

# Plan-it sustainably

Summarized by Scott T. Edmondson, AICP, and Katja Irvin, AICP, co-chairs, Sustainability Committee (Source: <http://bit.ly/skBx6M>)

## Got LEED for Transportation? Try STARS

As state departments of transportation, cities, counties, and private employers increasingly account for their transportation sustainability efforts, they need practical assessment tools to evaluate program performance. Such tools should also encourage the use of higher standards, improve access and mobility, reduce energy use, and decrease pollution that causes climate change. In the same way that the voluntary performance standards of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program have improved the building industry, a new tool, the Sustainable Transportation Analysis & Rating System (STARS), can help transportation program managers improve their performance in the areas where transportation has the greatest impacts: access, climate, energy, and cost.

Under the auspices of the City of Portland and the newly launched North American Sustainable Transportation Council (STC), a team of public and private sector transportation professionals from the Pacific Northwest is developing the STARS framework to complement LEED. The inclusion of appropriate LEED sustainable sites credits, specifically those related to transportation, and the use of a similar checklist format are strategies toward this end. Since buildings and transportation create approximately two-thirds of the United States' greenhouse gas emissions, the use of LEED and STARS would allow both building designers and transit operators to address the major sources of climate changing pollution.

The development team is designing STARS to help transportation professionals plan and/or evaluate the full life cycle of their efforts. STARS will allow transportation professionals to compare the triple-bottom-line performance impacts of their projects, programs, and plans using a national best practices standard. They can then decide whether to seek platinum, gold, silver, or bronze performance levels. STARS will allow users to:

- Evaluate the purpose of a transportation project or plan (e.g., to give people access to jobs, education, and other daily needs),
- Evaluate and prioritize innovative alternatives in the design phase, and
- Measure and improve system performance in ongoing operations and maintenance phases.

The STARS tool measures other variables, such as a project's ecological function and integration of planning, but its primary emphasis is on access, climate, energy, and benefit/cost. STARS can be used to analyze a full range of realistic options to meet access and mobility goals, including transportation demand management (TDM), transportation systems management (TSM), transit, land use, and roadway capacity. As it includes a strategic sustainability component,

STARS rewards those willing to set goals, evaluate a range of options, and consider different operational strategies during planning.

STARS is being pilot tested on a transit corridor project (Clark County, Washington), a City Transportation System Plan (Eugene, Oregon) and a Regional Transportation Plan (Santa Cruz County, CA). STARS is being used to develop, evaluate, and rate strategies to:

- Improve access to jobs, school, housing and goods;
- Reduce petroleum use and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Boost the local economy while reducing transportation capital and operating costs; and
- Improve public support for projects and plans that provide both economic and environmental benefits.

By identifying key access, mobility, cost, and sustainability opportunities at the planning, project, and employer levels, the STARS rating system can help those involved in transportation planning, project management and operations set clear higher-performance goals and measure success. Following the pilot phase, peer review, and development of certification and training programs, the STC plans a national rollout of STARS in 2012. For more information, contact Peter Hurley, PDOT Project Manager, at [peter.hurley@pdxtrans.org](mailto:peter.hurley@pdxtrans.org) or (503) 823-5007 or review the temporary website at <http://bit.ly/skBx6M>. Also see the results of the recent Bay Area workshop co-hosted by the Sustainability Committee and STC, <http://bit.ly/vPC6RI>.

## Committee update

- Explore the committee's temporary website, <http://bit.ly/oOgi1W>
- Access strategic community sustainability planning resources:
  - Oct. 14th Workshop, <http://bit.ly/smSVo8>
  - 30-min. video, <http://bit.ly/tpX60M> (enter your name in the guest field)
  - STARS Sustainable Transportation Dec 8th Workshop, <http://bit.ly/vPC6RI>
  - Review Leveraging Leading Edge Sustainability Planning (site, <http://bitly.com/r7D21g>; report, <http://bit.ly/sck2q8>)
  - Sign up for the Committee's email list.  
Email [scott-e@sustainability2030.com](mailto:scott-e@sustainability2030.com)

## Recommended Resources

**The EcoDistrict Institute** and its initiatives are one of the leading-edge innovations in neighborhood-level sustainability. Review their approach and resources for transferable practices: The Institute, at

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<http://bit.ly/uX7dXo>, and the Summit (this past Oct. 26–28) at <http://bit.ly/vRy2Lm>.

