



Webinars Scheduled to Summarize Proposed Draft of Regional Councils Act with Q & A Opportunities

Presented by members of MAP's Law Committee and representatives from the Michigan Association of Regions

[Wednesday September 21, 2011 from noon to 1:00](#)

[Wednesday September 28, 2011 from noon to 1:00](#)

The Michigan Association of Planning's Law Committee continued its efforts in 2010-11 to contemporize the State's planning and zoning enabling legislation. Following the unification of the Zoning Enabling Acts in 2006, and the Planning Enabling Acts in 2008, the committee tackled completion of its statutory unification challenge by taking up the Regional Planning Commission legislation in 2010. Three different statutes authorize regional planning in Michigan (Regional Planning Act, Metro Council Act and County or Regional Economic Development Commission Act). All statutes were written at different times and with different purposes in mind. Conceptually there is no reason that three statutes are needed, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. One statute combining the strengths of all three would provide significant new opportunities to solve local service sharing problems—for those local governments interested in a multi-jurisdictional or regional solution.

However, unlike the Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts, unifying the regional planning legislation has proven to be a more complicated undertaking since all the statutes are quite different from one another. Although at the end of the day, a new Regional Council's Act could provide a significantly improved and more predictable institutional structure for regional councils and state designated planning and development regions in Michigan. New opportunities would be created for existing councils, including enhanced opportunities for regional service delivery, enabling regional planning commissions to do more than planning if their constituents want them to, and clarification of roles for regional planning commissions and other regional councils.

While most people don't even know what regional councils are, let alone what they do, in an era of major government belt-tightening and increased efforts by local governments to find new, creative and cost-effective ways to share services, regional councils may provide a new option for some communities.

MAP prepared a draft of the Regional Councils Act in 2010, and since has worked closely with representatives from the Michigan Association of Regions to refine the draft. This summer the draft was disseminated to regional planning commission constituents, and to a broader group of stakeholder organizations (including the Michigan Municipal League and the Michigan Townships Association), for review and comment. Now we are ready to expand the circle of review and comment, and this webinar is a first attempt to share the draft with a wider audience. We hope that planners across the state will be interested in learning about this draft new legislation and how it may be of interest to them. Webinar registrants will get a link to download the draft legislation, a background white paper and FAQs about it.

Space is limited on the webinar, so please sign up early.