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The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities

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The nation’s growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, to adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and to introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in TRB Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions, published in 1987 and based on a study sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A report by the American Public Transit Association (APTA), Transportation 2000, also recognized the need for local, problem-solving research. TCRP, modeled after the longstanding and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program, undertakes research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The scope of TCRP includes a variety of transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, policy, and administrative practices.

TCRP was established under FTA sponsorship in July 1992. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum of understanding outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by the three cooperating organizations: FTA, the National Academy of Sciences, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB), and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by APTA. TDC is responsible for forming the independent governing board, designated as the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee.

Research problem statements for TCRP are solicited periodically but may be submitted to TRB by anyone at any time. It is the responsibility of the TOPS Committee to formulate the research program by identifying the highest priority projects. As part of the evaluation, the TOPS Committee defines funding levels and expected products.

Once selected, each project is assigned to an expert panel, appointed by the Transportation Research Board. The panels prepare project statements (requests for proposals), select contractors, and provide technical guidance and counsel throughout the life of the project. The process for developing research problem statements and selecting research agencies has been used by TRB in managing cooperative research programs since 1962. As in other TRB activities, TCRP project panels serve voluntarily without compensation.

Because research cannot have the desired impact if products fail to reach the intended audience, special emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended end users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. TRB provides a series of research reports, syntheses of transit practice, and other supporting material developed by TCRP research. APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by urban and rural transit industry practitioners.

The TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. The TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.
This report will be of interest to individuals seeking to improve the livability of their communities and to those concerned with the role public transportation can play in pursuing this goal. The report combines guidelines and case studies to provide a comprehensive approach for improving community livability and transit ridership in the United States. It is directed toward a broad range of individuals and groups in the public and private sectors associated with community, business, and civic organizations, including public transportation providers, local and metropolitan governments, community groups, and private businesses.

A livable community is something that everybody wants, but it does not mean the same thing to all people. There is some agreement on the characteristics of “livability” or quality of life, such as safe and healthy neighborhoods; sustainable employment; adequate housing, retail and community services; positive image; sense of community; and neighborhood-based cultural and recreational opportunities. Transit can be integral to making communities more livable by providing access to goods and services and can support attainment of complementary community goals in other investment areas as well.

The objective of TCRP Project H-4D, *The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities*, was to explore the relationship between transit and livable communities. The research team—lead by Project for Public Spaces, Inc., and supported by its subcontractors (the International Downtown Association, the National Association of Neighborhoods, TransManagement, Inc., The Urban Partnership, and the Urban Mobility Corporation)—explored a “place-making” approach where a local community, working in partnership with a transit agency, plans and implements neighborhood-scale projects and programs that are mutually supportive of community livability and transit ridership goals.

The final report from this research provides considerable information and guidance. The report’s 12 chapters are divided into three major parts as follows:

- **Part I. Overview and Context.** The first two chapters of the report define the concept of livability and the impact of transportation on livability. These chapters also describe federal support for transit and livable community initiatives, the “place-making” approach to livability, and transportation strategies that impact livability.

- **Part II. Roles of Transit in Creating Livable Communities.** In conducting this project, the research team met with numerous people in many communities throughout the United States to examine diverse examples
of how public transportation supports and enhances community livability. This research, documented and presented in Chapters 3 through 9, includes “examples,” which briefly summarize the experience of the individual communities, and more lengthy case studies. More specifically, the examples and case studies are organized by the following topics:

— Creating places for community life,
— Using transit as a catalyst for downtown and neighborhood renewal,
— Creating opportunities for entrepreneurship and local economic development,
— Improving safety and amenity,
— Making communities accessible and convenient, and
— Shaping community growth.

The use of examples and case studies provides practical concepts and demonstrates how public transportation can meaningfully contribute to the livability of metropolitan communities.

• **Part III. Implementation.** Chapters 10 through 12 provide a guide to implementation by describing the importance of a community-based process for creating livable communities. (This process involves early participation in transportation planning and partnerships with public and private organizations implementing transportation and community projects.) Part III then describes specific planning, design, and management strategies for livable places and concludes with suggested next steps to increase awareness of livability-oriented transit programs.

This report is a valuable resource for executives, decisionmakers, managers, and planners from transit systems, local governments, community organizations, MPOs, the FTA, the FHWA, and other public and private organizations involved with public transportation and community livability.

In addition to the final report, a video was prepared by the research team. The video provides an overview of key attributes of livable communities and shows how transit systems contribute to community vitality. The video is available from the American Public Transit Association. Inquiries regarding the video should be addressed to:

TCRP Dissemination
American Public Transit Association
1201 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
FAX: (202)898-4019
Internet: http://www.apta.com/tcrp
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The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities
SUMMARY

This report describes transit’s increasingly important role in improving the livability of communities.

Concerns about livability affect every community: inner cities, suburbs, small towns, and rural areas. The report explores a “place-making” approach where a local community, working in partnership with a transit agency, plans and implements neighborhood-scale projects and programs that are mutually supportive of community livability and transit ridership goals.

Part I of this report describes the place-making approach to livability and explores the relationships between transportation and livability that are keys to understanding the case studies.

In Chapter 2, the role of transportation in building communities through transit programs, strategies to “calm” traffic in residential and commercial neighborhoods, and a new understanding of the relationship between transportation and land use is explored.

Part II of the report—Chapters 3 through 9—presents examples and case studies of transit facilities and services that achieve community livability goals; the role played by communities, transit agencies, municipal agencies and authorities, and the federal government is also discussed. Each chapter in Part II has two sections: (1) an introduction with highlighted example projects and (2) case studies. Chapter 3 describes the selection criteria for case studies and the research approach used in collecting the data and background information for the case studies.

Livability topics covered in Chapters 4 through 9 include transit’s role in the following:

- Creating places for community life,
- Acting as a catalyst for the renewal and revitalization of neighborhoods and entire downtowns,
- Creating opportunities for entrepreneurship and local economic development,
- Making communities safer and more comfortable,
• Making connections between neighborhoods, downtowns, and community destinations more accessible and convenient, and
• Shaping community growth.

Part III of the report is a guide to implementation. Chapter 10 outlines a series of model partnerships created between communities and transit agencies, a specific process for developing such partnerships, and steps to follow for involving communities in the planning, design, and management of transit projects and other livability initiatives. Chapter 11 provides a checklist of design, management, and transit strategies and how they can be used to address specific local problems as part of a place-making process.

Chapter 12 concludes by offering the next steps in this evolving partnership between transit and communities.

A bibliography and related literature and the results of research conducted to define livability, as well as actual livability studies, are found in Appendixes A and B, respectively.
Part I

Overview and Context
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A revolution is going on today in American communities. Citizens are discovering that by working in partnership with government, they can reshape their neighborhoods and downtowns into vital, attractive, comfortable—and more livable—places.

A potent tool has emerged in this movement, one that is an important but still largely unrecognized catalyst for improving community life. That tool is transportation. Transportation facilities and networks are natural focal points for the kinds of activities that help restore a positive sense of community. This expanded role for transportation started with transit and has now spread to traffic planning.

This report is based on a year-long research effort to identify examples of best practices and provide concrete evidence of how transit can be a contributing force in achieving greater livability in all communities. Following a brief overview of the role played by transportation in community life, case studies are presented in which transit serves to foster livability. To assist in applying this process to other communities, a process for planning and implementing improvements, whereby transit agencies work in partnership with communities, is also presented.

WHAT IS “LIVABILITY”?

Bookstores today are filled with guides to “the best places to live in America.” Using census statistics, weather data, broad community surveys, and a range of other methods, researchers found when people say “livability,” they mean clean air and water, safe streets, positive race relations, affordable homes, quality public schools, greenery and open space, uncongested roads, and low taxes, among other things. (A detailed discussion of methods used to define livability and their findings appears in Appendix B.) Indeed, the avid interest in livability today seems to have emerged because people are increasingly recognizing the unlivable aspects of the places where they live, work, and spend recreational time.

People express their strongest concerns about the livability of their communities when referring to problems encountered on a daily basis. For example, they talk about difficulty crossing streets and feeling threatened by automobile traffic. They grieve about the replacement of distinctive local structures with sterile and characterless architecture. They complain about a lack of parks to sit or stroll in and the dearth of scenic vistas. They lament the disappearance of centers where people once came together and took part in activities such as shopping, mailing letters, eating out, going to the theater, catching a train or bus, visiting the library, or meeting friends. These concerns reflect an underlying sense of isolation and erosion of community life. The result is more and more people are feeling a loss of community as well as a lack of control over and connection to their changing local environment.

Even though “livability” is difficult to define, people are able to apply it as a concept to their own community and way of life. Striving for livability puts the unlivable aspects of communities into clear focus and helps channel local energies into projects and programs that address daily livability problems. The case studies presented in this report clearly show how this process works: how communities set priorities for improving livability and establish programs that address community needs, problems, and visions for betterment.

CONCERNS ABOUT COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

People everywhere are concerned about the livability of their communities. Specifics cited include safety and fear of crime, easy access to jobs, availability and affordability of housing, diminishing environmental
quality, educational quality, race relations, runaway growth, and traffic congestion.

Concern about livability is not confined to neighborhoods in large inner cities: it exists in suburbs, small towns, and even in the smallest villages. This concern is expressed by residents of cities losing population as well as by city dwellers in booming regions. It comes up in poor and wealthy communities alike, and among people of varied ages and backgrounds. It is clear that Americans are facing a national livability dilemma. Transportation strongly impacts community livability concerns. People are beginning to realize that designing cities and suburbs to accommodate the automobile has often diminished, not improved, quality of life. Intrusive roads have created barriers that disrupt communities and erode their physical and social cohesion. At the same time, public transportation options are often viewed as inadequate alternatives. As a result, many communities end up with transportation networks that simply pass through them, without responding to community needs, relating to their surroundings, or reflecting local character.

A PLACE-MAKING APPROACH TO LIVABILITY

... Places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short the places where we spend time affect the people we are and can become. [1]

—Tony Hiss, The Experience of Place

The two concepts of community and place are inseparable. ‘Place’ is the vessel within which the ‘spirit’ of community is stored; ‘Community’ is the catalyst that imbues a location with a ‘sense’ of place. The two are not divisible. You cannot have community without place; and a place without community is a location. A group of people with a shared concern but not a shared place is an interest group, not a community. [2]

—Donovan Rypkema

Urbanists focus on the micro before wrestling with the macro and understand that, in reality, the macro only changes for the better in micro steps ... Innovation and ingenuity are the prevailing characteristics. Perseverance in the face of naysayers and determination in the face of obstacles are prerequisites. Step by step, essential and natural growth follows and spreads until larger areas prosper over time. [3]

—Roberta Gratz, The Living City

This report explores a place-making approach to livability, an approach that involves assessing the concerns and needs of a local community and then using this assessment to make improvements to the many places in that community. Because this approach focuses on “places,” it can apply to any community, regardless of differences in socioeconomic status, demographic makeup, or even geographic location.

Discussions about livability are often too broad or attempt to cover too large a geographic area to lead to the development of practical strategies that address local community concerns. Making communities livable through a place-making approach connects the concept of livability to the specific places used by people in communities. It begins at a scale that a community finds both manageable and relevant: a small area
around where people live or work, one that is probably no larger than a downtown or a neighborhood. When “closer to home” problems are defined, residents of an area are not only better able to identify priorities, but they are also more likely to become involved in a place’s improvement.

Communities are usually composed of many small areas, and improvement to specific places can cumulatively produce success on a broader scale. This place-making approach thus provides a way for municipal agencies and transit operators, which operate on a metropolitan or regional level, to take steps toward addressing a community’s livability goals.

While place-making does include design strategies, design is only a part of it. Many places have been improved through better provision of municipal services without any physical changes at all. Improving the maintenance and management of a public space, upgrading security, or establishing a special-events or vending program are all strategies for improving a place without making design changes. The development of special management districts to oversee such activities, funded by special assessments agreed to by property owners, has flourished across the country in both large cities and small towns as more local organizations have begun to take responsibility for ensuring that their commercial districts are safe, attractive, clean, active, and comfortable.

**TRANSIT AND PLACE-MAKING**

There is a kind of mass transit cities used to be very rich in . . . the kind that is part of the fabric of the city itself, doesn’t just go overhead and take people whoosh, but links all kinds of places within the city and that’s the kind of mass transit we need to reconstitute . . . In a really healthy city, it’s something that knits the whole thing together . . .

—Jane Jacobs [4]

When you have this train running down the middle of the street every 3 ½ min, you don’t believe there’s going to be murder and robbery and violence.


A focus on place-making can bring the ridership goals of the transit agency and the livability goals of the community together. For transit operators, this means that each decision made to provide service, locate a station or stop and maintain that station should be made in the context of how transit can contribute positively to the experience of that place.

Mobility options must be developed and improved in response to expressed as well as observed community needs. These transportation options also must be regarded as a set of alternatives (cars, buses, trains, vans, bicycles, walking) that fit into a community’s broader vision as well as its self-image. When there is no existing community-based vision, transit planners should be prepared to insist that one be developed or learn to facilitate its development. Regardless of who guides this process, transit decisions should be made so as to complement and help realize a community’s vision and plans.

**Opportunities for Communities**

Case studies in this report demonstrate how transit services and facilities are already contributing to the livability of metropolitan communities throughout the United States—although clearly much more can
be done in many more communities. This report presents projects that involve communities, not just in a pro forma “approval” process, but in assuming a fundamental role transforming transit stations, and even bus stops, into community focal points. Transit agencies are establishing facilities like day care and senior centers as part of transit facilities. Transit is being integrated into downtowns in a visible and positive manner, through the creation of centralized transfer centers and specially designed streets that help stimulate economic development. New, flexible, neighborhood van systems now exist that cater to the needs of residents who find existing public transit to be inaccessible or inconvenient. Many of the new light rail systems around the country have brought new riders aboard—sometimes many more than expected—and have successfully changed transit’s image and use in automobile dominant cities like St. Louis and Denver.

Although the process for developing projects of this type is not new, recognition of the relationship between transit and the needs of communities and of the importance of a process that facilitates transit’s response to these needs is new. Community groups arerediscovering the value of services offered by trains, buses, and community shuttles and are embarking on projects that expand their use. More importantly, they are recognizing how transit services and facilities can enhance the livability of a downtown or a neighborhood. Although many projects are small or still in the planning stages, research for this report revealed that this community-oriented approach to addressing livability through transit is gaining momentum and that passion and dedication for community projects is waiting to be tapped.

However, obstacles still exist. The public, community organizations, and local governments do not always understand the connection between transit and livability. Most quality-of-life studies show that transportation in general is not currently a primary determining factor in influencing where people choose to live. Transit agencies themselves, therefore, need to recognize that the services they provide and facilities they create can have an enormous, positive impact on the livability of the neighborhood places they serve.

**Opportunities for Transit**

Historically, transit has been the central organizing feature around which communities were built and functioned. Today, transit needs a new direction if it is to continue to function effectively in metropolitan areas designed around the car. This challenge is particularly critical in areas outside the northeastern United States and other major transit cities. However, the long-term decline in transit ridership, even in cities like New York, shows that this problem is not geographically limited.

To ensure its own future, transit must become more visible and connected to people’s lives and the lives of the communities it serves. A transformation is required, much like the recent turn-around in the field of urban policing. Cities like New York, St. Louis, and Seattle have experienced extraordinary decreases in crime, largely because of the return of the “cop on the beat” and “community policing,” where police, citizens, and communities work together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life. This has completely changed the way police departments provide services and the way communities and police interact with one another.

While contributing toward the livability of a community is an admirable goal in itself, it is important to emphasize that there are other important benefits of this approach for transit agencies. Community building is an important and visible public business: the result can be tangible projects to which local officials can point with pride, thereby helping to build future support for transit. Working directly with communities, especially people who only occasionally use transit, helps to build a broader constituency of support for transit as well. Making transit better serve the needs of a community can translate not only into new transit riders, but a force that can lobby for funding to expand and improve service.

Finally, direct economic benefits also can accrue to a transit agency when it develops its facilities and properties to incorporate uses and activities—ranging from cafes to post offices—that generate income while providing a much needed service to transit patrons. Although such benefits are routinely considered part of major rail investments, they are often overlooked by the nation’s bus operators who handle most of today’s transit riders.

A community-based approach for transit works. In a day when many focus on the limits and constraints of transit, there are reasons to be optimistic about the future role of transit in communities. The key is enabling transit agencies to recognize and value their relevance in people’s lives and to encourage more communities to work in partnership with transit agencies.

**FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR TRANSIT AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

Many of the activities described in this report would not have been possible without the support of
the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Livable Communities Initiative and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. By fostering new approaches to applying transportation in the service of community life, both are bringing about positive changes.

The **FTA’s Livable Communities Initiative** has provided major funding and support for projects around the country, including many presented in this report. The FTA’s Livable Communities Initiative has 15 capital demonstration projects underway. It also is sponsoring a series of transportation-based town meetings and developing an innovative traveling exhibition promoting a holistic approach to transit, including a video for display at conferences, workshops and symposia across the United States. The FTA also is writing a guidebook for livable communities and is developing guidelines for public/private partnerships around its facilities. Growing Smart is a planning document being produced by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in partnership with FTA, Environmental Protection Agency, and American Planning Association. It will significantly update examples of model United States development and planning guidelines to combat sprawl and promote transit-oriented development. In 1996, the initiative focused on evaluating projects underway in order to document the benefits of community-sensitive transit.

**ISTEA**, which has fundamentally redirected transportation policy, was also instrumental in many of the projects presented here. ISTEA has expanded local discretion for transportation investment decisions, including the diverting of highway funds into transit, pedestrian, and bicycle projects. ISTEA has also mandated greater public participation in decision making, encouraging investment in projects that link transit facilities to their communities and in projects that enhance livability through transit.

This report arrives at the moment when the U.S. Department of Transportation has committed itself to a new initiative, the National Partnership for Transportation and Livable Communities. This partnership brings together public and private nonprofit entities as well as foundations to advance the place of transportation (transit and highway) as a tool for creating livable communities. This will be achieved through education and outreach, research and information exchange, and technical assistance and demonstration projects.

**ABOUT THIS REPORT**

This report is divided into three parts.

Part I, the Overview, describes the place-making approach to livability and explores the relationships between transportation and livability that are keys to understanding the case studies presented in the report.

Part II presents the specific ways in which transit can support the livability of communities, using extensive case studies as examples.

Part III is a practical guide to implementation, including a planning process and helpful suggestions on implementing the process. Case studies of partnerships involving transit agencies with city governments, community organizations and private developers are also presented to show the numerous ways programs and projects can be implemented.

The Appendixes A and B, respectively, contain a bibliography and related literature and the results of the in-depth research conducted on livability and quality of life and what these mean to communities.

A video was produced in conjunction with this report that presents an overview of the case studies covered and the planning, decision making, and place-making approaches outlined in the report. This video is intended to be used to assist communities in implementing projects and programs similar to those described in this report. (See Foreword for availability.)

**ENDNOTES**

2. Donovan Rypkema, “Place, Community, and Economic Development,” a talk delivered at the Annual Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in St. Louis (September 29, 1993) as quoted in Roberta Gratz, *The Living City*, p.iii.
CHAPTER 2

The Impact of Transportation on Livability

Transportation is at the core of everything.
—Roberta Gratz, The Living City [1]

Transportation plays a role in almost everyone’s daily life. It is intrinsically woven into the fabric of our existence, encompassing not only how we get from place to place, but also how we conduct our daily routines and the choices we make about what we do. Getting to work, school, or appointments, running errands, shopping, socializing and recreational pursuits are among the many things we do that are affected by the kinds of transportation available (or not available) to us. Location of transportation facilities, design of streets and sidewalks and even placement of on-street parking can make all the difference in how we experience these day to day endeavors.

Because transportation is so tied to our daily lives, it provides a perfect opportunity to address the livability concerns of our communities. For example, when train stations, bus stops or transfer facilities are centrally situated, easy to reach, with convenient connections, they make it simple to get where we’re going, without having to drive. Ample sidewalks and safe-to-cross streets also simplify our lives by giving us opportunities to walk, bicycle or stroll to our destinations while being able to look around, mingle with others and take part in all kinds of other activities, like shopping, eating, and entertainment.

Transportation can also enhance the quality of the general living environment when it responds to people’s needs. When transit facilities provide pleasant waiting places with comfortable seating, congenial food service, clean restrooms, helpful signage and other amenities in lively, attractive surroundings, they become important places in their communities that people can enjoy. Similarly, streets designed to the scale of people, with colorful plantings, pleasing street furniture and positive activities, offer environments where people can feel safe, relaxed and free to savor life around them.

What’s more, when transportation is people-oriented, it can help build communities and restore community life. It can provide the accessibility and exposure that helps develop business. It can allow for entrepreneurial opportunities by molding public spaces and transportation facilities that can nurture start-up enterprises. It can spur the identity and cohesiveness that bring communities together and help them grow and become safer and more attractive.

A ROLE FOR TRANSPORTATION AS A PLAYER IN BUILDING COMMUNITIES

For transportation to play an effective role in improving the livability of communities, it must become more of an integral part of community life and have a more direct link to the idea of “place.” This view of transportation, as a catalyst for strengthening community life in the United States, also calls for a new way of measuring the success of transportation facilities.

In the case of streets and roads, the idea of transportation as a catalyst for community livability goes beyond the movement of vehicles as the sole bellwether of success to encompass the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists as well as the accommodation of alternative mobility options to meet the varying needs of different individuals within the community. It also includes requirements for an attractive, inviting, more human-scale street environment that reflects, preserves and enhances a community’s unique personality, provides opportunities for people to come together and is supportive of local
businesses. This translates into commercial and residential areas where traffic moves more slowly in streets that are not excessively wide and are better connected to adjacent uses, in terms of scale, function and design. It also sets the stage for well-marked pedestrian crosswalks, light cycles that are timed for walkers, not just drivers, convenient on-street parking, public amenities, attractive landscaping and management practices that increase the flexibility of existing roadway space to accommodate different kinds of uses at different times.

In the case of transit facilities, such as those presented in this report, this idea extends beyond system operations. It includes serving passengers’ preferences and needs and focusing on how transit facilities can act as catalysts for regenerating surrounding communities as well as on how they can serve as centers of community life. This translates into transit facilities that are conveniently located in downtowns rather than on the outskirts of town. It also has resulted in stations and transfer centers that look inviting, are easily accessible on foot, provide amenities, and encourage local businesses to supply on-premise services, or to take part in local activities. It has created facilities like bus and trolley stops that are combined with other community uses that spur improvements to surrounding areas and create centers of activity. In the case of transit services, it has meant a new flexibility in providing alternative transit options such as small-scale van and circulator systems.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES IMPACTING LIVABILITY

Three overall transportation strategies that impact livability are explored below. They are transit strategies, traffic-calming strategies, and transportation and land-use strategies. Of these, only case studies of transit strategies are presented in this report. [2]

Transit Strategies

Transit strategies that help create livable communities are presented in this report, with Part II devoted to presenting many specific examples and case studies of how transit makes an impact. Strategies fall into two basic categories: design-oriented strategies and service-oriented strategies. Although they can be discussed separately, they very often work together.

Design-Oriented Strategies

Bus, light rail, heavy rail, and subway stops have the potential to be centers of community life. Design-oriented strategies enhance the comfort and convenience of transit users, while having a positive impact on the surrounding area. With proper design and incentives, transit stops can attract a variety of activities and uses (like retail, community services, and special events) which increase the sense of security and help create an incubator for small retailers and entrepreneurs from the local community.

Acting as a stimulus for commercial redevelopment and neighborhood renewal, the stop or station can contribute toward the livability of an entire neighborhood area. Examples of these design-oriented strategies are redesign of bus and trolley stops to support adjacent retail uses; introduction of improved public spaces around a commuter rail station; and creation of transportation centers and intermodal terminals that serve as catalysts for neighborhood-scale development.

Service-Oriented Strategies

Service-oriented strategies are essentially transit services that increase mobility within a neighborhood area. For the purposes of this study, service-oriented strategies that only target special user groups (like special vans to transport the elderly or people with disabilities to specific social services) were excluded. The focus is on services that are currently available to the general public (including these special user groups) to improve livability through better mobility and access.

Service-oriented strategies include transit shuttles and connectors, which link residential neighborhoods with commuter rail and rapid transit stations; circulators and trolleys, which enable shoppers, visitors and office workers to move more freely about the central business district; and neighborhood-based
transportation services. Introduction of these local transportation services helps support the goals of neighborhood livability by facilitating internal circulation to local destinations not well served by regular transit services. These new services carry residents to and from homes to jobs, shops, and local services: they transport the elderly to medical appointments, take children of working parents to day care centers and schools, serve the disabled, and transport residents to community-based social services. In metropolitan areas served by rail transit or regional bus services, small vans shuttle neighborhood residents to the nearest stations, providing convenient access to economic, educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities offered by the region.

While all these service-oriented strategies have the potential to add to community convenience and livability, it is important to remember that their effectiveness depends on their management. This includes, for example, efficient scheduling along with providing scheduling information, coordination of connections, user orientation, vehicle maintenance, and sensitive and responsive personnel.

**“Traffic-Calming” Strategies**

The impact of both design- and service-oriented kinds of transit improvements will be reduced, however, unless streets or roads also support community character and needs. Streets and roads can knit communities together and enhance the character and identity of the places where they pass. They can become symbols of pride for a community, have a considerable economic impact on local businesses and help create strong and viable community centers. In other words, improving the livability of streets is not just a pedestrian, vehicle traffic, bicycle, or transit issue—all must be considered together. It is important to balance all of the functions on a street so that they serve users. This balanced approach to the use of streets has come to be known as “traffic calming.”

Traffic calming is a term that emerged in Europe to describe the practice of slowing down cars, but not necessarily banning them, as they move through commercial areas and residential neighborhoods. The benefit for pedestrians, transit riders, and bicyclists is that cars now drive at speeds that are safer and more compatible with walking and bicycling. Buses no longer have to vie for limited space and access. There is, in fact, a kind of equilibrium achieved among all of the uses of a street so no one mode can dominate at the

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**Figure 2-2.** This historic style “trolley” bus links a downtown terminal in Corpus Christi, TX, with local attractions. Since the “trolley” was initiated, ridership has increased significantly. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

**Figures 2-3 and 2-4.** European experience with traffic calming is very extensive; this town is one of hundreds in Denmark that have redesigned their residential and commercial streets to make them more pedestrian-friendly (Figure 2-3). In the United States, cities like San Bernardino, CA, have begun traffic calming efforts of their own, in this example by introducing diagonal parking (Figure 2-4). (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)
expense of another. The objective of traffic calming therefore necessitates a change in the role and goals of traffic engineers who traditionally have been asked to move traffic as efficiently and quickly as possible.

Traffic calming also requires an understanding of new techniques: one based on traffic-management strategies, the other on physical design. Traffic-management strategies include issuance of center-city passes, truck restrictions, signalization systems, transportation system management, parking management, traffic-reduction ordinances, car and fuel taxation, and speed limits. Traffic-calming design techniques create physical impediments to speeding, such as road narrowed lanes for vehicles, undulations in the roadway, crosswalks raised to sidewalk level, and elements that create pinch points or gateways to a street. Because a wide and straight street with perfect visibility is most conducive to speeding, these and other similar approaches are intended to alter driver perception and encourage slower speeds.

In general, well-conceived traffic-calming programs address the broad issues of a street and go well beyond vehicle concerns to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit activities. For example, a sidewalk can be widened at an intersection to create a larger space for a bus stop shelter and seating. This wider sidewalk also reduces the width of the street for pedestrians who are crossing. The bus no longer has to pull in and out of traffic to pick up or drop off passengers, thereby speeding service, although momentarily delaying traffic. If the crosswalk is raised to sidewalk level, drivers are further encouraged to drive at lower speeds. Perhaps an adjacent business is created (or a newsstand located) to serve transit riders. All of these strategies work together, therefore, to create a balance of uses at that corner.

**Transportation and Land-Use Strategies**

Where and how Americans live has changed almost completely in the past 50 years. Fifty years ago, there was little suburban sprawl. People lived in small towns near cities, or they lived in cities or towns themselves. Compact, dense development was created by, and continued to be supported by, an extensive network of public transportation. Fifty years ago, even Los Angeles had its “Red Car” trolley system, which is now gone. During the first half of the twentieth century, people marveled at the growth of cities. This has paled by comparison with the growth during the second half of the century.

This massive transformation of cities, suburbs, and towns has been paralleled by unprecedented economic prosperity and growth. Yet it is clear that this transformation has not been without its costs. The “American Dream” of spread-out, free-ranging development has come home to roost in places that lack human scale or identity, and with serious damage, if not downright destruction, to the central locales and neighborhoods that have long given people their communal focus and sense of belonging.

Much of this sprawling development has been related to land-use policies that favor low density and complete separation of residential and commercial uses. In the long run, if lasting and effective transportation improvements that act as a permanent, positive force for livability are to be achieved, then they must take place within the context of an overall land-use policy designed to further the preservation and
revitalization of dense, lively town centers as well as the creation of new nodes near public transportation. Such a policy can nurture initiatives that cluster activities around transit hubs, provide opportunities for short commutes and easy walking, promote alternative transit use and avoid the wastes of energy, land, and the environment that sprawl creates.

There is considerable existing literature on the subject of how macroscale land-use patterns and urban form encourage or discourage transit-oriented communities. This literature describes the principles (such as “The Ahwahnee Principles”) of changing the way American suburbs are structured to encourage more dense, transit-oriented communities. The “neotraditional” communities movement is an important lead in this effort. (See, for example, *Land Use Strategies for More Livable Communities*, by The Local Government Commission, Sacramento, CA.) The TCRP also has completed major research toward this effort (*TCRP Report 16*, “Transit and Urban Form”).

Fortunately, there are encouraging signs today of a broadening perspective, a growing awareness of the role of transit in the development process and in the creation of livable communities. A growing recognition of the importance of land use broadens the discussion further. Transportation planners increasingly view transportation and land use as complementary components of the larger metropolitan system. Now the question transportation planners often ask is: how can communities be designed to provide a better environment for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders, and thus reduce automobile dependence? They also may ask: how can more opportunities and activities be provided within closer distances, and thus reduce total travel? Transportation planners are implicitly asking: how can accessibility be enhanced by changing land-use patterns rather than only by expanding the transportation system?

CONCLUSIONS

The case studies that follow in Part II show how the transit strategies discussed above are being used in communities throughout the United States and how they are succeeding at fostering greater livability. Each of these strategies has its own specific applications in response to specific local issues and opportunities, and all of them are not necessarily applicable in all cases. In many cases, however, a combination of strategies are at work, which demonstrate the intrinsic relationship between transportation and community life.

ENDNOTES

2. In 1997, additional research will be completed to document specific case studies of management strategies, which enhance streets so that they too contribute to community livability goals and support more efficient, effective, and convenient transit operations.
Part II

Roles of Transit in Creating Livable Communities
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This chapter describes the many ways that transit currently helps to create livable metropolitan communities. Case studies, which describe in detail the origin, planning process, overall strategy, and assessment of each program exemplify specific roles. The research team has organized the case studies according to specific livability issues in order to reinforce the connection between transit strategies and broader community goals.

The case studies are not meant to illustrate every possible program and role that transit can play, rather, they are indicative of types of projects. The research team has attempted to provide a variety of innovative case studies representing different geographic areas, transit operating environments, transit ridership levels, and types of transit modes. Most of the projects conform to the overall place-making framework that is presented in Chapter 1, that is, they entail a high level of community involvement in design, planning, and implementation through some kind of community partnership. Because most projects fulfill more than one community livability goal, the introduction to each chapter cross-references case studies from other sections of the report that are relevant to the livability issues under discussion.

CASE STUDY SELECTION CRITERIA

The case studies presented in the report were selected according to the following criteria:

• They demonstrate a link between transit and community livability objectives. Case studies illustrate “best practices” in one or all of the following ways and transit is a key component of these efforts:
  – Active community involvement in planning process;
  – Integration of facility or system as part of larger community development or improvement strategy—encouraging a high level of accessibility with less auto-dependence;
  – Facility design, amenities, elements, public services and activities that respond to transit user and community needs;
  – Innovative implementation strategies, through community-based, public-private partnerships; and
  – Innovative management strategies for security, maintenance, and other operations.

• There is considerable transferability to other places in the United States. The examples included in the site visits and case studies will illustrate initiatives or objectives that other communities could pursue and achieve. Indeed, it is important that readers interested in a specific geographic area or transit mode consult all the case studies, because there are “generic” aspects of all of them that may have bearing on a specific local situation.

• Different locations throughout the United States, as well as different sizes and types of communities and transit systems, are included. The examples will show that the concept of transit contributing to livable communities can be effectively pursued, regardless of geography or type of transit service. Examples include both suburban areas and inner city communities, as well as downtowns and neighborhoods, large cities and small. Examples also provide a range of transit strategies, including place-oriented strategies and service-oriented strategies.

• A range of budgets is represented. The case studies illustrate short-term, small-scale efforts that have had an impact, as well as major and costly capital programs and redevelopment projects. Even many of the major, expensive programs had components that were inexpensive and were implemented in a short period of time.
• Transit has had an impact. Case studies clearly show how and why transit was critical to improving livability.
• Transit and land-use policies are linked. The relationship between transit and supportive land-use policies is important and is illustrated, especially in Chapter 9, “Shaping Community Growth.”
• Transit investment is performed differently because a community is already livable. Case studies demonstrate how communities benefit from customer-focused transit services and investments and how transit benefits from livable communities through increased ridership, more positive public image, and better use of facilities.
• Obstacles have been overcome. Transit innovations often face many internal as well as external obstacles and barriers. In nearly every project covered, obstacles had to be overcome, which influenced the nature of the final outcome and made a project or program even stronger.
• Practitioners will find useful information and insights. The transit industry and local communities are primary audiences for the research results. Consequently, they should benefit from the information and be able to use it to improve communities and local transit services quickly and easily.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Research for this study was accomplished through a series of site visits to ten communities to observe and document actual projects and programs that have been implemented, as well as to discuss projects with innovative planning processes where implementation is in process. The following communities were selected:

• Boston, Massachusetts;
• Boulder, Colorado;
• Chicago, Illinois;
• Corpus Christi, Texas;
• Los Angeles, California;
• New York City/New Jersey*;
• Oakland, California;
• Portland, Oregon;
• Tucson, Arizona; and
• Suburban Washington, DC.

