

Perspectives from Station Area Planning and Transit-Oriented Development Case Studies

As noted in the preceding chapter, rail transit investments alone are rarely sufficient to spur significant new development in station areas. Accordingly, local governments and transit agencies have often applied a range of different policy tools to help promote appropriate growth along transit corridors. Transit-oriented development is typically compact in form, with a mix of residential and commercial land uses at medium to high densities. Efforts to promote transit-oriented development are usually focused on the area within a quarter-mile radius of the transit station, a five-minute walking distance. Implementation tools that cities and transit agencies have used to help promote development around transit stations include the following development strategies, reflecting a mix of policies, programs, and activities.

- *Station area planning*, including zoning, public improvements, development financing packages, and marketing programs.
- *Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure*, including pedestrian amenities as well as improved connections to transit, offices, retail centers, and homes.
- *Parking management and shared parking*, including parking “lids” or “caps,” reduced parking requirements for new construction, and shared parking structures.
- *Zoning and expedited development review*, including overlay districts, land use controls, building standards, requirements for pedestrian amenities, and “fast-track” permit approvals for projects meeting certain criteria for transit-supportive development.
- *Public assistance*, including redevelopment agency involvement in land assembly and financing; construction or improvement of public facilities; economic development policies to support transit-oriented development; and joint development projects.
- *Local transit service*, including neighborhood access routes, feeder route systems, and “timed-transfer” arrangements.

Cities around North America have employed a number of these tools to help foster appropriate development around their rail transit systems. The San Francisco Bay Area's BART system, opened in 1972, was the first regional rail system built in the U.S. in more than half a century. In the intervening two decades, a number of cities around North America have constructed heavy rail and light rail systems. These cities have experienced varying levels of success in attracting transit-oriented development around their rail station areas.

To help the City of Seattle benefit from the experience of other cities, twelve case studies were prepared that review use of various implementation tools designed to foster transit-related development. Detailed case studies are presented in *Case Studies of Transit-Oriented Development*, which is available from the City's Office of Strategic Planning. The following sections highlight points that are particularly relevant to the station area planning program. The following cities and rail systems were studied:

- Atlanta MARTA
- Denver RTD
- Los Angeles Metro
- Portland MAX
- Sacramento Light Rail
- San Diego Trolley
- San Francisco BART
- San Francisco MUNI
- San Jose Light Rail
- Vancouver, B.C., SkyTrain
- Washington, D.C., Metro

The case studies demonstrate that for transit-oriented development to occur and succeed, local governments and transit agencies must be committed to the goal and willing to devote the resources necessary over time to achieve it. Improving transit service and increasing allowable densities around light rail stations may help foster transit-oriented development where underlying market conditions are strong. In the absence of strong demand for such development, however, additional policy tools are critical for encouraging compact, transit-friendly commercial and residential development. Local governments and transit agencies may need the authority and resources to acquire prime sites, mechanisms for financing joint development projects, and other incentives for developers. The experiences of transit agencies and local jurisdictions with transit-oriented development – including both their successes and shortcomings – will help Seattle establish a planning framework and take the necessary actions to foster appropriate development in its LINK rail station areas.

STATION AREA PLANNING

Station area planning involves a number of major elements used in designing and shaping the area surrounding a transit station. Such activities may range from specific plans to market studies to land use or zoning policies. A range of different planning and development efforts can help foster development that is designed and built to coordinate with transit systems. For example, some cities have created master plans for station areas with design guidelines for transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly development, and others have established special zoning provisions for transit-oriented development. Specific Area Plans for transit stations

can tailor land use, density, development standards, and design guidelines to suit specific station areas and their surrounding neighborhoods.

The case studies suggest that all types of station areas benefit from area planning efforts, but the greatest results come when station area planning is carried out through comprehensive plans that utilize a combination of zoning, public improvements, development financing packages, and effective marketing programs. Such strategies were used with success in Portland, San Jose, Washington, D.C. and some of the BART station areas in San Francisco's East Bay.

- In Portland, Tri-Met has undertaken an ambitious Transit Station Area Planning program for MAX stations, including market studies, land suitability analyses, concept plans, and design guidelines.
- In the Washington, D.C., area, comprehensive plans for various station areas, such as Bethesda, helped direct development toward the station area as part of county-wide efforts to plan for efficient connections among land uses and transportation systems.

