Sustainable transportation and land development decisions should be based upon good quality evaluation of the sustainability of alternative policies, plans and projects. Although, there has been a proliferation of methodologies and tools for rating sustainability in the last 10 years, there is not an industry-wide accepted evaluation of sustainability. As the state-of-practice advances, a comprehensive overview of rating systems may reveal key evaluation components for sustainable decision making.

Objectives

- Review and assess approaches to rating the sustainability of transportation systems and neighborhood-level developments
- Highlight the state of the practice
- Outline similarities and differences in the existing approaches
- Determine when it is valuable to combine various approaches
- Identify opportunities for improving the existing practices.
- Create an educational module about sustainable design and evaluation

Findings

- Various definitions of sustainability
- Systems address environmental, economic, and social sustainability at different levels; transportation systems focusing heavily on environmental sustainability.
- Systems are at various stages of development and implementation and often build upon each other. Many neighborhood-level systems are at the pilot stage.
- Ratings are based on points awarded for meeting some minimum set of criteria:
  - Based on best practices in sustainability.
  - Built-in flexibility to capture innovations in the practice.
  - Specific criteria must often be fulfilled for certification.
- Systems are developed at various stages of project development
  - Many transportation rating systems have a narrow project-level focus.
  - The neighborhood-level systems typically take a more systems-based approach. Some are more of a framework than a rating system.
  - Neighborhood-level systems include a transportation component.
- Additional value of using rating system:
  - Identify, enable, simplify, and streamline sustainable practices
  - Improve and encourage sustainability
- Adoption of sustainability plan
- Certain rating systems may be more appropriate for specific contexts.
- A university-level educational course will be beneficial in communicating sustainability goals, practices, and design principles.
- Additional training modules could be adapted for short courses, seminars, and webinars, which would benefit STRIDE constituents, including ALDOT, GDOT, and local MPOs.