* Statewide programs of New Jersey Transit

For each site, the research team accomplished the following activities.

Background Research

In preparation for the site visit, the research team conducted telephone interviews to identify innovative local programs and potential participants for the focus group discussion. In addition, PPS collected background planning reports, program evaluation studies, and current relevant socioeconomic data.

Focus Groups

PPS facilitated focus group meetings with local transit, transportation and community development officials to describe projects and programs taking place elsewhere in the country. This gave local officials more information about what was happening elsewhere, as well as an opportunity to discuss specific local livability concerns and projects and services that exist or are needed in their communities. Each of the focus groups was different; while the same types of people were invited to each group (a mix of public and private sector representatives as well as people from local community organizations and advocacy groups) and the same slide show was presented, the discussion varied greatly according to local issues and the interests of those attending.

The following specific topics were discussed during the focus groups:

• Perceptions of livability: what are the community’s key livability issues?
• Community development and improvement activities that have been implemented over the past decade that were designed to improve the livability of the community.
• Relationship between the transit agency and other community development activities and organizations.
• Transit strategies implemented related to enhancing livability and responding to customer needs, and what worked and what did not work; strategies that are in the planning process.
• If strategies were successful, where and how they worked, including the extent of community involvement in the planning process and the types of ongoing relationships and complementary actions initiated between transit and community development activities.
• Applicability of local successes to other localities. What was special or unique about these efforts?
• What still needs to be done and how this report could be of help.
Case Study Interviews

From each focus group site, specific projects were selected, and these are highlighted in this report. In addition, detailed interviews were conducted with transit staff and local community development officials responsible for the project or program. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain answers to the following questions:

- What prompted the project or program? Was there a particular opportunity you were taking advantage of, or a particular problem you were trying to solve?
- Where did the ideas originate? Within the transit organization? If so, in which department(s)? Outside the organization? If outside, was it another agency? If so, which one? A community group? Other? Was the program or project part of a larger redevelopment or improvement strategy for the area?
- How was the decision made to go ahead with the program? What was the process used? How long did it take? Was there a reason why a specific location was selected for the project/program? How was this decided?
- What was the public process used (workshops, public hearing, focus groups, etc.)? Was the process successful in obtaining community input and support?
- What role did other organizations or government agencies (such as community development, tourism, land-use planning, etc.) play? Was it a collaborative effort or an effort primarily of the transit agency?
- Who funded the project start-up? Were there other complementary activities or components to the project that came from other sources? Who funded these activities?
- Who operates or manages the program/project? (Is it public? private? public-private?) What is the relationship to the transit agency? What does operation and management entail? (maintenance? security? marketing?) How much does it cost to operate/manage? Who pays these operational costs?
- What obstacles did you face in implementing the program? Were these obstacles primarily within the transit agency or outside or both? Was the role of the transit agency different for this project/program than for its usual activities? If so, has this role carried over into other projects or programs?
- How did you overcome these obstacles? Do obstacles still exist? Who within the transit agency has been most instrumental in dealing with obstacles?
- Did you set a goal to describe what you wanted to achieve with these changes? Do you think you were successful in achieving your goals? What is left to be done? Have the goals been changed or refined over time?
- What has been the response from customers/users about the program? Do you have any demographic information about users? Surveys of users or community? Ridership/usage information? Other impacts, such as increase in retail sales or decrease in vacancy rates? Job creation? New real estate development? More pedestrian traffic in area? How has the image of the transit agency changed as a result of the program?
- What would you do differently if you were starting over?
- Is your experience transferable to other transit agencies or communities? Do you have suggestions for how we might distribute the results of this research so that other communities might benefit from your experience?
- Is there anyone else we should talk to?

Detailed User Case Study Evaluations

In three cities (Woodbridge, NJ; Portland, OR; and Corpus Christi, TX) a series of systematic data collection efforts was undertaken to study people’s actual use and perceptions of specific transit facilities. (The exact methodology used in each case study was tailored to the particular project, although methods for all case studies were consistent to allow cross comparisons.) In addition to the materials collected during the site visits, detailed user studies included the following activities:

- Additional interviews with transit operating staff (drivers, maintenance workers, and ticket agents); local officials; representatives of downtown or neighborhood associations and merchant associations; and other key individuals. When appropriate, interviews were conducted in a focus-group format.
- Behavioral observations of activities within and around the facility during the course of at least one full day, including the types of activity (waiting, eating, and socializing), the type of user (age, sex, and so forth), and the location of that activity. These observations and studies of activity patterns at the facility were evaluated to determine general types of uses and users.
- On-site surveys of users of the facility, nearby businesses and residents. PPS has developed and tested survey forms, which were used to solicit perceptions about a facility, frequency of use, general demographic information, and suggestions for improvement.

Telephone Surveys of Selected Model Projects

To supplement the information collected during the site visits, the research team conducted telephone surveys of projects that were of substantial interest and
value to the study, but for which a site visit was not warranted or possible. Telephone surveys of the following cities were conducted:

- Aspen, Colorado;
- Denver, Colorado;
- Meridian, Mississippi;
- St. Louis, Missouri;
- Wilmington, Delaware; and
- Seattle, Washington.

Preparation of Case Studies

Using the information collected, draft case studies were prepared. When necessary, additional interviews were conducted to obtain more information or to obtain the viewpoint of another person or organization within the community. Draft case studies also were circulated to the local contacts listed on each case study for comment and to check the accuracy of facts. These comments have been integrated into the final case studies presented in this report.

LIVABILITY ISSUES PRESENTED

To present the case studies, the research team focused on six major livability issues. These livability issues are not, however, meant to be an exhaustive list and are also not intended to imply that there are not other issues of concern to communities. Rather, these livability issues are ones that were important to community studies and ones in which transit played a key role in addressing.

These are the six livability themes presented in this report.

- **Creating places for community life**: Transit can support places—public spaces, streets and buildings—helping to enliven their usage and making them centers for a range of community activities.
- **Serving as a catalyst for downtown and neighborhood renewal**: Transit can serve as a key force in the re-vitalization of neighborhoods and center cities.
- **Creating opportunity for entrepreneurship and economic development**: Transit can help create new businesses and improve access to job opportunities.
- **Improving safety and amenity**: Transit can help make communities safer, in part by making them more comfortable and attractive.
- **Making communities accessible and convenient**: Transit services and facilities can be tailored to meet community needs to provide a viable alternative to the automobile.
- **Shaping community growth**: Transit can be a key component of efforts aimed at reducing sprawl and encouraging development of mixed-use centers.

Each chapter contains an introduction, which briefly presents the nature of the specific livability issue and how communities are addressing the concern. The specific roles of transit are then presented, cross-referencing case studies from other chapters where appropriate. (Case study names are shown in italics in the text.) Each chapter includes (1) brief examples, which summarize particularly relevant projects, and (2) more detailed case studies.
CHAPTER 4

Creating Places for Community Life

The road is now like television, violent and tawdry. The landscape it runs through is littered with cartoon buildings and commercial messages. We whiz by them at fifty-five miles an hour and forget them, because one convenience store looks like the next. They do not celebrate anything beyond their mechanistic ability to sell merchandise. We don’t want to remember them. We did not savor the approach and we were not rewarded upon reaching the destination, and it will be the same next time, and every time. There is little sense of having arrived anywhere, because everyplace looks like noplace in particular.

—James Kunstler, The Geography of Nowhere [1]

INTRODUCTION

One of the continuing themes in livability and quality of life studies is the issue of “sense of place.” The combined impacts of sprawl, urban neglect and disinvestment, traffic, and city budget constraints have led to a situation in which we have few common places that bring people together and serve as a focal point for community life.

This was not always the case. Once, almost every place in a community—whether it was a downtown or a public library—served that goal. Today, many economic centers are located in suburban areas where pedestrian life tends to be nonexistent except in privately owned, legally restrictive shopping centers. As a result, there are few locations where a variety of people can come into contact with each other in a positive and inviting public environment.

In older cities, where spaces once thrived, public places have been decimated by the same economic and social forces. “As more and more private space is created,” PPS staff wrote in a recent op-ed piece in the Los Angeles Times, “true public spaces are under increasing pressure to accommodate the cultural diversity of Los Angeles and to survive economically. . . . Malls cannot replace the traditional town square.” [2] The result in small towns, suburbs, and cities alike is a lack of what can be broadly described as “places for community life.”

Overview of Community Strategies

There is new interest today in reversing this trend. Communities are working on a variety of “places” where people can come together. These places include public spaces—such as central squares, waterfront promenades, and parks—as well as traditional, stand-alone public institutions like libraries, schools, museums, public markets, and city halls. All of these traditional uses are being reconsidered in cities across the country and are becoming more multipurpose community-gathering spots.

Pioneer Square in Portland, Oregon, is one of the first in a new generation of public squares. No longer just passive green spaces, these squares are designed to be programmed and used by the public. In fact, the infrastructure for such uses is built in, and the spaces have management entities in charge of them to ensure their effective use.

Streets as important community public spaces are also being addressed. The impact of traffic, in particular, on inhibiting pedestrian activity and making spaces less hospitable for community activities was discussed in Chapter 2. Indeed, without effective traffic control in the future, it will be difficult to create more places for community life.

Finally, there are some more subtle design issues related to the goal of creating centers for people.
Public art and special amenity features, for example, also contribute to a “sense of place,” as well as to people’s use and enjoyment of public spaces. Artists are now much more involved in street and public space projects where they actually create public amenities—lights, benches, and other features—rather than stand-alone sculptures. Many spaces are activated with temporary rather than permanent installations, or by art which invites public participation and comment. All of this helps to reinforce the goal of creating places that reflect the values and heritage of a community.

Role of Transit

Because transit brings people to a location, it influences the use and activity of these spaces and, indeed, transit is instrumental in making them work effectively. Transit can enhance destinations, helping to create community places by supporting existing spaces, as well as providing a place for new activities and services. A transit facility need not be just a place for transportation but can also become a setting for community interaction and a place that accommodates a diversity of people.

Because transit stops come in all shapes, sizes, and levels of use, there are abundant ways that transit can support places for community life. The transit services and facilities mentioned below are discussed in this report.

Linking transit to existing public places is the simplest, and probably the most obvious and common strategy. Transit agencies usually plan their stops so that they correspond to destinations like a main square or a public library or school. The case study for the Watts Shuttle in Los Angeles, however, shows how the main transit system for the city did not adequately serve local, neighborhood destinations; the new shuttle now does.

There is a difference between providing a transit stop at a public place and making that stop truly integral to it. Pioneer Square in Portland, Oregon, is one of the premier examples in the country where transit is integrated into a public square known as “Portland’s Living Room.” Indeed, the two were designed at the same time. At a larger scale, Union Station in Chicago and South Station in Boston, both major commuter rail, bus, and Amtrak stations, have been revitalized to become focal points to the surrounding downtown areas.

Transit centers constitute a broadly defined strategy in which a bus stop, bus terminal, or train station becomes more than just a place for transportation. For example, Woodbridge Station in Woodbridge, New Jersey, was a well-used commuter rail station but was considered to be a maintenance burden by the transit agency and in a state of disrepair. Its case study shows how spaces around rail stations offer many positive opportunities for the surrounding community: train stations can become centers of community life, be welcoming gateways, and provide places for information about local attractions.

By creating places where people come together, transit centers can create focal points for a variety of activities, as well as links to the larger regional transit system. It is possible, for example, that a bus transfer center could include a staging area for employee commuter vans, a terminal for a local neighborhood circulator, and a taxi stand. Such centers are planned for LINC in Seattle.

Serving as a neighborhood focus, the center can act as a catalyst for neighborhood-scale joint development. With proper design and incentives, transit centers can attract a variety of activities and service establishments, such as open-air fresh produce markets (see Chapter 6), coffee shops, newsstands, video store rentals, branch bank offices, health clinics, and day care centers (e.g., KidStop Child Care Center, Shady Grove Metro Station, Rockville, Maryland.) Staples Street Station in Corpus Christi is designed to accommodate future small-scale retail.

These types of uses need not be permanent. In Tucson, the downtown transit center is used twice a month as the center stage for “Downtown Saturday Night.” In Portland, the Portland Saturday Market, which is served by a Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) light rail line stop in the center of the market, is a vibrant weekend attraction and a parking lot during the week.
EXAMPLES

Portland, OR: Tri-Met’s MAX Station Anchors Saturday Market

For 20 years, the Portland Saturday Market has brought thousands of shoppers every weekend to the old warehouse district in downtown Portland, Oregon. As the largest craft market in continuous operation in the country, the market has not only revitalized the district around it, but has created thousands of jobs. The market features over 200 vendors every Saturday and Sunday from March through December, and offers a wide variety of products: household wares, jewelry, furniture, sculpture—all made and sold by local artists. Adding to the festivity of the place are food vendors and live entertainment.

When the market first opened, it was located under the Burnside Bridge next to Ankeny Park because it offered protection from Portland’s unpredictable weather. Today, the market has expanded from this location, so that vendors extend across the street and into adjacent open areas. Several warehouse buildings now feature craft shops indoors.

The MAX light rail line, which began running in 1986, includes a stop right in the center of the market. When MAX was originally proposed, organizers of the Saturday Market opposed the project because they feared that the presence of trains would cut the market in two and destroy the pedestrian environment. After careful planning work and attention to detail by Tri-Met, the system operator, exactly the opposite happened.

The result is a place where transit could not be more integrated; indeed it becomes part of the vitality of the market. Moreover, it brings hundreds of customers to the market and increases transit ridership. In a survey the research team conducted of people waiting for the train, the market was the main reason people were riding the train. In addition, market vendors surveyed believed MAX was very important to their businesses, so not surprisingly the market is prominently advertised in the trains themselves. The Portland Saturday Market has been enhanced as a community institution.

Boston, MA: Health Clinic Becomes Visible and Provides Accessible Community Service at Roxbury Crossing T-Station

The Health Station at Roxbury Crossing T-Station is run by the Whittier Street Neighborhood Health Center, which in 1993 moved into a space adjacent to the Orange Line subway station. The Roxbury Station is one of many newly built or renovated stations along the Orange Line, completed as part of the Southwest Corridor project (see Case Study 5-1). As part of its renovation program, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) built space for retail into its new stations.

The T-Station location, the newest of three run by the Whittier Street Neighborhood Health Center, is used...
and manage the Tucson Arts District, a cultural district intended to better serve the arts community and revitalize downtown Tucson. One of the TADP’s most successful programs is “Downtown Saturday Night,” an arts and events series produced in collaboration with Sun Tran, the transit agency of the City of Tucson. The “main stage” of the series is at the Ronstadt Transit Center on the first and third Saturdays of each month.

Downtown Saturday Night functions as a community-wide arts district open house that attracts thousands of Tucson residents and visitors alike to the bus transit center for concerts, dance performances, theater, archery demonstrations, midnight basketball, and socializing. In addition to these events, adjacent shops, cafes and galleries stay open late to serve event-goers.

The Ronstadt Transit Center, built in 1991 at a cost of $6 million, is located near the Amtrak station and airport buses serving seniors, students, and commuters traveling through the downtown corridor. The Ronstadt Transit Center was not originally designed as a venue for events and performance; utilities and other equipment were added to the facility after it was built. Because Sun Tran bus service at Ronstadt stops at 8 p.m. on Saturdays, however, there is no conflict in usage. A new strategy is now needed so that people can take the bus to Ronstadt to participate in the special events held there.

Figure 4-4. Health Station at Roxbury Crossing. By integrating a public health center into a subway station, the Whittier Street Neighborhood Health Center at Roxbury Crossing in Boston is able to reach and serve more of the people who require their services. The subway station entrance is located at the far left of the photograph. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

Figure 4-5. Tucson, AZ, Downtown Saturday Night. On the first and third Saturday nights of the month, the Ronstadt Bus Transit Center in downtown Tucson becomes a center stage and a venue for performances, concerts, and other community events. (Credit: Jerry Ferrin Photography)
Corpus Christi, TX: Staples Street Bus Transit Center Using Public Art to Inspire Community Ownership of a Transit Facility

You hear all those clichés about community involvement and sense of ownership, but here, it became a reality. It was a great thing to be part of.
—Ed Gates, artist

Active participation in the public art-making process can help a community develop a sense of ownership about its local transit facilities. The Regional Transit Authority and project architect and planners of the Staples Street bus transit facility wanted to integrate the transit facility into the community. Under the guidance of a local artist—who had a budget of $25,000—residents produced 1,500 hand-painted ceramic tiles, which have been incorporated into the Staples Street bus transit facility (see also Case Study 9-3).

Tiles decorate the facility’s entrance arch, bases of columns, benches, planters, light fixtures, and telephone booths. The Staples Street bus transit center was the recipient of a 1995 Presidential Design Achievement Award and is featured in a recent joint publication of the U.S. DOT and FTA regarding art-in-transit projects.

CASE STUDIES

Cases studies illustrate different aspects of how transit can create places for community life. Although the projects deal in different types of transit (bus, light rail, commuter rail, and subway), each one involved expanding the traditional role of a transit stop into a place for a variety of community activities.

Case Study 4-1: Portland, OR: Pioneer Courthouse Square Transit Key in Creating the City’s “Living Room”

It’s not just about transit. It’s about a city.
—PPS focus group participant

Building rail lines is not an end in itself. The Portland story is more about community building than light rail building. MAX has been an effective means to the end of a livable community. What the community is interested in is livability. We enjoy great support for transit and land use because they are the tools we use to achieve a livable community.
—G.B. Arrington, Director, Strategic Planning, Tri-Met [1]

Pioneer Square respects the street. It respects the city.
—William H. Whyte

SUMMARY

The creation of this public space in downtown Portland cannot be separated from the fundamental role played by Tri-Met, the city’s transit agency. Planned concurrently with the new Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) light rail system, Pioneer Square was an idea that dated back to the 1950s when the site was a parking lot. Tri-Met leveraged its funding for transit stops and an information center and helped to make the Square financially possible.

With extraordinary public support, the Square was built to be “Portland’s living room,” a center for the life of the city. Funded in part by the residents of Portland, the Square has continued its tradition of citizen participation with thousands of community events held during the past decade. With the opening of the light rail system in 1986, Pioneer Courthouse Square became both the city center and the bustling hub of transit for buses and light rail, as well as the main information center for Tri-Met.
PLANNING PROCESS

The Pioneer Square site has served many purposes. Once home to Portland’s first public school, it became the Hotel Portland in 1883—the place to stay and the center of downtown life. In the early 1950s, the hotel was razed and became a parking lot for the adjacent department store. Although the idea of making the parking lot a public square was discussed at that time, it was not seriously considered until 1969, when the department store proposed a 10-story parking garage on the site. The Portland Planning Commission, after several heated public hearings, denied the permit for the garage and recommended that a public square be built instead, with other peripheral sites chosen as alternative sites for garages.

The parking garage crisis initiated a planning dialogue between the city and the business community about the future of the downtown area itself. In 1972, Portland adopted its innovative downtown plan—the plan that served for more than 20 years as the guiding vision for the city. This plan contained a strong transportation component: reducing reliance on the automobile, increasing use of transit, and setting strict limits on the amount of parking in the downtown. Coupled with the establishment of an urban growth boundary for the region and efforts to promote pedestrian orientation downtown, the stage was set for the rebirth of the declining city core.

It is not coincidental that one of the first major projects resulting from the plan was the Portland Mall, a largely federally funded transit mall, which extends over 20 blocks on two parallel streets and provides comfortable waiting areas in attractive shelters, up-to-the-minute transit information, and easy transfers between lines. For the downtown, it provides an attractive brick promenade with trees and amenities for shoppers and downtown office workers.

Pioneer Courthouse Square itself was seen as one of the key projects of the plan, a space that would complement the new investment in the transit mall. Luckily, the square was being planned at the same time as the new MAX light rail system and Tri-Met, a tri-county transportation agency, saw the opportunity to leverage its construction budget for light rail stops and a central information center to help unify the square. Not only did this funding make the square economically possible, but the coordination of the two design processes created a seamless design for the square, which integrates transit with larger community goals.

The planning and design of the square took many interesting twists and turns that left an imprint on the final product. While there was general consensus that the square should become a “people place,” an active plaza rather than a passive park, and that it should be built with private as well as public support, a design competition was needed to give these public goals a
The rules for this competition stated that the square should do the following:

- Respond to its location as a major transfer/information point—the focus of a region;
- Provide unrestricted pedestrian access and general visibility from surrounding streets—open on all sides with no more than one-third of the square covered;
- Have a unified design concept, with multifunctional-functional spaces, commercial uses (like a cafe), which support the design program, and places of refuge, interest, and information for users; and
- Recognize the significance of Portland’s history.

A two-step competition process was implemented: an open competition (to which 162 entries were submitted) from which five finalists were selected and paid a modest fee to produce a more detailed design. This process allowed the public to see a variety of ways that the square could be designed and how transit stops could be integrated into it. Options presented ranged from glass conservatories to fir groves to water gardens; transit shelters were free-standing, incorporated into arcades, and left virtually bare of amenities.

The winning team, led by Will Martin, consisted of Portland natives. More than a group of architects, the team included a writer, a historian, and two artists. Will Martin himself was a painter, sociologist, humorist, historian, and inventor.

The square took 5 years to build and overcame many obstacles that threatened to prevent its completion. Concerns about the design, lack of funding, and fears of uncontrolled activities on the square shaped the final product considerably. An extensive fundraising campaign raised $1.7 million from the community. The design was modified, but its initial integrity was retained despite pressures for greater modifications. An innovative management program was set up to oversee maintenance, security, and events in the square.

The square had its grand opening in 1984. It was not until 1986, however, that the square was truly complete, with the opening of MAX light rail transit service connecting downtown to the eastern suburbs. A westside line is now nearing completion, which should increase use of the square as a transit hub. A new north-south line in the planning stages will share the existing transit mall along the square with buses and cars. Over the past decade, both MAX and the square have become virtually synonymous with the revitalization of Portland as a city and its new identity as a livable community.

### STRATEGY

**Design.** The design of the square—with its brick-paving and historic elements—complements other projects like the transit mall. It fills an entire block downtown, lending it great visibility. Throughout downtown—on the transit mall, at the square, along the MAX line—there is an evident commitment to quality which goes beyond the functionality of the transit routes. Portland is walkable: sidewalks have been widened and many street amenities and art added. The overall result is that the square is integrated into everything around it.

Transit facilities are carefully integrated into the overall design. Columns and ledges under a glass canopy form the waiting area for light rail. MAX’s stop on the square is heavily used; in fact, it has the highest ridership of any MAX stop, with 2,500 daily boardings. Pioneer Square also features infrastructure that allows it to be used for a wide variety of events and activities. Because of sloping topography, the square features a series of crescent-shaped steps which form a natural amphitheater. The square is the site of hundreds of small and large events each year, many of which have already become Portland traditions, such as the following:

- The nation’s tallest Christmas tree with 8,000 lights and 12,000 carolers;
- Peanut Butter & Jam lunchtime jazz concerts;
- Festival of Flowers, an artist’s design constructed in flowers;
- Series of children’s hands-on activities “Kid-sational”; and
- Festa Italiana and other ethnic food and music festivals.

Tucked under the amphitheaters are the Tri-Met information center, restrooms, a travel bookstore, and the management offices for the square. Above, there is a pavilion structure with a successful cafe. A small area is devoted to pushcart vendors. These businesses bring income to offset the management of the square and encourage activity on a regular basis even when events are not underway.

Finally, architectural elements symbolizing history and themes of Portland abound in the square, including the original gates from the Portland Hotel, plaques about the history of Portland, and a column with the “rose city” motif. These elements add to the special character of the square.

**Management Program.** The nonprofit corporation that manages the square has contributed significantly to its success. A paid staff, including a full director and staff
assistants, works under the direction of a board composed of community members, business leaders, and a commissioner from the Parks Department. The management coordinates its own events and issues permits for events by others; oversees maintenance and security, including hiring of its own security guards; supervises vending and retail tenants; raises funds for the square; and handles public relations, including promotional activities and a monthly newsletter.

FUNDING

The square was built with a variety of funds. The total project cost was $6.8 million, with financing provided by the Portland Development Commission, Tax Increment Funds; federal grants from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now the Federal Transit Administration) and the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Services (now defunct); the city of Portland; and the adjacent local department store.

Another key source of funds was the community itself. When the construction of the square was threatened by a lack of money, the Friends of Pioneer Courthouse Square, a nonprofit advocacy group, took on the challenge of raising the needed $1.7 million. In order to raise the money, some 60,000 paving bricks for the square were imprinted with sponsor names (“Bake Your Name in Brick’’). The 200 volunteers who sold the bricks not only successfully raised funds, but also helped create a built-in constituency for the square. A second campaign to “sell” design elements in the square (from the amphitheater to drinking fountains) yielded more than $1 million. One indication of the community support amasses for the project: architects, artists, and volunteers arrived unannounced and painted a full-scale plan of the square over the parking lot asphalt, even covering the attendant shack and an abandoned 1960 Ford sedan.

The annual budget for the management of the square is about $623,000. Funds are contributed by the city ($240,000); fees, membership, and fundraising ($60,000); and income from retail businesses makes up about one-third of the budget. The remaining funds come from sponsored events and rental charges. The management organization is currently conducting a fundraising campaign for square repairs, soliciting government, private, and foundation donations to complete a $1 million repair and restoration project.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

After the winning design was selected from the competition, it almost was not built. The design was criticized, particularly by a downtown business group that wanted the square to be covered. The group suggested rejecting federal funds and starting over. Covering the square reflected more than just climactic concerns; the main question was whether or not the square would become a haven for anti-social activities. To address this issue, the Pioneer Square Management Advisory Committee was established to review the design. In the committee’s debates, it became clear that the issue was not the design itself, but the activities that would take place in the square. The committee’s report—critical to the success of Pioneer Square—outlined the management program for the square to establish a mechanism for overseeing activities and events, provide maintenance and security, and ensure the square lived up to its potential.

There was also a lack of funding to complete the square as designed. It took the coordinated participation of the transit agency and the community itself to make the square possible. As G. B. Arrington, Director of Strategic Planning for Tri-Met, has stated, “Pioneer Square is a wonderful example of what you get when you think of a transportation investment first as the means to the end of a livable community. By turning over our station budget, we helped make the square real and get a station in Portland’s living room. Pioneer Square is the most important block in the state because it’s where everything comes together, it’s a symbol of our revitalized downtown, it’s the first place you take out-of-town guests, and it’s the centerpiece of our bus and rail system.”

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Portland’s transit programs and the square are considered success stories both locally and nationally. The square attracts thousands of people downtown for its events and activities. As a focal point for community celebration, this generates a great deal of positive publicity for downtown as radio, TV, and newspapers cover the activities. The square has become the primary retail location downtown as buildings have been refurbished and new businesses opened. It is heavily used by tourists and residents.

There is a strong symbiotic relationship between the square and transit. The square gives a visible center to transit, makes the events and activities accessible and convenient, and increases ridership on the buses and light rail. A survey of transit users and businesses around the square conducted in 1995 by the research team showed generally positive ratings about the design of the transit stop, except for the amount of seating, safety during the evening, and the number of telephones. Businesses said that while the stop was
“somewhat important” to their own businesses, it was “important” or “very important” to the overall area as a place to do business.

Fears that the square would be the scene for anti-social activities never materialized, although there have been problems about which businesses and transit users are still concerned. Still, the management organization is ever-vigilant in addressing security issues as they arise. This has benefits for transit as well: Tri-Met users surveyed in 1994 reported that “personal safety when waiting for the bus or MAX” was one of the most important factors in deciding whether to use the system.

The investment in transit and public improvements downtown, which was based on the 1972 plan, has revitalized the downtown. There has been an increase in downtown jobs from 50,000 in 1975 to over 86,000 today. Air quality has actually improved and traffic congestion has not increased because nearly 40% of the downtown work trips are on public transit. A 1984 study estimated that without transit, six 42-story parking structures would have to be built and two more lanes to every highway coming downtown would need to be added. Development near the square itself has included a new shopping center, Pioneer Place, as well as many new retail stores and shops.

Why has it worked here? Portland’s citizenry have a sense of common purpose, a commitment to quality and a perseverance that keeps Portlandites anchored to their city. People who developed the original vision are still around to see it from a different perspective. As one commentator put it: “Portland may well depart from the norm in metropolitan growth. The sense of common purpose, the easy communication among the area’s leaders, and the long-standing conviction that Oregonians should conserve the good life, even at the sacrifice of some self-interest, point toward an outcome at variance with that in Los Angeles and most other American cities.” [2]

CONCLUSIONS

Pioneer Courthouse Square, with its transit activities, is the product of a visionary process and is now a symbol of the city’s livability. The process of creating the square—the public debates, the fundraising process, the grand opening—all worked to involve the broader community. Transit provided key funding and continues to bring people to the square and downtown as a whole. Building on the positive start, with an effective management organization running it, the square has become the city’s place of pride and a focal point for all kinds of community activities. The revitalization of the downtown is testimony to the square’s profound impact on the livability of Portland.

ENDNOTES


Case Study 4-2
Woodbridge Station, NJ: Creating a Sense of Place at a Commuter Rail Station

When is a railroad station not a railroad station? When it is in Woodbridge, because it becomes a very important part of the community . . .
—NJ DOT Commissioner Frank J. Wilson

This train station is about the public, is about our citizens; it is about using our train station to attract people to our downtown community.
—James McGreevey, Mayor, Woodbridge Township

What we did differently with this project, for openers, was to look at this station as a part of the community and most, if not all, of the effort was to try to create more of a sense of place here, a sense of community, and a sense of location. We also tried to tie the station into the surrounding areas . . . and to broaden out the reach of the station . . .
—Rick Richmond, Assistant Executive Director, NJ Transit Department of Engineering

SUMMARY

The 1995 renovation of the commuter train station in Woodbridge, New Jersey, provided New Jersey Transit (NJ Transit) with the opportunity to do more than just routine physical improvements to a station building. NJ Transit viewed the project as an opportunity to use transit to make a significant difference in the community. Woodbridge was sorely in need of work: the “train station” was nothing but a graffitifilled, dimly lit tunnel in the side of a railroad viaduct overgrown with weeds. Here was also the chance to try out a broader approach to station improvement; the Mayor of Woodbridge Township and other local leaders were eager to try to integrate the station into the town.

The project, one of five pilot projects of NJ Transit’s Station Renewal program (see Case Study 10-3), involved the renovation of existing facilities, the construction of a new entrance to the train station and the addition of amenities to better serve NJ Transit users. More significant, however, was the planners’ effort to enhance the role and visibility of the station in the town, while improving pedestrian access from Main
Street, thereby creating a sense of place at the station where previously there had been none. In addition, the station project complemented a streetscape and downtown revitalization project underway in Woodbridge.

PLANNING PROCESS

Although the renovation of the deteriorated train station was a major goal of the Woodbridge renewal project, L. Richard Mariani, Manager of Passenger Facilities of NJ Transit and the Project Director, sought to build a stronger connection between the station and the downtown area in order to efficiently expedite the project as well as build alliances with the township and local businesses.

The Woodbridge Train Station is located a few blocks from the heart of downtown Woodbridge, New Jersey. Woodbridge is the fifth largest city in New Jersey with a population of about 93,000 inhabitants, and it is the oldest original township in the state. The station’s intermodal role is ensured because it is also within a few hundred yards of the New Jersey Turnpike (Interstate 95) and is served by several bus routes. The station serves a major commuter line: the North Jersey Coast Line. Before the recent improvements were made, approximately 1200 commuters passed through the station every weekday. Most riders commute into New York City, about a 40-min ride. Many passengers arriving at Woodbridge transfer to buses to reach a popular destination, the Woodbridge Center Mall, one of the largest indoor shopping malls on the East Coast.

The station building at Woodbridge is at the far end of an elevated viaduct and had little visibility either from the street or from the adjacent downtown area (i.e., the station cannot be seen from Main Street). This was deemed detrimental to NJ Transit’s ability to attract additional riders, and to efforts on the part of Woodbridge businesses to attract train passengers to stop and shop on their way to or from the station. The platform and station building are reached by a tunnel and stairway at the north end—serving as the main entrance and providing access from Pearl and Poillon Streets—and by a stairway from Green Street at the south end. Before the improvements, the only visible presence of the station at the street-level main entrance was two enormous advertising billboards flanking the gaping hole of the tunnel. The minimal design of the station and its total lack of presence compelled one passenger to remark before the renovation, “You can’t even tell you’re at a train station.”

Information was collected through surveys of passengers, NJ Transit employees and adjacent retailers regarding their concerns about the station and suggestions for improving its design and function. Parking, circulation, seating placement, station upkeep and patterns of use at the station throughout the day were also observed. A series of recommendations for design improvements was developed based on this input.

Transit users and local retailers who were questioned expressed a need for additional retail services at the station and in the surrounding area. Thus, retail opportunities were included in the new design in the form of two kiosks flanking the Pearl Street entrance to be leased by NJ Transit to local businesses for use as newsstands, concessions or other businesses.

While planning work was underway, the Downtown Woodbridge Merchants Association was creating a special improvement district to implement a
designed for lease to local entrepreneurs, the side-entrance was flanked by two small buildings that extend out over the tunnel entrances. The primary entrance at Woodbridge Station, canopies were constructed to frame the entrance and tie it to the surrounding area. To create a strong presence and leverage project funds, NJ Transit applied for and received its first Transportation Enhancement Project grant under ISTEA, which provides funding for transportation planning projects.

STRATEGY

Partnerships. Creating a new identity for the station, and undertaking a major renovation in an era of budget cuts and personnel shortages, relied on forging a new relationship with the surrounding community. Mr. Mariani stretched the funding further and got the job done faster because he orchestrated a partnership between NJ Transit, the township, the Downtown Woodbridge Merchants Association and other organizations. These partnerships gave the community a new stake in its train station that had never before existed.

Using funds from NJ Transit, the Township agreed to take control of the street-level portion of the construction project. While NJ Transit retained responsibility for the overall design and policy, Woodbridge Township took over the implementation of the design, preparing final design and construction documents and managing the construction process. NJ Transit used state rail crews and its own contractors to implement the improvements to the platform level, and had the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) repair the three commuter parking lots. The township also worked with NJ Transit to improve parking at the station.

