

Platform

President's Corner

By John Robert Smith
President and CEO

With a new year, come new opportunities and new challenges for Reconnecting America.

The elections last fall changed the political landscape, but when one door closes, another opens. Though we saw some good friends leave, our policy team hit the ground running to educate new faces on the Hill on the importance of transit-oriented development, equity and multimodal transportation linkage.

Our technical assistance team has been hard at work, evidenced by the stories noted within. And coming in March, we'll unveil our new website at reconnectingamerica.org.

I trust you will find this issue of Platform educational and useful. As always, thank you for your support.



Central Corridor TOD Framework Process

By Catherine Cox Blair
Program Director

Reconnecting America and its partners in the Center for Transit-Oriented Development have been fortunate to have worked in the Twin Cities region for the past six years. The region has been a leader in planning a successful regional transit system and incorporating opportunities to create transit-centered communities.

In 2009, CTOD partnered with local firms Bonestroo and Springsted to commence work on a TOD Investment Framework for the Central Corridor, the light rail corridor that connects Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The framework was designed to encourage strategic, coordinated investments

along the entire corridor, which travels through two cities and two counties, and falls under the jurisdiction of multiple local, regional and state agencies. The overarching goal was to ensure that the value of the \$1 billion light rail investment is

leveraged to its full potential, to implement the vision expressed in locally adopted plans and benefit local residents and businesses. This process was supported by the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, and is intended to serve as a model for corridor-level planning along future transit lines in the region, as well as for other regions seeking to make the most of their transit investments.

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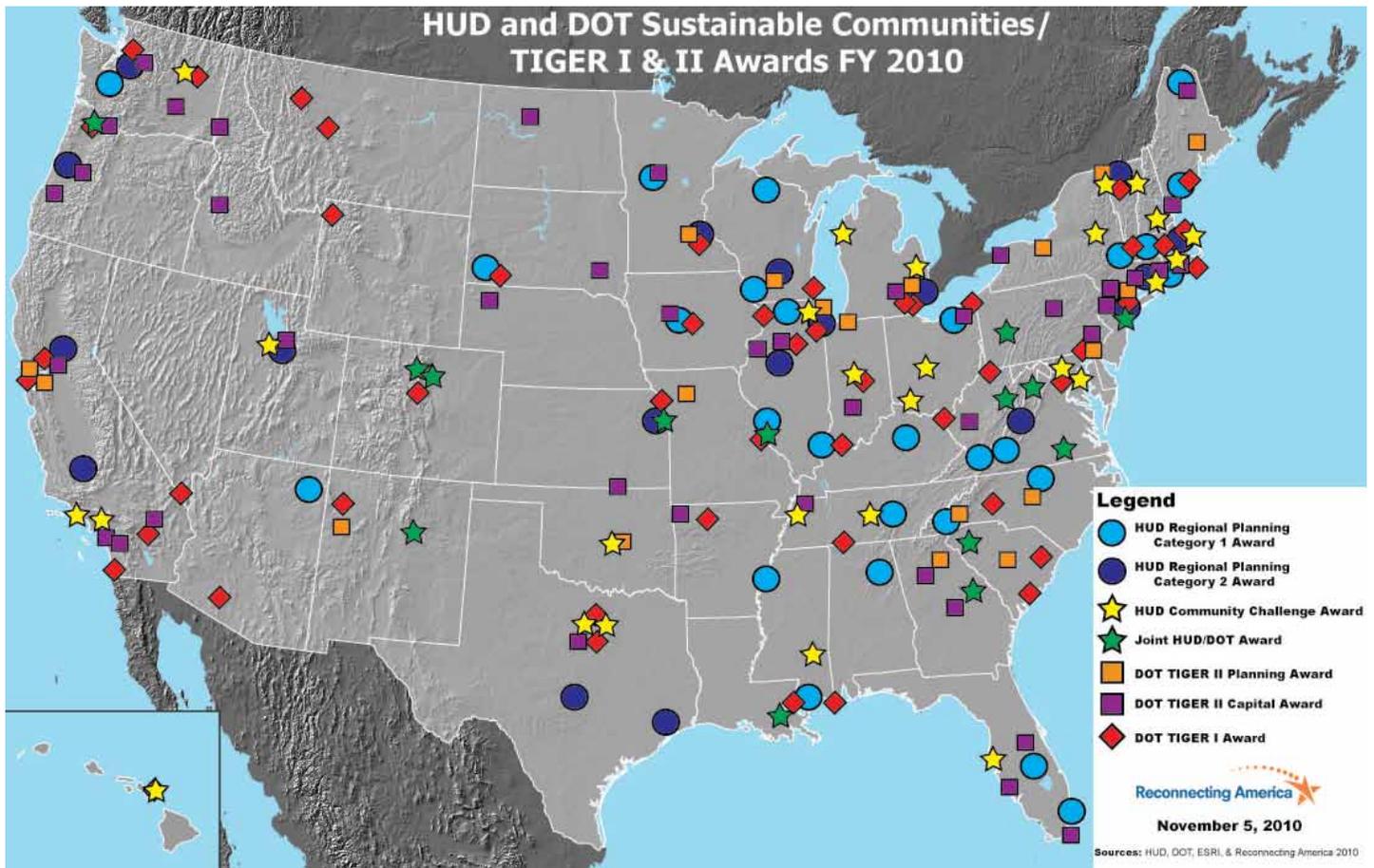
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Supporting Livable Communities

