



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Transit-Oriented Development Technical Assistance: Second Summary Report

Background

Public transportation plays a critical role in providing safe and reliable mobility and creating increased land value and economic opportunities in surrounding communities through transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD is generally defined as walkable community that is close to frequent, reliable public transit service with a mix of other transportation options and land uses. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) invests billions of dollars every year in transit systems and facilities across the country, many of which spur TODs. Communities across the country are interested in capitalizing on the development potential of transit; however, they approach the issue from various circumstances and need different kinds of information, technical assistance, and models for success. Additionally, with new and existing federally-funded public transit services across the country, there is a need to maximize the impacts of such investments.

In 2015, FTA, through the Section 5314 program, launched the Transit-Oriented Development Technical Assistance Initiative that provides technical assistance activities leading to improved access to public transportation, new economic opportunities, pathways to employment, and support for TOD within transportation corridors and around public transportation stations, with a focus on economic development through innovative financing. In addition, the Initiative aims to better leverage federal funds with state, local, and private investment. The five communities highlighted in this second summary report are Birmingham, Alabama; Omaha, Nebraska; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Tacoma, Washington.

Objectives

The objective of the Initiative is to help elected leaders, municipal and transit agency staff, developers, and community members work together to maximize the development impacts of federally-funded public transit investments. This Initiative seeks to support projects that promote access to housing, jobs, and transportation for low- and moderate-income residents.

Findings and Conclusions

The Initiative resulted in the provision of on-site technical assistance to five communities, the first convening of the TOD Peer Network, and the creation of new communication tools to continue messaging the economic, environmental, and social benefits of TOD.

The second year of work included a range of technical assistance activities in five communities across the U.S. to address a variety of TOD challenges and resulted in several outcomes and successes. Outcomes from the first year of technical assistance are also documented to highlight the impact of the technical assistance. Altogether, the second year of technical assistance highlighted common themes that will be built upon to ensure that future communities selected for technical assistance maximize TOD potential:

- **Public transit as a focal point for investment** – Transit investments have the potential to be transformative, especially in terms of how residents and visitors navigate a city. TOD is characterized by a concentration of development that supports walkability and transit use. Transit, in turn, encourages and serves the development. However, development can occur near transit that does not enhance the transit investment and localities promoting such development need to reevaluate transit's role as a focal point for investment.
- **Aligning citywide initiatives with public transit** – To maximize the economic return on transit investments, priorities around housing, development, and growth also must be aligned. Otherwise, initiatives elsewhere in the city can serve to undermine the impact of new and existing transit service.
- **Strong leadership that prioritizes TOD** – Strong leadership and cross-sector collaboration that cuts across silos to align land use and transit is crucial.
- **A need for private sector buy-in and support** – For TOD to realize its anticipated benefits, more vocal support from business leaders across all sectors is important.

Benefits

Because of the Initiative, local governments can better understand the factors that come into play when planning for, advancing, and implementing TOD. Although immediate impacts are already becoming apparent from the technical assistance, many may take years to materialize. Subsequent years of the project will continue to help communities capture the value of transit investments and maximize federal funds with state, local, and private investment. Continuing to support the communities and following their progress through the TOD Peer Network will be crucial to better understand what was successful and what was not and applying these lessons nationwide.

Project Information

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This research project was conducted by Smart Growth America. For more information, contact FTA Project Manager Justin John at (202) 366-2823, justin.john@dot.gov. All research reports can be found at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/research-innovation>.