Design Strategies. Design focused on elements that would enhance the presence of the station and link it to the surrounding area. To create a strong presence at Woodbridge Station, canopies were constructed to extend out over the tunnel entrances. The primary entrance was flanked by two small buildings designed for lease to local entrepreneurs, the sidewalk area was enlarged, and a canopy was added to the Poillon Street entrance. New amenities introduced at the entrance included historic-style benches, new trash receptacles, a historic-style clock, telephones, bike racks, and new cases that display both schedule and community information. On the platform, New Jersey Transit added new benches, information kiosks, telephones, and trash receptacles. The platform station building was renovated, air conditioning was added, and the restrooms were refurbished. The parking lots were cleaned, repaved, and restriped; the trees were thinned out between the platform and the parking lot to provide better visibility to the elevated platform from the street.

Clear directional signage was added at the exits to Pearl and Poillon Streets and a local artist created a station map showing transit, business, and cultural information. NJ Transit painted “Welcome to Woodbridge” on the trestle over Main Street to match the merchants association’s typeface and colors. This sign also directs people to the station and its parking lots.

Passenger safety was enhanced by improving access paths, parking lots, and lighting around the station, and by improving the Main Street crosswalk. Trees and vegetation were pruned throughout the station area to improve sightlines. A closed-circuit television (CCTV) system records activity at the station on video tape. New vendors will also contribute to passenger comfort and security.

While the township agreed to repave Poillon Street, NJ Transit strengthened linkages to the surrounding streets and parking lots. All paths and sidewalks were repaved, including those leading to Main Street, with the same brick pavers used downtown. Along the walkway running parallel to the elevated railroad viaduct, a landscaped strip was planted with climbing vines and lined with the same historic-style lamp-posts used on Main Street.

Parking Lots. Two NJ Transit lots were in disrepair and dimly lit. One was located some distance away on the other side of Main Street from the station. At the same time, township vehicles were parked in a township lot next to an historic park adjacent to the station and employees walked across Main Street to the Town Hall. This created friction between the township and civic groups who desired to use the park for events.

The solution was simple: swap the two lots. Convenience for transit customers and township employees was enhanced and 250 fewer pedestrians cross busy Main Street each day. This also freed the township lot for evening and weekend events when transit customers typically vacate the lot.

FUNDING

NJ Transit and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation each contributed $50,000 toward the station renewal program, which covered all the costs of the planning studies, completed by Project for Public Spaces, for the five pilot station projects, and which helped to leverage project funds. To implement the Woodbridge project, NJ Transit applied for and received its first Transportation Enhancement Project grant under ISTEA, which provides funding for transportation planning projects.
projects not previously targeted for federal support. ISTEA provided $463,000 and NJ Transit added $503,000 in New Jersey Transportation Trust Funds for the work at grade level. NJ Transit added an additional $200,000 in state Transportation Trust Funds, which were used for the platform-level and parking lot improvements and for benches, trash receptacles, lighting, display cases, new restrooms, and repainting. The township had the time to facilitate the project but lacked the funding. Empowering local officials with greater influence gained commitment to the project’s success. In December 1993, NJ Transit executed an agreement with Woodbridge Township committing $966,000 for the final design, engineering, and construction of the grade-level improvements. This included $463,000 in FTA Enhancement funds and $503,000 in New Jersey Transportation Trust Funds.

NJ Transit also used innovative ways to ensure a higher standard of maintenance at the station: parking fees collected by the Downtown Woodbridge Merchants Association from the commuter lots will be dedicated to station maintenance, with a small amount going to help the downtown. In addition, a local restaurateur, interested in converting an old freight house next to the parking lot into a micro-brewery, agreed to maintain a 180-ft-long strip of landscaping in return for use of a small number of the parking spaces for his customers in the evenings, after commuting hours, and on weekends.

By contracting with the NJDOT to perform the parking lot improvements, rather than by going through the usual procurement process, NJ Transit was able to reduce its cost for this part of the project by 70 percent and complete the parking lots in a fraction of the time, minimizing disruption to transit users.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

Commuters and townspople surveyed in 1995 about their newly renovated station were clearly pleased with the changes. They believe that their NJ Transit station is a much more handsome and comfortable facility: 87 percent of the passengers questioned rated their overall impression of the station as either good or excellent, whereas only 45 percent had described it as good before the renewal. Passengers no longer complain about the poor maintenance, graffiti, and vandalism in and around the station. They said that the station is cleaner, better managed, and much safer than it was before. The improvements and amenities that commuters said they would like to see, such as more seating, better lighting, more telephones, and improved signage and schedule information have been provided. A shortage of parking

continues to be an issue, despite the addition of more spaces. Now that the station’s image has improved, more people from surrounding towns appear to be driving to Woodbridge to take the train. Many commuters may also be taking advantage of the free parking, since New Jersey Transit has not yet imposed parking fees.

NJ Transit is negotiating with potential retailers to rent the two kiosks flanking the entrance to the station. Most commuters expressed the desire to have a convenient place to buy coffee and newspapers in the morning. A retail presence will help provide a greater sense of security and activate Pearl Street, perhaps attracting customers for neighboring merchants while providing a needed service for commuters.

Despite the effort to make the station accessible from Main Street, and vice versa, downtown retailers have not seen an increase in customers on their way to or from the station. (Most businesses are not open early or late enough to accommodate commuters.) The overall impression of the station has improved, however, and it is clearly seen as an asset to the town. The station has gained some attention outside Woodbridge as well: the Woodbridge Renovation Project received a 1995 Excellence in Downtown Development award from Downtown New Jersey, Inc., and one of “America’s 25 Best Enhancement Projects” at the 1996 National Transportation Enhancements Conference. The project was also a catalyst in shifting NJ Transit toward an organizational culture that produces more projects of this kind. A recent memo from the Chief Engineer of Engineering & Constructing emphasized how critical it is to understand how a facility works at all hours of the day and night, how people approach and leave the station, and how they behave while there. This directive, in effect, implements the vision embodied by ISTEA.

NJ Transit now views the transit ride as only part of the customer’s total experience and has developed a new and broader vision for the improvement of its station facilities. As Mr. Mariani describes it, “The quality of the whole experience is made up of the sum of all transportation segments. If any one segment is bad enough, customers may abandon the whole experience, causing ridership to suffer on all the segments.”

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

As part of the Station Renewal Program process, project planners had recommended community meetings for NJ Transit that would provide a better opportunity for both professionals and citizens to collaborate before design alternatives were developed. This approach was not incorporated into the planning
process for the Woodbridge improvements because of a lack of interest on the part of the Township at the time. Indeed, Mr. Mariani now believes that more community meetings would have helped to build trust and to show the community that NJ Transit was “on their side.” Obtaining more community support from the very beginning, he believes, would have helped streamline the implementation of the project and the approvals process, resulting in a better project.

CONCLUSIONS

To a community, a train station can be more than just a building or a place to wait before leaving town. If conceived in an appropriate manner, it can be as important to a community’s livability as a library, a city hall, or a town square. When this larger purpose is realized, people become proud of and care for these stations, and the beneficiaries are transit, passengers, community residents, and local businesses.

The Woodbridge Station Renewal project illustrates that in order to make long-lasting and effective improvements to a transit facility, a project must focus on more than a just the building and its amenities. Attention must be given to enhancing the facility’s connections to its surrounding area and to developing innovative ways to manage and maintain both the station and its environs. In Woodbridge, NJ Transit was able to form partnerships within the Township Merchants Association, which enabled the transit agency and its facility to play a larger role in the community while gaining needed assistance in the implementation of the project. Woodbridge Station now has a valued presence in the community.

PLANNING PROCESS

The establishment of the KidStop Child Care Center involved a unique public-private partnership involving the transit operator (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority [WMATA]), Montgomery County government, and a group of corporate sponsors. These interests formed the Foundation for Working Families, a nonprofit organization devoted to helping private employers fund facilities for child and elder care on behalf of their employees. Board members include representatives of local businesses and public agencies.

The concept of combining child care centers and public transportation began when a 1987 task force identified commuters’ side trips for child care as a major barrier to the use of public transit by working parents. In response to the task force recommendations, the county began to research a pilot location for a transit-related child care center. After identifying Shady Grove as an ideal location, the county approached the foundation to begin the process of raising funds for the facility.

In 1991, the Board of Directors of WMATA approved a demonstration program that encouraged the establishment of child care centers at other Metro facilities and extended invitations to each of the local governments in the Washington, DC, region to submit proposals for establishing child care centers at Metro facilities. Montgomery County was the first to take advantage of this opportunity. WMATA agreed to lease the land to the county government for a period of 30 years at a FTA, which had endorsed the program. (Land acquired with federal funds may ordinarily only be used “for transit purposes.”) Under an agreement with the county, the foundation assembled funds and supervised the development of the design and construction of the center. After the facility was completed, the foundation donated the building to the county government. Construction began in August 1994 and the center opened May 15, 1995.

SUMMARY

In an attempt to make mass transit commuting more convenient, attractive and “family-friendly,” transit agencies have begun partnerships with cities to develop a creative solution: locating child care centers at transit terminals. This allows working parents to drive straight to the station, park their cars at a park-and-ride lot, drop off their kids at the child care center and take the train to work. Picking up their kids at the end of the day is equally easy. One such center—KidStop Child Care Center—opened in September 1993 at the Shady Grove Metrorail station in Montgomery County, Maryland. The day care center now serves both transit riders and community residents and is one of the most sought after facilities in the area.
modern playground equipment. The center has capacity for 106 children, ranging in age from 6 weeks through school age, and provides care for mildly sick children. Children’s Discovery Centers of America, Inc., was selected to operate the child care center. The company, founded in 1983, operates 215 centers around the country and is one of the nation’s largest providers of child care services.

FUNDING

The cost of construction totaled approximately $1.5 million. The state of Maryland agreed to match contributions up to $750,000, including $20,000 of in-kind contributions. The city of Gaithersburg and area businesses, led by IBM and L’Oreal, contributed $438,000, and the county government granted $288,700 toward the match. Forty-two spaces were sold in advance to corporate employers whose contributions were used to pay for the facility’s construction, and priority enrollment period extends to 10 years. At least half of the center’s spaces are available to the public. Parents pay market rate tuition fees established by the operator.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The center is currently operating at full capacity and has a waiting list that extends into summer 1996. While there are several other day care centers in the vicinity, KidStop, because of its physical facilities and excellent staff, remains one of the most sought-after centers in the area.

The child care center fulfills multiple objectives. The transit authority benefits because the center helps to attract new transit users. Approximately 25 percent of the Center’s patrons commute by Metro daily and another 15 percent use the Metro occasionally. The remaining 60 percent work in the Shady Grove area.

The county benefits because each transit trip means one fewer car in the peak period on Rockville Pike, the most congested arterial corridor in lower Montgomery County. But the biggest beneficiaries are the commuters. Instead of having to drive their children to day care centers near their homes and then continue their trips to work by automobile, they now drop off their children at KidStop, park at the station parking lot and take the train to work.

CONCLUSIONS

For parents who rely on mass transit to get to work, dropping their children off at an out-of-the-way child care center and stopping on the way home to pick them up can make commuting seem like a full-time job. Child care is often cited as a major reason that commuters are unable to take transit to work. The KidStop Child Center addresses the livability of the Rockville area by combining two services needed by many families: child care and public transit. This results in a simpler and faster trip. KidStop’s location at the transit station also means that children are never more than a 30-min train ride from the parents’ downtown offices, a consideration that also weighs heavily in parents’ choice of a day-care location.
INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, the impact of post-war suburban growth has wreaked havoc on once thriving downtowns and urban neighborhoods. Downtowns, which only a few decades ago acted as centers of community life, have become empty and devoid of activity as businesses closed or moved to the outskirts of towns and cities. Many inner city neighborhoods have likewise declined, losing local business.

The redevelopment programs of the 1960s and 1970s, in many cases, were the wrong approach, further undermining an urban infrastructure that took decades to develop. As development and investment shifted to suburban areas accessible primarily by the car, public transit lost its ability to provide convenient and low-cost travel. Transit and the renewal of downtowns and neighborhoods are inextricably related.

Overview of Community Strategies

Most successful renewal programs for downtowns and neighborhoods are holistic and go to the heart of the community’s livability goals. These programs typically seek to restructure local economies so that area businesses can compete successfully with suburban chain retail centers and find their own special, profitable niche. This often means developing special strategies for recruiting, leasing, and promoting retail just as the suburban competition does. Public spaces can be upgraded—not just made more attractive but functional and usable for pedestrians, vehicles, and transit riders. Older buildings can be reused creatively. Developments of appropriate scale can create a new focus for activities and be a catalyst for economic revitalization. Often, it is a community’s cultural resources, which remain in the city center, that can act as an important draw. The visual arts, theater, music, museums, and libraries can directly contribute to a city’s economy while enriching residents’ lives and attracting visitors.

Moreover, most success stories have come through intense local community initiatives that have mobilized resources and leveraged all kinds of investments in a step-by-step process to revitalize local businesses, stabilize and enhance neighborhoods, and rebuild a sense of community.

Whether it be a downtown or neighborhood, bringing back the vitality of “Main Street” is often the first step—although in severely distressed neighborhoods, this also means bringing back the neighborhoods themselves. “Main Street” is the business center as well as the emotional heart of most communities. Therefore, focusing revitalization strategies in the

CHAPTER 5

Transit as a Catalyst for Downtown and Neighborhood Renewal

What is it that makes people feel so strongly about [Main] street, and so exhilarated when it may come back to life? To be sure, it has something to do with its historic buildings or attractive public square or its general physical appearance. But Main Street was and is more than just bricks and mortar, more than just another shopping center. It is the traditional center of a community, a center not defined so much geographically or architecturally as it is socially . . . It is . . . a place for activities of all kinds, for all kinds of people.

—Project for Public Spaces, What Do People Do Downtown, 1981. [1]
center can help establish a base for the revitalization of the surrounding community.

Crime, litter, and deteriorated conditions in cities, or the perception of these problems, keep people away. Special strategies for managing public spaces, often with private sector support, can be developed to improve a downtown’s image.

Finally, problems of traffic congestion, parking, pedestrian flow, and efficient mass transit are common concerns most cities share. Communities can work with the city to reduce vehicular traffic (ridesharing programs, reducing parking subsidies, managing parking for short-term retail shoppers, implementing flextime, and encouraging use of public transit).

**Role of Transit**

Much of transit’s impact comes from its drawing pedestrians to an area, which helps enliven adjacent uses and support business. By alleviating traffic pressure on streets, transit can help make an area more attractive and pedestrian friendly—a major goal in most downtown revitalization programs. In many cases illustrated in this report, transit has acted as the primary catalyst for community participation in downtown and neighborhood renewal programs and for the coordination and cooperation among public and private sectors, city agencies, transit authorities, and the community.

Transit service is essential to the functioning of most urban neighborhoods and downtowns. As a result, a variety of specific strategies have been developed to support the livability of downtowns and neighborhoods, including design and planning strategies related to transit facilities as well as special services designed to enhance mobility. (Note: as in the previous chapter, cities and projects in italics are featured in case studies in this report.)

Transit malls, that is, streets transformed to give priority access to buses and enhanced waiting areas for bus patrons, represent the most visible change over the past 20 years in the thinking about how best to integrate transit effectively into a major downtown area and in understanding the inherent problems and opportunities. For example, in Chicago, the transit mall is being removed, while in Portland, Oregon, it continues to be successful and will soon be augmented by a new light rail transit line. *Denver’s Sixteenth Street Mall* is generally regarded as a success, although the streetscape design has not proved as functional as Portland’s. While not technically a transit mall because it has no bus traffic, *Boston’s Downtown Crossing* is of the same generation as most other transit malls and clearly facilitates access to subway stations for thousands of passengers.

One of the most important aspects of transit malls is the significant role played by the transit stop. Transit malls gave designers the opportunity to design shelters and amenities to make bus patrons a part of the life of the downtown. The *Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative* is using donated kiosks and bus shelters from an advertising company to make bus stops centers of community life and focal points for neighborhood commercial district renewal. *Tucson’s Tohono Tadai Transit Center*—although larger in scale—has elaborate amenities for users, including air-cooled benches.

On a large scale, transit rail stations (light rail, subway, and commuter) and bus transfer centers or terminals have also taken on new importance for communities. The case studies of *Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts*, and the *Green Line, Chicago*, illustrate the actual impact of new and renovated subway stations on the development of entire downtown revitalization programs. Other case studies discuss the design and integration of light rail into a downtown (*Pioneer Square, Portland*); the development of a new commuter rail station (*Woodbridge Station, New Jersey*); the creation of new pedestrian space around existing subway stations (*Downtown Crossing, Boston*); and the design of new bus transfer centers (*Tohono Tadai, Tucson* and *Staples Street Station, Corpus Christi*).

Downtown circulators and shuttles are another strategy used to enable shoppers, visitors, and office workers to move more freely about the central business district, thereby contributing to downtown economic vitality and reducing traffic congestion. These circulators and shuttles are often sponsored by local chambers of commerce, downtown business organizations, and...
merchants associations as a promotional program, because experience has shown ridership is generally low. Denver’s Sixteenth Street Mall was the first large-scale demonstration of the use of free, electric bus shuttles, which connect passengers to two bus terminals at either end of the mall. As a transportation corridor, the mall achieves a much better balance between buses and people than if standard diesel buses were used. In Aspen, a downtown shuttle circulates along the main downtown street.

In a number of cities, trolley service—like Tucson’s Old Pueblo Trolley—link redeveloping urban areas with tourist attractions such as sports stadiums, convention halls, restaurant districts, and shopping centers. In Corpus Christi, rubber wheeled-versions of trolleys are used to provide convenient travel around the downtown and to connect to the main bus terminal. These old-fashioned-style trolleys recall downtown historic architecture and often become a tourist attraction in their own right, while allowing cities to avoid building costly transportation systems for short-haul, intracity trips.

On a neighborhood scale, many communities have developed special shuttles, discussed in the case studies of Boulder, Colorado; Aspen, Colorado; and Watts, Los Angeles. These shuttles serve downtowns and neighborhood commercial areas as well as the broader community.

ENDNOTE


EXAMPLE

Transit Malls: Successes and Failures [1]

The mall took the excitement out of State Street.
—Elizabeth Hollander, Chicago’s former planning commissioner.

The buses would line up, one after another, like a herd, with their diesel fumes.
—Adrian Smith, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Since people don’t drive on State, they forget it’s here.
—Carmen Rocha, store sales manager

As Mayor, I have found it difficult to find out whose idea this was in the first place.
—Richard Daley, Mayor of Chicago

—As quoted in “Chicago Gives Pedestrian Mall the Boot” (New York Times, February 1, 1996.)

Minneapolis constructed the first transit mall in the United States in 1967, and it was soon hailed as a national example of urban public space. Considered a bold and innovative move in its day, Nicollet Mall successfully generated almost $50 million in downtown development within 3 years. The mall was unique because it included not just amenities for pedestrians, but a serpentine roadway that allowed city buses to circulate along the street. Nicollet, a popular destination at the time, became a combination bus terminal and shopping street.

Nicollet Mall was copied in many other cities across the United States: Philadelphia, Portland, Oregon, Denver, and Chicago, to name the most well-known. Their construction was encouraged by federal funding from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now the FTA). As with pedestrian malls, the limitations of the approach became more apparent as the years went on. The basic problem was the size and the fumes of buses, which are not generally compatible with pedestrian strolling, sitting, and window shopping. Bus waiting areas become the major amenity focus on a transit mall. As a result, the transit functions of the street seem to dominate at the expense of other activities.

In nearly every city where they have been built, transit malls are being rethought or have been altered from their original concept. In Chicago, a total redesign of the State Street Mall is underway to return it to a mixed-traffic street without trucks. Sidewalks had been widened beyond what was needed and, as a result, were underused. Under the new proposal,
sidewalks will be narrowed, although they will still contain extensive amenities. The idea is that buses mixed with traffic are less dominant than buses alone.

Even Minneapolis has rebuilt the Nicollet Mall, although it has not changed its essential mix of functions. The problem with the mall was partly physical; it was in a state of disrepair as elements gradually wore out. Users in surveys complained about bus fumes and lack of bicycle access. Nicollet was no longer a major shopping street. The development it spurred removed activity on the street, because a second-level skywalk system was developed that essentially elevated retail activity above the street. The system, which does not connect directly to Nicollet Mall, now connects some 35 blocks.

The redesign of Nicollet Mall did not address its functional problems. Although the Nicollet Mall included plans by 1994 for smaller, electric-powered vehicles to reduce bus fumes, bicycle access has not been improved. Plans to connect the mall to the skywalks, which might have improved access, were scrapped. Kate Christianson, a Minneapolis writer on design issues, wrote that while some changes have made the mall “friendlier,” it also “seems spiritless . . . The overall passivity of the redesign is all the more painful because the mall originally swirled in excitement.” [2]

On a positive note for transit malls, Portland, Oregon’s bus mall has successfully integrated transit, automobiles, and pedestrians. Although transit-oriented, the mall has always allowed one lane of vehicle traffic on it. The mall is attractively laid out with very well-designed bus waiting areas and simple street amenities (e.g., benches, information kiosks, and plantings) along it, as well as well-placed public art. The placement and design of amenities is often poorly understood by designers; in the case of Portland, however, amenities are usable and placed according to function. Because of the design of these street amenities, the mix of traffic, and the excellent maintenance and street management program, the Mall is the most successful of all those constructed. (See also Case Study 4-1.)

Learning from the experience in other cities, Rochester, New York, sought to create a mixed-use traffic street, with appropriate priority for buses. Originally conceived as a pure transit mall, the Main Street project was rethought to allow more diverse use and access. The street was reduced from six lanes to four, with the curb lanes given over to buses only. Parking and delivery were removed (the latter remains a problem), while sidewalks were widened to provide more space for pedestrian amenities and bus waiting facilities. While the street is well-used by pedestrians, it must compete with a skywalk system. In addition, retail activity has declined with the closing of a major department store, so it is difficult to assess the impact of the approach taken.

In Sacramento, California, and Memphis, Tennessee, light rail systems have been installed in the center of former pedestrian malls. While this can be seen as an improvement (because light rail, which is not diesel powered, is more pedestrian-friendly than buses), it does not usually operate with great frequency; and the center of the street still seems devoid of activity. Because of the tracks, having appropriately located crossings and well-designed access to light rail stations and platforms for people on wheeled conveyances, such as bicycles and wheelchairs, is very important.

In Portland, Oregon, a light rail transit system has continued to set records in terms of passenger use. This system, separate from Portland’s bus mall but intersecting it, has been very effectively integrated into the downtown area. MAX is a 15-mile route that connects the downtown area to the suburbs, and, once it reaches downtown, becomes a part of the downtown street network. One of the strengths of the system is that the modal mix in which it operates changes according to the block. In general, it runs on mixed-traffic streets, but still discourages a great amount of private vehicle use. Where mixed traffic does occur, space for vehicles is limited, and on certain streets shared space is allocated to pedestrians only. Sidewalks have been widened slightly to accommodate small waiting areas. The trains, while long, are quiet and relatively unobtrusive, but clearly operate in street space rather than a pedestrian mall.

Public spaces downtown, including Pioneer Courthouse Square, are enlivened by the system’s presence, not dominated by it. It is an example in which transit, pedestrian, and vehicle uses are balanced.

ENDNOTES


CASE STUDIES

Case studies illustrate how transit is contributing to the renewal of downtowns and neighborhoods in three cities. While the projects are geographically diverse and involve different of modes of transit, they illustrate the importance of integrating transit facilities into downtowns and neighborhoods so that they can act as true catalysts for neighborhood renewal:
Case Study 5-1: Somerville, MA: Davis Square Transit Station
Subway Extension Spurs Neighborhood Rejuvenation

Case Study 5-2: Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative: Rebuilding Disinvested Neighborhood “Main Streets” from the Bus Stop Up
Case Study 5-3: Chicago, IL: The Green Line Using Transit Stations to Spur Reinvestment in Distressed Inner City Neighborhoods

SUMMARY

Davis Square, a principal commercial center in Somerville, Massachusetts, has experienced a remarkable renaissance with the extension of the Red Line subway from Cambridge in the early 1980s. This extension included construction of a new transit station in the center of the square. The city of Somerville capitalized on development of the new station, from its earliest planning stages, as a catalyst for revitalizing the square by promoting new commercial development and sponsoring other physical improvements, while working to maintain its traditional urban character. These public improvements have also catalyzed private reinvestment in the square’s adjoining residential areas. The success of the redevelopment efforts are largely attributed to close cooperation between the many stakeholders in the process. These stakeholders included the city, local businesspeople and residents, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), and numerous federal and commonwealth agencies.

PLANNING PROCESS

Davis Square, once a thriving commercial center, experienced a gradual decline in the post-World War II era. Between 1970 and 1980, the city of Somerville lost 2,000 jobs and the population dropped from 89,000 to 77,000, a 13 percent decline. Manufacturing, wholesale, and retail businesses left the area. According to a planning study completed in 1980, Davis Square suffered from a lack of competitiveness among merchants, traffic congestion, inadequate parking, and an increasingly deteriorated physical environment.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, plans to expand the highway system in the Boston area met with stiff protest from community groups and local officials opposed to the massive land-takings required for highway construction. At the same time, Boston-area residents realized that public transportation was more practical than the automobile for commuting within Boston and from its outlying areas. Governor Sargent responded to this opposition in 1970, by signing a moratorium on highway construction within Route 128, a highway that encircles Boston, and setting up the Boston Transportation Planning Review to examine transportation plans for the Boston area.

In 1970, the Cambridge City Council urged the MBTA to seriously consider the extension of the Red Line, originally built in 1912, beyond Harvard Square as an alternative to a proposed highway. The route was to run from Harvard Square north through Cambridge to Arlington. However, in 1973, Somerville residents, businesspeople and public officials—realizing the economic benefits that a train and bus station would bring to their community—launched a petition and letter writing campaign to the MBTA requesting that the extension be routed through Davis Square. In addition, Somerville was providing 5 percent of the MBTA’s budget, and without any subway station within its borders, Somerville residents felt that their transit service was unequal to their contribution. In contrast, the town of Arlington, concerned about traffic congestion, opposed the extension of the Red Line into its boundaries and its termination at Arlington Heights. As a result, the Red Line now terminates at Alewife, in North Cambridge.
In 1977, while the Red Line extension was in the planning stage, the Somerville Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council put together the first Davis Square urban design and business study. That same year, the Davis Square Task Force was formed, composed of local business owners, residents and local officials, to act as a citizens’ advisory committee regarding the revitalization plans and to address a major concern that was dividing the community on the type and extent of development. One faction was pushing for a major redevelopment project that would include the creation of an indoor shopping mall, while many local residents favored minimal change to the neighborhood. The OPCD commissioned outside consultants to study potential land use, including office and retail uses, traffic, parking and other issues. Along with input from the Task Force, the studies resulted in the Davis Square Action Plan, adopted in 1982. The primary goal of the Plan was to use the new Red Line station as a cornerstone for redevelopment, strengthening Davis Square as a viable shopping district while preserving the residential character of the neighborhood.

STRATEGY

The city of Somerville and the Davis Square Task Force initiated many projects to accompany the Red Line extension, using the redevelopment, especially of empty parcels, to build the type of community that they had envisioned:

- Streetscape improvements with funds from the Federal Highway Administration’s Urban Systems Program, including street reconstruction, sidewalk widening, new lighting, fences, and planting.
- The renovation of Kenney Park at the corner of Grove Street and Highland Avenue.
- Storefront and facade improvements with a grant from the city’s Community Development Block Grant entitlement. With the grant, the city paid for one-half of the facade work on eligible properties and provided design assistance through the OPCD landmark constitutional decision allowing the removal of all billboards from Davis Square, initially, and then from the city of Boston as a whole. In 1995, a local bank established its own Storefront Improvement Program, available to Davis Square businesses.
- Designation of Davis Square as a commercial area revitalization district (CARD), which allowed major commercial developments to use Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) financing through the Massachusetts Industrial Finance Administration (MIFA). With IRB financing, the owners of the Errico building were able to renovate 6,000 sq ft of retail and office space and add 12,000 sq ft of new space.
- The construction of additional public parking, in small lots, throughout the Davis Square area.
- The construction of the Ciampa Manor Elderly Housing development on College Avenue. (Local residents favored residential over commercial development at this prime site, a gateway to Davis Square.)
- Planning and site development for the Buena Vista project, a $10 million, 100,000-sq-ft office and retail complex, which includes a public parking structure. An Urban Development Action Grant provided $1.7 million toward the initial development costs. This project was completed in 1991.

Private development efforts included the renovation of former manufacturing buildings and department stores in the Davis Square area to provide additional office and retail space. A locally owned, community-oriented bank was encouraged to construct a new building in the area and the old telephone building was converted into a drug and convenience store.

A bicycle path connects Davis Square to the towns of Arlington and Lexington, and bus stops, used by the MBTA and the Tufts University van service, connect local residents to the subway line. The subway station is also within walking distance of the large Alewife station parking garage. The streetscape improvements surrounding the Davis Square Station were designed to enhance the pedestrian access to the station and

Figure 5-4. Case Study 5-1. This plan of Davis Square shows the integration of the subway stations into the CBD, as well as the pedestrian improvements connecting the transit stations to the adjacent residential and commercial districts. (Credit: Carol R. Johnson Associates, Inc.)
local businesses, and to slow traffic, while giving the commercial area a more coherent appearance.

The MBTA developed the plaza linking the two station entrance buildings, built on an old railroad right of way, and continued a greenway along the right of way as far as Alewife. The plaza is designed to serve as the center of Davis Square, providing a gathering place and a center for activities and outdoor entertainment. The MBTA’s Red Line extension qualified it to receive state percent-for-art funds. One percent of the cost of constructing the new headhouses was used to commission the figurative sculptures, some representing local citizens, that adorn the plaza. In addition, tiles designed by neighborhood children were installed in the station and a large sculpture was commissioned to hang over the tracks. The public art projects fit in with the city’s goal of creating a community place; a place where residents could feel a sense of ownership.

At Mayor Capuano’s recommendation in 1995, the city’s Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), with input from the Task Force, engaged a consultant to improve Davis Square Plaza/Statue Park and make it more attractive as a gathering place. The city will provide new and upgraded amenities for the plaza, such as improved lighting, and new furniture, landscaping and flag poles, and the MBTA will replace the station’s long skylight. The existing barrel-vaulted, plexiglass skylight extending across the plaza, obscures the view of adjacent stores and is out of scale with the neighboring buildings. A new, lower skylight of more durable materials is being planned to illuminate the station, while serving as a performance stage on the plaza level.

City agencies are also working with the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) to add a second bicycle path through the square, with new bike racks near the station, and to improve bike connections to neighboring communities. Other community groups such as the Somerville Bicycle Committee and the Friends of the Bikeway are involved in the process. In addition, a new substation for the city’s community policing program, which includes police on bicycles, is being created within one of the station buildings. The continuing success of this project can be attributed both to the interagency cooperation between the MBTA, Mass Highway, and the city of Somerville and to the ongoing involvement of the Davis Square Task Force and other community groups.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

During the planning stages, the resident members of the Davis Square Task Force struggled to keep Davis Square from becoming overdeveloped. According to Lee Auspitz, a long-time member of the task force, local residents (who at the time wielded more power than the business interests on the task force) had at first opposed the subway extension, fearing that it would “ruin the neighborhood.” Preserving a stable, residential environment was their primary goal and they fought to prevent Davis Square from becoming just another regional shopping mall. If they had to have a subway then “the subway was to be there for the community, not the community for the subway.”

While local businesses pushed for an increase in parking, residents thought more parking would lead to the disintegration of the urban fabric of the neighborhood. “Park and Ride” and even “kiss and ride” drop-offs were discouraged. As a result, no facilities for commuter parking are provided today in Davis Square. The task force fought long and hard to keep Davis Square pedestrian-oriented, even helping to defeat a mayor who favored large-scale commercial redevelopment of the area and the construction of large parking structures.

The task force also encouraged the MBTA to minimize its intervention in the neighborhood; while the MBTA had initially planned to demolish 64 houses and businesses, it ultimately removed only 4 houses. The Task Force and local citizens, through various tactics, were able to convince the MBTA to accommodate the needs of the community in the design and planning of the station and throughout the long and disruptive construction phase. Goody Clancy’s project architect was a resident of Davis Square himself and worked closely with local citizens to integrate the station buildings into the existing fabric with as little disruption as possible.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The Davis Square MBTA Station and associated improvements have significantly transformed Davis Square. The new brick and granite paving, upgraded lighting, and facade improvements have given the plaza and surrounding streets a fresh, well-maintained appearance. The plaza is replete with such amenities as public art, seating, a new tree canopy, and granite bollards to prevent vehicular access and to delineate the plaza’s edges. The plaza is principally used as a central square by residents who sit, watch, rest from shopping or exercise, or wait for the next bus. The plaza also functions as a meeting place and as a “front yard” for adjoining businesses. Annual community events such as ArtBeat, sponsored by the Somerville Arts Council, are staged there. Periodically, the plaza is used for public speaking.

Today, Davis Square flourishes and has recently experienced an influx of new restaurants, theaters, and entertainment-related businesses. The Somerville
Theater, a historic landmark in the square, is capitalizing on the square’s improvements as well as its proximity to transit. Its monthly programs, which include live as well as film performances, attract a regional audience and enjoy renewed patronage. Its restoration and reconstruction, scheduled for 1996, reflects favorably on the square’s recent improvements.

Davis Square is also host to new commercial office space. Since 1988, two substantial office buildings totaling approximately 170,000 sq ft have been completed and are at 100 percent occupancy. Building tenants include a major regional community health care provider, a medium-sized architectural firm, and headquarters for a local bank. Also, the square hosts a number of start-up businesses.

Taken together, these activities add vitality to the square, both during and after traditional business hours. Undoubtedly, the transit improvements have contributed significantly to the square’s overall health. The transit station has made it possible for people to reach the square without bringing cars into the densely settled area. Rent control was abolished recently in the neighboring communities of Cambridge, Boston, and Brookline, and the affordable housing available in Somerville, combined with access to its good public transit, has made it an attractive place for people to live. Other factors that increased the square’s attractiveness include changes in living preferences and increased private transportation costs, which bolster support for public transit use.

The Red Line Extension, Land Use Study, prepared in 1988 by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, analyzed the changes in land use and commercial and residential development 5 years after the completion of the extension. The report states, “Davis Square appears to have passed the turning point on its way to recovery. Businesses in the square, old and new alike, are generally thriving and public confidence is high. The Red Line clearly . . . helped to stimulate this revitalization, but it was clearly accomplished only by a cooperative effort of the municipality, local merchants, and the residents of Davis Square.” [1] Specifically, the report states that businesses near the station show increased sales and office and retail uses rose by 10 percent.