People around the country are plotting their course for the future, and working to make livable, sustainable communities, where people have transportation and housing options, and where businesses have the competitive advantages that will serve their needs for years to come. Reconnecting America is working to support these efforts.

We completed a review of sustainable communities planning grants made by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and livable communities investments made by the Department of Transportation to highlight key themes that are drawing regional stakeholders together. The report is available online at: <http://ractod.org/fX9VEG>

Reconnecting America is supporting on-the-

ground efforts to build regional coalitions across the country in partnership with foundations, advocates, and public agencies.

We also are developing a series of policy briefs to highlight the opportunities and challenges around livability in the New Orleans-Baton Rouge super region and helped lead a two-day summit in Macon, GA, around issues of inter-city and high speed rail and regional livability.

Reconnecting America continues to integrate our work on policy reform at the federal, state, and regional levels through our technical assistance with partners in specific regions, and sharing lessons learned and best practices with others seeking to implement similar programs and policies in their regions.

CTOD Update: Tools of the Trade

By Sam Zimbabwe
Director, Ctod

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development is continuing its research and technical assistance efforts. Reconnecting America and our CTOD partners at the Center for Neighborhood Technology and Strategic Economics are excited by our efforts to provide new tools and methods for planning for TOD and capturing the benefits of transit investment.

CTOD made our National TOD Database



publicly available in October 2010. The response has been astounding. More than 1,200 users signed up in the first two weeks and generated 15,000 different reports on TOD across the country. We are working to incorporate new data (including the 2005-2009 American Community Survey and eventually the 2010 Census) and new functionality. The database is accessible at toddata.cnt.org



CTOD also released a new report, “Performance-Based TOD Typology and Guidebook,” developing performance metrics for

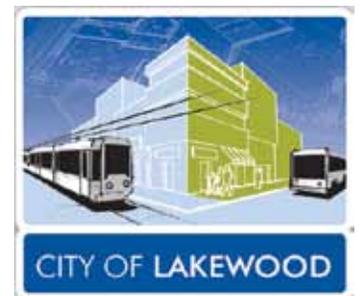
communities around transit. These metrics will help planners, developers, and community members plan for TOD around existing and new transit stations by providing benchmarks for different types of communities.

