation and leverage significant private sector investment.

Supporting the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

Frequently Asked Questions About the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

- **What is a ‘sustainable community?’**

Sustainable communities are urban, suburban or rural communities with more housing and transportation choices near jobs, shops and schools to support thriving local economies and protect the environment.

- **How does the Partnership help communities save money?**

Coordinating strategic decisions allows communities to save money and realize fiscal benefits from better capital investment decisions that link housing, transportation, and economic development.

- **How does the Partnership for Sustainable Communities help rural areas or small towns?**

HUD’s inaugural grants under this program will benefit diverse areas across the U.S. including \$25.6 million split evenly between regions with populations less than 500,000 and rural places (fewer than 200,000 people). HUD is also reserving \$2 million to help all of these areas build the needed capacity to execute their plans. Additionally, not less than \$140 million (20%) of the funds provided for TIGER II Discretionary Grants, including TIGER II Planning Grants, is to be used for projects located in rural areas.

- **Why is this the proper role for the federal government?**

The federal government is heavily involved in transportation, housing and environmental infrastructure spending with various programs and requirements that directly impact local decisions. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities coordinates these programs and requirements so decisions are more efficient and effective. The Partnership cuts red tape for communities working with multiple agencies and eliminates duplicative or conflicting federal decisions, ensuring taxpayer dollars are being used more effectively.

Post-Call Checklist

Follow the steps outlined below when your call is complete. This checklist will help ensure that there is successful follow-up from your call. If you have any questions or need assistance, contact Katy Hartnett, Government Affairs Director at Smart Growth America via email at khartnett@smartgrowthamerica.org or phone at 202.207.3355 x125.

- **Report back.** Complete & return your legislative call report form (page 9) to SGA staff or fill out online at www.smartgrowthamerica.org/partnership/legislative-call-report-form. Send SGA any digital photos from your visit for use on the SGA website.
- **Follow up.** Send a thank you email (page 10). Be sure to follow-up with any information or other items promised at the meeting. Smart Growth America's staff can assist with any follow-up as well. Offer Smart Growth America's DC staff as a resource in providing more detailed information or research.
- **Monitor progress.** Keep track of the issue and make sure that you monitor your legislator's actions. If they follow through on a promised action, be sure to thank them. If not, encourage them to do so.
- **Stay connected.** Continue to build a relationship with your Congressional delegation by inviting them to attend or speak at events, taking them to visit local projects, and keeping them informed about activities in the state.
- **Keep informed.** Work with the SGA's Government Affairs and Outreach staff to monitor legislative activity and continue advocacy on behalf of our federal legislative agenda. Stay active in grassroots advocacy activities by signing up to receive action alerts from SGA; just visit our website at <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/> and click on Take Action.

Report Back: Legislative Call Report Form

We want to hear how your call went! Return this form to Katy Hartnett, Government Affairs Director at Smart Growth America via at khartnett@smartgrowthamerica.org or fax at 202.207.3349 or fill out the form online at www.smartgrowthamerica.org/partnership/legislative-call-report-form.

Complete a separate form for each call you place.

Name and Organization: _____

Other Call Participants: _____

Congressional Office: _____

Congressional Staff on Call: _____

Please describe the reaction of the Senator/Representative/staff person to the conversation on the Partnership for Sustainable Communities FY2012 appropriations.

Please note any other issues that were discussed.

Did the office make commitments regarding your requests?

Did the office request any additional information or further follow-up (please describe)?

Is any contact or follow-up required with the office by SGA staff?

Additional Comments / Other Issues Discussed (including any commitments made):

Sample Thank You Email

Items in brackets should be customized as appropriate.

[DATE]

The Honorable [XX]

Attention: [Staffer]

Dear [Senator/Representative XX, or staffer name],

Thank you for speaking with me on [insert date and time of meeting] to discuss the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and sustainability appropriations for FY2012.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss these issues with you, and hope you will view the appropriations process as an opportunity to support the joint program between HUD, DOT and the EPA that helps communities achieve economic growth and create jobs at a time when we need it most. Please contact me if you would like any additional information or have any questions.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Contact information]