CONCLUSIONS

Davis Square has been revitalized and is a thriving downtown area, not just because of the transit investment and improved access, but because of the energy and commitment of the city, businesses, the MBTA, and residents. Working together, the transit station served as a catalyst for a range of cooperative programs that have breathed new life into the district and made the city of Somerville more livable. The tremendous community effort to preserve the neighborhood’s character paid off: Davis Square is remarkable in its coherence and urban texture. As the residents had hoped, the area still has the narrow streets, the small scale and the densely built fabric that made it unique and that now contribute to its success.

SOURCE


ENDNOTE


Case Study 5-2
Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative: Rebuilding Disinvested Neighborhood “Main Streets” from the Bus Stop Up

LANI is a vision that touches everyone who encounters it. It is like a pallette of paints allowing each neighborhood to design its colors, textures, and uses. Government is there to provide the paint, but only the community can compose the picture.

—Deputy Mayor Rae James

My dream for LANI is that it becomes a national model for revitalizing and sustaining neighborhoods through community empowerment.

—Richard J. Riordan, Mayor of Los Angeles

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI), sponsored by Mayor Richard Riordan, is undertaking a 30-month demonstration project that seeks to provide an economic stimulus to eight transit-dependent neighborhoods through community planned transportation improvements, housing, and commercial rehabilitation, and development. Incorporated in 1994, LANI has established community organizations in each neighborhood and provided technical support, training, and funding for demonstration projects around transit facilities.

In December 1994, local organizations completed work plans, describing programs and projects to be
implemented. In 1995, they hired design consultants and began construction of the initial demonstration projects. Projects vary greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood, but all share a common focus on bus stops as centers of community life. In addition, LANI has encouraged other ongoing efforts in neighborhoods and has served as a catalyst for community participation and action. At the end of the 2-year demonstration period, local organizations will have the capacity to become permanent vehicles for community revitalization.

**PLANNING PROCESS**

LANI has its roots in the Los Angeles riots of April 1992, when it was evident that rioters, in the words of the original LANI proposal, “had no feeling of ownership or caring about what happened to their neighborhoods. Residents felt disconnected, and in many cases they were.”

In addition to a lack of connection between people and their neighborhoods, the neighborhood main streets—even in stable, middle-class neighborhoods—looked abandoned. Transit service was inadequate for low-income areas in which more than 20 percent of households in auto-dependent Los Angeles have no car. Moreover, transit stops are virtually invisible. They are situated on narrow sidewalks with few amenities, just inches away from speeding traffic. The stops are, as one resident put it, “humiliating places to wait.”

Rather than simply take a city initiated “triage” approach to neighborhood renewal, the Mayor’s Office of the City of Los Angeles developed the concept for LANI, whereby with a minimum of financial support coupled with dedicated technical assistance, neighborhoods would be empowered to address their own economic opportunities. Moreover, it was important not merely to plan communities, but actually to implement projects that establish linkages between other programs in communities and build in the self-reliance necessary to continue these efforts.

After encouragement from the United States Secretary of Transportation, the Mayor’s Office prepared a proposal in January of 1994, which identified the overall scope of LANI and the eight neighborhoods to be included. City council members were solicited to nominate neighborhoods in their districts, and city staff and planning consultants evaluated projects to identify those with the greatest chance for success. Each of the project sites selected was situated along a significant bus or rail corridor (four adjacent to Metrorail light rail stations) with a substantial transit-dependent population and, while several of the area main streets were underused, there was a demand for new affordable housing and neighborhood retail. Moreover, the projects all had existing community organizations and some level of planning work already in place; these were considered to be the main ingredients for short-term success. The city council representative for the district had to endorse LANI, identify the appropriate community groups, and provide continued leadership and cooperation with that local group.

Within 6 months of its conception, LANI became a reality. A board of directors with diverse backgrounds in real estate development, transportation, urban planning, finance, labor law, communications, and community organization was established and an executive director hired. Funding commitments were obtained from the FTA and local public and private sources. Eight “Recognized Community Organizations” (RCOs) were set up, composed of community members representing businesses, commercial property owners, residents, and institutions.

In another 6 months, each of the eight RCOs had completed a project work plan that defined specific physical improvements, such as transit and pedestrian amenities, to be implemented in 1995. They also developed longer-term programs to revitalize the neighborhood main streets, create jobs, and assist youth. The work plans identified goals and prioritized needs determined by community meetings, outreach, and previous planning work. Organization and decision-making structures were developed and the scope of work for designers of the initial projects outlined.

Throughout 1995, efforts focused on implementation: hiring consultants, developing specific plans, reviewing plans and proposals with city agencies for approval, bidding, and beginning construction. Meanwhile, RCOs pursued other nonconstruction activities, like holding special events and installing banners that gave tangible evidence of the LANI project.

**STRATEGY**

The LANI strategy has several important, interconnecting components:

- **Community Participation and Ownership.** LANI is based on the substantial involvement of local residents, businesses, and property owners. The RCOs have substantial independence and are responsible for implementation of their own projects and programs, with financial support and guidance from the LANI board. Methods of participation have varied by project, but include diverse representation on the RCO Board, community workshops, and outreach to existing institutions and organizations.
Leveraging Public and Private Resources. LANI seeks to leverage its own limited resources with other local, state, and federal programs, both public and private. This strategy is critical in concentrating rather than diffusing scarce financial resources. LANI has been successful in obtaining in-kind donations as well. For example, bus shelters and information kiosks for all the neighborhoods were provided by Gannett Outdoor. This private company donated $250,000 and agreed to maintain the shelters and kiosks for 3 years.

One advantage of pursuing eight projects concurrently is that LANI is able to help streamline approval processes through various city agencies. For instance, the Los Angeles city council contributed to the LANI program by waiving more than $150,000 in permit fees.

Short-Term Catalytic Projects. Critical to the success of LANI is that it did not merely plan for long-term visions, but produced concrete results during the first year of the program. Each community has determined for itself which of the best first projects will lead to other projects and programs in the future. Projects such as the installation of new bus stops and information kiosks help make the commercial streets more attractive and build a sense of cooperation within the neighborhoods. These are the short-term efforts underway in the eight neighborhoods:

- Tree plantings using volunteers from a conservation organization, with refreshments provided by local businesses.
- New historic light fixtures, installed on a trial basis.
- A training program for youth in gardening and landscape maintenance, operated by a local senior center.
- Installation of banners with a special banner-raising ceremony.
- A jazz festival to celebrate the importance of jazz in the African American community.
- Development of an “art park” next to a bus stop, with trees, sculpture displays, and a community mural.
- A community garden on a vacant lot run by at-risk youth, an important first step to creating a farmer’s market where the community can buy produce and at-risk youth can earn employment.

Building Long-Term Local Capacity. LANI’s strategy is to produce self-reliant programs that have the capacity—in terms of organization, finance, leadership and technical skills—to carry on the work in the future. It is anticipated that future programs will be sustained through special neighborhoods improvement districts, which can finance streetscape improvements, public space management activities, and business development efforts. Community development corporations can also help sustain programs by supporting affordable housing. It is hoped that local business associations will be developed as well.

FUNDING

The core of the funding for the Los Angeles LANI comes from the FTA Livable Communities program, which provides $250,000 in support to each neighborhood through the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Contributions from the FTA/MTA have totaled $2.3 million. MTA also provides free office space overhead for LANI.

Meanwhile, the city of Los Angeles has contributed $800,000. This includes the $115,000 that the city council approved for the program start-up and administra-
tive expenses. Since the initial contribution, the majority of the city’s money has gone directly to the eight neighborhoods where LANI operates. (The county of Los Angeles helped fund LANI as well, $200,000 was approved by the state ballot for county transit stores and 138 transit shelters.)

Local neighborhoods have also been successful in obtaining donations, such as meeting refreshments, flyer printings, and meeting spaces. Local businesses have donated trees and private companies have donated legal, accounting, and design services. Of course, much of the implementation of projects relies on community volunteers.

For example, Leimert Park, one LANI neighborhood, has leveraged more than $1 million in local government money to fund various aspects of its demonstration project; $600,000 was contributed by the City Department of Parks and Recreation to upgrade the local park; $285,000 was donated by the Community Redevelopment Authority to pay for needed street work, including adding decorative paving and bump outs; and $400,000 was granted by the local city council office for re-stripping and improving lighting in parking lots and adding landscaping. In addition, a mixed-use retail/office development project has been attracted to the area and has purchased land.

As noted above, each neighborhood group is preparing a plan for sustaining the program. LANI will also continue to seek federal, state, and local support for implementation of demonstration projects.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

LANI implemented a process to overcome obstacles before they arose. In May 1995, LANI arranged a 2-day forum during which each of the eight design engineers presented their plans to a panel composed of representatives from the City Department of Transportation, MTA, and the Departments of Public Works, Safety, Streets and Lighting, and others. This streamlined the planning process because each neighborhood did not have to seek separate approvals from each agency. During the two days of deliberation, concessions were made and compromises reached. For example, the NOHO (North Hollywood) community agreed to the widening of Magnolia Street as a trade-off for streetscaping and amenities.

The bureaucratic hurdles involved in leveraging funding tied to other city initiatives have been difficult to overcome, however. Currently, LANI has a second round of FTA funding and an ISTEA grant is still pending.

Local obstacles exist in each of the project areas as well. For example, the Highland Park site is within the overlay of a historic district that prohibited the use of angle parking. Also, some design engineers have developed plans that are simply not feasible to build. People within the organizations themselves have been working hard, however, to overcome these obstacles as well as to gain consensus among divergent groups so that they can move forward with implementation.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

So far, a number of project areas have been successful in attracting additional funding for improvements. These design and planning efforts have also served to boost efforts to organize merchants into local merchants associations. In Leimert Park, community development block grant funds will be used to hire a consultant to develop a nonprofit organization to manage and administer the new merchant’s association and to coordinate other efforts aimed at attracting further funding.

In addition, many communities have gone a step further in their design process and have created plans for the next stage of development, so that when funds are identified, communities have plans ready for implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

Although still in its early stages, LANI has combined many key ingredients: community involvement, a focus on creating places along corridors that are unappealing to pedestrians, and short-term, visible projects, all focused on transit. In the next year, the true test will be weighing the impact of the first phase of plans and seeing how neighborhoods take the next step toward making their communities more livable and transit-friendly.

Case Study 5-3
Chicago, IL: The Green Line
Using Transit Stations to Spur Reinvestment in Distressed Inner City Neighborhoods

We started with a pie in the sky notion and now there is a $300 million investment . . .

—Doug Farr, Project Architect

The Green Line took neighborhoods and businesses, inner city and suburban residents, and city government and transit operators and made them realize that they had something in common.

—Jackie Leavy, Executive Director, Neighborhood Capital Budget Group
We have given a terrific shot in the arm to the City and communities, but it will be a long time before the CTA reaps its rewards with increased ridership.

—Ken Domier, CTA Service Planning.

All that is happening in the area are dividends from investments that people have been making for a long time. The Green Line has created the synergy which is pulling it all together.

—Ken Govas, Industrial Council of Northwest Chicago

SUMMARY

One month after the Green Line was actually created by re-routing and re-connecting several legs of CTA’s rapid transit system into a new configuration, newly installed President Robert Belcaster of the CTA announced that he was considering permanently closing the line, replacing it with express bus service, and redirecting passengers to two parallel commuter train lines. The community, seeing this as yet another potential disinvestment in already distressed neighborhoods, rallied forces and organized into a broad-based community coalition. This coalition developed the concept of using transit to create a series of redevelopment projects within easy walking distance of stations on the line. The idea was not just to reopen transit service, but to use the transit infrastructure as a community asset to create employment opportunities in neighborhoods where unemployment was among the highest in the city and to attract new residents, developing the vast tracks of open, vacant land into vital and safe new neighborhoods.

The campaign to save the Green Line was successful. The line was rebuilt during a 2-year, $323 million rehabilitation project and is slated to resume operations in March or April 1996. Just as important, the citizens’ campaign to save the Green Line has subsequently led to a renaissance of interest in the neighborhoods, which have also been designated a federal empowerment zone. While efforts are only starting, there is new interest and commitment to rebuilding neighborhoods from the bottom up—an investment that would not be taking place with such vigor and excitement had the Green Line not been saved.

PLANNING PROCESS

When the Green Line was constructed in the 1890s, it ran through the center of a vital urban district—with both industrial and residential neighborhoods—and served as an important link to downtown Chicago. However, the area declined after World War II in a classic pattern of flight to the suburbs, influx of poor minorities seeking housing, and 1950s style urban renewal. The riots in 1968 sent the district into a downward spiral, decreasing the number of people and housing units in the area by 50 percent and more by the 1990s.

As the neighborhood declined, so did transit service. Twelve stations were closed until there were few access points for the community. Between the mid-1970s and 1993 there was a 60 percent decline in ridership (from 72,000 in 1976 to about 27,000 weekday riders in 1994) with the elevated structure and stations in dire need of repair. Travel time increased almost 100 percent as trains slowed on the deteriorated tracks.

The planning process for saving the Green Line began with the formation of the Lake Street El Coalition a community network representing business and residents, as well as citizen action groups. Spearheaded by the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group (NCBG), the coalition included West Side and South Side residents and communities, industry and business leaders and leaders of suburban Oak Park, with the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) providing technical assistance. These community groups collected nearly 20,000 petition signatures and lobbied elected officials. NCBG, a city-wide organization dedicated to increasing public investment in neighborhoods, staffed the coalition.

Recognizing the coalition’s goal of using the Green Line as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization, the CNT encouraged the coalition to work with the architectural firm of Doug Farr and Associates to create a prototype plan for one station. The Pulaski stop on the west leg of the Green Line was selected to serve as an example of a strategy to be replicated all along the transit corridor because an active local development corporation existed to help drive the process. Farr and Associates working with CNT staff developed a “Sustainable Kit of Parts” through a series of six com-
munity meetings facilitated by NCBG. Community members identified specific local assets in their neighborhood (libraries, housing, shops and parks) and how these elements could be improved. Over the six meetings, a plan emerged for the neighborhood that reflected the concerns identified at the meeting. The plan included a new transit station flanked by a commercial strip with retail services; a 24-hour drug store; intensified housing development on vacant land; a day care center; and special programs to improve security and retain industry.

In July 1993, the Green Line Coalition and NCBG held a press conference to unveil the “Community Green Line Initiative” to demonstrate the economic potential of communities all along the Green Line and the value of rebuilding the transit corridor. This initiative provided a model for determining what the air quality benefits of transit-oriented development would be for the communities adjacent to the Lake/Pulaski and Washington Park Green Line stations.

One month later, in August 1993, the CTA announced that the line would be reconstructed at a cost then estimated at $300 million. The CTA did not raise any new grants for this program, but reallocated capital improvement moneys from other projects. Practical considerations played a role as well, as the CTA might have had to repay the federal government almost as much money if it had closed the line before the expiration of the 40-year time limit, after receiving federal grants for infrastructure repairs. In addition, the CTA is required to reduce bus emissions to meet federal Clean Air Act requirements.

In December 1994, there was another momentous announcement: the CTA Green Line would be the spine of a new federal empowerment zone (EZ) for Chicago, one of six in the nation. The inclusion of the Green Line corridor in the designation was not a coincidence but was a direct reflection of the citizen activity in the area, plus the fact that the Green Line itself provided a strong geographic identity for the zone and that all the census tracts in the transit corridor met the federal poverty guidelines for EZ program eligibility. The federal EZ program will provide $100 million in social service block grants in addition to tax incentives to encourage investment and job creation in the area. The state and city have added to this financial commitment, and the private sector has committed $2 billion in investment.

As the Green Line reconstruction began, planning work continued in the neighborhoods. The NCBG conducted a year-long job planning effort for four additional neighborhoods (other than the Pulaski station area) and published “Putting Neighborhoods on the Right Track” in January 1995. In addition, the city of Chicago and the CTA asked the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a nonprofit education and research organization that deals with land use development, to assemble a panel of experts to assess the market for a mix of uses around each station, develop underlying planning and design considerations, and identify the role of the city and the CTA in implementing the vision. The panel convened for one week in June 1995 and focused on two neighborhoods as examples. One of these stations, California/Lake Station, is presented below as a typical strategy that other stations will follow.

**STRATEGY**

The principal strategy of the program, and certainly the key goal of the CTA, is to reopen the transit line, provide access, and build new ridership although the transit agency expects that it will take years before any real gain in ridership can be measured. The community is leveraging this project to achieve many livability goals by involving and empowering the community to attract business and housing investment that serves current community residents. While each neighborhood along the line has its own particular

![Figure 5-6. Case Study 5-3. Proposed design concepts for the renovated California/Lake Station and station area plan. (Credit: Urban Land Institute)
problems and objectives, the goals presented in the initial plans for the Pulaski Station give some idea of the range of livability issues the communities hope can be addressed by this transit project:

- Improve public safety;
- Increase pedestrian access to transit and community services;
- Rebuild neighborhood density through infill and new housing;
- Increase jobs and employment for community residents;
- Rebuild the neighborhood economy via retail and commercial revitalization;
- Revitalize open space; and
- Expand neighborhood capacity to implement the project in partnership with the CTA, city, and local organizations.

The result of all this activity along the Green Line is that many groups need to take responsibility for implementation. The CTA views its role as opening the line and the stations in 1996. It is taking an active role in station development at two larger stations that are being planned as retail/transit centers or “super stations,” and where they may also own more land. For the rest of the line, the CTA’s position is that community development groups, the city, and the private sector must take the lead, although the CTA is available to provide guidance and to conduct such activities as training workshops for community people. For example, the CTA has funded the African American Leadership Program to provide training on the development process. Both NCBG and CNT have continued to provide community-based organizations with planning assistance. The city of Chicago has been funded to carry out a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Demonstration Project on the Green Line, and Chicago’s Regional Transportation Authority has formed a transit-oriented development clearinghouse as well as funding roundtable discussions on these topics.

One example of a local project is presented below.

**Example Strategy: The California/Lake Station**

The California/Lake Station was one of two stations investigated in depth by the ULI panel and is further along in implementation than most of the other projects because there had already been several revitalization programs in place in the area. This station is an area that is both industrial and residential. The Kinzie Industrial Corridor is a 675-acre industrial district that abuts the station, with more than 13,000 workers (3,000 of whom are within ½ mi of the station).

**Transit Service.** The ULI panel suggested that the CTA establish short distances between stations on the Green Line, so as to provide complementary service without competing with the parallel Blue Line, which offers express service. Competing bus service could also be eliminated. Stations located roughly ½-mi apart reinforce transit-oriented development potentials and emphasize the community investment goals of the Green Line project.

**Developing Communities.** Because population has been declining and there is a vast amount of open land, the environment along the Green Line looks devastated. The troubled Henry Horner Homes Chicago Housing Authority public housing project discourages new residential development. Until the Green Line project, however, residents and industrial advocates did not work closely together. This transit program has united the two in pursuing the revitalization of the neighborhood.

Because the aggregate buying power of the neighborhood is currently so low, the ULI panel recommended that the neighborhoods focus on building owner-occupied homes (single- and two-family houses as well as townhouse units) and increasing residential density targeted to mixed-income groups. Neighborhood convenience stores and other commercial development around the station should follow once population and income are increased.

There are already projects in the works. The city of Chicago plans to demolish or radically reconfigure the Henry Horner Homes. About 40 privately built, single-family infill homes are under construction and another 50 are planned under a city-sponsored program, “New Homes for Chicago,” which reduces the purchase price of houses by providing low-cost land. The industrial district is one of the city’s “Model Industrial Corridors,” a program seeking to expand existing and recruit new industrial uses in the area. The Kinzie Industrial Development Corporation, which runs the oldest and largest “business incubator” in the country, will be greatly enhanced by the recent EZ designation, and its substantial tax incentives for business investment and expansion.

The ULI panel also recommended establishing special overlay zones to provide guidelines for the design of new development and streetscape improvements, which are also needed to reinforce neighborhood development goals and to upgrade the image of the area. As a small first step, banners announcing the EZ now line neighborhood streets.

**Station Area.** The ULI panel recommended creating a small “transit plaza” adjacent to the station lined with small retail establishments as they become feasible. Unfortunately, the CTA’s design for the new sta-
tion is not oriented in the right direction (because the CTA does not own the land ideal for the plaza); the station itself was criticized for its mundane appearance. The panel suggested a new station with a plaza and civic identity. “The station should celebrate the neighborhood. Perhaps it should honor . . . a neighborhood pastor . . . A standout station and station area plaza will encourage pedestrian traffic, one of the key elements of a transit-oriented development.” [1] Unfortunately, this level of community input appears to have come too late in the process, and it is unlikely that such a station will be built.

Transit service, new development, and improved station areas are being addressed in other areas as well. However, the level of promise and commitment varies greatly, usually dependent on the extent of local initiative.

FUNDING

Funding for the initial pilot planning work to save the Green Line was done by nonprofit organizations through their general support funds, although some additional foundation grants were received by the CNT. Additional planning funds were obtained through federal ISTEA funds, with matching funds from the CTA and the city of Chicago community development block grants, but these have not yet been spent.

The Community Green Line Initiative’s model for determining air quality benefit was used by the CTA to qualify for $10.5 million in federal CMAQ funds to build and renovate the Lake Pulaski and Washington Park transit stations. The model enabled the city to prove that each of these two facilities would decrease the number of automobile trips in their respective areas by 10 percent.

Funding for the reconstruction of the Green Line and stations totaling now about $350 million was provided by the CTA through its capital budget. The EZ is a project of the federal government and includes extensive investments, as described above.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The obstacles to this project have been and remain considerable. Initially, the CTA was seen as an obstacle and became the object of an intense political campaign. Jackie Leavy, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group, wrote in an op-ed piece in The Chicago Tribune, “We collected tens of thousands of petition signatures, held scores of community meetings and press conferences, analyzed the CTA and the city’s capital budgets, pored over RTA documents, took CTA President Robert Belcaster on a train ride and persuaded three powerful Illinois congress people to join him. Throughout the campaign, we involved local and state legislators and neighborhood manufacturers, and united city residents with suburban neighbors . . . In April, 1993, on the congressional tour of the Green Line that we organized, CTA said it had no money for the line. Four months later, we won.” [2]

The Coalition for the project also faced financial problems in terms of supporting planning activities for the project. However, they were successful in obtaining ISTEA (CMAQ) funds and FTA Livable Communities Initiatives for one station with the city of Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development acting as sponsor. Thus, the broad-based approach ultimately helped lead to more funding for the project.

Now the obstacles are more practical: how to implement this ambitious, costly project, which will take years. The ULI panel focused on this problem and made seven basic recommendations:

1. Public sector subsidies must leverage private, market-driven investments.
2. Public sector resources must be made early and targeted to produce visible results—not spread evenly over the entire line.
3. Master plans for each project must be developed and adopted.
4. The operation of the Green Line should emphasize short- and middle-haul trips and not compete with the Blue and Red Line longer haul services. Local competing bus service should be dropped. The whole line should be renamed to give it a new image.
5. Station designs should be modified so they support local economic development goals.
6. Transit should see itself as a tool in the revitalization process.
7. Successful station revitalization will be driven by increasing the number of people who live in the area, not by commercial development alone.

One obstacle has arisen as a result of the project’s success in changing the perception of the area: vacant land that has been long dormant is now being purchased and held for speculative reasons and owners of land slated for inclusion in these development projects have either refused to sell or demanded many times the fair market value for the land. To put an end to the delays caused by property owners—at the Lake/Pulaski site in particular—the city stepped in and designated the site as a “redevelopment area,” which enabled it to take control of the property through “eminent domain.”
The CTA was criticized in the ULI report, which stated that “the perception, if not the reality, seems to be that the decisions about station closings and improvements have been unilateral, with little notice given to those affected by the decisions.” [3] Moreover, ULI recommended that “the CTA has a responsibility to be an active partner with DPD (City Department of Planning and Development) in incorporating transit service in a coordinated planning approach . . . The panel believes there presently are degrees of fragmentation in the development decision process that occasionally leave the community behind; this situation should be changed through the establishment of an inclusive planning process that serves as a basis for resource allocation, priorities, and ultimate investment decisions.” [4]

According to David Chandler, of the CNT, the CTA has made progress in developing a more inclusive public participation process and in understanding its role in the economic development of the neighborhoods it serves; these changes in the organization’s “culture” have permeated the hierarchy of the CTA.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

The most visible impact of this program—the reopening of the Green Line—occurred in May 1996. (CTA President Robert Belcaster resigned 2 days before the line reopened, citing reasons unrelated to his tenure as president.) The impact of the Green Line has gone beyond the physical reconstruction of the transit line to include a reassessment of the future of the neighborhood itself.

The tangible results today include a massive infusion of funds and programs, mainly through the federal EZ, which grew directly out of the movement to save the transit line. Another visible result is the activity, commitment, and new resolve of many existing and recently formed community organizations and business groups, working with the city. The Green Line seems to be providing a focus for joint action and cooperation that has, in many respects, left the transit agency itself in almost a secondary role. Oddly enough, people interviewed for this study commented that had the CTA not considered closing the line, very little of what has happened over the past 2 years could or would have taken place. As is so often the case, a crisis mobilizes the community into realizing that they must take the future of their community into their own hands.

Currently, the CNT is working with several community development corporations to develop comprehensive and feasible development plans for a two-block area around the Washington Park and Lake/Pulaski stations. In addition, the NCBG, CNT, and several West Garfield Park community organizations (Bethel New Life, most notably) have formed a joint venture to implement the plan for their area using the Lake/Pulaski station as a commercial anchor for the development. This joint venture also is assembling land for commercial and housing developments and is constructing housing units on an incremental basis.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The “coalition” for the Green Line is not a monolithic entity. It is diverse geographically as well as in terms of business and residents. Its success will depend on the energy of local organizations to maintain the momentum and to attract resources from the city and others to solve its own problems. Still, people remark that, just a few years ago, organizations that were active tended to work in isolation. Now, there is a more holistic approach to addressing the livability needs of this very needy district. The Green Line project is a model for combining community development and transit-oriented development strategies to achieve revitalization goals where the key to success is the improvement of public transit access.

**SOURCES**


Center for Neighborhood Technology, *Opportunities in Neighborhood Technology: Community Green Line Initiative* (no date).

**ENDNOTES**

2. *Chicago Tribune* (February 6, 1994).
INTRODUCTION

Jobs are a prime livability issue, evidenced by their prominent ranking in most livability surveys and by the fact that employment was mentioned by participants at almost every focus group session. While individuals are concerned with finding stable employment at fair wages and municipalities with keeping employers from moving and closing plants and offices, finding opportunities for inner city, lower-skilled and minority workers is especially critical. Often the opportunities in metropolitan regions are in the suburbs, many of which are experiencing unprecedented growth, but one needs a car to take full advantage of them.

There is also growing awareness that small businesses are responsible for most job growth in this country and that communities can achieve substantial economic growth by nurturing local entrepreneurs, that is, people who produce and/or sell needed products and services on a small scale. Although local entrepreneurs start small, with the proper incentives, work environment, and management, they can grow to become major contributors to a community’s economic development.

Overview of Community Strategies

More and more, communities are developing programs to support and encourage the development and expansion of small local businesses, ranging from small manufacturing operations to high-tech firms. Local governments, economic development organizations, and national leaders alike have developed innovative strategies to search for entrepreneurs and to provide them with the support they need to get started, such as subsidizing work space, offering technical assistance and business training, and relaxing ordinances that ban certain types of enterprises, such as open-air selling. Often assistance is provided in a specific facility, such as a vacant factory building, where so-called “business incubators” offer newly formed businesses or retailers space in designated facilities where they can receive on-site technical assistance, favorable financing and management support services that they otherwise could not afford. These facilities frequently offer job-training programs as well.

In many inner cities, these programs are initiated or augmented by the establishment and designation of state and federal government “enterprise community” and “empowerment zones,” which...
strive to address a broad range of community needs—jobs, safety, affordable housing, schools, transportation—through community-based, comprehensive, strategic planning. Part of the package includes technical planning and design assistance to communities, the provision of tax and other financial incentives to encourage businesses to relocate to these needy areas, funding to increase public transit service and access to communities, and funding to implement these strategic plans.

Local private-public partnerships also use many creative financial strategies to assist promising businesses that may not yet be able to obtain conventional financing or to make it attractive for an established business to locate in a specific area. Many also sponsor a wide variety of job-training programs.

Strategies for building local economies also include supporting retail businesses in neighborhood and downtown commercial districts. Public-private partnerships and downtown associations have many types of programs to assist businesses with financing, design, merchandising and promotion. The concept of “retail management” applies techniques developed at suburban malls to strengthen downtown business activities, such as creating merchants’ and property owners’ associations, and establishing master lease agreements to coordinate leasing, store hours, merchandising practices, recruitment, and expansion.

At the smallest scale of retail enterprise, there has also been a resurgence in vendors who operate independently or in public markets. Public and open-air farm and craft markets, for example, provide affordable space and on-site management assistance for producers of local food products and non-food items, while stimulating local community development. PPS’s recent book, Public Markets and Community Revitalization, documents the variety of opportunities for and impacts of markets. [1]

**Role of Transit**

Transit facilities attract people every day, and no one should underestimate the value of foot traffic for businesses. Transit brings customers to support and promote local businesses of all sizes. Moreover, transit supports business development by providing access for employees, especially transit dependent populations who can take advantage of job-training and educational opportunities if they are made accessible.

By taking advantage of foot traffic, transit facilities can become mixed-use developments, which provide a variety of retail and shopping opportunities. The larger transit facilities, like Washington and Chicago’s Union Station, and Boston South Station, attract tens of thousands of people annually—many of whom come to dine and shop and do not even take the train. In Chicago, most of the food businesses are locally owned and operated. The design and merchandising standards are state-of-the-art and an overall appearance of quality is maintained, in dramatic contrast to the condition of these stations before redevelopment.

Even for smaller transit facilities, there is potential for small business development. New Jersey Transit’s Station Renewal Program is developing passenger service centers, with satellite operations of businesses like bakeries, dry cleaners, delicatessens, florists, and shoe repair, which operate satellite stores and vending carts at transit stops during the busiest times of day. They are also developing “concierge” programs where one or more people contract with local businesses to act as an intermediary between transit customers and their shops. In the mornings, a concierge collects from passengers their dry cleaning, undeveloped film, shoes to be repaired, keys to be made, and so forth, and distributes these items to the appropriate merchants. Before the evening rush, the concierge retrieves these items and distributes them to passengers when they return to the transit facility.

Other forms of small business development include vending programs, like Downtown Crossing Marketplace in Boston, the Columbus Circle Market in New York City, and Pioneer Square in Portland, which features a cafe, flower and food vendors, and a branch of a local bookstore. Vending areas can also be indoors. One of the successful retail areas in Union Station in Washington, DC, is a vending area (which actually looks more like the ground floor of a department store) with local businesses selling quality

Figure 6-1. St. Louis’s Wellston Metrolink Station has not only become a new transit hub for the community, but also has stimulated the development of a job training and business incubation center in the abandoned Wagner Electric Factory Building. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)
crafts. The Port Authority Bus Terminal’s renovation program began with an experimental vending cart program operated by a minority entrepreneur.

Transit has also been a catalyst for renewal of downtown and neighborhood commercial districts, as presented in Chapter 5. Transit agencies have taken specific steps to support local businesses. In Woodbridge, NJ, New Jersey Transit hired an artist to design maps and guides to the town’s businesses and services, which are displayed on train platforms. NJ Transit also works with local retailers, especially those located in or next to a facility, to provide schedule and fare information to their commuter customers and even to sell parking permits (Netherwood Station, Plainfield, NJ). The entire Denver Partnership program is built around the joint support for transit and for downtown businesses, creating a successful environment for both. While all retail merchants do not necessarily believe a transit station or facility near their stores helps bring them business (see the example on transit malls in Chapter 5, for example), those whom we surveyed in Portland and Corpus Christi did believe that transit service had benefited the area overall and made it a very good place to do business because transit was effectively integrated into the downtown environment.

Finally, in Chicago, one of the original partners in the Green Line Initiative, was one of the largest industrial incubators in the country—recognizing that business incubators and job-training programs require effective transit access. This area has also been designated a federal EZ as a direct result of the community’s action to save and revitalize the Green Line. In St. Louis, a partnership has been established to create a job-training center and business incubator in an abandoned factory complex, adjacent to Wellston Station, a new light rail station. Another jobs strategy takes the opposite approach: Jobs Link in Chicago shuttles workers from the inner city to the suburbs where jobs are more prevalent but for which transit access is inadequate.

ENDNOTE


EXAMPLES

Washington, DC: Union Station Local Business Opportunities at Revitalized Intermodal Station

Union Station in Washington, DC, is a bustling facility serving 50,000 daily Amtrak travelers, Maryland Area Railway Commuter (MARC) riders, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metro riders, tourist bus passengers, taxis, office workers, and area residents. With trains and subways infusing the station with people in regular intervals, Union Station pulsates with life. Indeed, the transit function is essential to the success of the station. The Metro (i.e., subway) stop is the second busiest in the city, serving office workers at lunch (the station has its own lunchtime rush hour), Amtrak passengers, visitors and tourists going to the Capitol Building and nearby museums, as well as employees of the area (including Capitol Hill and other federal offices). Like South Station in Boston, Union Station has become a neighborhood central square where people feel safe shopping, eating, and meeting friends; indeed, the station is the second largest tourist attraction in Washington.

Union Station, which is owned by the U.S. Department of Transportation, was redeveloped by the nonprofit Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRDC) and is managed by LaSalle Partners, a private management firm that holds a 99-year lease on the station and is the leaseholder for the station’s many retail tenants. While the USRDC was responsible for bringing in private developers, restoring the train station and all of its historic elements, LaSalle replaced the government in handling day-to-day operations of the station, including maintenance (24 hours/day cleaning) and security. In addition, the management firm sponsors seasonal events and activities such as “Taste of the Nation,” an annual culinary festival that help to finance other community events. LaSalle also runs an innovative social service referral program for the homeless with free transport to area shelters and food donation service between station restaurants and local homeless facilities.

Retail sales at Union Station reached $70 million in 1995 and, at the current growth rate of 5 percent per year, are projected to top $101 million in 1996—$70 million more than the $35 million projected when the station opened in 1988. The 600,000 sq ft of retail space is 95 percent leased and 99 percent occupied by stores that are or will reflect the retail specialty. There currently are 140 retail tenants at the station renting an average of 1,000 sq ft each. Retailers must conform to strict design criteria: 85 percent of each storefront must be transparent; fluorescent and neon lighting are not permitted; signage is controlled; and building materials must be in keeping with the historic style of the architecture.