However, comprehensive plans must remain flexible enough to respond to changes in the real estate market. Where station development plans are overly restrictive and do not relate to market conditions, transit-oriented development does not occur.

PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Municipalities and transit agencies should communicate with developers throughout the planning process and work to create opportunities for transit-supportive development that benefits citizens, communities, developers, and transit systems. Communication can help foster realistic expectations on both sides of the table and may lead to mutually beneficial outcomes.

In Portland, Tri-Met staff held a number of informal meetings with Grubb & Ellis and other commercial brokerage firms to discuss potential opportunities for new development. Through these informal discussions, the transit agency learned more about the elements that made projects attractive to developers and those that made them wary. Involving developers and local governments in the station area planning process helped generate realistic, feasible plans that are now translating into on-the-ground results. Involving local businesses contributed to the ongoing successes at BART's Fruitvale station and along San Francisco's Third Street light rail line. When transit operators and local governments seek the neighborhood business community's participation, the potential for transit-oriented development coupled with neighborhood revitalization increases.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Station area planning works best when it responds directly to the needs of the surrounding community. This approach not only builds community support, but it also leads to plans that physically integrate the station area and new developments with the surrounding communities. Involving the community base produced successful TOID projects in several cases.

- A community-based organization spearheaded plans for the Fruitvale BART Transit Village project, and the Muni Third Street Light Rail Project in San Francisco has included substantial community involvement as well.
- In an effort to take a more proactive approach to station area planning, the City of Los Angeles is shifting its focus from planning for general station prototypes to developing neighborhood plans for each station area; this approach recognizes the value of creating specific plans for each individual station.
- In the Washington, D.C., area, local jurisdictions have led the development of area plans for some stations and have worked to integrate WMATA's joint development projects with other surrounding developments.
- In Portland, Tri-Met has linked its work with other regional planning efforts and worked with communities to prepare detailed development plans for station areas. Tri-Met and the municipalities along the light rail line have also initiated public-private partnerships for the development of master plans in communities surrounding MAX station areas.

Appropriate Development

Developing station area plans that fit the local community character and are tailored to various station areas will facilitate success. Imposing one-size-fits-all plans that do not consider local needs and values will likely pose problems. It is useful to learn from the experiences of other cities, but adopting a cookie-cutter approach may not work in a different region. For example, Toronto's model of high-density, high-rise residential development at rail stations, which transit planners originally sought to replicate in Atlanta, has been slow to gain acceptance among local residents. Accordingly, station area plans should be flexible enough to adapt to unanticipated changes in development patterns, types, and locations.

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

Cities and transit agencies should integrate station area planning efforts with other existing plans and plans under development.

- In the Washington, D.C., area, Ballston and Bethesda, two of the region's most successful station area projects, used master plans for coordinating long-term development around the station. The master plans coordinated public and private investments, linked station area planning with planning efforts for other areas, harnessed existing implementation tools for the station area, and committed public resources to the station area over time in coordination with private development. Stations without master plans, like West Hyattsville, have evolved in a much more piecemeal way.
- In the San Francisco Bay Area, specific plans at the Hayward and Fruitvale BART stations have integrated new and old development, and the plans themselves have become integrated into other planning efforts. The Hayward station plan was part of the City's overall effort to revitalize its downtown. At Fruitvale, the station plan was integrated with the provision of vital housing and community services to local residents.

- In San Jose, a solid framework comprised of the General Plan, specific plans, and Housing Initiative policies supports transit-oriented development. San Jose has been successful in implementing transit-supportive projects because of its policy base and the implementation of those policies.

EARLY AND ONGOING COMMITMENT

Station area planning is not a single-step process. It is important to initiate station area planning and design efforts early in the light rail planning process. For transit-oriented development to occur, planning must begin early, and plans should be revisited and modified as needed. Additional attention and resources are necessary to ensure that plans are implemented. Planners should consider existing as well as forthcoming land uses during station design, and they should work with other agencies and developers throughout the planning process.

