

I Introduction

This paper presents detailed case studies of representative transit-oriented development projects throughout North America. The experiences of transit operators and local jurisdictions with transit-oriented development will help Seattle establish a planning framework and take actions toward station-area development. This chapter provides background for the case studies by defining transit-oriented development, describing the methodology for choosing case study areas, and establishing the framework for analyzing individual station areas.

WHAT IS TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT?

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) refers to development that is centered around and coordinated with a transit station in its use and design. The intent of TOD is to establish land uses and to design structures and public areas that will encourage people to ride transit more often. Typically, a TOD project has the following physical characteristics:

- *Mixed Uses.* Land uses are mixed and may include a combination of residential, commercial, and entertainment activities.
- *Compact Development.* Development is compact, at medium to high densities. Parking is limited.
- *Location within walking distance of transit.* Boundaries of the TOD area extend approximately 1/4-mile from the station, a distance that can be covered in about 5 minutes on foot.
- *Neighborhood Focal Point.* Open spaces or plazas near the station function as community gathering spots.
- *Pedestrian Orientation.* Streets and open spaces are friendly to pedestrians.

Transit-Oriented Development does not refer to one specific type of planning or development process, but can include a variety of planning or development efforts. Some cities have created master plans for station areas with design guidelines for transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly development; some have established special zoning provisions for transit-oriented development; and some cities or transit agencies have worked with private developers on a joint development project connected to the station. On the following page are some images of transit oriented development being considered for Seattle.

What factors influence TOD?

In the early 20th century in Seattle and other cities, when streetcars were the dominant form of transportation, small villages and neighborhoods formed around streetcar stations outside the urban core. The orientation of the residential development to streetcar stations allowed for an easy commute downtown. Today, such residential villages do not form naturally

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around transit stations, because more people travel by automobile. TOD projects must be intentionally planned, and their success depends upon specific supporting factors:

- *Regional and Local Markets.* Successful transit-oriented development is dependent upon both regional and local market trends, including the regional supply and demand for housing and employment and the desirability of station areas for development.
- *Community Support.* Community input and support are essential to a successful TOD project. In order to function as a community center, the structures and open spaces in the station area and the local circulation system must be developed and designed in accordance with the needs and desires of local residents and workers.
- *Supportive Land Use and Economic Policies.* Transit-oriented development can only happen with supportive City land use and economic policies. Planning policies and zoning regulations must permit the types of structures and open spaces that form a transit village. Economic policy must phase development around stations so that new housing and commercial space can be gradually absorbed into the local housing and employment market over a period of ten to twenty years.
- *Specific Area Plans and Design Guidelines and Standards.* Specific Area Plans for transit stations can tailor land use, density, development standards, and design guidelines in order to suit a specific station area and its surrounding neighborhood.
- *Public Amenities.* Public amenities can make the station area more attractive for development over time. Improvements may include street and sidewalk improvements, street lighting, street furniture, transit shelters, information kiosks and landscaping.
- *Public/Private Partnerships.* Transit operators or local jurisdictions can work with private developers to create transit-supportive development. The role of the public partner can be minimal, holding a ground lease, or it can be more significant, directly subsidizing the project.

The intent of this report is to examine these factors in more detail at selected TOD sites throughout North America.

METHODOLOGY

In selecting stations to be analyzed in the case studies, stations were chosen that resemble the types of potential LINK station sites in Seattle. Site conditions examined include the surrounding land uses and urban form, potential development issues, known socioeconomic characteristics, and station configuration (aerial, grade, underground). Most selected stations are located in dense urban areas with little or no parking, consistent with the proposed characteristics of the LINK system. However, some suburban sites are included because they resemble conditions at Seattle's Rainier Valley, Northgate and near-freeway stations or because of the specific planning concepts and tools used to foster transit-oriented development.

ORGANIZATION OF CASE STUDIES

This analysis examines the influences and context of transit-oriented development in the selected case studies. A subsequent paper to be prepared in Part B of the Station Area Planning program will analyze implementation strategies in greater detail. Each case study in this report has a consistent structure that analyzes station-area planning and development. Major elements include:

- *Station Area Planning Framework.* An analysis of the planning framework describes the major elements used to plan for the station area. These may range from specific plans to market studies to land use or zoning policies.
- *Factors Influencing Station Area Development.* Actual changes in land use and development around a station are examined for their causal factors.
- *Implementation Tools.* The description of implementation tools highlights how station area plans are actually implemented.

At the conclusion of each case study, specific findings relevant to Seattle are summarized, focussing on lessons for station area planning in Seattle. References for additional sources of information and key contacts for the case study also are included at the end of each case study.