Union Station also provides opportunities for startup businesses. The station’s East Hall has been completely given over to movable, mahogany counter-height retail kiosks where vendors hold leases for as
few as 60 days and up to 12 months. The East Hall kiosk program allows vendors to try out new merchandise, experiment with new marketing ideas, and focus on seasonal products while incurring very little financial risk or having to make a long-term commitment. Some businesses that were incubated in the East Hall and have moved into permanent retail space include artists, craftspeople, and mom-and-pop-type businesses, several of which are minority enterprises. Between 1,200 and 1,500 new jobs have been created within the station itself.

The contract to operate the market for the MTA was awarded to a group that also operates antique and flea markets throughout Manhattan and that organizes the Central Park South craft market for the Department of Parks and Recreation each year. The Columbus Circle Market functions 10 months per year (closing after Christmas and reopening in mid-March) and accommodates 55 vendors: 16 at tables in a large tent, 30 around the tent (weather permitting) and 9 in permanent kiosks that have been retrofitted with electricity and running water. While the kiosks are leased annually to vendors of food and merchandise, such as clothing, flowers, jewelry and rugs, the majority of vendors rent space in or around the tent on a day-to-day basis, particularly if they are transient or can’t afford to pay in advance. On Tuesdays and Thursdays during the summer, the daily spaces are rented to farmers.

The Columbus Circle Market has been successful both as an economic and retail incubator and as a method for replacing negative activity with a positive use.

New York, NY: Columbus Circle Market
Subway Station Plaza as Place for Economic Opportunity

The Columbus Circle site is a boon to business and not only has sustained the Market and its vendors but has allowed it to grow. The new covered entrance to the station made that entrance more attractive to people and has helped to draw more people to the Market.

—Alan Boss, Market Manager

The Columbus Circle Market is located at the plaza entrance to the Columbus Circle subway station, one of the busiest in New York City, and in front of the New York Coliseum (the city’s old convention center) and one of the offices of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The subway station is a major hub, serving as a transfer between four lines and as a major station for Manhattan’s west side.

The market, which opened in May 1995, was conceived by the MTA Real Estate Division to take advantage of the tens of thousands of commuters, office workers, tourists, and area residents who frequent the station. When the city’s new convention center opened, usage of the Coliseum dropped and much of the plaza was underutilized despite the heavy usage of the subway station. Homeless people camping in plaza nooks and crannies became more and more of a problem. The market was introduced to add positive activity and to make the homeless activity less prevalent.

Chicago, IL: A Public/Private Joint Venture to Create Local Retail Opportunities at Transit Stations

Taking advantage of blighted retail space at transit stations can benefit transit operators, improve the livability of the neighborhood around the station and provide local jobs. In 1993, the nonprofit Edgewater Development Corporation and Combined Properties Management, a for-profit leasing and management company, joined together to create the Edgewater Redevelopment Group (ERG) which undertook to rehabilitate and re-lease the commercial properties owned by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) that were under or adjacent to four intermodal elevated (El) transit stations along the Red Line. ERG’s goals for the project were to introduce transit-oriented retail at the Red Line...
stations and to encourage private commercial investment in the area, in hopes of turning the community around.

The ERG was able to secure an interest-free loan of $500,000 from the CTA to accomplish the work, which has included the rehabilitation of the facades and lighting of 21 stores in the area. The ERG oversaw the private-sector rehabilitation work, encouraged the CTA to maintain other parts of their property (station entrances, etc.), and developed a transit/commuter-oriented tenant mix. The businesses, 70 percent of which are minority business enterprises, are located next to station entrances and at staircase entrances.

The retail mix was designed to provide many goods and services to commuters, including newsstands, coffee carts, dry cleaners, ATMs, and a foreign currency exchange.

The majority of original tenants have remained, the properties are nearly 100 percent leased and the program has begun to provide a revenue stream for the ERG. The project represents significant commercial reinvestment in the area which, according to project manager Marty Goldsmith, usually lags far behind residential reinvestment, making it more difficult to revitalize a neighborhood and create a more livable place.

Figure 6-3. A lively depiction of New York City’s Columbus Circle Market by artist K. Jacobsen adorns the interiors of subway cars and invites transit passengers to stop and shop.
Chicago, IL: Suburban Job-Link Connects Jobs and People

We are consciously trying to open up the suburbs as a place of work for the inner-city poor, instead of granting them access only to job opportunities around the corner.

—Mark Hughes, Director, Bridges to Work

Access to jobs is a major challenge for low-income inner-city residents. In cities like Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, and Milwaukee, two-thirds of the new jobs created between 1980 and 1990 were located outside city cores. The city of Denver alone lost 13,000 jobs during this time while its suburbs gained 184,000 jobs. The amount of office space now located in exurban areas has more than doubled, to 57 percent in the past 20 years. This includes manufacturing, retail, service firms, and offices.

While an increasing number of entry-level jobs are available that pay a living wage and offer full benefits, they are located in distant suburbs. The rising unemployed inner-city work forces remain cut off from these opportunities simply because of a lack of time-saving and cost-efficient transportation.

Bridging this gap is the goal of nonprofit groups like Suburban Job-Link, a 4-year, $25 million program. It is funded jointly by private foundations and the public sector to promote reverse commuting in cities across the United States. Job-Link minivans collect workers in downtown locations and transport them, free of charge, to jobs as far away as adjacent counties. Job-Link also operates training centers where people are tested, trained, and matched with particular jobs. Chicago Job Oasis, a service of Suburban Job-Link, has chosen to concentrate on a targeted cluster of distressed communities in the West Side where it has successfully trained and placed more than 200 residents in $6.00 to $8.00/hour jobs in DuPage County.

While the program has been successful thus far, according to Job Oasis Director David Boyd, “long commutes, unfamiliar job cultures and difficulty adjusting to ethnically diverse workplaces lead some to drop out.”

CASE STUDIES

Clearly, many opportunities exist for transit facilities and agencies to support local businesses and transit-related enterprises and to provide quality service to their customers, increasing transit’s positive impact on its passenger communities. Case studies show where transit, working in partnership with local communities and businesses, has achieved just this.

SUMMARY

Boston’s Downtown Crossing is both a retail and a transit center for downtown Boston. Home to Filene’s, Filene’s Basement and Macy’s department stores as well as hundreds of smaller, thriving businesses, Downtown Crossing is a major shopping destination. Transit improvements constructed in the late 1970s, combined with a major expansion of the subway lines
and an increase in ridership, have helped to create the Downtown Crossing Marketplace, a vending program which enlivens the area, creates jobs, and supports the ongoing activities of a management organization working to improve the downtown.

**PLANNING PROCESS**

In 1966, the MBTA published its visionary “Program for Mass Transit,” which set the stage for a major expansion of the rail transit system and a moratorium on highway construction within the Route 128 “Beltway” that surrounds Boston. In 1973, to meet federal air-quality standards, the city instituted a freeze on public parking spaces. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of route miles on the subway system was doubled with the construction of the new Orange Line and the Red Line extension (see Case Study 5-1).

The hub of the transit system is Downtown Crossing, the site where all the subway lines converge. A major retail center, the area was very congested in the 1970s as buses, cars, and pedestrians—including some 60,000 daily riders of the “T” subway stations—competed for the same space along Washington Street. Recognizing that the environment for shoppers and transit riders was clearly overcrowded, the city of Boston initiated a program in 1977 to develop Downtown Crossing as an “auto-restricted zone.” With funding from the federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now FTA), a series of proposals were studied to eliminate auto traffic on main downtown streets in favor of improved access for pedestrians, buses, and subway transit riders.

While previous attempts to restrict auto access downtown had failed because of merchant opposition, this proposal succeeded in part because business people had seen the success of the new Faneuil Hall Marketplace with its ample and lively pedestrian-friendly design. Through a complex 3-year planning process consisting of meetings, hearings, and behind-the-scenes negotiations, the Mayor’s office was able to orchestrate consensus on a plan that provided for a pedestrian mall on Washington Street and a rerouting of car and bus traffic around this largely pedestrian center.

Downtown Crossing opened in fall 1979 with a new look: wide brick sidewalks and pedestrian amenities. An evaluation conducted by PPS in 1980 found that the area, in general, was vital and popular. However, not all of the public spaces were working as well as they could; in fact, by removing cars and creating more pedestrian space than ever before, there were many places that were underused. PPS then made suggestions for rearranging amenities and developing a management program to sponsor activities to enliven the area. A 1982 report included additional ideas for specific programs, such as a vending program, to help further activate the downtown and raise revenues for the management of the district.

**STRATEGY**

The Downtown Crossing Association, which was established to implement these programs, opened its Downtown Crossing Marketplace in 1983. Today, the marketplace features 75 “on-street retailers” with, as their brochure describes, “an international display of quality merchandise and a variety of delicious snacks and treats. You’ll find ethnic wares, flowers and balloons, Boston souvenirs, men’s, women’s, and children’s accessories and cheerful, friendly pushcart vendors.” Vendors are spread throughout the Downtown Crossing area, which generally extends between the major “T” stations. Over the years, the vendor spots next to the “T” stations have become valued locations for vendors selling impulse items, produce, and flowers to subway travelers.

While the marketplace is managed on a day-to-day basis by a private financial partner, the Downtown Crossing Association oversees quality control, troubleshoots problems, and assists with various city approvals. The association also retains the rights to the program.

Over the past decade, the vending program has continued to evolve. Regulations have been modified, the private operator has been changed, and merchant

![Figure 6-5. Case Study 6-1. Vendors liven up the sidewalks and T-station entrances throughout downtown Boston. The Downtown Crossing program acts as both a retail and transit center and supports the ongoing activities of a downtown management organization. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)](image-url)
outreach continues to ensure that a balance between vendor requirements, street ambiance, and retailer needs are met. The association has used the proceeds from the marketplace to conduct activities that draw shoppers to the area and make the area safer and more attractive for all visitors, including transit riders. Activities have included a summer concert series, holiday lights, new trash barrels, a marketing program, and banners.

FUNDING

In 1979, funding for the construction of Downtown Crossing came largely from federal transportation funds from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now FTA).

As noted above, the marketplace is not just self-sustaining; it generates income for the Downtown Crossing Association. While the exact figures are proprietary, vendors pay from $200 to $1000 per month, depending on their location. About 40 to 50 vendors operating 75 carts participate in the program. Start-up funding (including purchasing push carts, etc.) was provided by the private financial partner.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The vending marketplace was not easy to establish. Merchants were concerned about the visual appearance of the vendors as well as potential competition. The association itself did not want to manage the daily operation of the marketplace, nor could it afford the start-up costs of purchasing push carts. A management partnership with a private operator was set up, with the association sharing revenues and providing quality control oversight. Strict regulations were set up governing merchandise type and quality, cart design, vendor dress, and even a "returns" policy. To prevent direct competition, merchants have absolute control over vendors in front of their stores. Only 25 percent of the vendors can sell food, and then it must be hand-held food that doesn’t compete with area restaurants.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Boston’s Downtown Crossing is a place where the positive impacts of transit can be seen first hand. The extensive investment in new subway lines in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a dramatic increase in ridership—up 20 percent over the past 20 years. About 50 percent of all commuter trips to the center of Boston today are by transit, and the subway lines themselves are operating at near peak capacity.

This investment in the transit system has continued to feed the economic vitality of Downtown Crossing.

Moreover, by taking advantage of the new space created by transit improvements and the flow of transit riders, the Downtown Crossing Association has created a program so successful that it is the main source of financial support for the association itself. The city’s Parks Department has even copied the program around other transit stops, including the downtown station in Boston Common. Despite its successes, the
program requires constant attention to maintain quality control.

The marketplace has created hundreds of jobs and created the opportunity for people to start businesses at low costs. There is a core of 20–30 vendors who have more or less established permanent businesses "a la carte." While the association has not kept detailed statistical information about the program, vendors range from recent immigrants to frustrated corporate executives. One cart was started by a refugee from Cambodia who sold intricate carvings. The profits put the vendor through MIT, and today the family still operates the cart. Another vendor started with a cart and then moved into permanent space in the newly renovated South Station (see Case Study 10-4).

CONCLUSIONS

The Downtown Crossing Marketplace, which began as a transit and pedestrian improvement project, has helped maintain Downtown Crossing as a premier shopping destination in Boston. The marketplace has contributed to the livability of the city by creating hundreds of jobs, enlivening the downtown, and supplying a creative financing method, which supports programs to improve attractiveness, vitality, and overall business climate in the district.

SOURCES


SUMMARY

From 1989 through 1991, Chicago’s historic Union Station underwent a $37 million renovation that transformed it into one of the most modern and attractive rail passenger facilities in the country. Chicago Union Station, on the west side of Chicago’s Loop, is the city’s busiest commuter rail station, handling 23 million commuters and 2.3 million Amtrak customers annually.

Prior to the renovation, Amtrak, which owns the station through a subsidiary company (Chicago Union Station Company), believed that the poor condition of the station impacted its business by making part of the rail passengers’ travel experience a negative one. Amtrak saw an opportunity to use the remodeled station as a way to promote train travel and make the station the activity center of the West Loop area once again.

Amtrak worked with a local developer to redevelop the station. One of the key components of this program was a complex of restaurants and food retailers to serve the 25 million train customers and 65,000 office workers within walking distance of the station. The food service retailers, who generally were selected from among the best of Chicago, were skeptical about being able to sell to an audience whom they had little experience serving. However, the results in terms of sales have exceeded even optimistic projections and the station is praised by passengers and public alike—a new center for the West Loop.

PLANNING PROCESS

Historically, Chicago Union Station was the national train hub for all transcontinental trips and all train passengers traveling coast-to-coast changed trains there. It became famous for its Great Hall waiting lounge and Fred Harvey’s Red Lion restaurant.

Union Station is located at the western edge of Chicago’s downtown area. The area had been a transition zone between the downtown high-rise office buildings and mid-rise warehouses and factories that surrounded the Loop. As warehouses and factories have left, this area has been transformed into residential and office space. Since the 1980s, the West Loop has become the “hot” real estate market for new high-rise office buildings as more tenants wanted to be closer to the commuter train stations and cheaper parking.

Within a 10-min walk of Union Station are almost 20 million sq ft of office space with an estimated daytime population of close to 65,000. Above the station is the 222 South Riverside office building with 1.1 million sq ft of office space and a daytime office population of more than 3,000 workers.

Chicago Union Station is the second busiest railway station in the United States with 23 million commuters annually. On an average workday, some 85,000 Metra commuters—which represent almost 10 percent of all downtown workers—use the station. Chicago is the central hub for the country where about 1,000 of the more than 6,000 daily Amtrak train riders change trains going from coast-to-coast. The scheduling of these trains provides for a minimum
layover of 3 hours between trains, providing time for travelers to buy food and goods outside the commuter rush hours.

In 1970, the passenger concourse building was demolished to construct the 35-story 222 Riverside Plaza Building. The new building was part of a 3.4-million-sq-ft Gateway complex of offices built on railroad air rights overlooking the Chicago River. The new station under 222 Riverside Plaza was strictly utilitarian and had unpainted concrete block walls and exposed concrete flooring finishes. The Great Hall of the station, which is on the National Registry of Historic Places, was left untouched.

When Daniel Burnham designed the station in 1914, he anticipated a 16-story office building around the Great Hall. However, because of various delays, the station was not finished until the Great Depression and only nine floors of the office portion were built.

In the later part of the 1980s, Chicago Union Station issued a request for proposals to developers for the redevelopment of the station and the adjacent Great Hall building. Chicago Union Station awarded U.S. Equities Reality, Inc., of Chicago the right to develop 1.2 million sq ft of office space cantilevered in twin towers over the Great Hall along with the restoration of the Great Hall and the passenger service facilities beneath 222 Riverside. Ironically, the plans for constructing the office building along with adding 180,000 sq ft of retail space in the Great Hall area again fell through because of the recession in 1989 when developers could no longer obtain financing for new office buildings.

When the office portion of the development did not proceed, Chicago Union Station did not abandon the project. Rather, it pursued a new strategy with U.S. Equities Realty to redevelop the portion of the station constructed in 1970. Lund & Associates, from Chicago, served as the retail planning consultant on the project.

The extensive retail space originally proposed for the new office building was scaled back to the mezzanine area of the 1970 annex, to be divided into many independently operated food businesses. When national food chains proved disinterested, the focus shifted to existing, independently owned food businesses from the city of Chicago. Union Station found this option especially appealing because it would allow the station to be marketed as a unique destination, rather than a generic airport-like retail mall.

**STRATEGY**

The strategy of this project was to bring new life to the historic station, building on its extraordinary architecture and developing services, amenities, retail, and food service that appeal to today’s customers: Amtrak passengers, suburban commuters, and the nearby office population.

*Retail and Food Service.* The mezzanine level of the 1970 wing was completely reconfigured to take advantage of the flow of commuters for which it is the primary entrance. New escalators were added to connect the mezzanine to the main floor where Amtrak passengers wait during their layover.

Approximately 21,000 sq ft of food service was created. Although there is a small 2,400-sq-ft McDonald’s and newsstands that are chain operations, all the other food businesses are locally owned and operated—most with well-known, local reputations for quality and value. Many are minority or woman owned. (McDonald’s, which is Chicago-based, was a
kind of insurance policy and was selected because it was so popular.) Businesses include Connie’s Pizza, Biff’s Headhouse Diner & Tap, Clark Street Deli, Dock’s Great Fish, and others.

Businesses have tailored their services and product to the station. Even McDonald’s provides special attention to Amtrak customers: games for the children and televisions that show cartoons on Saturday mornings and sporting events later in the day. McDonald’s is designed in the rail motif with the same color scheme as the station. McDonald’s also sells railroad and Amtrak souvenirs, helping to achieve a special ambiance for customers.

**Passenger Amenities.** The main or concourse level was also completely reconfigured for Amtrak passengers. Attractive new restrooms and comfortable passenger lounges were built on the concourse level. An airline-club like facility was constructed for first class passengers, a children’s play area, and two “ziosks,” small rooms for rent for rest, respite, and retreat.

**Design.** The historic section of the station was restored. The adjacent Great Hall waiting area was painted and the ceiling illuminated. The brass light fixtures were restored and the wooden benches refinished. The limestone exterior of the building was cleaned and illuminated.

The 1970 wing, a desolate design at best, was completely redone using a subtle art deco style reminiscent of the grand railway stations of the past. Concrete block walls were covered in honed northern bluff dolomite with verde tinos marble trim; and the bare tile floors were done in a polychrome terrazzo with brass and stainless accent strips.

**Marketing.** Union Station has undertaken an extensive program to market the station as a unique local attraction. For example, it began showcasing its food establishments through the “Taste of Chicago” program, which provides area workers, train customers and visitors alike with a chance to experience Chicago’s finest culinary treats. It has served to further establish Chicago Union Station as a special place in the West Loop area.

**FUNDING**

Of the $37 million for the renovation, $7 million came from Metra, the commuter rail service, and $30 million was financed through the operating funds of the Chicago Union Station Company. While businesses at the station are successful and contribute to operating income, the retail is viewed more as an “amenity that pays for itself,” something that makes a substantial contribution to the overall environment of the station. In addition, operating costs have increased since the renovation: marble being more costly to maintain than bare concrete.

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

In 1990, the Chicago Union Station Company issued requests for qualifications for food service and restaurant operators looking for a single operator for the entire mezzanine level. While discussions continued with several national and local food operators, none delivered a proposal with food programming and economic structuring that would deliver the quality of service the Chicago Union Station Company wanted for this facility.

When the plan then shifted from seeking a single operator to finding several food service operators to take individual spaces on the mezzanine level, many “site selectors” for national restaurant operators were contacted about the opportunities for opening an operation at Union Station. The problem was that many of these site selectors had no experience with American retailers, too, have lost the tradition of leasing at train stations and have few notions on how to service train customers. Many of those contacted about the opportunities at Union Station were unconvincing that they could operate a successful business at the station, despite the high foot traffic on the mezzanine level, proximity to the train waiting lounges, and large nearby office population.

To successfully lease the space, Chicago Union Station had to provide very low base rents for businesses and take a percentage of sales after a certain threshold was achieved. To lower the base rents even further, they increased the percentage as sales increased: the more sales, the higher the percentage. In return for lower base rent, Chicago Union Station now receives from some tenants as much as 24 percent of sales when sales volumes reach certain thresholds. This rent is in addition to common area charges to cover maintenance and promotion of retail.

In the beginning, Union Station also allowed some businesses to try the space as an experiment. One of Chicago’s premier restaurateurs was skeptical about how successful the station would be for his new
Corner Bakery concept. U.S. Equities convinced him to open a small temporary 110-sq-ft stall. After reportedly generating sales of $5,000 a day in bread, he signed a lease for 2,000 sq ft of retail space.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The facility clearly appeals to all of the intended customers. By 1994, the station’s food retailers were generating more than $12.5 million in sales annually, which is about $600 per sq ft of rentable area. These sales figures rank the station as one of the better retail locations in the country. Because of the percentage rental structure, Union Station has also benefited from this success.

For example, McDonald’s is now generating more than $2 million in sales in 2,400 sq ft. It had negotiated clauses that permitted closing the store if sales were below $300,000 annually and thought, at best, it would do $1.2 million. McDonald’s is now paying substantial percentage rent and regrets that it does not have more space.

Retail is so successful that there is now a lack of adequate seating at the station, which is limiting food sales. Chicago Union Station has responded by adding more tables and one retailer, the Corner Bakery, now provides seating outside the store front. A lack of space in the eating areas for people carrying luggage remains a problem.

Finally, the station has had a very positive impact on the West Loop area. Leasing in office towers in the vicinity of the station is reported to be easier than before. While rental rates are not higher than elsewhere, the station is considered to be a positive feature for the area—not just because it provides convenient commuter access, but because it is an important amenity for the district.

CONCLUSIONS

Chicago Union Station now provides a clean, bright, and safe environment where people at all hours can come for meals and entertainment, as well as to catch the train. Because of the redevelopment, Chicago Union Station has again become the center of activity for the West Loop area. Both Amtrak and Metra commuter rail customers now experience the comfort of a well-designed station, while the city of Chicago benefits from a new public amenity.

Union Station, once a faded shadow of its former glory, is again a center of vitality in downtown Chicago. While providing increased services for millions of transit passengers, the station provides significant opportunity for local businesses—a refreshing alternative to the standard chains so pervasive across America today.

SUMMARY

In 1993, St. Louis opened its new light rail line, which connects downtown St. Louis, East St. Louis, and Lambert International Airport. One of the system’s stations is located in the inner-city community of Wellston, a distressed area with a 500,000 sq ft, vacant industrial building near the station. To increase ridership at the Wellston station, improve transit access, generate activity at the station and revitalize Wellston economically, the Economic Council of St. Louis County, the Bi-State Development Agency (BSDA, a transit agency), Arts in Transit and the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council are partnering to transform the area around the Wellston station into a vibrant mobility center that will include the Cornerstone Partnership’s state-of-the-art manufacturing training center under development by the county. This initiative is being implemented through a collaboration among government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community residents, and businesses to bring mobility and economic opportunity together. It is hoped that this effort will foster economic revitalization in this mixed-use industrial, commercial, and residential neighborhood.
The education and business incubation center will be located in a vacant industrial complex. A child care center is also planned. In addition, a range of site improvements and streetscape enhancements surrounding the station area have also been planned to connect the station with the development activities around it.

**PLANNING PROCESS**

The tragic 1992 slaying of an 11-year-old boy playing near the remains of the Wagner Electric manufacturing site focused community attention on the need to revitalize this desolate, unsafe area of Wellston. Deeded to St. Louis County in 1983, Wagner Electric had been reduced to a series of crumbling buildings—very visible from the new light rail line and station—in anticipation of redevelopment plans that never materialized. The site is composed of five industrial buildings and over 500,000 sq ft of vacant space spread out over 24 acres contiguous to Wellston station.

The Wellston neighborhood has an unemployment rate 2.5 times the regional average, as jobs have steadily moved from the city center to the suburbs. In addition, violence in the area has worsened. To address these problems, the Economic Council of St. Louis County created the Cornerstone Partnership to provide job-training for young adults and new skills for laid-off workers. The Wagner Electric complex will be the site for all of the programs. The initiative is modeled after Detroit’s highly successful “FOCUS: Hope” project whose students work as subcontractors to the auto industry.

The Wellston MetroLink station provides access to the light rail line, to two bus routes (the Page and the Page Express) and to an adjacent commuter park and ride. When the station opened, ridership exceeded all projections, and it became clear that the station could better serve the community by connecting the Cornerstone Partnership complex and adjacent areas with the Wellston MetroLink Station. BSDA/Arts in Transit received a Livable Communities grant from FTA to begin addressing these issues.

Project partners have organized a series of focus group sessions to facilitate community visioning. Community involvement has also included a town meeting and public participation using a Visual Preference Survey (VPS) to provide a better understanding of community concerns related to station-area improvements. In addition, the Urban Land Institute convened a panel in September 1995 to examine specific development opportunities in three stations, including Wellston.

Objectives of the overall project include the following:

- Increasing use of the park and ride,
- Beautification of the surrounding area,
- Enhancing station safety and security,
- Providing better access to job-training and educational opportunities,
- Increasing employment opportunities in the immediate area,
- Encouraging community pride, and
- Providing a child care/community services facility.

Planning, rehabilitation, and transformation of station-area enhancements and the Wagner Electric complex have involved intragovernmental coopera-
tion and public and private agency support. Project partners include the following:

- U.S. Department of Commerce,
- Department of Transportation-FTA,
- Economic Council of St. Louis County,
- Bi-State Development Agency/Arts in Transit,
- East-West Gateway Coordinating Council,
- City of Wellston,
- Community residents.

STRATEGY

The strategy for the project has two main components.

_Cornerstone Job-Training Facility at the Wagner Electric Site (the Partnership)._ The focal point of this project is renovation of the former Wagner Electric manufacturing site and its transformation by the Economic Council of St. Louis County into a state-of-the-art regional educational and manufacturing training facility. The first phase of development is slated for completion in fall 1996. At that time, a remedial education program and a manufacturing training program will begin. Forty leaders from the business, labor, manufacturing, governmental, and educational communities were selected by the County Economic Council to develop the curriculum, with Ranken Technical and the St. Louis Community College providing initial training. In addition to housing the above institutions, the first building to be renovated will also include an enterprise center and a manufacturing incubator. The latter will target minority startup firms and focus on job outreach to link minority businesses to jobs on site.

_Wellston Station Site Improvements._ Proposed site improvements to the Wellston station and its surroundings include improved sidewalks and lighting, landscaping, public art installation, resurfacing of roads serving the park-and-ride lot, new signage, bicycle racks, and information on services offered at the Cornerstone Partnership complex. The station area will not only be a transportation center; the plans also include a child care center. In addition, the project partners are considering developing a police substation and a small retail/convenience store. Shuttle vans, which will provide MetroLink riders with access to local Wellston businesses, will also be purchased through the FTA Livable Communities grant.

FUNDING

In August 1994, the Economic Council of St. Louis County secured a $4.5 million renovation grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce to fund the first phase of the facility’s construction. The National Center for Manufacturing Sciences is contributing an additional $1.5 million in training equipment. The project site was donated to St. Louis County by Wagner Electrical in 1983.

Design improvements to the Wellston Metrolink station area are being funded by the FTA. The estimated total cost is $956,000. Financial commitments by FTA total $764,800, and those by BSDA and the county total $191,200.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Synergy of this transit-based community revitalization effort has been slowed somewhat by the physical attributes of the surrounding area: vacant lots and buildings in disrepair abound in the area. Also, initiative organizers are challenged to find additional public resources to attract private investment to the area. Aside from these problems, no major obstacles have been encountered thus far.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Because the buildings have not yet been renovated, no new tenants or businesses have moved in. The anticipated benefits, however, include improved access and expanded activity at the station and increased transit ridership due to increased economic activity. Landscaping, better access, and improved transmission of information will all enhance the overall atmosphere and appearance of the station for riders and nearby residents and retailers. Thus far, the feedback and involvement of local organizations, merchants, and residents has been enthusiastic and positive.

CONCLUSIONS

This project demonstrates the successful partnering of a transit agency with a county economic development organization, a metropolitan planning organization and community residents. The partnership enabled the creation of a transit facility, which will act as a catalyst for the economic development and improved livability of a very distressed inner city community. Understanding that such an effort requires the participation of many players, BSDA, the Economic Council of St. Louis County, and the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council have obtained funding from local, county and federal government sources and secured the commitment of a range of local and national partners. The project’s multidisciplinary focus—which involves job creation, vocational training, mobility, intermodality, adaptive reuse, and the economic revitalization of a depressed area—is a laudable model of a transit-based community development initiative.
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, people’s fear for their personal safety has become an overriding issue in communities of nearly all sizes and types across the country. In focus groups conducted for this study, it was almost always the first issue mentioned. Indeed, fear of crime is not an isolated problem but impacts all aspects of public life. People’s fears can affect where they choose to shop, work, or locate a business. This can lead to the more serious urban problems of physical deterioration, disinvestment, and population loss.

The issue of security goes beyond dealing with actual crime, however. “Crime is a barometer of social disorganization,” says Lawrence M. Friedman, an historian of criminal justice. He and other criminologists argue that the civil rights progress of the 1960s allowed the black middle class to move from the inner-city thereby removing an important force for social control. Combined with the flight of manufacturing jobs and increased drug use in communities, the result was an unprecedented crime wave. [2]

Safety is also a perceptual problem: in fact, people often report feeling unsafe in areas where the actual crime rate is low. Factors such as uncollected litter, graffiti, people loitering, and dark streets with little nighttime activity can translate very quickly into the perception that an area is unsafe. A less obvious factor is the destruction of places in communities, as discussed in Chapter 4. When people frequent public spaces less often, avoid walking down streets because of traffic, and begin to retreat into privately run shopping malls and their own homes; all of this affects the perception of security.

Because of these interconnections, the issue of security needs to be addressed with other livability issues, like downtown and neighborhood renewal, job creation, and other social problems, for example, which help treat some of the underlying causes of crime, not just the symptoms. In addition, how comfort and amenity are connected with the issue of security is emphasized. The design and use of spaces and buildings have substantial impact on security, affecting both crime rates and the perception of crime. For instance, a parking lot located in a secluded area or the rear of a park may be a staging area for crime, because there are no surrounding commercial establishments to generate other activity. Many strategies can be used to reduce the opportunities for crime that are inherent in the structure of the buildings and the layout of the public spaces of a locality as well as to reduce perceptions of danger. The underlying philosophy of this approach is that when spaces are usable with amenities and activities that attract a range of people, they also will become safer places.

Overview of Community Strategies

Traditionally, improving security has meant increasing the number of police or construction of buildings that looked and functioned like fortresses: with interior spaces that could be monitored and access that could be controlled. These methods, however, failed to stem the surge of crime throughout the
1970s and 1980s. Because of this failure, new strategic approaches were developed and tried—the benefits of which are now being felt across the country. As a rule, however, there is no one strategy that works. A comprehensive approach that addresses all aspects of a security problem seems to have the most impact.

The most important new strategy (although some would say it is actually an old one) is community policing. With this approach, police no longer just patrol neighborhoods in their cars and respond to reports of crime. Police become actively involved in solving specific crime problems in a community and seek to establish a sense of order and control. This involves the return of foot patrols, which help to make people feel more secure and help to deal with those seemingly petty crimes (like graffiti or loud radios) that contribute to people’s sense of disorder—so called “quality-of-life” crimes. Police in diverse cities like New York, St. Louis, and Seattle also work closely with community organizations and constantly evaluate crime data to understand where crime is occurring and why. Programs are then developed to stop crime: these programs can address a variety of small and large issues, from removing a telephone that is used by drug dealers to a raid on a “crack house.”

The results have surprised even hardened police in these cities. In New York City, there has been a 40 percent decline in homicides in 2 years; in Seattle, the rate dropped 32 percent last year and 18 percent in St. Louis. *The New York Times* reports that New Yorkers are now saying that the city is safer, showing perceptions are catching up with reality. [3] Studies have shown that the police are also reporting that they have higher morale, greater job satisfaction, and a more favorable attitude toward citizens; citizens also indicate more favorable opinion of the police. [4]

Police foot patrols are not the only way to achieve a sense of order. Depending on the context, a food vendor, a maintenance worker, a nearby store owner, and an information kiosk attendant can all provide informal surveillance of a space and be able to respond to security problems. PPS has found that public spaces that have a designated manager in charge of them also become safer and less prone to anti-social activities.

So-called “environmental design security” involves strategies to create new spaces and buildings, or retrofit existing ones, so that they become naturally self-policing. One goal is to make existing spaces visible for surveillance by police and other users who establish a management presence. For example, design strategies for improving perceptions of security might involve trimming shrubbery for greater visibility, relocating parking from remote places, or reorienting buildings from an inward focus to the street by adding visible ground level activities, such as retail.

With environmental design security, it is important to make a space or place not just more visible: it needs to be an attraction as well. Activities and amenities that attract people help keep it busier and safer. Improvements need not include physical design changes, but can be limited to programming activities. For example, noontime classical music or jazz concerts in a downtown park can attract office workers and displace loitering, drug dealing, or the presence of anti-social activities.

One of the better examples of successful activity programming and environmental design security is a small vest-pocket park in Rockefeller Center in New York City. This park was not actively used by downtown workers and had become a center for drug dealing. A redesign and management plan for the park recommended adding new seating, a cafe, and vendors and increasing the visibility of the park from the street, while also instituting a regular program of events and entertainment. The use of the park has increased three-fold, with more elderly and women users, and the drug dealing was completely eliminated.

Cumulatively, this range of security strategies has proven to be effective in reducing crime in a step-by-step process of reclaiming and reinvigorating space. However, the sign of true success, which will take years of effort, will not be just one or two buildings or spaces that are safe havens, but an entire neighborhood that is both safe from actual crime and a safe-feeling place for its community.

**Role of Transit**

Security is a major concern of transit operators, reflecting concerns of transit passengers while they wait at stops or stations and on the transit vehicle itself. Efforts to improve security can benefit the
broader community around the stops or stations as well as along the routes on which the transit mode proceeds. Efforts to bring activity to stations and to make transit facilities more comfortable and attractive also have security benefits for communities.