- Adjacent to RTD’s Alameda light rail station, the City of Denver’s urban renewal agency helped facilitate construction of a major “big box” retail center that turns its blank back wall towards the light rail station. The redevelopment agency is now more cognizant of the benefits of transit-oriented development, but the results of the oversight at this station will be challenging to reverse. Interim land use controls, or simply better communication early in the planning process, might have prevented this situation.
- For Portland’s Westside light rail line scheduled to open in September 1998, Tri-Met began working several years in advance to craft market development strategies for station areas. More than a decade after Portland’s Eastside rail line opened, some sites remain undeveloped, illustrating that a long-term perspective is important for promoting appropriate development.

PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE

Streets, buildings, and open spaces that are oriented toward pedestrians and create a pleasant walking environment can help curtail automobile use and promote transit ridership. Non-rail infrastructure investments can improve pedestrian access to transit systems and surrounding land uses. Investments such as street and sidewalk improvements, street lighting, street furniture, transit shelters, information kiosks, weather protection, public art, and landscaping can also create or improve amenities for pedestrians and make the station area more attractive for other development. Such pedestrian amenities also can improve security around stations by attracting more people to the area, resulting in more “eyes on the street.”

Providing direct connections from rail stations to surrounding buildings makes the transit system easier to use and can enhance ridership. Direct pedestrian connections between new office development and rail stations, as in San Diego and Washington D.C. improve transit access because they allow people to go directly to the trains without going outside. Station designs can include knock-out panels in anticipation of connections to future buildings. However, allocating the costs of direct connections to commercial establishments can prove challenging. In Washington, D.C., developers typically bear the additional cost of establishing linkages to the Metro. In Atlanta, MARTA officials initially sought fees from developers

for direct connections to rail stations, but the transit agency reconsidered its position after developers balked at the charges. Currently, developers cover the cost of the access in some cases, and MARTA is seeking other funding sources to pay for the direct connections. In some cases, the City and MARTA have successfully negotiated with developers to provide improved pedestrian access and amenities.

Zoning and design guidelines can also focus on enhancing the pedestrian environment. For example, a pedestrian overlay zone in the City of Atlanta is designed to improve pedestrian access to station entrances. The ordinance requires that developers provide an extra ten feet of sidewalk width around station areas, or they can avoid this requirement by providing a direct connection to the station through the building. In Portland, development guidelines for transit station areas include several provisions regarding the pedestrian environment. For example, buildings must locate their front door on the main street, and they are required to provide additional pedestrian amenities in station areas.

Local Improvement Districts can collect taxes used for improving the environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users in business districts around station areas. For example, the City of Portland used this approach for MAX stations downtown and in the Lloyd District. Local Improvement Districts generated tax funds for use in beautification and circulation improvement efforts, such as pedestrian walkways, plantings, bike racks, and public art.

Not all transit systems have focused on improving the pedestrian environment in order to boost ridership and promote transit-oriented development in station areas. For example, Vancouver's BC Transit had not yet pursued significant investments to improve pedestrian access and amenities at some stations partly due to a perception that encouraging people to spend more time around rail stations is not necessarily a desirable goal. Some SkyTrain stations have an undeserved reputation as places that criminals frequent. However, other agency staff have countered that having more people recreating and conducting legitimate business in station areas could enhance public safety by increasing the number of "eyes on the street."

PARKING MANAGEMENT AND SHARED PARKING

Strategies to manage and limit the supply and location of parking play an important role in promoting transit ridership, and appropriate parking policies can foster transit-oriented development in station areas. Parking is usually a major issue for developers, and municipalities and transit agencies should work closely with the private sector to craft policies that are acceptable to developers while supporting goals for transit and transit-oriented development. Cities and transit agencies have employed a range of approaches in addressing parking needs, including limits on the total amount of parking, reduced parking requirements, public parking facilities, shared parking structures, and other strategies.

MINIMUM PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Many existing building codes and zoning ordinances include requirements mandating minimum amounts of parking to be included in new construction. Reducing or removing these

requirements is a first step towards encouraging transit-oriented development, which typically include fewer parking spaces than traditional buildings. Since parking is costly for developers to provide, lowering or removing minimum parking requirements may help make potential projects more attractive.

