

People + Places = Possibility

Sorting Out the Implementation Needs of Transit Communities

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Doing more with less. This is the new reality for cash strapped local and regional agencies across the country striving to provide high quality transit service while fostering more livable communities in the form of transit-oriented development (TOD). This same challenge presents an opportunity for cities and regions to refocus attention on existing transit infrastructure and established urban districts and neighborhoods.

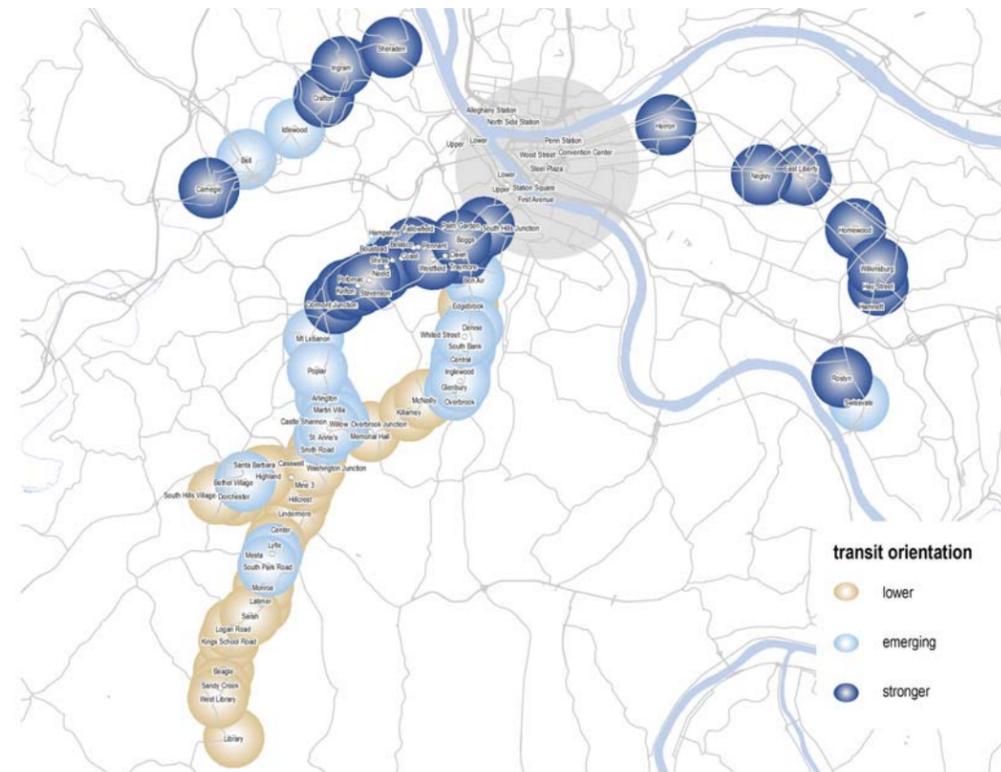
For nearly a decade, Reconnecting America and the Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD) have been developing tools to help regional and local stakeholders more efficiently coordinate and optimize their TOD opportunities. Today, CTOD is working with partners in four regions – Seattle, WA; Pittsburgh, PA; Boston, MA; and Washington, DC – to test a new performance-based tool that can help TOD stakeholders coordinate infrastructure, market-based real estate, community development and affordable housing investments across an entire transit system. Our new innovative tool builds on work with partners in Portland, OR, and the Central Maryland (Baltimore) regions to create a quantitative approach with two components: Places — the built environment — and People — the social environment).

Behind Places and People is the understanding that successful TOD requires investments in both the built environment and those who inhabit it. We need to improve our urban form and catalyze investment in new development (Places) in order to increase access to viable transportation alternatives such as transit, walking, and biking. But simultaneously, we need to understand who lives

in our transit communities today (People) to ensure that investments in community engagement, workforce development and mixed-income housing production and preservation are improving the lives of local residents, and enabling them to continue to thrive in communities near transit. By combining Places with People, this approach can help advance regional economic, environmental and equity objectives through transit-centered communities that provide greater access to opportunity for all.