CTOD is preparing to release three new research reports on transit and TOD. Two reports focus on the links between transit and employment, both at the regional scale and in a more

focused manner, analyzing the sectors and types of employment most closely linked to transit access. The third, “Rails to Real Estate,” examines the development impact of three recently built transit lines: the Hiawatha Corridor in Minneapolis, Charlotte’s South Corridor, and Denver’s Southeast Corridor. While all three corridors have seen significant amounts of new investment, there are still large opportunities for TOD to be realized.

In addition to our national research work, CTOD has been actively engaged in several regions developing corridor- and regional-TOD strategies. Highlights of this work include:

- In Denver, we’ve been working with the cities of Denver, Lakewood and the respective housing authorities, which will be connected by the West Corridor LRT line currently under construction. Together, we’ve been crafting a corridor implementation strategy that maps out different approaches to TOD and ensures long-term affordable housing along the corridor.
- In Portland we’ve been working with Metro to develop a strategic plan for their TOD program, linking investments more closely to a market-based typology of communities in the region so that different types of investments can be made where they are most catalytic.
- We’re continuing to work in Pittsburgh and Detroit, while forging new relationships in regions around the country.
- We’re also working to revamp our web presence at www.ctod.org.



Inventory of TOD Programs

By **G. Sasha Forbes**
Policy Associate

Developers, local governments, and regional land-use and transportation agencies have long highlighted the need to increase both public and private funding for planning, land acquisition, infrastructure, construction and maintenance for transit-oriented development (TOD) projects. Across the US, state entities, transit agencies, and metropolitan planning organizations are working to address this challenge by providing a variety of financial incentives for TOD.

In January 2011, Reconnecting America released the “2010 Inventory of TOD Programs: A National Review of State, Regional and Local Programs that Fund Transit-Oriented Development Plans and Projects.” The report provides information on 42 programs, including 18 state-level, 15 regional and transit agency, and nine local programs. The report lists three categories of programs that provide grants, loans, tax credits, or direct financial incentives to TOD projects or plans:

- Planning: funds to conduct corridor, district or station-area TOD planning
- Implementation: funds for construction of projects or infrastructure in a TOD district
- Property acquisition: funds dedicated to acquiring property or land banking in locations near transit

Using web-based research, individual interviews, and Reconnecting America experience, policy staff compiled an inventory of ongoing,

institutionalized programs that provide direct funding or financial incentives to support the actual planning, implementation or acquisition of property for TOD.

The project did not attempt to compile all policies that support TOD. The many examples of states, regions, and local governments setting the framework for TOD by updating zoning codes, creating enabling legislation, approving tax-increment financing districts, or developing other supportive policies were beyond the scope of the project.

The report is divided into sections on state, regional, and local policies and programs. Each section has a description of the program or policy, the funding source and level, and web links to obtain further information. The inventory can be used as a resource for planners and policymakers who are creating new TOD programs

in their own jurisdictions. The table on the adjacent page provides an example of the information in the report.

The report concludes by offering three recommendations regarding TOD funding programs:

- TOD programs must be tailored to fit the local conditions and needs of the place they are designed to serve.
- TOD-supportive programs are important, but they are just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to implementing TOD. Removing policy barriers to TOD can be equally important.
- TOD programs may be able to include an incentive for localities to zone for appro-



Table 1: Inventory Example

STATE		
TOD Housing Program (Proposition 1C), California Department of Housing and Community Development	Implementation	The program provides three different types of assistance: low-interest loans for gap financing for rental housing developments of 50 units or more; mortgage assistance for homeownership; and grants for infrastructure improvements necessary for mixed-income TOD housing. Housing developments must be within a half-mile of transit stations and 15 percent of units must be affordable to low- or very-low-income households. Funded through bonds (Proposition 1C, 2006) of up to \$285 million over ~3 years. Info: http://www.hcd.ca.gov/fa/tod/
REGIONAL		
Livable Centers Initiative, Atlanta Regional Commission	Planning	Planning grants that encourage local jurisdictions to plan and implement strategies that link transportation improvements with land use development strategies to create sustainable, livable communities consistent with regional development policies. Funded with federal STP dollars at ~\$5M annually. Info: http://www.atlantaregional.com/land-use/livable-centers-initiative/lci-transportation-program
LOCAL		
Capital Acquisition Revolving Fund, Minneapolis Community Planning & Economic Development	Property acquisition	Funding to acquire property or provide loans for private sector property acquisition and site assembly for sites located on commercial and transit corridors and at commercial nodes for mixed commercial and residential use. At least 20% of the housing units must be affordable at <50% median income. Funded with \$1 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money, other funding comes from Neighborhood Revitalization Program funds. Info: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/carf_home.asp