However, feasibility is a key concern, and developers may balk at the idea of including less parking if they fear the project will not work. Accordingly, cities and transit agencies must demonstrate to developers that the gains in transit accessibility will reduce the need for parking spaces, while maintaining the viability and attraction of commercial centers and residential developments. For example, in some cases in Atlanta, planners successfully persuaded developers to reduce parking by convincing them that their proximity to a MARTA station would reduce parking demand. In Denver, the City does not require minimum parking amounts in construction of new downtown office space. Portland has no minimum parking requirements, and Tri-Met has also worked with the suburban jurisdictions to lower their parking ratios required for residential and retail developments.

MAXIMUM PARKING REQUIREMENTS

In addition to removing or lowering requirements for the minimum amounts of parking required, some cities have placed caps or limits on the amount of parking allowed in certain areas. Parking “lids” in downtown Portland and reduced parking requirements in Sacramento have helped make transit-oriented development viable.

- In Portland, the lid on the total number of downtown parking spaces is now being lifted, but other parking restrictions remain in effect. The number of parking spaces allowed in new buildings are limited, and parking space ratios are linked to transit accessibility, with less parking allowed closer to the MAX light rail stations.
- In Sacramento, the State government – the area’s largest employer – wanted to encourage transit use, so it severely limited parking and enacted aggressive transportation demand management programs.
- The City of Denver has also established a maximum allowable amount of parking per square foot of office space.
- Atlanta initially sought to restrict downtown parking, but early efforts to limit parking supply provoked an outcry from downtown businesses, which threatened to relocate to the suburbs if the City infringed on their ability to build accessory parking in new downtown construction. Communication, education, and positive models from other cities may help persuade the business community to accept some parking limitations.

SHARED PARKING

In shared parking lots or parking structures, commuters, residents, shoppers, and other drivers share parking spaces throughout the day, reducing the overall need for parking. Shared parking can be attractive to developers, as it reduces the costs of providing parking, especially when parking is shared with public facilities, such as Park & Ride lots or public buildings. In Atlanta, MARTA is currently working to develop a shared parking system at its Lindbergh

Center station. Currently, the site has a 2000-space surface parking lot, which MARTA plans to replace with two parking structures. MARTA riders and retail shoppers will share these structures, and the transit authority is currently negotiating with stores to determine the appropriate ratios for the shared parking.

In some cases, difficulties have emerged in shared parking arrangements. In Denver, for example, a major shopping center had shared 300 to 400 parking spaces with light rail riders until the retailers abruptly terminated the agreement when they decided they needed the additional parking spaces. RTD is now working with the retailers to establish a more stable agreement for shared parking.

In Portland, Tri-Met has arranged for shared parking at several stations. For example, at the LaSalle Apartments at the new Beaverton Creek station on the Westside line, overflow visitor parking in the Park & Ride lot enabled the use of lower parking space ratios in the apartment complex. In another case, theater attendees, churchgoers, and express buses share a parking area, with each user group occupying the parking lot at different times of the day and week. At the Westside rail's terminus in downtown Hillsboro, MAX riders will share a parking garage with a regional justice center.

PARKING LOCATION AND DESIGN

The design and location of parking lots and structures can also support or hinder transit-oriented development.

- In Atlanta's downtown and midtown sections, the City established a parking limitation district, which requires a special permit for the construction of stand-alone parking structures though accessory parking within other building uses is unrestricted. Planners concede that this policy probably has not decreased the supply of parking, but it may have influenced the design and location of parking so that it does not impede pedestrian access to transit stations.
- In Portland, the City built some public parking garages to provide short-term parking for shoppers to compensate for restrictions on the development of commercial garages and parking lots.
- Along San Francisco's Third Street Light Rail Project, MUNI worked with local residents and businesses to develop parking recommendations, including increasing side street parking by reorienting on-street parking from parallel to perpendicular, working with churches to share parking resources, installing additional short-term parking meters to encourage parking turnover, and developing a signage plan to guide visitors to the available parking supply.
- In Vancouver, on-street parking is encouraged, in accordance with the traditional neighborhood model, and surface parking lots are typically restricted or prohibited for new developments. New off-street parking is primarily in-structure or underground; these requirements limit the parking supply by increasing the costs of parking construction.

