


<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Watersheds, Ag Lands &amp; Natural Areas</b>	
<b>Action Tool Title:</b>	County Land Use Authority Enabling Legislation	
<b>Description of the tool:</b>	This is a policy/legislative tool that would seek to empower counties in the State of Texas to plan for and manage growth in unincorporated areas toward prescribed development objectives in an environmentally sustainable and efficient manner. This policy will require legislation since counties currently do not have the authority to conduct planning activities through zoning and land use controls.	
How Well Does It Work?		
<b>How valuable is this tool? How important is its contribution to achieving North Texas' vision for the future?</b>		
A large amount of the projected growth in the region will occur in presently unincorporated areas, especially in rural communities. These areas are also home to some of the most sensitive areas of ecological biodiversity as well as ag land that is vital for continued food security. A county land use enabling legislation would be a critical instrument in guiding and managing future growth in these areas, with the goal of protecting these natural resources from destruction due to unmanaged growth, as well as help preserve the traditional character and quality of life enjoyed in these rural areas.		
<b>What are the costs and who will they affect?</b>	<b>What are the benefits and who will they help?</b>	
If implemented, county agencies would have to provide funding for new staff to handle the planning and land use duties. In addition to expanded staffing, there may be increased facility and overhead costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Benefit 1 discussion:</b> This will help counties and cities achieve synergy in mitigating the negative impacts associated with the rapid growth of our region.</li> <li>• <b>Benefit 2 discussion:</b> The entire region stands to gain from unincorporated areas having the land use controls that will help efficiently and sustainably accommodate the expected future growth.</li> </ul>	
<b>What are the biggest stumbling blocks?</b>	<b>How can they be addressed?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stumbling block 1 discussion:</b> Lack of political will in a State that views government intervention as an anathema to individual property owners' rights and prefers the 'invisible hand' of the market to control growth.</li> <li>• <b>Stumbling block 2 discussion:</b> The primary responsibility for pushing such legislation lies with local MPOs that are to some extent beholden to the interests of municipalities that might view such a legislation as an infringement on their powers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Action to address:</b> Other than framing of the issue(s) and challenges facing metropolitan areas of the State of TX in a way that appeals to the values of the public, business sector and politicians with a view of changing perceptions to pass such a legislation, there are few other feasible options.</li> <li>• <b>Action to address:</b> Dialogue and consultations between municipalities, counties and local MPOs on the merits and demerits of such a legislation could be a starting point.</li> </ul>	
Who Would be Responsible?		
<b>Primary (lead) responsibility</b>	Primary responsibility for advocating the passing of such legislation lies with the local MPOs	
<b>Secondary responsibility</b>	State legislature, counties, local MPOs, cities and the private sector.	
<b>Need for coordination</b>	State legislature, counties, local MPOs, cities and the private sector.	

<b>How Should it be Funded?</b>		
<b>Primary (lead) responsibility</b>	Not applicable at this point	
<b>Secondary responsibility</b>	Not applicable at this point	
<b>How Does It Connect?</b>		
<b>What other VNT issues are helped by this tool?</b>	This tool touches on every aspect of VNT's efforts of achieving sustainable development, it touches on the use of fast depleting natural and water resources as well as all types of landuse.	
<b>What other VNT issues could be hurt by this tool?</b>	None so far.	
<b>How Should It Be Implemented?</b>		
<b>What will be done?</b>	<b>When will it happen?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First step for action:</b> Initiate dialogue and consultations amongs the responsible parties on the proposed legislation.</li> <li>• <b>Following steps for action:</b> Framing of the policy once the dialogue and consultations are concluded.</li> </ul>	<p>The timing is dependent first on how the stakeholders can come to a consensus on the best way to proceed.</p> <p>As above.</p>	
<b>What Examples Can We Follow?</b>		
North Texas Case Studies	Not applicable at this point	
Other Texas Case Studies	Not applicable at this point	
Other U.S. Case Studies	The State of Carlifornia provides a good example of the workings of such legislation. The counties have zoning and land use authority to manage and control arowth.	
Supporting Research	Not applicable at this point	
Related Information	Not applicable at this point	
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	Vision North Texas Water/Natural Assets Team	