Transit agencies have developed security approaches for different situations, which improve security for both the transit facility and the area around it. Many of the strategies have been developed in places which have had chronic, severe problems, such as New York City.

Since most transit agencies do not have their own extensive security forces, most have relied on environmental design strategies and a management presence to reduce crime and increase the perception of safety. One of the reasons for creating bus transfer facilities, such as Tohono Tadai Transit Center in Tucson and Staples Street Station in Corpus Christi, is to bring people together in a comfortable, attractive, informally superviseable area. For example, in Tucson there is a staffed information center. These projects contrast with bus transfer centers in other cities that have been placed in isolated locations with little if any on-site management and that often are closed evenings and weekends. In such cases, ironically, transit agencies did not want to provide amenities for passengers because of security and maintenance reasons. However, the introduction of these amenities has not been a problem in Corpus Christi and Tucson, in fact they have served as a positive influence.

On a larger scale, South Station in Boston, once an unpleasant terminal with security problems, has been transformed through its renovation, which includes retail activities and movable tables and chairs in the main waiting area. These and other strategies help reduce undesirable activities in that station. In New York City, surveys of passengers showed that just improving the overall environment of the subway station (which included special off peak waiting areas and better views from token booth to the platform) increased perception of security dramatically (although actual crime was always quite low.)

Clearly, one of the goals of The Green Line in Chicago and Wellston Station in St. Louis, both located in distressed areas, is to bring activity to the stations to help improve perceptions of security. Indeed, the Wellston project was initiated in part because of a specific crime. In Woodbridge Station, Woodbridge, New Jersey, surveys conducted after a new station improvement showed that passengers do feel more secure.

Community policing approaches have also been used in transit facilities. Baltimore’s new “koban,” a free-standing police booth/kiosk near the light rail and bus stops in downtown, has already served as a deterrent to crime. On an informal basis, vendors at Downtown Crossing in Boston also provide “eyes on the street” to augment conventional police. Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland has its own private security force to oversee the square, which includes the most used stop on the MAX light rail line; in this case, the transit agency is able to provide security by cooperating with the management of the square. In New York City, the Station Managers Program establishes one manager in charge of a station who is able to handle all concerns and coordinate with police, providing better services and improving cooperation with surrounding communities.

One of the innovative programs to provide security on buses has been the Rider Advocate Program in Portland. This program addresses problem behavior and security problems by having paid workers ride the buses, help customers, and assist the bus drivers with maintaining control. A related program, called Night Stop, allows passengers to request a stop closer to their destination, even if it is not an official stop. In Watts, security problems related to gangs occurred on the shuttle buses. The problem has ceased as a result of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation working with parents and local community groups.

The concept of comprehensive security is best illustrated by the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City. This program combines community policing, environmental design security, and the establishment of a management presence to reverse a long history of security problems in this facility. The management of the bus terminal also works closely with surrounding community organizations, resulting in a dramatic decrease in crime inside and outside the terminal.

ENDNOTES

4. PPS, Managing Downtown Public Spaces, p.8.

EXAMPLES

Baltimore, MD: Howard Street Mall
Koban Police Booth Improves Community and Transit Security

What Officer Dwight Thomas likes best about his new assignment at the Howard Street Koban is that now he has the opportunity to meet people other than suspected criminals. He has also become a visible symbol of community policing, where police work closely with communities to improve livability and
quality of life. Officer Thomas is the first police officer in that city to be assigned to the 10-ft by 10-ft air-conditioned koban, which was purchased from the City of Kyoto, Japan, at a cost of $150,000 and installed in May 1995. The koban is equipped with bulletproof glass and a restroom and soon will have a refrigerator and closed-circuit television cameras, which will make it possible for on-duty officers to monitor a large area.

The booth is located mid-way along the Howard Street light rail transit mall at the corner of East Lexington Street, one block south of a booming public market in what was once the city’s premier downtown shopping center. Today, only the empty art deco department stores, like the one opened by the Hutzler brothers in the late 1800s, provide visitors with a clue as to what the area once was and, as many hope, will become again.

Providing an on-site security presence 7 days a week, 24 hours per day is one way of making the area safer for transit riders and attracting new shoppers and visitors. Modeled and named after similar structures used by police in Japan, the koban functions as a police substation and home base for bicycle patrol officers. It also places officers among the people they serve and protect and encourages a broader role for police in neighborhoods and in community redevelopment. It was the Eisenhower Foundation that introduced U.S. city police chiefs to the idea of koban and other community policing techniques during a 1988 trip to Japan. The idea was quickly adopted in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, where it appears to be as popular with police officers as it is with the public.

Since the koban opened in Baltimore, officers say crimes that were previously quite common, such as purse snatching and shoplifting, have decreased dramatically. There are similar findings in two other cities with kobans: Philadelphia and San Juan. These cities have experienced, respectively, a 24 percent and 35 percent drop in crime in areas where the koban was introduced. Officer Thomas says that he now has time to chat with people, give directions, and answer questions about local retail and transit services and the koban itself. Asked how he liked the koban system, Thomas replied, “I told the (Baltimore City) Police Commissioner that if it got any better, I would pay him!”

SOURCE
Janofsky, Michael. “Police are Stationed at Center of Action in Japan-Style Booths,” The New York Times and a personal interview with Officer Thomas.

New York, NY: Improved Subway Stations Enhance Perception of Security

The perception that New York was “unsafe” and “unlivable” was symbolized in the late 1970s by the decay of the city’s subway system. As part of a massive reinvestment in the system beginning in the 1980s, however, many stations have been rehabilitated with new finishes, lights, amenities, and entrance treatments. In 1991, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) New York City Transit began to survey transit customers along the 1/9 line, which services South Ferry and the Statue of Liberty ferry docks in lower Manhattan and stretches to upper Manhattan, terminating in the Bronx. The purpose of the survey was three-fold:

- To evaluate the effect that this station rehabilitation and modernization program has had on overall customer satisfaction and perceptions of personal safety when using the system;
- To determine whether customer ratings of station improvements are affected only by actual use of an upgraded station or also by seeing improvements at stations they are not specifically using;
- To measure the effectiveness of line-specific rehabilitation efforts on customer perceptions in
order to determine the relationship between concentrated improvement efforts, investment, and customer satisfaction ratings.

Starting in November 1991, Gallup, Inc., interviewed more than 1300 riders of the 38 stations along the 1/9 line by telephone as to their sense of personal safety and security in these rehabilitated and modernized stations and in the system overall. Respondents rated the 1/9 line higher than the subway system generally: 6.8 out of 10 for the 1/9 line and 5.4 for the entire system. In other words, the survey showed that a substantial number of station improvements concentrated along one line can raise customer approval ratings significantly. The survey results also indicated that the more extensive the improvements at a particular station, the higher customers rated it in terms of their sense of personal safety. In addition, the higher the rating of a particular station overall, the higher its rating for personal safety. For every point the overall station rating improved, the personal security rating increased by half a point. While the entire system received a personal security rating of 4.2, the rating for 1/9 service was 6.7.

Another significant finding was that the MTA New York City Transit’s station rehabilitation program has had a significantly greater impact on customer approval and satisfaction than the Authority’s more modest repainting and upgrade programs. The upgrading of stations did not affect passenger perceptions noticeably.

In 1992, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) of Corpus Christi, Texas began to redesign its system to create a series of bus transfer centers. The RTA wanted to create operationally functional transfer centers that were user-friendly and contributed to improving the community around them. A special concern of the RTA was safety and security.

To find out more about bus transfer centers and other passenger facilities that were considered to be “state of the art,” the RTA’s Project Manager visited and evaluated recently constructed bus transfer centers throughout California, where such centers are common. At present, there exist very few design criteria that can be used to develop these facilities in such a way that they become public spaces that attract riders to public transportation and are integrated into their communities. The kind of research that has been conducted on this subject is generally of a technical nature. It does not tend to look at users’ needs as the basis for creating positive transit environments or evaluate how such facilities can act as catalysts for enhancing rather than detracting from the areas in which they are located.

The RTA, working with PPS, set up a special rating system to evaluate these facilities according to such features as architectural sensitivity to neighboring buildings, connection to the surrounding community (both physical and visual), amenities, availability of information regarding bus service, sense of safety and security, circulation and passenger flow, passenger comfort, existence of complementary on-site uses, maintenance, management of the facility, and bus operations. Of more than 20 facilities reviewed in this research, all functioned at a high level operationally. However, only one had amenities and other attributes sufficient to creating a user-friendly environment for passengers. Most of the state-of-the-art transportation facilities lacked even the most basic amenities, such as adequate seating, lighting, and restrooms, usually because of concerns about operations, maintenance, security, and abuse.

Often, there was no attendant or security provider on the premises, particularly on weekends. In some cases, there was not even a structure that people could identify as a specific place to wait or rest. There was usually no place to buy food, enjoy a cup of coffee, or learn about scheduled community events and activities. Many of these bus transfer centers were inaccessible, located away from areas of community

Figure 7-3. This image of the recently renovated Broad Street subway station in New York City illustrates the success of the MTA’s decade-long station rehabilitation efforts. (Credit: MTA New York City Transit and John Tarantino, architect)
activity, either at isolated suburban sites or in urban locales removed from town centers.

In some communities, bus transfer centers had a negative reputation because of the perception that they fostered drug dealing, vandalism, and vagrancy. As a result, many of the transfer centers had been cut off from surrounding areas by walls or wide streets, or had been built outside of city centers. In an attempt to make them vandal-proof, many were built without the amenities that passengers needed.

Other transit authorities use a “timed transfer” mechanism to minimize transfer waiting time and, in theory, improve ridership. With this system, almost no time is spent waiting for buses at a given facility. Many operations people have focused on reducing trip time through timed transfer operation which, by definition, compromises the ability of the bus transfer center to act as a catalyst for neighborhood activity. Timed transfer conflicts with attempts to create an active, bustling “people place” where security is enhanced with efforts to address the real amenity needs of passengers at bus transfer facilities. Timed transfer also may not adequately provide for passenger safety during emergency situations, such as extreme weather conditions, and traffic problems during which passengers could find themselves stranded until bus service resumes. Generally, this important issue is not being addressed by the transit industry.

Using the California research as a guide primarily for what not to do, the Corpus Christi RTA undertook the process of transforming bus waiting areas in Corpus Christi into places of community pride and activity. The challenge was to take existing waiting areas and, by transforming them into community assets, enhance surrounding businesses and boost ridership. This project is presented in Case Study 9-3.

CASE STUDIES

Projects and programs illustrate how both environmental design security and community policing can increase perceptions of safety and reduce actual crime. In this way, transit facilities can contribute to the improvement of safety and security in a surrounding neighborhood or district:

Case Study 7-1: Tucson, AZ: Tohono Tadai Transit Center
New Environment Transforms Transit Experience in Area Suburban Sprawl
Case Study 7-1
Tucson, AZ: Tohono Tadai Transit Center
New Environment Transforms Transit Experience in Area of Suburban Sprawl

As the system develops, you begin to expand and create [transit centers] with art and with the community.
—Jill Merrick, Project Manager, Tohono Tadai Transit Center

SUMMARY

The Tohono Tadai Bus Transit Center is the third and latest such facility built by the City of Tucson and Sun Tran in Tucson, Arizona. This center, like the Roy Laos and Ronstadt Centers that preceded it, were designed to consolidate many individual bus stops to make it safer and more convenient for passengers to ride and transfer. Tohono Tadai is a very attractive, comfortable bus transit center that has successfully and creatively used good design and artwork to create a transit facility that is comfortable for all users—adults as well as children, people who have disabilities as well as people who do not.

Tohono Tadai means “desert roadrunner” in the language of the Tohono O’odham nation, the area’s early inhabitants. Located in suburban northwest Tucson, in the center of an expanding retail corridor, Tohono Tadai covers 3.5 acres adjacent to an amusement center and the Tucson Mall, a destination with offices, shopping, and restaurants. Opened in December 1994, Tohono Tadai is the first bus transit center in the State of Arizona built to fully meet ADA specifications.

PLANNING PROCESS

Before Sun Tran built its transit centers, bus riders had to wait at isolated, poorly designed, badly lit bus shelters situated next to wide, heavily trafficked streets. Crossing streets to transfer buses was dangerous, even at intersections. In addition, large numbers of bus shelters strung along the city’s major roadways added to the visual clutter and sense of sprawl, and large numbers of people waiting for buses along major roads increased the public’s negative perception that transit was not working and that bus service was not reliable. This was particularly true in the downtown, where all bus routes passed. The large numbers of buses circulating through the central business district and the large numbers of passengers waiting on sidewalks throughout the area actually reduced bus efficiency and increased travel time.

Sun Tran’s goals for this project were as follows:

- Increase passenger safety by consolidating bus stops and reduce the numbers of people crossing busy streets to board buses;
- Improve operating efficiency of the buses;
- Enhance transit’s image in the community;
- Link public transportation to all modes such as bicycle, pedestrian and automobile (140 buses carry bicycle racks on the front);
- Provide coordinated transfers and route synchronization for passenger convenience;
- Provide a central information area for passengers that includes route maps and schedules, personal trip planning and information;
- Design transit centers accessible to persons with disabilities with amenities such as covered waiting areas, public telephones, and rest rooms; and
- Create attractive, convenient, comfortable, and safe waiting and transfer areas.

The Tohono Tadai site was selected to support growth to the northern and northwestern parts of the city, reduce operation ‘dead head’ miles, and support the number of buses already traveling along Stone and Wetmore Streets. Sun Tran has sited its new bus transit centers in each of the city’s four sections: Ronstadt downtown, Roy Laos in the south, Tohono Tadai in the north, and a future facility will be located in the east. Sites are selected based on feasibility studies and federal environmental guidelines including operational characteristics, land costs, and adjacent uses. For each new center, the city and Sun Tran look at and rate a multitude of sites based on system location, environmental history, air quality issues, traffic flows, and so on and then narrow the selection down to three to five priority sites. Then, an in-depth analysis is performed followed by appropriate environmental work. After a site is selected, the land is acquired and a preliminary design is developed. The final design process for the Tohono Tadai Center included a simulation by bus operators at the Pima County Fairgrounds.
The Tohono Tadai site was preferred because of its proximity to a family amusement center and the Tucson Mall—a major shopping destination—and because it acts as the gateway to the new northwest communities. The owners of the Tohono Tadai property were the developers of the Tucson Mall. Sun Tran and the city worked in close coordination with them. In addition, focus groups composed of persons with disabilities provided input and suggestions for amenities that would meet ADA requirements and features that would help riders with visual, hearing, and ambulatory disabilities using the facility. Ideas from architects, artists, traffic consultants, bus drivers, and people with disabilities were incorporated into the project’s design, and artists were included on the design team from the beginning. Community groups were involved as advisors on the project throughout the design stages. Tohono Tadai was designed and built by city architects who had an understanding of transit operations and the needs of the transit users.

Management of the facility is a cooperative effort: Tucson Mall provides a presence, the city handles maintenance, and Sun Tran takes care of landscaping and maintenance through outside contracts.

**STRATEGY**

The center operates from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays. There are 6,000 boardings per day through 12 bus bays for seven bus routes.

The city’s 3-mile linear park system, which was designed for use by cyclists, pedestrians, and horseback riders, runs along the transit corridor and adjacent to the center. Tohono Tadai also features shaded, cooled waiting areas, public rest rooms, Westminster Chimes in the clock tower, two play areas, drinking fountains, public art, vending machines, bike racks and lockers, and CCTV for security. A cooling tower situated under the center sends cooled evaporated air into the pipes installed behind the benches. Attention also has been paid to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. There is a textured platform around the facility, signage, benches constructed with round edges and a 2 percent pavement grade. All signage is in Grade #2 Braille and speakers are in place at each bus bay to announce information updates and schedule changes. A two-way amplified speaker system at the central information booth and a flashing red light at each bus stop direct attention to digital sign boards for passengers who are hearing impaired. For patrons in wheelchairs, there is a 34-in. counter at the central information booth, accessible public phones and vending machines, and restrooms equipped with motion-sensored toilets and sinks.

The design of Tohono Tadai is striking and provides an appealing oasis in an area where there is moderate pedestrian activity. The center’s theme is “urban grid meets river and mountain,” which is illustrated in the use of blue-colored concrete to...
symbolize the river, tan concrete for the mountains, and the urban grid represented in purple. The interplay of the natural and built environments is symbolized by the sculptural elements into two 200-sq-ft play areas and the 16 banners displayed on light poles around the perimeter that depict both ancient/natural icons and their modern/manmade parallels. The play areas were designed and constructed by artists to entertain and educate children and adults about the Sonoran desert environment. Sculptures, which are set in soft, rubberized ground covering to allow for safe climbing, include a giant horned toad about to roll over or be rolled over by a giant bulldozer in mosaic tile, a large desert tortoise, and a set of enlarged ceramic-tile alphabet building blocks in both English and Spanish.

FUNDING

The total cost of the project was $4.2 million; 80 percent was funded by the FTA.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Few if any obstacles to the transit center arose from the community or other city agencies. This may be due in part to the fact that Sun Tran is managed through a contract with the city. As a result, partnerships between Sun Tran and the city transportation planning office are strong. Furthermore, this level of cooperation has been cited by Sun Tran and city planners as the reason they have been able to design and build such attractive and innovative bus transit centers.

However, Sun Tran has acknowledged the need to establish partnerships with private sector groups in order to fully integrate their centers into the communities they serve and provide much needed retail services. The challenge facing Sun Tran is to establish these partnerships with the private sector to encourage the development of retail, commercial, and community uses around its new and existing facilities.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The center has transformed a parking lot into an attractive bus waiting environment that is an extraordinary improvement for passengers. However, because the center closes early, it is difficult for riders to reach destinations (like the Tucson Mall) after 6 p.m. by transit.

Although the center serves the Tucson Mall, 70 percent of passengers arriving at the Tohono Tadai transfer to other buses. Therefore, while better serving its transit-dependent riders, it would appear that Sun Tran has been less successful in luring mall patrons out of their cars. However, it is a new facility and this is estimated to improve use in the future. Finally, Tucson’s bus transit centers have no passenger-related retail; this represents an untapped opportunity for the development of these kinds of services.

CONCLUSIONS

With the completion of its three transit centers, Sun Tran has been able to provide riders with safe, comfortable, and convenient places to wait and transfer and to enhance the transit experience for riders. The innovative elements and features included at Tohono Tadai are worthy of consideration by other transit authorities as models for the design of future transit centers that act as focal points in suburban areas. Through such facilities, transit agencies can improve the livability of communities by making them more accessible and convenient, as well as safe and comfortable.

Case Study 7-2
New York, NY: Station Manager Program
A Place-Oriented Approach to Subway Station Management

For the first time . . . I feel as though some government-related agency is conveying a message to the public that . . . you are trying to serve your customers.
—New York City subway rider

SUMMARY

The New York City subway system, one of the largest in the world, has undergone a transformation in the past decade. With the investment of billions of dollars, subway cars have been purchased, stations renovated, and visible signs of decay—such as graffiti—have been removed.

The Station Manager Program was established in June 1990 to address a nagging and common complaint of subway customers that “no one was in charge” at the stations. Under previous management practices, MTA New York City Transit, which runs the system, had separate divisions responsible for specific tasks in each station: maintenance, crime prevention and response, repairs, and so on were handled by different divisions. While efficient in some regards, there was little coordination between
divisions and some difficulty responding to specific problems.

The Station Manager Program takes a more “place-oriented” as well as more personal approach to meeting customer needs by putting a single, visible, front-line individual in charge of a station, who is responsible for coordinating all station activities and providing a safe, clean, customer-friendly station environment. The station manager also serves as a point person for the community and participates in community organizations. Modeled after a similar program in the London Underground, the station managers work directly with support divisions to improve station conditions. They respond quickly to customer concerns and are flexible problem solvers.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Station Manager Program—the brainchild of then MTA New York City Transit President, Alan Kiepper—started with five station managers supervising 19 stations throughout the system, but has expanded every year since 1990. In setting up the program, the MTA New York City Transit held events and meetings to reach out to local community organizations, such as community boards and business improvement districts, to find out what their concerns were.

Based on this outreach, the goals of the Station Manager Program were established as follows:

- Better customer service through personal interaction;
- More control of the station environment through the coordination and monitoring of operations concerning cleaning, security, repair of defects, passenger flow, revenue activities, and other station quality issues;
- The use of the team approach to coordinate the activities of all the operating divisions concerned with stations;
- Improved staff supervision at the station level; and
- Improved community relations through participation at community board and other public meetings.

Station managers are encouraged to develop their own programs in response to the needs of their communities. For example, Maria Branch, the Station Manager at the Broadway East New York station in Brooklyn, participated with the New York City Police in a national “night out.” This program encourages members of a community to spend a “night out” participating in local events to show community solidarity in the fight against crime. Ms. Branch provided tours of her facility and refreshments for young people in order to show them that the subway station was an important part of their community and that vandalism and crime in the station ultimately affects them.

Stations are selected for inclusion in the program based on a number of criteria, including passenger volume, complexity of service, transfer locations, physical conditions, community locations, and special features. Recently renovated stations are often included to ensure the continued high quality of maintenance. Grand Central Station and Times Square were two of the first stations to enter the program.

STRATEGY

Ultimately, the Station Manager Program is planned to reach all 3.5 million daily subway customers using the transit system’s 468 stations. The MTA New York City Transit currently has 58 station managers in charge of 252 stations, which impact at least 80 percent of customers systemwide.

Each station manager handles as many as seven stations, although a few handle only one large station complex. Managers in turn answer to district station managers, each responsible for about 50 stations. (Before the program was initiated, behind-the-scenes station superintendents were in charge, but not on site.)

By using a team approach to management, the station managers coordinate all station activities to achieve a sense of order, improved maintenance, cleanliness, turnstile availability, and public address systems, and a decrease in fare evasions. They closely supervise the staff at their stations, including token clerks and cleaners. A recent reorganization has given the station managers more direct control of maintenance and repair personnel.

Managers have a clear presence in their stations. They frequently stand where they can be seen by customers, particularly during rush hours, and they wear bright orange vests. A photo of the station manager is prominently displayed near the token booth. Other nearby signs indicate when the manager has office hours in the station. During office hours, they stand in fare control areas, interact with customers, provide information, and listen to problems.

Station managers work closely with community organizations, public officials, and private developers on an ongoing basis. For example, Gerald Lane, previously the station manager for the Herald Square Station, developed a task force with local businesses,
such as Macy’s and A&S, and with the Port Authority Police and Transit Police to increase security during the holiday season. The station managers also work closely with the New York City Police precinct in their communities. Managers will notify the local precinct captains if they have special security needs at their stations.

Other station managers, in conjunction with their communities, have held exhibits or sponsored activities at their stations. For example, local schools have displayed student artwork in conjunction with programs that stations sponsor to increase children’s respect for their stations. In another case, a Brooklyn district station manager and the station manager of the Borough Hall Station arranged with Project Help to hold an exhibit and event at the station aimed at helping single mothers obtain counseling, job training, and jobs.

Station managers also deal directly with retail tenants in their stations. The real estate department of the MTA leases the spaces, but the station managers deal with tenant problems and requests and issue violations when necessary.

FUNDING

Funding for the program comes from the overall MTA New York City Transit budget, made up of transit fares and state and municipal funds. The budget includes the cost of the station managers themselves, their supervisors, and maintenance support activities and personnel under the direct supervision of the station managers. The program budgets were $22 million, $22.6 million, and $19.8 million, in 1994, 1995, and 1996, respectively. In 1994, the program was extended to include 252 stations and 62 station managers. Recent budget cuts have expanded the number of stations per manager so that 58 managers are now responsible for 252 stations.

The Division of Stations received a $20,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to help publicize the Station Manager Program. With this grant, a video about the program was produced and station managers made public appearances.

Because of recent budget cuts, the program cannot be expanded to more stations, but the efficiency of the program will continue to be improved and the station managers’ role will be re-evaluated to make them even more effective. The managers’ direct control of maintenance work is proving to be very cost-effective: the MTA New York City Transit has recently seen a significant increase in productivity among maintenance and cleaning personnel and a decrease in maintenance costs.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Carol Meltzer, the Chief Station Officer, mentioned that one of the most significant obstacles in establishing and implementing the program in the early years was the Transit Police. They were initially reluctant to work with the managers to solve problems in and around the stations or grant any authority to the station managers, whom they viewed as “civilians” in dealing with security issues. This problem has been largely overcome as the local precincts have learned to interact with the station managers, and the managers have learned to work with the police. The support of the top commanders in the Transit Police was essential in breaking down conflicts and establishing good relationships. Positive relationships continued as the Transit Police merged with the New York Police Department.

Cost is another obstacle that continues to threaten the existing program and future plans for its expansion. The program will not be extended to more stations in 1996, as originally planned.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the Station Manager Program, including many letters of praise. Also, customer comment and feedback about the Station Manager Program, as collected through surveys conducted by MTA New York City Transit’s department of customer service, have been positive. Graffiti at managed stations has decreased, and fare collection and refuse collection is more successfully accomplished at these stations.

The following data indicate the program’s success.

Station Cleanliness. A sample number of stations are surveyed monthly on a 1 (dirty) to 4 (clean) scale. The 3-year average of stations in the program (1991–1993) was 3.33, while the average for stations outside the program was 3.09. The MTA New York City Transit’s infrastructure department has created dedicated teams that work solely at stations with station managers. The response time to infrastructure and maintenance problems, therefore, is much faster at managed stations because they have, in effect, their own staff—within a manager’s purview—to service the stations.

Fare Evasion. From 1992 to 1993, the percentage of fare evasions per day measured at stations in the program (1991–1993) was 3.33, while the average for stations outside the program was 3.09. The MTA New York City Transit’s infrastructure department has created dedicated teams that work solely at stations with station managers. The response time to infrastructure and maintenance problems, therefore, is much faster at managed stations because they have, in effect, their own staff—within a manager’s purview—to service the stations.

Fare Evasion. From 1992 to 1993, the percentage of fare evasions per day measured at stations in the program was 1.98 percent, while the percentage at stations not in the program was 4.19 percent.

The MTA New York City Transit has received commendations for some of their customer service initiatives and favorable mention in the New York Times.
Figures 7-9 and 7-10. Case Study 7-2. New York City transit customers know when and where they can find their Station Managers by consulting the weekly calendar posted in each of the stations they manage. The program’s philosophy is shared with customers through a brochure as well. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)
and other newspapers. In 1992, the program won an American Public Transit Association (APTA) award and in 1993, the program was among the top twenty finalists for the Ford Foundation Management Innovation Awards program. This prompted Vice President Al Gore to recognize the achievements of the program in a letter to the MTA New York City Transit.

CONCLUSIONS

The Station Manager Program represents a new approach to subway station management and to the way the stations relate to their surrounding community. While the start-up costs of the program were significant, the MTA New York City Transit believes the program is already paying off in terms of (a) savings in maintenance costs and (b) increases in ridership at the stations with managers. But the primary goal of the program has always been to better serve customers, and by all indications the customers and the surrounding communities are indeed pleased. The program has changed the nature of the subway from a faceless bureaucracy to stations run by real people who can solve problems—both inside and around a station. As a result, surrounding communities have found new partners in addressing security and other livability issues in their neighborhoods.

SOURCE


Case Study 7-3
New York, NY: Port Authority Bus Terminal
A Comprehensive Approach Yields Security Benefits for Terminal and Times Square Neighborhood

We wanted to have customers feel that the Port Authority was in charge of the building, not that the building was in charge of us.
—Ken Philmus, Manager, Port Authority Bus Terminal

Finally we have a safe, convenient place where people can drop in and spend a little money.
—George Marlin, Executive Director, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey [1]

SUMMARY

The Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT) is the largest commuter bus terminal in the country, connecting major subway lines as well as housing more than 225 intercity bus platforms serving 185,000 passengers per day. The Bus Terminal, located on 42nd Street near Times Square, was reconstructed in the late 1970s, in part to reverse a perceived decline in the terminal and the area around it. This effort largely failed to achieve its goal. By the mid-1980s, the terminal was plagued with significant criminal activity and homelessness, with people actually living in the terminal. In addition, the interior of the terminal was confusing and unattractive, with insufficient services and amenities for passengers.

In 1991, the Port Authority created an in-house task force to completely revamp the terminal from both a design and a management perspective. A comprehensive improvement program was initiated, including Operation Alternative, a social service outreach and
referral program; a community policing program within the terminal; modifications to public spaces to minimize nooks and crannies; new amenities for users including upgraded restrooms, a public address system, and information booths; and improved retail.

In addition, the terminal management has become a more active participant in redevelopment and neighborhood activities in the area around the terminal. The manager of the facility is on the board of directors of nine community-based organizations and works closely with their community development projects.

The impact of these changes has been significant, and patrons have noticed the difference, as demonstrated by increasing positive perceptions during recent customer surveys. Also, in 3½ years, 33,000 referrals for homeless people were made. Sales per square foot of retail space have doubled. Crime in the terminal and surrounding area has been greatly reduced as well.

PLANNING PROCESS

The security problems at the Port Authority Bus Terminal did not emerge overnight, but began in the late 1950s—reflecting, in part, the decline of the Times Square area in general. By the mid-1980s, however, the terminal was in a near-crisis situation. The “crack” epidemic hit hard and the terminal provided a place for dealers and users to use drugs, hide, make deals, and use the public facilities. This problem was exacerbated by other concurrent trends: the overall recession in the economy; the closing of psychiatric hospitals and the release of patients with nowhere to go; and court decisions making it illegal to remove a person from a facility simply for loitering.

In many ways, the terminal was an ideal place for these illegal activities. It was an immense facility operating on six levels with two separate wings, with more than 225 bus gates serving 7,000 buses a day, multiple entrances, and a generally dismal environment. A major renovation and expansion of the facility in the early 1980s worsened the situation by making it even more difficult to control public space. Other seemingly small elements—like the number, location, and billing procedures for public telephones—were major contributors to security problems.

Officials of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, operators of the terminal, realized that they had to respond to increasing public demands to improve the terminal. Not only were patron perceptions poor, but retail revenue from the scores of shops and restaurants in the terminal was decreasing. An effort to reclaim public spaces—using pushcart vendors to fill empty or misused spaces on the main floor of the terminal—proved successful. However, Port Authority Officials realized that it was necessary to take a comprehensive approach to security, looking at all aspects of the design and management of the facility.

Project goals were as follows:

- To reduce fear of crime and actual crime and improve perception of security;
- To minimize niches and corners that accommodate the homeless and develop an effective social service program that would offer people alternatives and allow police to enforce rules;
- To improve the atmosphere of the bus terminal; and
- To increase marketability of retail spaces and improve the retail services provided in the station.

Figures 7-11 and 7-12. Case Study 7-3. The vending program introduced by the Port Authority at its 42nd Street bus terminal was one of the first steps taken to improve security at the facility; in combination with other efforts, there has been a 50% drop in crime at the terminal. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)
A task force, consisting of Port Authority staff from different divisions and consultants like PPS, was assembled to evaluate the use of public areas. This task force took the first intensive look at all aspects of the terminal, including design, management, security, social services, retail, circulation, amenities, ticketing—in short, all aspects of the terminal that affected public use. By looking at the terminal from this perspective the task force was able to understand how the different features and management practices at the terminal contributed to security problems and how to address them concurrently.

A report was prepared outlining the 100 recommendations of the task force. The recommendations included both short- and long-term recommendations and lower cost as well as higher cost items.

STRATEGY

The comprehensive scope of the strategy that has been implemented over the past 4 years makes it difficult to summarize. Many small changes together have had a big impact. The highlights of the program are as follows.

Operation Alternative. Operation Alternative involved strict enforcement of PABT rules while providing social service alternatives to needy individuals. While there had been social service providers in the terminal before, they tended not to work closely with the police. Under this program, terminal rules are clearly posted throughout the station. If a Port Authority Police officer sees someone in violation of the rules (under police union rules, the police must make the first contact) and appears to need or asks for help, he or she is referred to an on-site assessment center to be sent to the appropriate treatment facility. If someone refuses to comply with stated Port Authority rules, officers have three alternatives: remove the person from the building, issue a summons, or arrest the individual.

PABT also has partnerships with outside social service agencies, which provide referrals through the assessment center from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. seven days per week. They provide access to a range of services, including drug and alcohol treatment, employment training, medical assistance, and permanent and temporary housing. Individuals referred by police are interviewed, assessed, and assigned a counselor. Operation Alternative then transports people to appropriate services with a van provided by the PABT.

Community Policing. Operation Alternative has allowed the police to revamp the way they had previously provided services in the terminal. Based on the community policing model, police patrols are more evident within the terminal and different police become familiar with specific areas of the terminal—a kind of indoor “beat cop.” Police are even posted in high visibility areas during rush hour as a means of reassuring patrons and establishing a high-profile presence. Restroom attendants have continued to provide a security presence, an effort that began before the comprehensive plan was developed.

Design Improvements. Unused and misused space was redesigned in an attempt to eliminate so-called “criminogenic areas”: dark corners, poorly lit corridors, and other problematic areas that contributed to the unsafe atmosphere of the bus terminal. The design changes included renovating public restrooms, using smaller pillars (because pillars obstruct view) and brighter lighting, painting, and repairing floors. Attic spaces where homeless people had been living were sealed. Also, the Port Authority now plays classical music on its interior sound systems. This has yielded much positive public comment and seems to contribute to the overall ambiance of the terminal.

Retail Improvements. In addition, design changes were made to change poorly used areas into mixed-use, revenue-generating retail locations and make spaces more naturally self-policing. Efforts have been concentrated on making retail much more inviting and approachable and on expanding retail use into underutilized public spaces.

As part of the comprehensive plan, a phased retail development strategy with a space-by-space retail plan was prepared to allow retail changes to be made as leases end. Ideas ranged from small kiosks to a golf driving range, a sports bar, pro shop, and learning center. Recommendations were also made to improve storefront design and merchandising.

A vending cart operation, previously noted, was started on the main level of the terminal. This program made the terminal more attractive by providing a service for patrons and reducing nooks and corners where security problems occurred, especially at the entrances to the terminal from the street and the subway.

One of the terminal’s success stories was the leasing of two vacant spaces near the central staircase to Au Bon Pain, a light food retailer, and Timothy’s coffee, an upscale coffee shop. These locations have become their respective chains’ highest grossing retail spaces and have actually helped improve the sales of businesses around them.
Late Hours Management. The terminal is far too large for the number of people using it late at night. To reduce the potential for undesired activity during these hours, bus service is consolidated during non-peak hours so that commuters wait together. Many restrooms are closed in off-peak hours as well. All individual gates are closed at 10 p.m. and bus operations move to gates with common concourses. At 1 a.m. daily, all gates are closed except for the lower level of the north wing, which stays open all night.