ZONING AND EXPEDITED REVIEW

Zoning ordinances, including overlay districts, land use controls, building standards, and requirements for pedestrian amenities, can help promote transit-supportive development in rail transit station areas. Upzoning, in particular, coupled with reduced parking requirements, helps attract transit-oriented development. In areas with spatial constraints on development, intensive existing development, and a strong local economy and real estate market, zoning may provide sufficient incentives for transit-oriented development. In San Francisco's confined downtown area, for example, a strong real estate office market and higher floor area ratios drew development into the Montgomery station area.

However, while zoning allows for development, zoning alone will not attract development where underlying market conditions are weak. In such areas, specific plans, direct public investments, or other policy actions may be necessary to promote transit-supportive development. Municipalities should not expect appropriate station area development to come of its own accord, and additional policy measures may be needed to foster appropriate development in some areas. In promoting transit-friendly development, creating a general atmosphere of support for transit-oriented projects can be even more important than developing a laundry list of detailed zoning regulations.

In addition public agencies also adopted interim development standards to prevent undesirable land uses before station area plans were complete. Sacramento, San Francisco, and San Diego have also experienced some successes in using zoning in their efforts to encourage transit-oriented development.

REZONING AND UPZONING

Increasing allowable densities can be an important step in facilitating relatively dense transit-supportive development around rail stations.

- Along Portland's MAX line, municipalities rezoned lands around many stations for higher density land uses and transit-oriented development.
- In Vancouver, six regional town centers were designated in existing centers or in redevelopment areas to provide for compact residential development, commercial centers, community services, and public amenities. Upzoning has facilitated developments that are attracted to transit, and such projects have helped create an atmosphere of success that draws additional developers.

However, efforts to change zoning, especially upzoning to increase allowable densities of development, can draw opposition from community and business interests.

- For example, MARTA worked closely with the City of Atlanta to revise its downtown zoning significantly, but protests from the business community led to less sweeping changes than originally envisioned.
- In Denver, significant rezoning has not yet occurred in light rail station areas, but the City expects it will occur with the development of the new Southeast Corridor light rail line.

In addition to upzoning around rail stations, it is also useful to exercise land use controls in areas away from transit, where development is not desired.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

A number of municipalities and transit agencies have adopted specific design guidelines intended to promote transit-supportive development around rail station areas.

- In Portland and its suburbs, zoning changes around the MAX line have included a number of specific development guidelines, including provisions for ground-floor retail requirements, setback restrictions, street configuration, parking ratios and locations, sidewalk widths, building orientation, minimum and maximum densities, and other pedestrian-oriented design elements. Some jurisdictions incorporated these changes directly into their underlying zoning, while others established transit overlay zones around the light rail corridor and stations. Along the Westside corridor, Tri-Met was successful in getting the City of Portland, the City of Beaverton, the City of Hillsboro, and Washington County to adopt the transit agency's development guidelines as part of their municipal codes.
- In the Vancouver area, local policies in designated regional town centers include design criteria, density transfers, and zoning to restrict parking. Communities established comprehensive zoning districts along with specific zoning regulations for particular areas, including building character specifications, building location requirements, and architectural design criteria.

INTERIM LAND USE CONTROLS

Interim land use controls can be used to prevent developments that are not transit-supportive from occurring in station areas before the light rail system is complete. In the Portland area, Tri-Met initially worked with various jurisdictions to establish interim land use controls to prevent undesirable developments, such as the golf course that was proposed at its Beaverton Creek station where the mixed-use LaSalle Apartments just opened. In more urban areas, interim controls may be less important, as many sites surrounding transit stations are already developed.

OVERLAY ZONES

Overlay zones may be added to existing zones to establish requirements encouraging transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly developments. For example, in Portland's suburb of Gresham, the City established a Transit Development District, which involved significant rezoning designed to make transit a focal point. The zone included a high-density Central Urban Core district, and it mandated office and residential buildings as the primary permitted uses near stations.

