

ENERGY - Issue Paper

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Background

The Legislative and Policy Committee voted to consider the development of a new Policy Guide on Energy. This has been a topic that has had a great deal of discussion and one that has received more attention subsequent to the adoption of APA's Policy Guide on Sustainability. This short paper is designed to identify some key issues to address in the development of this policy. Additionally, it is hoped that it will generate suggestions on other related issues to be considered in developing the policy.

Why This Topic is of Interest to APA

1. Energy consumption becomes a significant land use issue from a number of perspectives. These include the siting of energy generation and transmission facilities, renewable energy, natural resource extraction, transportation policy, resource conservation, industrial development, waste management, and site design.
2. The creation of "green buildings and infrastructure" will enhance our ability to reduce energy dependence and promote the conservation of resources.
3. A new policy on energy will complement the Policy Guide on Sustainability and will serve to implement key policy positions.
4. Legislation is pending that addresses energy and conservation issues and APA should be involved in that debate.

Discussion

In its Policy Guide on Sustainability, APA addresses energy issues in the following specific policy positions.

The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning policies and legislation that encourage alternatives to use of gas-powered vehicles. Such alternatives include public transit, alternatively-fueled vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian routes, and bicycle and pedestrian-friendly development design.

Reason: Use of privately-owned gas-powered vehicles significantly contributes to increasing carbon dioxide concentration and greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at the global level, and to air pollution, as well as nuisance and societal costs of traffic congestion at the local and regional levels. Planning and development actions that reduce the need to drive

can in turn help to reduce carbon dioxide and other emissions, as well as help reduce traffic congestion and add system capacity.

The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning policies and legislation that encourage all types of development to use alternative renewable energy sources and meaningful energy conservation measures.

Reason: Use of alternative renewable energy sources will contribute to reduced dependence upon fossil fuels for heat and power, also helping to reduce concentrations of carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere. Increased use of alternative energy sources will also contribute to healthier, more stable local economies through reduced dependence on one or two energy sources whose own economic future is uncertain.

Additional transportation issues include the reduction in vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled through compact, infill, and mixed-use development; the use of alternatives to the drive-alone automobile, including walking, bicycling, and public transit; the development and use of vehicles powered by renewable fuel sources; and the use of local street designs that encourage pedestrian and bicycle use and discourage high speed traffic and that support/enhance access between neighborhoods and to neighborhood-based commercial developments.

Buildings consume nearly a third of America's energy—much of it wasted by inefficient design—while land-use decisions influence another third used in transportation. Real-estate development therefore offers abundant opportunities for saving resources, not to mention reducing waste and restoring damaged land. APA's policy on energy should ideally address ways in which building and site design could reduce energy consumption.

A number of other issues could be addressed in an energy policy guide, although some thought would have to be given as to how best to develop specific policy positions. These could include the creation of an "energy hierarchy" where priority is given to one energy source or another; siting criteria for energy transmission and generation facilities (not only for typical power plants and transmission lines, but also alternative energy facilities such as wind farms); fiscal issues such as tax credits to encourage sound energy use; and strategies to employ energy conservation into building design.

Contact

Any comments and thoughts on this issue would be appreciated. Please contact Ralph Willmer, AICP, McGregor & Associates, 60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111; 617.338.6464 x26; 617.338.0737 (fax); rwillmer@mcgregorlaw.com if you are interested in participating on the Committee that will prepare the Policy Guide.