priate levels of affordable housing near transit, for agencies to acquire properties for mixed-income TOD, or for developers to include below-market rate units in their projects.

The report displays the notable variety that exists in TOD programs today. This variety is largely due to the different political landscapes, challenges, strengths, the development market, and key players that exist in each state, region, or locality. The report focuses on the actual inventory of programs; a future analysis could include common barriers to program and policy implementation.

Recognizing that TOD programs change and are adopted frequently, Reconnecting America aims to use the content from this report to develop an interactive web tool that will include a broader set of policies and can be updated by

users, to ensure ongoing accuracy. The report is at <http://ractod.org/eDF76G>

Other Policy Highlights

- Reconnecting America is continuing to engage in the development of policy regarding high-speed rail in the United States. Upcoming work includes research related to high-speed rail and TOD.
- On behalf of FTA, Reconnecting America and its CTOD partners will be conducting research on joint development to identify organizational and other barriers and recommend policy solutions.
- Through our work with the Transportation for America campaign, Reconnecting America is developing materials and strategy to advance transit and TOD in the context of the next surface transportation authorization bill.

Central Corridor TOD Framework Process . . .

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a Central Corridor Working Group was created, bringing together key leaders from the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, Ramsey County, the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. The Working Group identified three key objectives:

- Create a comprehensive public investment framework that includes strategies to leverage the public investment to attract, shape, and accelerate appropriate private investment in the Central Corridor.
- Identify critical investments that might otherwise be missed by individual jurisdictions and participants.
- Establish a coordinated voice to support future corridor-wide funding needs, strategies for various funding partners, and

provide information to support individual jurisdiction funding requests.

The work included collecting all corridor-related community plans and engineering documents; assessing costs to implement the plans; evaluating current market conditions and how potential investments might help to stimulate private market activity; identifying potential funding mechanisms; and creating a prototype tool for ongoing monitoring of corridor investments.

CTOD collected data and information from all neighborhood and station area plans in the corridor, including necessary costs from streets, sidewalks, utilities, landscaping, land acquisition, environmental remediation, public art and private development. More than \$6 billion in costs were identified. The chart at right breaks down the costs to implement TOD in the corridor. Much of the cost to implement

