

Platform

President's Corner

By JOHN ROBERT SMITH
PRESIDENT AND CEO

Welcome to the Fall Platform newsletter. As I write this, Congress has just returned after its recess with a mountain of issues awaiting action.

Policy Director Sarah Kline takes a look at what's at stake while Chief of Staff Allison



Brooks and Deputy Policy Director Darnell Chadwick Grisby explore the America Fast Forward proposal.

In a follow up to a summer newsletter article, Project Director Abigail Thorne-Lyman explains how to set up regional partnerships to support creation of sustainable, equitable communities, and Sam Zimbabwe, CTOD's director, details our work with regional stakeholders to articulate the benefits and challenges of transit and TOD.

We hope you find this newsletter informative.

'Making the Case' for Transit and TOD

By SAM ZIMBABWE
DIRECTOR, CTOD

Reconnecting America, often in collaboration with our partners at the Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD), has been working with regional stakeholders to articulate the benefits and challenges of transit and transit-oriented development (TOD) in regions around the country. This year, we have completed regional reports in Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, and the Baton Rouge/New Orleans area. Each region has its own specific opportunities and challenges.

Indianapolis is deciding how to make initial investments in high-capacity transit, addressing issues from alignment to transit technology. Our work, completed in partnership with Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Living Cities' Project on Municipal Innovation, highlighted the opportunities to connect regional employment concentrations, plan for station development and identify need-

ed public investments. CTOD is continuing the work in the region by assisting with developing a strategic plan for TOD and a set of station area typologies.

Pittsburgh has an extensive transit network of light rail, bus rapid transit, on-street bus, and even several funicular railways traversing the hillsides. Our work has concentrated on helping to identify the benefits and opportunities for development around this transit network, and making the case for continued investment in both operations and expansion of transit.

Pittsburgh has an aging population, and our report highlighted ways that transit access can help reduce isolation of seniors while supporting the region's ability to attract and retain a young, educated workforce.

In Pittsburgh, we've been working with the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group and the GoBurgh coalition - composed of nonprofit policy,

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mendations by November 23, and, if a majority of Committee members vote in favor, the full House and Senate must vote on the recommendations, without amendment, by December 23. If the recommendations do not pass both chambers, a package of \$1.2 trillion in cuts will go into effect, dramatically reducing a variety of federal programs, including defense spending and various entitlement programs.

The Deficit Reduction Committee's work has the potential to significantly reshape federal programs of all types, impacting millions of

Americans in hundreds of different ways. With the Deficit Reduction Committee's work as a backdrop for the transportation reauthorization and appropriations discussions this fall, it is little wonder that Congress seems to be turning to these matters with less than full enthusiasm. While the rest of the country wants action, Congress appears to be heading toward another round of stop-gap funding bills that will provide flat – or reduced – funding, which will only kick the can for major transportation policy reform further down the road. ✨

'Making the Case' . . .

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technical, and advocacy organizations, neighborhood groups and community development corporations, public agencies, and philanthropic organizations – and look forward to continuing to work with this coalition in developing a comprehensive regional action plan for TOD.

Baton Rouge and New Orleans are figuring out how to improve connections between the two cities and serve the parishes in between as job and housing patterns have shifted in the post-Katrina era. Working with the CONNECT Coalition, an alliance of business, community, and philanthropic stakeholders, we have been identifying the benefits of regional investment in transit, as well as some of the key next steps in making this investment successful. In this context, local transit connections to the intercity rail line, as well as continuing to focus regional housing and employment patterns on transit-rich areas will be important in maximizing the success of the rail line. Recognizing the financial constraints public agencies face and the important role of the private sector in implementing sustainable community development, our work highlighted the economic benefits that transit and TOD can bring to businesses, governments and local communities.

"Making the case" for transit and TOD in each of these regions has required different types of analysis and arguments based on the context and coalition partners. But there are some commonalities:

- A broad coalition of stakeholders working to invest in transit and make the most of this investment with the understanding that no one interest group could "go it alone".
- A recognition that the economic future of the region is intertwined with the ability to help people save on transportation costs, create attractive, walkable communities that retain a talented workforce, and connect these communities via high quality and reliable transit.
- And a desire to identify the public policies and investments that will speed implementation of transit and transit-oriented communities.

The coalitions we have worked with in these three regions have parallels in regions across the country, some of which we have also worked with in the past. We look forward to bringing the analytic approaches and understanding we've developed in these three recent efforts to other communities, large and small, across the country. ✨