“**Embedding Sustainability into the Culture of Government**,” a new report from the Network for Business Sustainability, The Natural Step Canada, and the Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University, is available at <http://bit.ly/u9JKEP>.

Since **Getting off Oil ASAP** is the basis for any long-term community sustainability strategy, see Amory Lovins’ and the Rocky Mountain Institute’s new proposal to do just that and grow the US economy by 150 percent: *Reinventing Fire*, <http://bit.ly/vadBlo>.

**Rio+20** — the impact of rapid urbanization on the sustainable growth of cities, one of the seven priority issues. (Newsletter: <http://bit.ly/vJJeCC>; Rio+20 website: <http://bit.ly/toPkAl>). ■

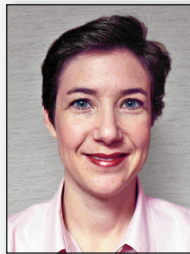
### Answer to “Where in the world?” (Page 11)

Ghent, Belgium: The Graslei (street of the herbs) in the old city center. To the right is the Sint-Michielsbrug (St. Michael’s Bridge). Two of the three towers of Ghent (and a sliver of the third) can be seen. *Photo by Ella Samonsky*

Efficient movement of people and goods is fundamental to the state’s economy and quality of life, and doing nothing in the face of an exponentially growing population is not an option.

—California High-speed Rail Authority,  
<http://bit.ly/t34KOJ>

## Who’s where



**Darcy Kremin, AICP**, has joined the Oakland office of URS Corporation as Environmental Planning Group Manager. She previously worked at Cardno ENTRIX managing the CEQA and NEPA process for large water infrastructure projects. At URS, she is managing the NEPA for FEMA group within the Environmental Planning Division. Darcy has a bachelor’s degree in geography and environmental studies (UCLA) and a master’s degree in environmental policy (Tufts University). She is the Northern Section’s Immediate Past Director and a newly elected member of the California Planning Foundation board.



**Rodrigo Orduña, AICP**, has been appointed Membership Director for Northern Section. Orduña is a senior planner in the Alameda County Planning Department. He holds two degrees from UC Berkeley: a bachelor of arts degree in architecture with a minor in city planning, and a master’s in city planning with a concentration in urban design.



**Avalon Schultz** has been appointed the new YPG Co-Chair for Northern Section. Schultz is associate planner, Union City. She has a bachelor’s degree in comparative urban development with a minor in city and regional planning (UC Berkeley) and is a candidate for a master’s degree in urban planning (San José State University). Schultz was named Union City Employee of the Year – General Government in 2010, and received a California Planning Foundation Continuing Student Scholarship, 2011–2012.



**Laura Thompson** has been elected Treasurer for APA California Northern Section. She has been a member of the American Planning Association since 1995 and affiliated with the Northern Section since 1997. In 2005, she served as co-chair of the Mobile Workshop Committee for the National APA Conference in San Francisco. Laura is currently manager of the San Francisco Bay Trail Project at the Association of Bay Area Governments, where she coordinates completion of the 500-mile trail system through strategic planning, financial management, staff supervision, partnership building, and public outreach. Laura holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Miami University in Ohio and a master’s in urban planning and policy from the University of Illinois, Chicago. She coauthored the book *Trail Planning for California Communities* (Solano Press, 2009). *Trail Planning* received the APA California Award of Merit for Focused Issue Planning, the Northern Section Media Award, and was named the AEP Outstanding Environmental Resources Document for 2010. ■