Telephone Fraud Prevention. One of the more curious security problems in the terminal was rampant illegal international telephoning. Long lines of people waiting to purchase cheap illegal international calls (from dealers using stolen credit cards) clogged the station with illegitimate activity. Numerous telephones were removed and the remaining phones were replaced with so-called “smart phones,” which make international and incoming calls impossible. This produced perhaps the most visible, quickest change in the terminal: overnight, the street phone call vendors disappeared.

Community Outreach and Participation. Because the health of the neighborhood and the terminal are so closely interrelated, the manager of the terminal has become actively involved in community activities, serving on the board of organizations such as the Mayor’s Midtown Committee, the 42nd Street Redevelopment Corporation (in charge of the Times Square redevelopment project), and the 9th Avenue Association, a business group. The Port Authority works on various problems with these organizations opening up lines of communication and benefiting the terminal and the neighborhood as a whole.

Efforts of these and other groups, especially the redevelopment of 42nd Street, have complemented the efforts by the Port Authority to improve the terminal. With the help of the business improvement district (BID), which sponsors private security guards to patrol streets and sanitation staff to supplement city forces, crime has dropped 41 percent in the area between 1993 and 1995. The cleanliness rating improved from 54 percent to 96 percent, according to the Mayor’s monthly cleanliness survey of the area, as reported by Gover Howell, Director of Public Safety for the Times Square BID. In addition, illegal peddling and low-level drug dealing have dramatically decreased in the neighborhood.

The number of PABT customers rating the area around the bus terminal as “good or very good” grew from 7 percent in 1991 to 12 percent in 1993 and to 15 percent in 1994.

FUNDING

The economics of the bus terminal may seem daunting, but many of the program components can be tailored to smaller facilities. Some of the programs implemented did not increase costs at the Port Authority, but simply involved a different deployment of existing resources. In addition, investment in capital improvements and retail have resulted in increased revenues to the terminal.

The operating budget for the Port Authority Bus Terminal is about $45 million per year, plus about $10 million in capital improvements. Approximately 25 percent of the operating budget is spent on security. Some of the maintenance costs of the facility also have security benefits: staffing the restrooms, for example, costs about $3 million annually. The contract for social service referrals is approximately $750,000.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The comprehensive approach to security meant a new way of operating the terminal, along with a substantial investment of funds for new programs. Both were obstacles in their own way. The cooperation of police staff was crucial to the success of the changes and Operation Alternative represented a significant departure from generally accepted policing methods. Furthermore, the task force, in working to develop the initial recommendations, attempted to be conciliatory and collaborative, but the very nature of its work involved organizational changes that many resisted.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The Port Authority regularly collects information about patron perceptions, retail data, and use of the facility by the homeless. The following data indicate that the project has been successful:

- Operation Alternative has been successful in referring and relocating the homeless to the proper facilities and agencies and had a tremendous effect on safety levels at the terminal. The homeless population has been dramatically reduced. In 3½ years, Operation Alternative made 33,000 referrals. However, a few problematic individuals remain. In 1991, 43 percent of customers surveyed complained about these people, but by 1994 they were a problem to only 15 percent of terminal users.
Criminal activity throughout the terminal has decreased by half, with serious crime down even more. The dramatic reductions of specific crimes are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Crime</th>
<th>Number in 1988</th>
<th>Number in 1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickpocket</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loitering</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug-Related</td>
<td>1216</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sales per square foot have increased from $388 to $659 between 1990 and 1994. Revenue per square foot also increased, from $50 in 1990 to $67 in 1994. Gross sales from the Port Authority rose from $27.14 million in 1992 to $37.13 million in 1994.

Annual commuter surveys show that public perceptions of the bus terminal have become very favorable. The 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1994 surveys showed significant improvements in perceptions about security and social issues. Specifically, customer rating of “safety inside the terminal” as “good to very good” more than doubled from 20 percent in 1991 to 52 percent in 1994; “safety in restroom facilities” increased from 12 percent in 1991 to 26 percent in 1994; “the police effectiveness” rating jumped from 28 percent in 1991 to 51 percent for both 1993 and 1994. The overall experience of using the bus terminal was rated “good to very good” by 67 percent of customers in 1993 (the first time the question was asked) and by 76 percent in 1994.

The surrounding district is clearly being revitalized. The Walt Disney Company has committed to the 42nd Street redevelopment project and will be renovating a historic theater and participating in opening a new hotel. Other entertainment companies are following. The Times Square BID is upgrading the cleanliness and security in the neighborhood from West 40th to West 53rd Streets and from 6th to 8th Avenues.

CONCLUSIONS

The Port Authority Bus Terminal has been transformed from a transit terminal plagued by security problems to one which is becoming an anchor for the revitalizing Times Square district. There is general public acknowledgment that the terminal and the neighborhood are more livable.

The most important lesson learned in this multiyear process of revitalizing a transportation facility is that addressing all problematic situations was necessary to clean up the terminal. Efforts by the Port Authority have addressed all aspects of problems in the terminal, both perceived and actual. Working with the surrounding neighborhood has contributed to upgrading a troubled area.

ENDNOTE


Case Study 7-4
Portland, OR: Tri-Met’s Rider Advocate Program
On-Board Services Improve Transit and Community Security

The Rider Advocate [program] is one of the first attempts of Tri-Met to address collaborative relationships that improve transit. We see it as an innovative partnership: customer service on wheels. These are people who are hired from within their own community and who have a commitment to their own neighborhood.

—Peg Caliendo, Marketing and Community Safety, Tri-Met

We commend Robert and David for their quick thinking and rapid response that helped save a life. This effort illustrates Rider Advocates’ important role on Tri-Met and in the community.

—Ben Priestly, Executive Director, Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods

SUMMARY

The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (Tri-Met) “Rider Advocate” program was established in 1994 in response to an expressed need by communities in northeast Portland for an ongoing security presence on Tri-Met buses. The Rider Advocate program is a community-based partnership between Tri-Met and the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods that enlists members of the community to serve as extensions of Tri-Met’s customer-relations efforts.

A major goal of the program is to reduce antisocial behavior on the buses in order to encourage ridership. Rider advocates talk with patrons, distribute brochures, and give out transit as well as social-service information. Rider advocates assist both new and regular riders and help Tri-Met personnel maintain a pleasant environment for passengers. The program has helped solve problems on this specific line.
while providing personalized service to customers. With the approval of funds from Americorps, the program will be expanded in 1996 to include additional bus lines serving other neighborhoods.

PLANNING PROCESS

Tri-Met created the Rider Advocate program in the aftermath of two shootings in October 1993 on board the #4 Fessenden bus line in northeast Portland. Immediately after the incidents, Tri-Met posted armed guards on the buses in this neighborhood. The community complained that this solution was not acceptable, stating that “it wasn’t how they saw themselves” and that people from the community should be hired to do the job instead.

Through a series of meetings with Tri-Met, the community proposed the idea of having individuals from the surrounding community riding the eight bus lines that service northeastern Portland to be troubleshooters and provide a security presence. Tri-Met contracted with the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods (NCN), one of Portland’s 90 volunteer-run neighborhood associations, to implement the project, which also is responsible for the hiring, training, and deployment of nine full-time rider advocates and a coordinator, all of whom receive full health and other employee benefits. Rider advocates comprise part of Tri-Met’s customer service division and live in the 13 northeast coalition neighborhoods.

When the program began in 1994, Tri-Met’s goals included the following:

- Enhancing customer relations, including boosting customer confidence in using transit;
- Reducing the occurrence of criminal and anti-social behavior on buses; and
- Enhancing customer knowledge of the Tri-Met system.

STRATEGY

The NCN offers technical services to 13 neighborhood associations and is funded by the city’s Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA), a bureau created to act as a liaison between the citizens of Portland and their elected officials. The ONA, in turn, oversees the work of seven neighborhood program offices, which help neighborhoods with community development, crime prevention, land-use assistance, and neighborhood organizing. When Portland’s communities face specific problems, a structure of grass roots community organizations already exists. No groups had to be mobilized to address the problem because they were already officially recognized and, as such, it was easy for Tri-Met to work with them.

Rider advocates were originally assigned to the northeast in response to specific criminal incidents. The northeast business and retail center, however, is also Tri-Met’s second highest ridership area, on both light rail and bus. Advocates alight and board many times each day in order to cover a variety of buses along all eight bus lines and four connecting lines within the coalition’s neighborhood boundaries. They are equipped with radios, which allow them to reach both 911 and Tri-Met in case of emergency. Rider advocates travel in pairs and board buses (and some light rail trains) weekdays beginning at 1:30 p.m., the time of daily school dismissals. At this time of day, the advocates ride the lines that service the area’s schools, ensuring that students are well-behaved on buses and at bus stops. They are also given free bus and movie passes with which they reward those youngsters displaying appropriate behavior when others around them are “acting up.”

The advocates themselves are between the ages of 30 and 55; most are African American and two are women. They are charged with talking to and developing relationships with passengers, and giving out information on NCN social services, job training, and neighborhood-watch groups in the area. Rider advocates are trained to deal with difficult people. Passengers are encouraged to ask their rider advocate for help or for information about local points of interest, community programs, or Tri-Met services.
FUNDING

The ONA funds seven neighborhood coalitions, which oversee the work of 90 volunteer-run neighborhood associations such as the NCN. The Rider Advocate program is funded by Tri-Met on a yearly contract and costs about $284,000 to administer and operate. The advocates themselves are paid $8.50/hour through funds transferred to the NCN.

The County District Attorney proposed and received an Americorps grant to hire 10 transit advocates in a companion to the Rider Advocate program. The transit advocates will ride other bus and light rail lines in the city and on the downtown transit mall.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The primary obstacle facing the program is that it is both labor-intensive and expensive to operate; approximately two-thirds of program money funds labor and about one-third is used for administrative expenses. Also, bus drivers have expressed concern that rider advocates may be monitoring them and reporting their mistakes.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

No major incidents have occurred on routes served by rider advocates since the advent of the program. In addition, in the past year, rider advocates saved the life of a woman who was suffering a stroke while waiting at a bus stop and returned a lost 3-year-old, alone at a stop, to his home.

On-board surveys of passengers on the #4 bus line were conducted specifically to see how perceptions of safety and comfort have improved. Passenger knowledge of the Rider Advocate program as well as their experience with advocates caused people to rate Tri-Met higher across the board. Passengers who had seen advocates gave Tri-Met more “excellent” ratings than respondents who had not; passengers commented that the Rider Advocate program was a “great idea” and stated that advocates gave out bus information and directions, assisted passengers with disabilities and helped maintain order on the buses.

In early 1996, a process to evaluate the success of the program began, which includes interviews with the following people in order to determine whether or not the program goals are being adequately met, how effectively the program is operating, and what changes might be needed to increase the program’s effectiveness:

- Bus operators on all lines that the rider advocates frequent;
- Administrators of the advocate program;
- Tri-Met Dispatch and Road Operations;
- Representatives from the Portland Police Bureau Tri-Met Transit Unit; and
- Representatives from the rider advocates themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

The Rider Advocate program began as a safety and security program. It has evolved, however, into a community effort to encourage appropriate behavior aboard transit. In addition, rider advocates see what problems and issues are facing drivers and passengers and can share this information with Tri-Met, thereby making transit safer and more comfortable for passengers, while improving community security.
CHAPTER 8

Making Communities Accessible and Convenient

Americans are not irrationally car-crazed. We seem wedded to the automobile because policy after government policy encourages us to be.
—Jessica Mathews in the Washington Post. [1]

Since the 1950’s, autocentric transportation policies at every level—federal, state, and local—have effectively destroyed transportation options for Americans. These policies have wiped out walkable, older communities while preventing the creation of new ones.
—Richard Moe, President, National Trust for Historic Preservation. [2]

INTRODUCTION

Much of what was stressed in the previous case studies centers on the “destination” and the role that transit can play in enhancing the communities where transit stops and stations are located. But this approach leaves out a fundamental goal of transit, which is to provide a convenient way for people to reach their destinations.

Many people in the United States have no option but to use a car to get from place to place. The design and planning of communities over the past decades precludes other options or makes them so inconvenient that few people walk, ride a bike, or take public transit. Even existing communities—older neighborhoods that had once been walkable and well-served by public transit—have been negatively impacted by automobiles so that, ironically enough, cars are now required rather than optional.

Today, as participants in focus groups for this study emphasized, people live complicated lives. With two working parents and the need to plan children’s activities, everyone seems to be going—as one focus group participant put it—“from everywhere to everywhere.” Those who cannot drive because of age, illness, or income are especially sensitive to the lack of convenience in their lives and their dependence on others just to get around.

Overview of Community Strategies and Role of Transit

Chapters 4 through 7 presented what communities, in general, are doing to improve livability before discussing existing and potential transit roles. In the case of concerns about access and convenience, transit is inseparable from overall community strategies.

While many people are tired of having to drive cars to do the simplest errand, of waiting in traffic jams and of chauffeuring their kids from school to music lessons, the automobile has clear advantages in terms of flexibility and comfort. In contrast, most transit systems have been based on rigid routes and scheduling, especially rail systems. For reasons of economic practicality, some destinations simply cannot be served or serviced as frequently as others.

However, new approaches are being tried to make transit more flexible, comfortable, and convenient—not to replace the car, but to provide more viable alternatives that meet individual as well as community needs.

Land-use strategies (see also Chapter 2) to change the design of communities so that they are more compact and, therefore, appropriate for a variety of transportation options have even been reported as a cover story in Newsweek. As the article begins, “Most of us actually know what we want in a neighborhood—we
just don’t know how to get it, because developers have been building the wrong thing for 50 years.” [3] While somewhat overstated, it is true that there is at least a debate going on today about land use and transportation that was less prominent a few years ago.

The goal of more progressive land-use strategies is to plan and design communities more compactly so residents can walk, bike, or take a bus and not always have to drive. There should be centers in a community where shops, schools, services, and other destinations are within walking distance of each other. The problem is that, at least for the present, very little new development provides such an alternative and established areas cannot be transformed overnight. As a result, land-use strategies, as important as they are, represent a long-term approach.

Retrofitting traditional communities or re-establishing pedestrian and transit networks in communities that were built prior to auto-dominated policies offers great potential for more immediate results. Case studies of Pioneer Square in Portland; Davis Square in Somerville, Massachusetts; Woodbridge, New Jersey; the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative; and the Green Line, Chicago are some of the key examples of the impact of retrofitting to improve pedestrian and transit access.

Effective transit systems that simply offer convenient service at competitive prices also represent an effective strategy. The Big Blue Bus in Santa Monica is one dramatic example of a bus system that provides convenience and accessibility in a city that is part of the car-oriented culture of Los Angeles. Many of the case studies presented here—such as Davis Square, Somerville, MA; 16th Street Transitway, Denver; and Go Boulder, Colorado—are transit systems that offer convenient service within neighborhoods, downtowns, or communities as a whole.

Another more specialized strategy has been the creation of transit shuttles and connectors, shuttle bus services that connect residential neighborhoods with employment centers. Some systems facilitate connections with commuter rail and rapid transit stations. These transit shuttles and connectors are often sponsored by developers and corporate employers, alone or in partnership with transit agencies, and financing usually comes from a combination of rider fares, employer subsidies, grants and public subsidies. Other systems, like Chicago’s JobLink Corporation (see example in Chapter 6) takes inner city residents to job-rich suburbs in subscription vans and buses. Still other programs provide employer-sponsored shuttle buses from outlying regional bus and rail stations to office and industrial parks not served by regular transit. A variety of examples are provided in this chapter.

Intermodal transit centers help improve the functioning of existing transit and improve linkages between different modes of travel. Meridian, Mississippi is currently transforming its historic railroad station for this specific role. Most of the case studies presented in this report, however, have some sort of intermodal component to them: Wellston Station, St. Louis, combines local buses, shuttle vans, and light rail; Corpus Christi’s Staples Street Station is a bus transfer center that connects to a downtown rubber wheel trolley. LINC (Local Initiative for Neighborhood Circulation) in Seattle is in the process of developing neighborhood intermodal centers with connections to regional buses and private taxis. The Watts Shuttle feeds regional bus lines.

Neighborhood-based transportation services may offer the most potential to support the goals of neighborhood convenience and accessibility. Case studies include two very diverse communities—Watts, Los Angeles, and Aspen, Colorado—where new transit services provide flexible service in smaller buses to local destinations. These systems are viewed positively by passengers because they offer more options than larger buses. Just the same, much remains to be learned about the long-term viability of these systems. Experimental demonstrations can be helpful in assessing their effectiveness, for example, the LINC Shuttle in Seattle was a 6-month pilot project to test specific assumptions and evaluate public response. In the future, such neighborhood transportation services can also create mini-centers of community life, help generate new jobs and businesses, and improve access to a larger region.

Figure 8-1. The Tohono Tadai Center, Tucson, AZ, provides a focal point for development near the Tucson Mall. (Credit: Steven Haines)
ENDNOTES

2. Ibid., p.6–7.

EXAMPLES

Santa Monica, CA: The Big Blue Bus
Convenient and Accessible City Bus Service Builds Livability and Transit Ridership

We want to make riding a bus an enjoyable experience, so that the passenger steps on a clean bus, meets a helpful driver, and rides to a destination he or she wants to reach.
—Bob Ayer, Assistant Director, Big Blue Bus

For 70 years, Santa Monica has taken an active approach to transit to assure that the city and its nearby destinations are accessible and convenient for residents. In 1923, the sparsely settled community offered an exclusive citywide bus franchise to a private bus operator that would establish bus routes specified by the city. Within a few years, complications arose and neither state-run railroad nor private bus services were meeting the needs of Santa Monica’s residents. In an attempt to improve the situation, the city bought buses and established its own routes. Later, the local private company merged with the city’s Big Blue Bus (BBB). For almost 70 years, the BBB has operated local main line bus service to Los Angeles County’s west side under local control.

The BBB carries approximately 19 million passengers per year on 135 buses. With a fare of 50 cents (the national average is 75 cents), the farebox recovery ratio is 46 percent compared to the U.S. transit system average of 28 percent. More than half of the company’s revenue (61 percent) comes from fares and the rest (39 percent) from subsidy, which is precisely the reverse of the budget for Los Angeles County transit. Most important, the BBB received a rating of “favorable” by 98 percent of its passengers. According to Mr. Ayer, the favorable rating is a direct result of efforts to keep the buses clean and ensure that they “look like something people want to ride,” rather than have people thinking “they don’t care.”

The BBB runs five lines to the University of California, Los Angeles, and four lines to the beach, one line to downtown Los Angeles, and it operates special monthly trips. The BBB takes input from the community on a regular basis regarding its service; almost everyone in the city of Santa Monica lives within two blocks of a bus stop. As residential to commercial service has proved successful, the focus of the service has evolved and is now geared toward linking business centers and providing point-to-point service between the aerospace center, El Segundo, and Santa Monica. In fact, one experimental route provides “family seating” and videotaped entertainment for aerospace commuters.

The newest development for the BBB is a citywide street enhancement project along Main Street and Pico Boulevard, which has marked a turning point for the BBB. The city, the BBB, and local businesses are now working together to enhance the community and transit amenities.

Kids Kab: Reducing the Need for Parent Chauffeuring

One of the community livability challenges for many parents is transporting children conveniently and safely. Kids Kab is a privately operated transit service for children, designed specifically to meet the needs of busy working families. It offers individually customized door-to-door transportation to and from school, after-school activities, doctor appointments, music lessons, and weekend social and sports events.
The service was created by Pamela Henderson, a working mother of three children in Birmingham, Michigan. From its humble beginning in 1991, with three vans and manual dispatching, the business has expanded into a far-reaching network of franchises in 12 states that collectively carry 50,000 riders a month. The fast growth of Kids Kab—and numerous imitators—demonstrates that there is a market for customized transportation services focused on children and young teenagers.

The service is offered by subscription and on a single-ride basis. In some communities, Kids Kab carries students to and from classes at independent schools that do not have school bus transportation of their own. Peak demand occurs after school, with vans carrying children to sports activities, music and dance lessons, and dentist appointments. Weekends are also periods of high demand for transportation to sports events, birthday parties, and dances.

Because safety and security are uppermost in parents’ minds, children are issued photo identification cards that become their bus admission ticket. Children are not left unattended; they must be met at the door by a parent or other pre-approved person. To allay parents’ fears of turning their children over to strangers, drivers are carefully screened with an emphasis on hiring parents, school bus drivers and retired neighbors living in the service area.

New Jersey Transit WHEELS Program:
Experimenting with Flexible Service to Serve Local Mobility Needs

When you ride our WHEELS you travel in comfort, and in the company of friends and neighbors. Without a worry about weather, traffic, or wear and tear on your car, and that means less wear and tear on you. So go ahead and laugh, talk, sleep and relax, on NJ Transit WHEELS. It’s the way more and more people are getting around.

—From a NJ Transit promotional brochure

The New Jersey Transit WHEELS program is an experimental program to test special transit services to serve local mobility needs not currently served by traditional buses. Funding from CMAQ has, since 1993, made it possible every month for 138,000 people to travel to and from home, school, shopping, work, and commuter rail stations. The WHEELS program operates express service along a fixed route between residential areas and rail stations, office districts (corporate and industrial parks), and shopping centers statewide. Several routes pick up passengers at park-and-ride lots, bus terminals, hotels, and train stations. Between two and four 20-passenger minibuses service each route on weekdays.

The most successful of NJ Transit’s 19 WHEELS Suburban Transportation Services is the Princeton Junction Rail Station-Lawrence route. The Princeton Junction service is a flexible subscription service, which requires passengers to reserve their seats in advance for a specific month, week, or day. The service operates every 30 min during weekday rush hours from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. and from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. between the Princeton Junction Rail Station (along the Northeast Corridor Rail Line) in West Windsor and residential neighborhoods in Lawrence (in Mercer County). Arrivals and departures are scheduled to coordinate with the trains. Fares range from $1.40 one way to $49.00 for a monthly pass.

The shuttle service was introduced by NJ Transit as a way to solve the serious parking problem that exists at the Princeton Junction rail station and to assist commuters traveling to destinations along the Northeast Corridor Rail Line. The service is operated by Mayflower Contract Services for NJ Transit, which requires Mayflower to coordinate passenger pickup requests closely with train arrivals/departures.

Ridership has more than tripled—from 471 to 1,968 in eight months—since the service began in August 1994. Brochures, Transit Days, free-ride coupons, give-away items, and direct mail solicitation have been used to draw more riders to this service.

Figure 8-3. Brochure for Kids Kab, a privately operated transportation service for children, which provides transportation to and from after school activities. (Credit: Kids Kab)
Case studies present three different communities: Aspen, Colorado, a wealthy resort community; Watts, a low-income neighborhood in Los Angeles; and Meridian, Mississippi, a small city. Each has addressed the goal of improved access and convenience in a different manner, but the community-initiated process has yielded transit programs in all three communities that address the needs of residents in a more effective manner:

Case Study 8-1: Aspen, CO: City Shuttles
Community Develops Plan to Reduce Traffic Congestion and Increase Mobility

Aspen cannot build its way out of traffic problems anymore than Los Angeles was able to solve its problems with ever larger and wider freeways. The community seeks to provide a balanced, integrated transportation system for residents, visitors and commuters that reduces congestion and pollution.

—Aspen Area Community Plan, January 1993

SUMMARY

Aspen, Colorado, a charming, old mining town and world-famous ski resort, was plagued with traffic congestion and a parking shortage until recently when a “pay-for-parking” program and increased local transit services were introduced. This “carrot and stick” approach was the only way to convince people to leave their cars at home, or at least outside the business district, according to Gary Gleason, the Marketing Director of the Roaring Fork Transit Agency (RFTA). While parking fees were instituted in early 1995 to discourage the use of downtown streets as free, long-term parking lots, an inexpensive demand-response van service and a free shuttle from outlying park-and-ride facilities were introduced at the same time to provide alternative transportation. Commuter service was also expanded in terms of frequency and number of express runs. The response has been overwhelmingly positive and there has been a substantial increase in transit ridership.

PLANNING PROCESS

Because tourism is Aspen’s economic engine, the RFTA and the local ski corporations have long provided free bus service within the city and between the four ski areas as a service to visitors. Locals, commuters and tourists, however, still tended to clog up the unmetered streets of Aspen,
especially during the peak winter season. The full-time population of Aspen is only 6,000, but it expands to as many as 30,000 during the winter months. In addition, 60 percent of the people who work in Aspen live outside the city, primarily because of very high housing costs, and the full-time population in the entire Roaring Fork River Valley has expanded to 30,000 in recent years. To serve this large commuter population, the RFTA provides bus service along Highway 82, the corridor through the Roaring Fork River Valley—the only means of entering Aspen for most of the year. The parking fee program was intended to encourage even more of these commuters to take the bus. A new parking lot at the airport outside of town, serviced by another free shuttle, was also built to encourage both commuters and visitors to leave their cars outside of Aspen.

The pay-for-parking program, free shuttle buses, and other proposals for reducing congestion grew out of the Aspen Area Community Plan (AACP). Developing transportation alternatives was an important theme of the AACP, a document intended to "revive the vitality that previously characterized Aspen," while developing "a livable environment for the community’s residents, employees, and visitors." The AACP published in 1993, was the result of a 2-year, community-based process, led by citizen task forces and professional consultants. Along with action plans to revitalize the permanent resident community by providing more affordable housing, promote sustainable development and maintain design quality, Aspen residents expressed the need, in the AACP’s “Transportation Action Plan,” to provide transportation alternatives in order to reduce their dependency on automobiles. The increase in commuter traffic caused by the displacement of the workforce was described in the AACP as “degrading both the air quality and the quality of life for both residents and visitors.” Aspen residents realized that “Aspen cannot build its way out of traffic problems anymore than Los Angeles was able to solve its problems with ever larger and wider freeways.”

The Transportation Action Plan proposed detailed solutions that would do the following:

- Limit vehicle trips into Aspen,
- Provide efficient valley-wide mass transit,
- Alter land-use patterns,
- Move people within and around the city without automobiles,
- Create a less congested downtown,
- Enhance pedestrian mobility,
- Improve bikeways, and
- Provide practical car storage facilities on the outskirts of town.

The developers of the Transportation Action Plan recognized that locals and visitors alike would only take advantage of the parking facilities outside of town if mobility within town, through frequent, accessible shuttle services, was enhanced. Likewise, the transit service would only be used if drivers were discouraged from bringing their cars into town. Thus, each component of the Transportation Action Plan was dependent on the implementation of the other components. Most of the steps outlined in the Transportation Action Plan were phased in between 1992 and 1995.
A controversial plan by the Colorado Department of Transportation to bring a four-lane highway into Aspen was recently rejected by the community. The city of Aspen proposes to build, instead, a new two-lane parkway from the airport, with a light rail system running down the median, to replace the overcrowded two-lane highway. The new road, called “Alternative H,” would retain the historic character of the “entrance to Aspen,” preserve open space, reduce the number of cars coming into town and force vehicles to slow down as they enter. “Alternative H” would provide a more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly approach to entering the town, and it would have fewer hidden costs, such as the additional parking garages needed for a four-lane highway.

**STRATEGY**

The RFTA has expanded the range of choices within the three types of transit service that it provides in the Aspen area as follows.

*City Buses.* The service hours of the free circulating bus system that has been operating for many years within the city were increased; it now runs from 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 a.m., on four year-round routes and two additional seasonal routes, at 20- to 30-min intervals. New services recently added to supplement the bus system include: a “dial-a-ride” van service, seating 15, that circulates on a 15-min fixed route—the service is free, but if the van picks up passengers at their doors, the charge is $0.50; the Galena Street Shuttle, a free, seasonal downtown trolley that runs north-south from the municipal parking structure through town to the Aspen Mountain gondola; and the Airport Park-and-Ride Shuttle, a free, seasonal service from a 350-car parking lot into the center of town, designed primarily for commuters.

*Seasonal Bus Service.* The local ski company pays for ski-area shuttles that operate in winter. In the summer, RFTA buses climb the winding road (no cars allowed) to the foot of the Maroon Bells, a spectacular group of high mountain peaks, for a fee of $5.00.

*The Commuter Corridor to Glenwood Springs.* The RFTA provides 1.5 million passenger trips a year, primarily for commuters, on buses that run along the Roaring Fork River Valley. With the introduction of paid parking in Aspen, the level of commuter transit service was doubled to encourage people to ride buses by making them even more convenient.

The parking fee introduced in the downtown business district to encourage people to use the many transit choices was only $1.00 per hour. But to make it equitable, and to counter the charge that only the rich could park in Aspen, parking was limited to 2 hours. Rather than individual meters, which were deemed to be unsightly, “pay and display” meters, which dispense tickets to place in the windshield, were attached to the historic-style lampposts at mid-block locations. Aspen also introduced the innovative idea of “in-car” meters which can be purchased from the city and credited with up to $500 of parking time, also in 2-hour increments.

**FUNDING**

The RFTA is funded by a 1 cent sales tax that was raised recently to 1½ cents to help fund the light rail system. While the ski-area shuttles are paid for by the ski company, the other free shuttles are paid for out of the regular operating budget of the RFTA. The cost per ride is about $2.00, relatively low by industry standards. The free service is perceived by the RFTA and the community as being critical to the success of Aspen as a comfortable and convenient resort destination, as well as a means of encouraging residents to leave their cars at home. Parking revenues, collected by the city of Aspen, go primarily toward the enforcement of parking restrictions, as well as to help pay for the free park-and-ride shuttle service from the airport into town.

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

The RFTA and the city of Aspen have faced their share of obstacles; changing long-established behavior patterns, particularly within a privileged population, has not been easy. In addition, maintaining the character of a small town while coming up with big-city transportation solutions has, at times, created problems of scale.

The opposition to the parking fee proposal was fierce: a “honk-in” was staged a month before the program was to take effect to protest the end to free parking. Thousands of cars, with horns blaring, circled City Hall on New Year’s Day for 25 min. Mayor John Bennett stood outside City Hall with a sound level meter, greeting the protesters, and handing out prizes to the loudest horns. Nevertheless, the program went ahead and within 2 weeks of its inception even its staunchest opponents were calling it a resounding suc-
cess: the congestion was noticeably diminished and the city was perceived to be more livable.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The parking fees have been remarkably successful as a disincentive, motivating people to take the bus. Commuter ridership in the valley is up 35 percent from last year to this year and ridership in the city is up 23 percent. Parking occupancy has dropped from 95 percent to 85 percent which has reduced vehicle miles traveled and parking “trolling.” Average daily traffic into Aspen has declined by 3 to 4 percent since paid parking was initiated.

CONCLUSIONS

Although Aspen, a wealthy resort town with huge seasonal fluctuations in ridership, may have little in common with most urban communities, its problems of traffic congestion, degraded air quality, and arduous commutes are familiar livability concerns. The Aspen community’s innovative solutions, introduced through a long citizen-participation process, can serve as models to other communities across the country. By carefully adapting urban-scale transit solutions to the needs of a small town, the RFTA and the Aspen community are succeeding at preserving the quality of life in the Aspen area while enhancing mobility. Transportation strategies, including improved transit and restraints on auto use, have made the area far more livable.

SOURCE

Aspen Area Community Plan (January 1993).

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) began operating the local shuttle service in Los Angeles’ Watts neighborhood in September 1990 as a transportation demonstration project, in response to the community’s request for improved local transit service. The initial program was so popular that service was expanded and a second route was considered and added this year. DASH shuttles also operate within downtown Los Angeles, Pacific Palisades, Fairfax, Hollywood, Midtown, Crenshaw, Van Nuys, Warner Center, and southeast Los Angeles, for a total of 17 communities throughout the city. Most shuttles operate 6 days per week with 20- to 45-min headways. For 25 cents, residents are connected by DASH shuttles to the key retail, recreational, and social service centers in their neighborhoods.

PLANNING PROCESS

Watts is an economically disadvantaged neighborhood in Los Angeles, an area that never fully recovered from the Watts riots in 1965. Since that time, there has been a great deal of investment in the area, especially in the form of community services, retail, and educational and health facilities. While the hospital, shopping center, and park had done much to improve the livability of the neighborhood for residents, many people were unable to reach these destinations. They were scattered throughout the community and had limited public-access services. Residents approached their local councilwoman requesting a solution to the problem—a fixed-route shuttle bus service that would circulate throughout the neighborhood and connect residents to vital community centers.

The Mayor and City Council responded to the community’s concerns by establishing a 1-year transportation demonstration project to initiate shuttle service in the greater Watts community. The project was funded through Proposition Local Transit Assistance moneys. In September 1990, two buses (with one backup) began to travel a bi-directional route every 45 min.

Many groups joined together to plan and implement the DASH shuttle service in Watts. They included the offices of the Mayor and two councilmembers and their Transportation Policy Review Committee; representatives from LADOT and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (LACMTA); local senior centers and civic associations that actively solicited both the City Council and the LADOT for neighborhood transit service; and the

Case Study 8-2
Los Angeles, CA: The DASH Watts Shuttle
Community-Scaled Transit Links
Neighborhood Destinations

I love being the director of a transportation program that provides such a wonderful service to a community I’ve lived in my entire life. The people who use the Watts shuttle need it desperately and really depend on its services.

—Teddy Watkins,
Watts Labor Community Action Committee
Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC), a nonprofit organization, which won the competitive contract to operate the service for LADOT.

STRATEGY

The Watts DASH Shuttle was approved by the Mayor and City Council in 1989. LADOT staff worked with the WLCAC to identify the community’s activity centers, and WLCAC helped the community develop and propose the route it wanted to the City Council. The route connects residents to the neighborhood’s most important destinations, including Will Rogers Memorial Park, City Hall, the Post Office, the Health Foundation, a hospital, a job and vocational preparation center, a social services facility, and two plazas within the neighborhood’s retail and commercial corridor. It also connects to the 103rd Street and Imperial Metro Blue Line Stations, a light rail operating between downtown Los Angeles and the city of Long Beach. The shuttle and municipal/city buses share the same bus stops, which usually only consist of a bench and sign.

Now, with five shuttles (four in service and one spare), the service operates on 20-min headways from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays, and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays. The fare is 25 cents, but seniors and persons with disabilities ride free with an MTA pass. Half of LADOT’s DASH buses now run on compressed natural gas or propane, which produce less pollution than regular gas or diesel-powered buses. However, the current buses used in Watts are diesel-powered.