PLACES

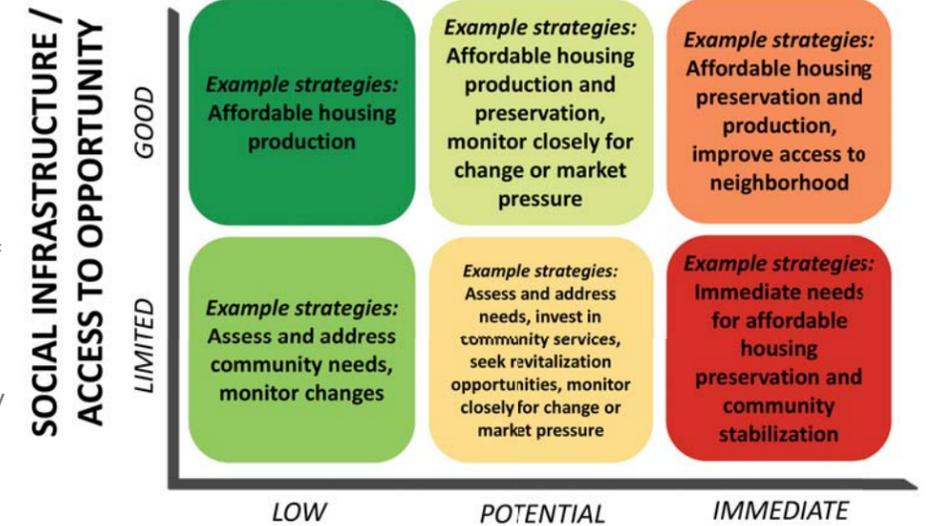
CTOD's Places approach measures the readiness of transit station areas and corridors to support transportation choices and catalytic development investments based on an evaluation of existing transit-orientation and market potential.



These two factors are overlaid on a grid to offer a comprehensive view of the physical context of station areas. When working in a transit system or region with 10, 20, or even 70 stations, this approach is a good way to quickly sort out the relative needs of different places. If a station area has a strong real estate market but urban form that is inadequate to support transit use, that station could be a high priority for implementation activities that leverage new development such as sidewalks, bikeways and walkable retail and services to enhance its transit orientation. In contrast, if a station area has a lukewarm

market but strong urban form, catalytic public investments should be targeted to help trigger the market to build more densely over time.

This quantitative model can include many variables. The transit orientation index combines variables that have a proven effect on reducing vehicle miles traveled: walkable blocks, high-density housing or jobs, mix of uses and proximity to job centers. The market potential index can combine any number of variables available locally: recent sales transactions, assessed land values or even – in the case of Pittsburgh – the capac-



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Growing Transit Communities and PSRC

ity of community-based organizations to secure financing through programs such as New Markets Tax Credits. CTOD has developed a flexible approach that can be tailored to the needs and data availability in each region.

PEOPLE

CTOD's People approach evaluates the susceptibility of neighborhoods to change over time, with an emphasis on identifying areas that could experience rapid gentrification or, conversely, increasing disinvestment. Based on Professor Karen Chapple's research at the University of California, Berkeley, Center for Community Innovation, the approach looks at both change over time using the 2000 to 2010 demographic data available in the CTOD database (toddata.cnt.org), and susceptibility to future change using variables such as tenure, incomes, educational attainment, household type and potential for

mance, or we're not making a dent in the performance of our regions.

Third, we have graded each of the 366 metro areas based on how they measure up to our vision, with metro areas being graded on a curve against metro areas of a similar size. For instance, Altoona, Pennsylvania, is not measured against New York City, but against regions of similar size.

Finally, *Are We There Yet?* describes real-life examples we have collected — and in some instances that we have experienced first-hand — of leadership, innovation and collaboration occurring in all sorts of places and by all kinds of people. From Oklahoma City to Des Moines to Seattle, we have compiled stories that illustrate forward thinking with tangible outcomes — getting people to work, reducing obesity and engaging in a productive civic dialogue.

In our development of the metrics, we experienced ongoing challenges in accessing consistent and reliable data to measure progress across cities and regions. While we believe that the information presented in this report is the best that is available today, we also believe it would advance our efforts to build complete communities if we could work with other organizations to develop a shared national data set to track progress at the regional level and at other appropriate levels. By tracking this data over time, we can identify the best practices and strategies that help places improve their performance, and we can identify those sure-fire investments that produce better outcomes.

Reconnecting America will be distributing a limited amount of hard copies of the report at conferences and upon request. It can also be downloaded from our website, where you will also find more stories and more data than we could include in the report.

For more information, we encourage you to visit ReconnectingAmerica.org/arewethereyet.

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erous support we received from the America Public Transportation Association (APTA), the Ford Foundation and the Surdna Foundation to complete this report.

People + Places . . .

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

transit or other investments to change market strength. Whereas the Places approach combines its variables into an index, CTOD's People approach suggests evaluating each of these variables independently and seeing how they relate to one another in order to understand susceptibility to change.

In the Puget Sound region, the People approach also incorporates opportunity mapping completed by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (at Ohio State University) in support of the region's Growing Transit Communities HUD regional planning grant initiative. Puget Sound stakeholders will be able to overlay the information described above with measurements of the health, education and employment opportunities found in each community.

IMPLEMENTATION

Ultimately, this approach helps cities or regions strategically identify the broad implementation needs of a transit community, without breaking the bank on costly station area plans. This systemwide approach informs and sets the table for local planning and implementation efforts. It allows regions to “do more with less” by targeting funding for places that can truly benefit from investments; coordinating across the public, private and philanthropic sectors; and prioritizing activities that can best capture the untapped value of transit. In the long term, this systematic approach will foster critical conversations about the policy priorities and programmatic changes needed at the state, regional, citywide and community scales. 