However, transit overlay zones may not create the appropriate land uses around station areas, and such measures may be inadequate for encouraging station area development. For exam-

ple, in West Hyattsville, Maryland, transit-oriented development overlay zones did not attract investment because the zone itself established rigid, inflexible requirements and did not create sufficient economic incentives for the type of development desired. Such zoning may be effective in the context of a more comprehensive plan for development, but in some cases, alone it accomplishes little on its own.

INCENTIVE ZONING

Some cities, including the City of Los Angeles, implemented a series of incentive zoning measures intended to encourage development along the light rail system. However, incentive zoning may not always produce the best results, and such measures may not be consistently applied. Direct public funding, flexibility in use controls and development standards, and provisions for high-density development may encourage more and better development. Incentive zoning is not necessarily more flexible than normal zoning provisions, because the options offered are usually limited and require that the developer trades one benefit for another.

EXPEDITED REVIEW

A number of cities have considered the use of expedited permit review procedures intended to encourage transit-oriented development around transit station areas. However, this strategy has not been used to a significant degree in the rail systems our case studies examined, though jurisdictions in the Washington, D.C., and San Francisco Bay areas used expedited review procedures in some station areas. For instance, around the Metro station in Bethesda, Maryland, an optional zoning standard placed projects with high-quality construction and public amenities such as open space, public art, and other pedestrian-friendly design elements on a fast-track for permit approval. In the Bay Area, “umbrella” environmental review has shortened the review period around some BART stations for projects that conform to particular station area plans.

Other cities and transit agencies have deliberately chosen not to use this implementation tool.

- For example, in Atlanta, MARTA stressed the importance of retaining its review capacity. To support its arguments, the transit agency cited the example of a building permit for a corporate headquarters that the City granted without MARTA review for a site located above the rail line’s downtown tunnel. MARTA staff worried that the new building could affect the structural integrity of the subway.
- In Denver, the City does not offer expedited permitting to transit-oriented development projects, but it is currently in the process of streamlining its permitting process for all applicants.
- Tri-Met and the local governments in the Portland region discussed implementing some form of expedited permit review for transit-oriented development projects, but they determined that establishing a blanket agreement for permits was not feasible. Staffing constraints were a factor in this decision, as the jurisdictions were already having difficulty keeping pace with existing requests for development permits. Though some aspects

of the permitting process could be expedited, planning staff did not believe that appropriate review of projects could be conducted in a significantly shorter time frame. Concerns like these have impeded widespread use of expedited permit review procedures as a tool to encourage transit-oriented development.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Public investments in station areas can build confidence among developers and help spur additional investments in transit-oriented development. Community facilities, such as daycare centers and street beautification, can make transit station areas more attractive and help build transit ridership, increase the number of “eyes on the street,” and reduce automobile use. Transit operators or local jurisdictions can work with private developers to create transit-supportive development. The role of the public sector partner can be minimal, such as holding a ground lease, or it can be more significant, as in directly subsidizing the project. Public agencies can also structure their economic development policies to help support transit-oriented development projects.

REDEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Redevelopment agencies have worked to promote private development in station areas. In Oakland, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and Portland, redevelopment agencies have helped foster transit-oriented development through both land assembly and financing. However, legal constraints may limit the scope of assistance that can be offered in some cases.

- In Portland, the Portland Development Commission took an active role in involving a private developer in the Pacific stadium complex. The Commission also used urban renewal funds to add transit- and pedestrian-friendly amenities in some station areas. Currently, Tri-Met has several efforts underway to foster joint development of excess right-of-way and private property.
- In Vancouver, British Columbia, BC Transit as well as other government and quasi-public agencies relocated their offices near light rail stations. Local redevelopment agencies and BC Transit Capital Projects Division helped jump-start private investment by taking the first step in investing in new station areas. Other community investments in parks and public infrastructure also helped spur development around SkyTrain stations.
- In the City of San Francisco, MUNI staff sought to engage and cooperate with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in order to plan for appropriate land uses and catalyst projects. Muni’s role in the process was to plan for and provide transit and enhancements, with the SFRA taking the lead on land use planning and providing other redevelopment incentives, such as land assembly. Both agencies worked cooperatively by hosting joint economic revitalization forums as part of the light rail planning process.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AT RAIL STATIONS

Locating public buildings at rail stations can help spur additional investment and provide models of transit-related development for the private sector. Showing early successes can help promote future projects at rail stations.