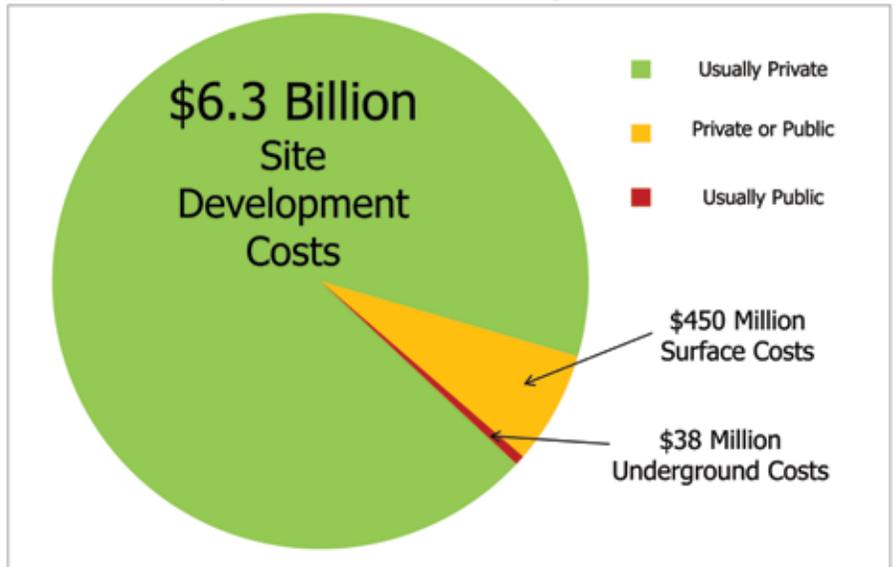
Map of Central Corridor Line



TOD in the Central Corridor consists of private development, which includes affordable housing and the redevelopment of existing buildings. In strong market conditions, developers typically deliver community benefits such as streetscape improvements, a public plaza, or other desired amenities as a part of their project. Increases in value generated by new development can be captured using public finance mechanisms such as tax abatement or tax increment financing (TIF). Because most public-sector financing strategies that can help to pay for needed improvements are driven by property value increases, stimulating new development is important to finance many of the needed improvements in the Central Corridor. Developer interviews and a financial analysis revealed a “feasibility gap” for all kinds of development tested. The locations with the highest development feasibility are generally on the western end of the corridor.

Given current relatively cool market conditions, it is important to leverage public-sector investments to stimulate market activity. This

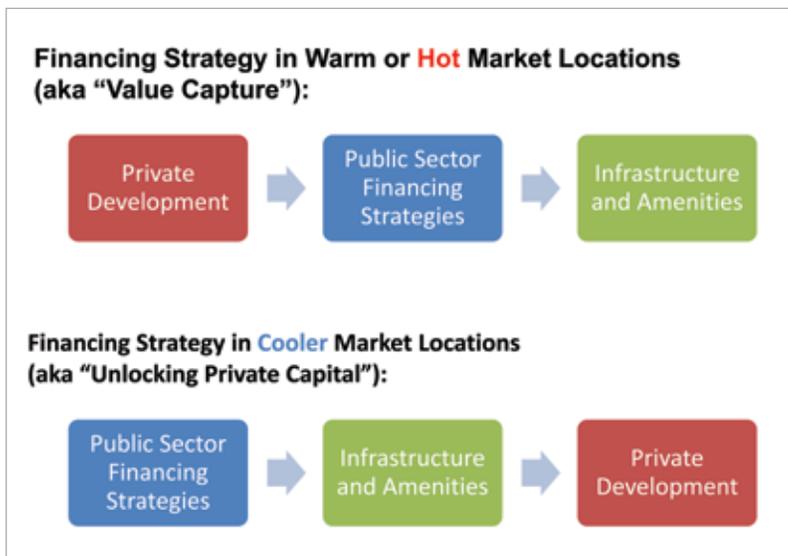
Planned Improvements Along Central Corridor