- For example, the Atlanta Economic Development Corporation helped fund construction of a major federal office center adjoining the Five Points station, where MARTA's North, South, East, and West lines converge in downtown Atlanta. At the Civic Center station also in downtown Atlanta, the State of Georgia constructed two 20-story buildings providing one million square feet of office space on top of the station and created a pedestrian concourse connecting directly to the station.
- In Portland, Tri-Met encouraged the location of government office buildings and regional attractions at MAX stations. For example, the Rose Garden basketball arena and the Oregon Convention Center were both built at existing light rail stations and integrated with the transit system. In the western suburb of Hillsboro, a major justice center is located at the terminus of the Westside light rail line, and the design incorporates landscaping and wide sidewalks to facilitate access to the rail platform and make the station area more attractive for pedestrians. At the Old Town/Chinatown station in downtown Portland, the Oregon Department of Transportation relocated one of its offices to a location near the station several years ago, and the State of Oregon is constructing a new government office building.

LAND ASSEMBLY

Cities and community organizations can consolidate land for development in order to promote transit-supportive land uses.

- The Atlanta Economic Development Authority has been involved in redevelopment efforts in some MARTA station areas, especially at older Park & Ride lots that rail line extensions have rendered less useful. The AEDA is undertaking efforts to assemble MARTA land and other properties for redevelopment at the Hamilton E. Holmes station on the West Line, the Arts Center on the North Line, and the West End and Lakewood/Fort McPherson stations on the South Line.
- In Denver, the urban renewal agency has not yet assisted in land assembly, but the agency expects to do so in developing an old industrial site at one of the southern light rail stations. The redevelopment agency plans to acquire land and then present a Request for Proposals to developers for creation of a transit-oriented development on the site.
- In the San Francisco Bay Area, public agencies assembled land to facilitate development at several BART stations. At some suburban BART stations, the establishment of surface parking lots served to assemble and bank land for future development.

JOINT DEVELOPMENT

Several transit agencies have worked with private developers to create joint development projects on excess rights-of-way, Park & Ride lots, and other public property. The City of Seattle and Sound Transit should consider joint development opportunities where Sound Transit may be able to acquire excess land under its current legislative authority. The City can take the lead on land use planning and providing other redevelopment incentives, such as land assembly. A comprehensive approach that utilizes a range of financial agreements, coupled with conducive land use policies, can help make joint development projects feasible and attractive for developers, municipalities, and transit agencies.

Washington D.C. Metro

In the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, WMATA has worked on a number of joint development projects. WMATA's joint development initiatives at both the Bethesda and Grosvenor stations helped foster transit-oriented development. At Bethesda, WMATA prepared land use provisions, conducted initial environmental review, and provided system interface and development rights to private developers. The transit agency typically conducts initial market studies for station area development and invests only in those projects that appear marketable. The agency also works with local jurisdictions, making recommendations on area master plans for conducive zoning and infrastructure improvements. These initiatives have made station-linked joint development more attractive for the private sector. An initial successful demonstration project established the precedent for effective joint development and showcased the benefits of joint development for surrounding businesses as well as transit ridership.

San Francisco BART

In the San Francisco Bay Area, after beginning with a few isolated joint development projects, BART now has a joint development department that is actively marketing sites in order to build structured parking and generate revenues to offset system operating costs. BART has worked with local governments on station area plans for joint development, but the transit agency has had mixed success in implementing them. BART's more successful joint development projects are those that have been spearheaded by local jurisdictions or community organizations. BART's attempts to work directly with private developers to build various projects have typically ignited community opposition.

For example, BART's initial plans to increase ridership at Fruitvale through construction of additional commuter parking conflicted with the community vision of station-based community revitalization. After the original opposition, BART worked cooperatively with the community, and its Real Estate Development arm has been quite active in the planning process. BART is working closely with local groups to develop neighborhood-oriented station area plans at the Coliseum station in Oakland and the 16th Street/Mission station in San Francisco, among others. BART has a long-standing joint development policy that parking cannot be lost to development. Any spaces taken out of use for construction must be replaced on a one-to-one basis, in lots that are contiguous to the station. The cost of replacement parking can severely increase development costs and deter investment. To address this

problem, requirements for replacement parking could be reduced or public agencies could help defray the costs.

Portland MAX

In Portland, Oregon, Tri-Met has had a long-standing interest in joint development projects, pursuing such agreements since its early days of planning for the Eastside MAX line in the 1980s. The transit agency hired a specialist in joint development to negotiate and craft these public-private arrangements. Despite these efforts, only a few joint development projects have been built to date, though additional negotiations are underway. The first joint development proposal, for a high-intensity mixed-use commercial project including a YMCA center, was slated for the Gateway Station. However, the deal collapsed when the YMCA lost its tax-exempt status, and in its place Fred Meyer constructed a large, auto-oriented retail center. The store did, however, reorient to face towards the station, rather than away from it as originally planned.

Tri-Met also attempted to create a major joint development at the Gresham City Hall station, which would have placed a regional mall on the largest parcel of vacant land along the Eastside corridor. The regional shopping center was to be integrated with the new light rail station just west of Gresham City Hall. The City of Gresham incorporated the site into its Transit Development District, and Tri-Met secured funding from the federal government for its share of the project costs. But after years of negotiations and planning, the developer, the Winmar Company of Seattle, backed out of the project during the recession of the early 1990s. In 1995, a public-private partnership developed a new master plan for mixed-use development of the site.

At the Jefferson Street station, Tri-Met formed a partnership with the Portland Planning Bureau, the Goose Hollow Foothills League, and Innovative Housing, Inc., a private, nonprofit housing developer, to develop 18,000 square feet of excess property. Recent policy changes at the Federal Transit Administration enabled Tri-Met to write down the land value, and the City of Portland provided a low-interest loan to facilitate the project. The resulting 27-unit, high-density Arbor Vista Condominiums is expected to generate new transit riders at the adjacent station. Another recent joint development success involved construction of a 42-unit residential complex on excess right-of-way property that Tri-Met sold a developer. The project generates about 70 MAX riders each day.

LOCAL TRANSIT SERVICE

Improved bus connections, including both local and express service lines as well as “timed-transfer” arrangements to light rail, help improve access to local businesses and employment centers and support regional rail transit systems. A number of cities have redesigned their local transit service in conjunction with establishing new light rail service. Some transit agencies have significantly altered bus routes to feed rail systems, replacing trips that were once completed one a single bus and forcing riders to transfer from buses to trains. Local bus service should be coordinated, not replaced, with new light rail capacity.

- In Vancouver, BC Transit rerouted bus service to feed passengers onto SkyTrain light rail routes, requiring a bus-to-rail transfer for many riders. This change increased SkyTrain ridership, but at the expense of bus service in some areas, as bus routes that crossed the rail line were split into two separate routes each terminating at the SkyTrain.
- In Atlanta, most of MARTA's bus service is designed to bring riders to the MARTA rail system, with nearly all of its more than 150 bus routes connecting to rail stations.
- In Denver, RTD also reconfigured its bus service to provide riders to the light rail system. Under the new system, most suburban express buses end their routes at light rail terminus stations, and riders transfer to the light rail system to complete the trip downtown. The connections are synchronized such that trains are waiting when the buses arrive. With the light rail trains now operating at capacity, however, RTD recently restored some of its bus service to downtown.

OVERARCHING POLICIES INFLUENCING STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the specific implementation tools discussed above, several overarching factors can contribute to the success of efforts to promote transit-related development around rail stations.

- Cities and transit agencies should take a proactive, long-term approach to encouraging development, recognizing that change may not come immediately and that continued attention and resources are critical to long-term success.
- Developers, local businesses, and community members should take active parts in the planning process.
- Prioritizing efforts to demonstrate early successes can provide useful models and help facilitate additional developments.
- Supportive policies for transportation and land use at the city, county, regional, and state levels can complement and reinforce local efforts to promote transit-oriented development.
- Finally, efforts to promote transit-oriented development should take a multi-disciplinary, comprehensive approach and include a range of policy tools that can be tailored in their application to particular sites or projects.

The next chapter reports on the views of Seattle's development community regarding how these tools should be applied in Seattle given the market conditions and current environment for real estate development.