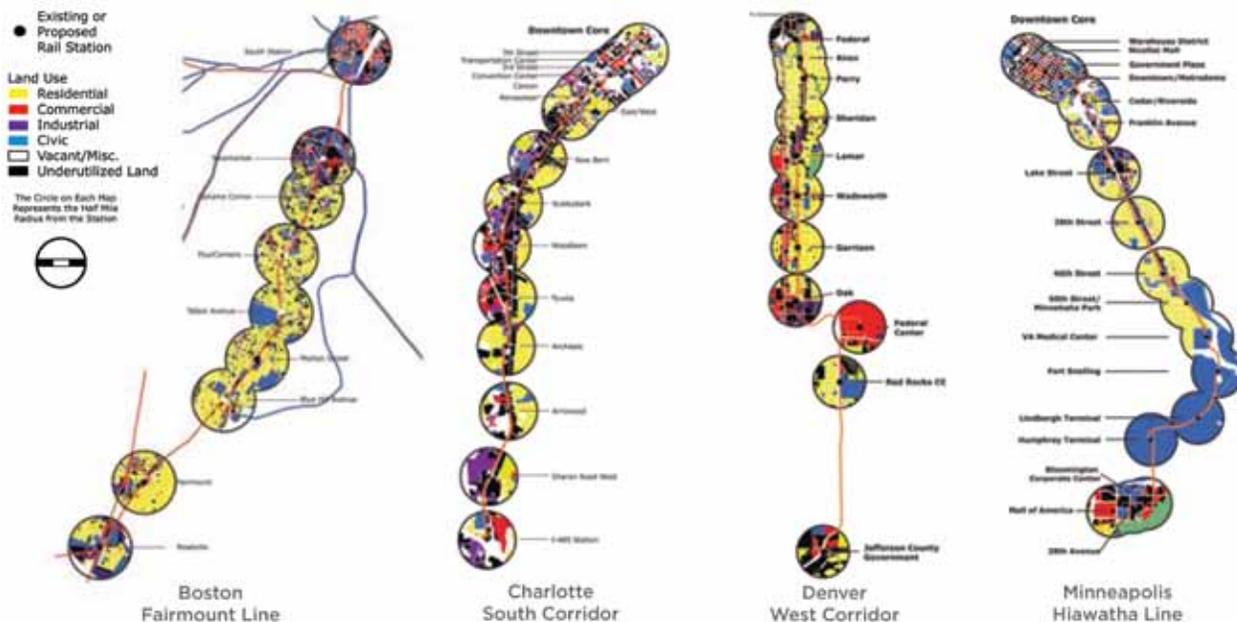


Source: Center for Transit-Oriented Development, Bonestroo, 2010

is particularly important for parts of the Central Corridor that have historically consisted of auto-oriented uses and require investments to facilitate mixed-use, pedestrian and transit-oriented development. The new transit has the potential to have a significant positive impact on property values, as evidenced along the Hiawatha line. We identified the potential impact of improvements such as streetscape, parks, and enhanced retail districts. The analysis found that these proactive efforts can also have a significant impact on nearby property values and development potential, and that the combination of new transit service and strategic investments can move up the timeline for development in some parts of the corridor that might have otherwise taken years to reach feasibility.

CTOD is in the process of developing a management tool that provides objective information to cities and counties in a manner that assists them in prioritizing public improvements and support for development projects. An additional benefit of the tool will be to track development activity investments along the corridor over time.





This graphic compares the amount and size of underutilized land parcels along four transit lines. Mapping underutilized land along a corridor provides a better understanding of where new development might happen, though this information should be supplemented with a study of local market strength.

TOD 203: Corridors and TOD

CTOD, led by Reconnecting America staff, just completed recently completed the latest in its 200 series TOD guidebooks in partnership with the Federal Transit Administration. “Transit Corridors and TOD: Connecting the Dots” highlights recent TOD experience along corridors throughout the country and provides a series of recommended strategies for maximizing the TOD potential of transit corridors.

Filled with real-world transit-oriented development lessons, the TOD 203 guidebook explains how corridor planning can facilitate not only successful transportation outcomes but also successful transit-oriented development.

The guidebook contains numerous on-the-ground examples: alignment considerations for the planned Southwest Corridor in the Twin Cities; engaging stakeholders along the Foothill Extension of the Gold Line; the shared

planning process along Phoenix’s Valley Metro Light Rail that led to TOD zoning and pedestrian development guidelines for the entire corridor; Charlotte’s development experience since light rail arrived in 2007; the exciting collaboration between the housing authorities, planners, and city leaders in Denver and Lakewood along the West Corridor; and the high ridership experienced by Houston’s Red Line due to the connections it provides between major destinations, not to mention lessons from Seattle, Boston, Cleveland, St. Louis, Washington, DC, the San Francisco Bay Area, Baltimore and Portland. Visit <http://ractod.org/gzm0ju> to download the guidebook.

The technical assistance staff is hard at work on new guidebooks, anticipating the release of a guidebook on TOD and regional planning in the Spring of 2011 and guidebooks on topics from climate change to public health in the future.