DASH is only one component of the regional Metro System. In addition to DASH, there is Commuter Express bus service between downtown Los Angeles and residential neighborhoods, the battery-operated San Pedro Electric Trolley, and Cityride, a dial-a-ride van and taxi service that serves seniors and persons with disabilities.

FUNDING

The DASH Watts demonstration project was initially funded through City Proposition A funds, which the City Council appropriated for the Watts program. Now the city is using a combination of Proposition A and C funds.

The monthly operating costs of the DASH Watts average $34,000, which is paid to the WLCAC, the city’s contract operator. Total fare revenue, at 25 cents per ride, averages $10,000 per month for DASH Watts, which has the highest farebox ratio of all the transit services operated by LADOT.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Problems and difficulties facing DASH Watts have been vandalism of its buses (rock throwing, in particular) and gang-related problems. The WLCAC has mounted a 3½-year-long community outreach effort with area schools, block associations, the local police, and the parents of students, to enlist their cooperation in changing the behavior of the offending gangs. Using funds from the city and Proposition C, a Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) sergeant has been assigned to address the security issues on community DASH buses and often rides the route with passengers. In recent months, the problems have stopped and no incidents have occurred on board the DASH buses. As part of this security effort, and in cooperation with the LAPD, the WLCAC has instituted strict rules governing on-board behavior, and violation of these rules results in a perpetrator’s prompt removal from the bus.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

In its second year of operation, the DASH Watts fleet for Watts expanded from two to four vehicles and carried 40 passengers per revenue hour, twice LACMTA’s ridership standard. Two years later, in 1994, ridership had increased to 48 passengers per hour. LADOT began planning a second route to serve the northern and western sections of the Watts community; DASH Watts North was implemented this year. Today, 50,000 passengers ride the DASH Watts shuttle each month giving it the highest ridership per hour and the lowest subsidy per passenger of all of LADOT’s services.

CONCLUSIONS

The DASH Watts is vital to the livability of this transit-dependent community. The shuttle connects people to the many social, medical, educational, and community services that have been systematically developed for the benefit of Watts’ residents. In fact, introducing new social services into a community without providing patrons with the means to access them makes the programs much less effective than if a transit component were incorporated as part of the project from the start. According to Teddy Watkins, Director of WLCAC, of the 100 DASH buses that serve 20 routes systemwide, DASH Watts is the most
Figure 8-7. Case Study 8-2. DASH Watts Brochure and service route showing how the routes serve many local destinations, including the post office, library, city hall, and social services. (Credit: Los Angeles Department of Transportation)
successful primarily because it connects transit-dependent people with the destinations they want to reach.

Case Study 8-3
Meridian, MS: Union Station
Train Station Becomes Community Transportation Hub

SUMMARY

Often referred to as a “child of the railroad,” Meridian was settled in 1859 along the Mississippi-Alabama border, at the junction of the Vicksburg and Alabama lines, and developed to accommodate employees of the rail lines.

Although Meridian now serves the transportation needs of nine surrounding counties, there are no transit centers where passengers can catch the bus or transfer from the train. The Union Station Multi-Modal Transfer Center is being planned to provide the predominantly low-income population with safe, reliable, and convenient access to buses and trains and to link all major forms of transportation. With nearly 30 percent of Meridian residents living below the poverty line and a median household income of $18,000 per year, efficient and accessible public transit is truly a necessity.

PLANNING PROCESS

The original Union Station was constructed jointly by the Mobile & Ohio, the Southern, the Alabama & Vicksburg, the New Orleans, and the Northeastern rail lines. The station opened in August of 1906 and had heavy rail traffic for the better part of the century, supporting 44 trains per day. Much of the original structure, including the central tower, was demolished by 1966, and all that remained was the eastern wing of the passenger depot, which currently serves as a ticket area, office space, and waiting room with a seating capacity of 50. Since 1966, Meridian has not had an adequate train station. Transit service is extremely fragmented, and people must travel all over town to catch and transfer between trains, buses, and taxis, creating disjointed and difficult transit access.

Many cite John Robert Smith, the mayor of Meridian, as providing impetus for the project. John Smith developed a strong interest in building a central multimodal transportation center (MMTC) in Meridian in December 1990 when—while building a model train set for his son—he researched the role of rail in the development of the west. Since then, Mayor Smith has expended considerable time and effort in generating interest in and educating the business community, municipal government, and citizens about the need and benefits of a multimodal facility for Meridian, and its potential to serve as a tool for economic revival. The goals of the MMTC are not only to centralize transportation services, but also to stimulate tourism by promoting the historic preservation of this important railroad town and to act as a catalyst for downtown revitalization efforts.

The project began with feasibility studies in 1991, funded by the Meridian City Council. The city then commissioned a team of architects and engineers to develop a design. They held a series of town meetings and discussion groups with community committees, key design professionals, citizens and railroad “buffs” to obtain community input and discuss conceptual designs. Based on this community input, the design team developed conceptual drawings that outlined the major components of the MMTC. Implementation is expected in 1996.

STRATEGY

The Multi-Modal Transfer Center will occupy four city blocks. Six acres of this space has been donated by the Alabama Great Southern Railroad Company and includes the existing historic station structure. The design of the Union Station Multi-Modal Transfer Center will resemble the original railroad depot that occupied the space in the 1900s. Construction is set to begin in June of 1996 and should last approximately 18 months.

Center facilities will include the Union Station Railroad Museum, a landscaped area with memorial brick pavers, a new terminal building attached to the surviving portion of the depot, and areas for future use. A site for a farmers’ market and a landscaped park area with a covered stage for festivals and other city events are proposed.

The major transportation agencies that will have offices at the MMTC include the Meridian Transit System, Amtrak, Norfolk Southern Rail, Greyhound and Trailways buses, and local taxis. The Meridian Lauderdale County Partnership, an economic development agency that promotes tourism, economic and industrial development, and employment, also plans to relocate its offices to the MMTC and to assume responsibility for managing the facility. Auxiliary services and retail uses planned for the MMTC include the following:

• Conference rooms and convention activities;
• A hospitality center with special-event ticket sales;
A Special Invitation To Join The
UNION STATION PATRONS CLUB

Figure 8-8. Case Study: 8-3. This Union Station Patrons Club Membership form invites local residents to purchase a brick or have their name inscribed on a plaque at this multimodal center being constructed at a historic train station. (Credit: City of Meridian, Mississippi)
- Restaurants and a food court, lounge, and gift shop;
- A trolley link to CBD-area locations;
- Historic train excursions;
- An airport and Naval Air Station shuttle service;
- Travel agencies and airline ticketing;
- A tour bus operation;
- A package express; and
- A welcome center.

**FUNDING**

The city of Meridian has received $2.56 million in Federal Transportation Enhancement Funds for the preservation of historic transportation structures to initiate the project. A $30,000 FTA Sec. 8 Planning Grant supported the intermodal terminal feasibility study. Another $1.3 million was generated by a Certificate of Participation and state bonds that covered the local match for design and engineering work.

In addition to public meetings, citizen involvement was encouraged by the Union Station Patrons’ Club. Because of the strong railroad heritage, project developers created the Patrons’ Club to encourage people to take ownership of the project. Engraved brick pavers identifying donors as “patrons” are being sold to raise money for the purchase of planters, benches, and other amenities not funded by the federal dollars, as well as to pave the walkways. To date, over 1,000 bricks have been sold. Another fundraising program in place is the “sale” to corporate sponsors of the 2,500 replicas of turn-of-the-century, Union Metal lampposts to be installed at the MMTC. Funds from the lampposts will also go toward opening the railroad museum at the station.

Robert West, an artist from Atlanta, has been commissioned to paint an original work depicting the station as it was at the turn of the century. Proceeds from this limited edition print are being collected by the Railroad Historical Society and will also help to fund the construction of the railroad museum.

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

Amtrak reported that for the period between June and December 1994, Meridian’s Union Station had more than 9,000 boardings. However, Amtrak has since reduced service from 7 to 4 days per week, and passenger figures have dropped substantially from approximately 1,800 people per month to about 900. Similar figures are expected with the construction of the MMTC.

While some opposition surfaced among community members regarding the necessity of such a transfer center, the majority of citizens supported the effort; support was reinforced by community involvement.

Because this project was the first ISTEA project for the state of Mississippi, completing the requisite paperwork has proven to be a major obstacle. The guidelines are new and unfamiliar to the state highway department, the agency administering the funding, which had little experience in implementing historic preservation projects.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

Generating enthusiasm for a transportation project involving rail was not difficult in this railroad city and the success of the project thus far is attributable to the participation of all those concerned throughout the process. The citizens of Meridian have become more aware of the benefits and importance of multi-modal facilities. Expectations of spin-off economic development and improved downtown development are high.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The success of the transfer center thus far has been due to the early and continued involvement of government leaders, property owners, the business community, concerned citizens, and users. Sustaining involvement and developing a sense of public ownership are of utmost importance in order for the project to be a success. Amtrak and the city of Meridian are hopeful that the project will reestablish the role played by rail in America’s communities and provide the people of Meridian with a transportation center that will greatly enhance their mobility and livability.
Chapter 9

Shaping Community Growth

[We are] at a crossroads. We can either take control of our growth and channel it in ways that will enhance our communities, or we can sit and watch unmanaged growth destroy the things we value [most about them.]

—Seattle 2014 Plan

All we have to do is look at Los Angeles to see how many people want to leave it because it’s a sprawling, violent, congested, smoggy, unlivable city. So what are we [Coloradans] doing? Not a damn thing different than they did in LA.

—Dick Lamm, former Governor of Colorado

about Colorado’s failure to pass growth management legislation. [1]

Introduction

The issue of guiding growth is very often considered the most important livability concern. Growth can create opportunity, but it also can cause people concern about the sustained livability of their communities. Mismanaged growth erodes places for community life and pulls the economic and social rug out from under older downtowns and neighborhoods. Some critics argue that sprawl is a no-win situation: trapping low-income and minority families in inner-cities while creating a not-so-good-life in the traffic-ridden suburbs. Cities like Phoenix have doubled in size between 1970 and 1990 and even environmentally conscious Denver has increased 77 percent since 1973, encompassing more than 550 sq mi. For this reason, the research team has included the issue of guiding growth as a separate chapter.

Overview of Community Strategies

In a recent front page article in the Wall Street Journal, Portland, Oregon, was praised for its regional approach to land use (“Portland Shows Nation’s City Planners How to Guide Growth,” December 26, 1995).

In the 1970s, Portland implemented an ambitious program that combined the establishment of an urban growth boundary with strategies to focus growth in downtown and encourage transit use (see Case Study 4-1). This initiative is considered integral to the economic success of the Portland region, its vital transit system, and high quality of life.

Communities that have chosen to take part in shaping their own growth have used a variety of strategies to do so. Portland’s are typical: encouraging higher densities; growing upward rather than outward; containing growth by prohibiting or limiting development outside of established boundaries; and developing pedestrian-oriented residential and commercial neighborhoods.

While they are still the exception rather than the rule, many communities have instituted detailed plans to direct and control growth. These plans—which are usually enforced through zoning ordinances—direct growth and establish specific land uses in designated areas. Emphasis is placed on developing mixes of uses, rather than exclusionary single-purpose uses that generate more automobile trips. This kind of planning can only be implemented with foresight and is often difficult to initiate. Many cities have tried to adopt such plans, but have been
derailed by various interest groups and community pressures.

Increasingly more common are situations where communities prepare specific plans for large tracts of land, such as redevelopment parcels, within existing community boundaries. These plans are less threatening to communities when they are prepared with extensive community input. In addition, these plans actually help to encourage development because projects that comply with guidelines and regulations can proceed without delays, and developers are assured that neighboring projects will reinforce, not detract, from their own projects. By virtue of their specific regulations, these plans also offer opportunities to shape densities within areas and help make an area more pedestrian and transit friendly.

There is, today, strong interest in developing new models of suburbs that feature “neotraditional” communities—sometimes called “transit-oriented communities”—which re-create neighborhood development patterns more typical of the early part of this century. These design improvements often include grids of through streets, rather than curving cul de sacs; smaller lots with garages off rear alleys; sidewalks and front porches. Because only a few of these communities have been constructed, and these are located in exurban areas, their impact has probably been more on reshaping the orientation of planning and design professions than on shaping real growth.

**Role of Transit**

A major goal of guiding growth is to encourage the use of public transit. As Portland illustrates, the investment in transit helps achieve the goal of reducing sprawl and encouraging the development of mixed-use centers. Transit can play a leading role, however, simply by initiating community discussions about growth and livability. A number of different transit strategies can be pursued.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) (also called “pedestrian pockets” or “transit villages”) is the term commonly used to express new development constructed around transit facilities. These facilities act as focal points for a community and are generally accompanied by higher densities of land use, with an emphasis on walking. The car becomes an option rather than a necessity. Most of the discussion about TODs has been in the western and southern cities and in suburban areas; eastern cities, which grew up in the 1940s, evolved a kind of natural TOD. **Davis Square in Somerville, Massachusetts**, did not have a subway stop until a decade ago, but it was originally developed as a tight, urban neighborhood and the station had an immediate impact on the area. **The Green Line Initiative in Chicago** and **Wellston Station in St. Louis** are examples of reintroducing TOD in an area where it existed historically, but was essentially obliterated by massive urban deterioration and urban renewal. **Fruitvale in Oakland, California**, is also applying these principles to an older area, focusing on a parking lot adjacent to a rapid transit station built in the 1970s.

Transit service reorganization is another method used to support growth concerns, often as part of a more comprehensive strategy. **GO Boulder in Colorado** is a program that includes special passes for buses and shuttles, as well as a variety of transportation management programs—all intended to reduce the use of the automobile and support community environmental goals. In **Seattle, LINC** is part of a broad community effort to create “urban villages” as part of a new regional strategy to direct growth; **Aspen’s Shuttle** is also part of a broader development strategy for the community. **Corpus Christi’s** transit program involves creation of bus transfer centers downtown and in neighborhoods to create strong centers of activity. **Tucson** has a similar program, for which the **Tohono Tadai Transit Center** near Tucson Mall is an important component.

Finally, new rail systems, have been used to encourage growth. In once car-oriented cities like **Washington, DC; San Francisco, CA; Portland, OR; and San Diego, CA; light and heavy rail systems have begun to have a major impact on the shape and growth of the community.** **One example—Arlington, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, DC—is presented here.** Unfortunately, such systems can be controversial. In **Seattle**, the light rail system was turned down by voters, in part because it would not serve many
communities: LINC is the alternative approach now being pursued.

ENDNOTE


EXAMPLE

Arlington County’s Rosslyn-Ballston Metrorail Corridor
Using Transit to Shape Growth and Create Community

Arlington County’s vision to understand the enviable position it occupied in the Washington metropolitan region and then act decisively to secure that position for future generations. The county took full advantage of the significant transit investment and planned for growth before it happened and then, when the rail system was completed and the market came of age, it was able to steer growth in the direction of the plan.

—Robert Buchanan, Ballston Developer

Arlington County, in Northern Virginia, is a densely developed inner-ring suburb in the Washington, DC, area. Occupying about 26 sq mi and located across the Potomac River from Washington, the county was largely built in the early part of the 1900s as a bedroom community for federal workers in downtown Washington. Since World War II, the county experienced almost 30 years of steady office growth, fueled first by the growth of federal agencies and more recently by the arrival of private firms doing business, directly or indirectly, with the government.

That success was blurred, however, by what came to be perceived as the darker side of growth. This is exemplified by the county’s experience with Rosslyn, the focus of the first spurt of post-war redevelopment, whose transformation from a tawdry warehouse district into a high-density urban office center became the subject of much criticism. The absence of new residential construction discouraged retail and restaurant development, causing the area to become an “urban desert” at night. Also, a lack of open spaces and street-level stores, combined with the uncoordinated development of pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems, added to Rosslyn’s rather unappealing image. Finally, speculation that neighborhoods surrounding Rosslyn would themselves become targets for high-density development led to their deterioration.

Toward the end of the 1960s, Rosslyn became a symbol of what Arlington residents did not want to see happen in the rest of the county. These attitudes were fostered by the emergence of a broader phenomenon—public questioning in Arlington County and elsewhere of the deleterious effects of new growth on the environment, the quality of life, and the viability of established neighborhoods. By the early seventies, it could be no longer assumed that county residents agreed—as they generally had in the 1950s and 1960s—that growth was a desirable end in itself. In this climate of opinion, it was clear that further redevelopment of the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor, especially of the areas around Metrorail transit stations, would require a new approach.

Well before Metro construction began, the county, anticipating both positive and negative economic and environmental impacts, began a process of sector planning for station areas to take maximum advantage of opportunities that the system offered and to mitigate its undesirable effects. In general, the sector planning process involved a clear commitment to (1) accommodate growth stimulated by the transit stations and a corresponding commitment to contain development within designated transit impact zones, (2) avoid undesirable spillover effects beyond these zones, and (3) preclude the kinds of urban design shortcomings evident in Rosslyn’s redevelopment. Sector plans would encourage mixed-use development, focus on good architecture and urban design, reinforce the unique character of each station area, and clearly demarcate the high-density transit zones from surrounding low-density residential areas. Each of the five stations was to serve a unique function and have a well-defined identity: Rosslyn as a major business and employment center; Court House as a government and administrative center; Clarendon as an urban village; Virginia Square as the focus for cultural, recreational, and educational activities; and Ballston as a new downtown in central Arlington.

The planning effort for the five stations in the corridor involved extensive public participation. It produced detailed sector plans for each affected station area, governed by the following common principles:

- Highest densities would be concentrated within walking distance of Metro stations, with building heights, densities and uses “tapered down” to existing single-family residential neighborhoods. Within the Metro core areas, a mixture of office, hotel, retail, and high-rise residential development would be encouraged. Residential development would be a particularly high priority in all station areas. This mixed-use approach, coupled with common design criteria aimed at ensuring a
quality pedestrian environment, would ensure an active, vibrant core area.

• Existing single-family residences and most residential communities would be preserved.
  Neighborhood conservation plans calling for the establishment of buffer zones of relatively low-density development would be implemented.
• Commercial revitalization would come about primarily as a function of redevelopment of the core area and associated increases in residential land-use density.
• Each station would feature integral pedestrian circulation systems connecting residential areas, commercial facilities, and Metro entrances, and a streetscape program focused on pedestrian amenities and landscaping.
• Adequate open space in the station areas in general, and the core areas in particular, would be obtained through a combination of county acquisitions and the site plan approval process.

As a result of these policies, the overwhelming state of the county’s commercial and residential development between 1970 and 1994 has taken place in these corridors within 1/2 mi of a Metrorail station. This development includes 14,700 residential units, 21 million sq ft of office space, more than 6,000 new hotel rooms, and 2.2 million sq ft of service and destination retail. These designated transit hubs have absorbed 94 percent of the county’s new office development and more than 90 percent of its hotel and retail development. This concentration of intense mixed-use development has yielded a much higher use of transit in this corridor than in other inner-suburb locations in the greater Washington region. As a result of the development pattern, several Metrorail stations in this corridor have the highest daily boarding of any stations outside the district central-office core. In 1995, 77,400 daily boardings were recorded at corridor stations (more than 150,000 trips per day).

Nearly 19 percent of Arlington residents use public transportation on a daily basis and 42 percent rely on transit at least once a week. In addition, Ballston is a particularly attractive place to live for people with disabilities as they can easily access all of the shops in the area, live in an accessible area, and use public transit.

Today, the challenge for Arlington County is to upgrade the pedestrian environments in these high-density development zones, to provide better connectivity to the transit stations and to adjacent neighborhoods, and to plan for still greater variety in the land-use mix of corridor centers. These improvements will capitalize on the area’s high densities to make it even more livable.

### Case Studies

Case studies show how three different communities in the west and south are incorporating transit as a key ingredient in a community growth and development plan:

**Case Study 9-1: Boulder, CO: GO Boulder**
New Transit Services Key to Meeting Local Environmental Goals

**Case Study 9-2: Seattle, WA: Local Initiative for Neighborhood Circulation (LINC)**
Neighborhood Transit System Channeling Community Growth

**Case Study 9-3: Corpus Christi, TX: Staples Street Bus Transfer Station and the Downtown Trolley**
Transit Reorganization Sets Stage for Downtown and Neighborhood Renewal

### Summary

Boulder, home of the University of Colorado and gateway to Colorado’s Rocky Mountains National Park, enjoys a well-deserved reputation as one of America’s most livable communities. The city boasts the largest municipally owned open-space system in the nation, with more than 100 mi of paths and trails and 80 mi of designated bikeways. This includes an 11-mi, grade-separated path traversing the city along Boulder Creek, which has become one of the best known examples of an imaginative recreational use of an urban waterway. Boulder’s Pearl Street Mall, unlike many of its contemporaries built in the mid-1970s, has remained a vibrant, commercially successful pedestrian precinct.

A threat to Boulder’s livability comes from continued growth and its associated traffic, the result of a job-
housing imbalance that has brought hordes of new commuters into the Boulder Valley. The city’s response has been to mount a series of actions intended to arrest the slide toward gridlock. Boulder’s strategy can be held out as a model of how a community can preserve its livability through alternative transportation.

**PLANNING PROCESS**

Boulder has a long-standing tradition of growth management. In the mid-1970s, a citizen-led initiative imposed an annual 2 percent cap on residential growth, which the City Council subsequently made progressively more stringent. While the cap was successful in limiting growth within the city boundaries, it did not prevent leapfrog development in the surrounding communities, which grew at a rapid pace throughout the 1980s and during the early 1990s.

In the meantime, Boulder continued to offer a welcoming and attractive environment for clean, high-tech industry, which led to a robust expansion of employment inside the city. The combination of these trends created a serious job-housing imbalance that is the source of the present traffic problem. Boulder Valley has become a regional job center with a net inflow of commuter vehicles during the day. Of the total 510,000 daily vehicle trips with destinations in the Boulder Valley, 140,000—close to 30 percent—originate outside the valley. Regional land use-transportation forecasts estimate that traffic in the Boulder Valley will increase from 2.5 million to 4 million daily vehicle miles of travel by the year 2020. With no plans for construction of new roads in the foreseeable future, and with CBD parking capacity limited, Boulder’s citizens have become justifiably concerned about the effects of these trends on the quality of life in their community.

Boulder’s response has been to take an active stance. In 1989, the Boulder City Council adopted a Transportation Master Plan (TMP) with a goal of shifting 15 percent of existing single-occupant vehicle (SOV) trips to other modes by 2010. To help implement this goal, the council created GO Boulder, an “alternative modes” division within the city administration. Boulder is the only municipality in the nation to have created an operating unit devoted specifically to promoting transportation alternatives.

The TMP had an extensive public outreach process. More than 70 stakeholder groups and organizations were identified and invited to provide input. These included the Sierra Club, PLAN Boulder County, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Chamber of Commerce, the League of Women Voters and various neighborhood associations.

In November 1994, a city-sponsored initiative proposed a wide-ranging program of transit service improvements, including more frequent service on local and regional routes, a transit pass offering unlimited access to bus service to all 80,000 downtown Boulder employees, and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The $12.2 million/year Transit Initiative was to be funded through a combination of local taxes. The citywide referendum failed by a substantial margin, the victim of a general anti-tax sentiment and a belief that the measure was too narrowly focused on transit improvements.

**STRATEGY**

Following the failed referendum, the city proceeded to mount an aggressive multi-pronged strategy using its regularly appropriated budget. The strategy has several elements as follows.

The ECO Pass. The main instrument of the campaign is the ECO Pass, an unlimited-use annual transit pass for use on the HOP Shuttle, sold through employers. The pass is offered at a deep discount: $35–$65/year, depending on the level of transit. Participating employers, however, must purchase the pass for all their employees. The pass is provided to all university students for $12.00 per semester through an automatic charge to their tuition bill. ECO pass is also marketed to high school students, residents of suburban housing developments, and urban neighborhoods.

The “HOP” A Community Access Shuttle. To supplement the Regional Transit District (RTD) line haul and local service, the city of Boulder launched a local shuttle service in October 1994. The objective of the service is to encourage residents, employees, students and visitors to use public transportation instead of their cars.

Figure 9-2. Case Study 9-1. HOP Shuttle, Boulder, CO, functions as a local shuttle service to encourage residents, area employees, students, and visitors to leave their cars at home. One cannot “hop” on, however, without first purchasing an ECO pass, which is an unlimited-use annual transit pass. (Credit: GO Boulder).
Figure 9-3. Case Study 9-1. GO Boulder’s promotional materials and posters make their point in a clever and eye-catching manner. (Credit: GO Boulder).
during the day for trips such as shopping, lunch, errands and meetings, with the ultimate goal of persuading people to leave their cars at home in the first place. The HOP shuttle connects Boulder’s three major activity centers: the CBD, the University of Colorado’s main campus, and the Crossroads Mall, a major regional shopping center. The HOP operates weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on 10-min headways, using eight propane-fueled, 30-ft buses. Recently, nighttime service during the academic year was added at the request of the University. One cannot hop a HOP shuttle without having purchased an ECO Pass—no fares are collected on the bus. HOP’s initial 6-month ridership goal of 2,000 daily riders was exceeded in the first 6 weeks. The shuttle carries 3,000–4,000 riders per day. The shuttle service is operated by a private contractor at an annual cost of $700,000, which is covered through ECO Pass sales, with the city contributing the rest from general operating funds.

Bicycle Facilitation. With more than 80 mi of designated paths and bike lanes, Boulder is a bicycle-friendly city par excellence. Bicycles are designated as “vehicles” and allowed to use vehicular roadways as well as dedicated bicycle paths and sidewalks. In the wintertime, snow clearance on bikeways is given the same priority as on city streets. After a heavy snow fall, bikeways are said to be often open to traffic before the city’s roadways. A large student population and an aggressive marketing program contribute to making Boulder the second most bike-intensive community in the nation, with 12 percent of all trips made on bike (Davis, California, carries the top honors, with 14 percent).

Ridesharing. Carpools and vanpools constitute 24 percent of Boulder’s total daily person miles and are actively promoted by the city in cooperation with the Denver Council of Governments. GO Boulder was the first city agency in the nation to receive federal funding to buy vanpool vehicles used to support employee transportation programs.

Residential Parking Permit Program. In 1986, in response to an increase in nonresident spillover parking in residential neighborhoods, the city developed a residential parking permit (RPP) program. Residents living within the designated zone and businesses located within the zone are exempt from the on-street parking restrictions after purchasing and displaying RPP permits in their vehicles. Everyone else is restricted to 2-hour parking between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays. Two RPP zones have been established.

Congestion Relief. By far the most ambitious and potentially controversial initiative is Boulder’s congestion pricing project or, as Boulder’s officials prefer to call it, “congestion relief” project. This project explores the technical, institutional, and political feasibility of using market-based measures to discourage automobile use among Boulder’s residents, students, and workers. As part of its congestion relief initiative, the city will be exploring various strategies, ranging from voluntary employer-based transportation demand management (TDM) programs to regulatory, ordinance-based programs and pricing measures such as “smog fees,” congestion tolls, pricing of off-street parking and taxes on private parking facilities. The congestion relief project, according to city officials, will carefully consider these issues with the help of an active public outreach effort. The intent is to remain in step with public opinion and to shape a strategy that Boulder’s citizens will accept as reasonable and support politically.

The city of Boulder is currently updating its TMP. The 1995 TMP Update will be considered by the planning board and the transportation advisory board, culminating with a city council review and adoption in spring 1996. The transit portion of the plan reflects feedback from the failed public initiative. As part of this plan, the city is considering a new goal of reducing SOV use to 25 percent and increasing ridesharing to 29 percent, transit use to 7 percent, and bicycle use to 15 percent.

FUNDING

GO Boulder’s operational funding is approximately $1.2 million per year. The budget is divided among transit, bicycle programs (20 percent), pedestrian improvements and marketing/public information (25 percent for each). Capital funding comes from a special capital budget. All of GO Boulder’s funding and most capital transportation funding comes from sales tax; a small portion of capital funding comes from a development excise tax.

The city devotes 26 percent of its $4 million per year capital transportation budget to the bicycle/pedestrian capital program. The congestion relief project is funded with a $492,000 grant under the Federal Congestion Pricing Pilot Program.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The biggest obstacle to overcome was the failure of the Transit Initiative. Through subsequent surveys and focus groups city officials attempted to gain an understanding of why the initiative had failed and what the community would like to see in the future. It was concluded that the initiative did not clearly communicate the benefits of the additional transit ser-
vices, which were perceived by the public as “just more big diesel buses running around empty.” The fact that there were other competing tax increases on the ballot did not help either.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

The city’s aggressive promotion of alternative transportation has paid off. The marketing campaign has been highly successful: a total of 15,000 employees and 25,000 students currently carry the ECO Pass. Since the introduction of the ECO Pass in 1989, transit ridership has increased by 161 percent. Since the establishment of the GO Boulder program in 1990, SOV trips have decreased, while transit and bicycle use has increased. Boulder’s current modal split is one that most communities would look on with envy:

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<th>1994* (%)</th>
<th>Goal (%)</th>
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<td>Multi-Occupant Vehicles</td>
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**CONCLUSIONS**

GO Boulder demonstrates the benefits of addressing community livability and environmental goals together with transportation facilities and services. Programs to reduce use of autos and increase use of transit, bicycles, and walking have worked because of the comprehensive approach taken. In addition, new transit services are tailored to community needs and the ECO Pass makes transit usage convenient and inexpensive. These programs appear to be an effective base on which to build even greater transit ridership increases.

**SUMMARY**

For 6 months in 1995, residents of Ballard, a neighborhood in Seattle, participated in the trial run of a new, more flexible local transit system. They were able to flag down a free minibus only minutes from their homes that circulated frequently around the community and linked them to the regional bus system. The shuttle dropped off passengers at their doors on the return trip. By moving people more efficiently around their neighborhoods, the city of Seattle and King County/Metro, the Seattle transit authority, hoped to increase transit ridership and discourage short, frequent, SOV trips. In addition, LINC (Local Initiative for Neighborhood Circulation) was the first step in a new, far-reaching transportation to replace Seattle’s current radial-route system, focused on downtown Seattle, with a system that links transit hubs in neighborhood centers throughout the city, including downtown. The new three-tier transportation plan, also called LINC, was developed to reinforce Mayor Norm Rice’s “urban village” scheme by meeting the specific transportation needs of each community.

The Seattle Engineering Department (SED), with assistance from the King County/Metro, developed the 6-month pilot project in Ballard to test the feasibility of this local transit service concept. While the experiment was necessarily limited in scope and did not entirely fit the needs of the community, it has set the stage for both a new approach to transit and transit-centered growth.

**PLANNING PROCESS**

The Seattle Transportation Plan. In 1991, the Washington state legislature passed a Growth Management Act requiring all municipalities to develop 20-year plans to project their future growth, define future land-use patterns and develop local and regional transportation alternatives to accommodate the growth. In Seattle, as part of its Comprehensive Plan, Mayor Rice’s administration introduced the urban village concept as a means of channeling growth into specific neighborhoods, both new and existing, thereby controlling future development. These urban villages would become nodes of activity that could also serve as transit centers throughout the city. The transportation component of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan was developed to reinforce the urban village idea by providing a network of limited-stop arterial buses throughout the Seattle area, connecting transit hubs and taking people where they need to go, instead of largely providing radial service to and from the center city.

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If we are really serious about cutting down on car trips, there needs to be some user-friendly, convenient type of service to get people around their neighborhoods and connect them with the regional service.

—Dan Williams, Metro transit spokesman [1]
The design engineer who developed this pilot project, Hiro Takahashi of the SED said he was motivated by the sight of “empty and half-empty buses running around.” He had stopped using the bus system himself because he found it inconvenient.

Planners used the pilot study to do the following:

- Answer technical and operational questions associated with the development of new types of services;
- Identify institutional barriers associated with the development of new types of services; and
- Determine long-term costs of the LINC program.

The SED, with assistance from King County/Metro, developed a temporary, 6-month planning study to test the local transit service using Metro staff and equipment. Ballard, a waterfront community in northwest Seattle, was selected for the demonstration project because of the significant number of people who use mass transit: many residents commute to downtown Seattle by express bus and students frequently travel by bus to the nearby university. Approximately 1 sq mi in area, the neighborhood has a diverse, primarily middle-income population of about 10,000.

The pilot program, which ran from May 6 to October 31, 1995, did not replace or decrease any of the existing transit services in Ballard.

An eight-member community advisory committee of Ballard residents participated in the planning process for LINC. Three ½-day planning workshops were held between October 1994 and January 1995 at which the committee helped to select the routes, made recommendations on how local transit use in the community could be increased and provided input on the overall design of the pilot program. Upon completion of the project, the committee helped to evaluate its effectiveness.

The community was also involved in designing the logo for the LINC vans. A “LINC Bus Design Contest” was conducted in local schools in Ballard. The colorful, eye-catching design submitted by two high school students was selected. For their efforts, the students received a $200 savings bond from a local bank as well as an award from Mayor Rice.

**STRATEGY**

The underlying concept for local LINC service is that people only need to walk a block or two to a street where they can catch a passing shuttle. Passengers do not have to stand at designated bus stops to be picked up; they simply wave down the bus and it pulls over to the curb. Commuters on their way home can get off the bus from downtown and grab a shuttle home almost like they would a taxi.

Thus, LINC is intended to provide service so frequent that people can travel around their community without consulting bus schedules. This custom-tailored, local transit service is intended to provide the “missing link” in the regional transportation system by serving the needs of the commuters and those making...
short trips within a neighborhood and by making regional bus and rail services more accessible.

For the pilot study, the LINC service consisted of a fleet of six 10-passenger vans operating on four different routes. The buses operated between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Sundays and holidays. The LINC service area covered approximately 2 sq mi. The routes were selected to allow easy transfer to regular Metro routes and to serve the business district of Ballard as well as local parks and civic institutions. The only posted stop was at Bergen Place in the business district, where all routes terminated.

Two types of neighborhood service were tested: a fixed-route circulator and a flexible routing service. The fixed routes operated vans every 30 min. The flexible routing service dropped passengers anywhere within a service area on their trips from the business district.

While SED was developing the LINC pilot program, Metro was investigating the design of the transit centers that will serve as connecting points between the local circulators and higher capacity transit lines. These transit hubs are intended to become activity nodes within neighborhood commercial centers.

**FUNDING**

The city of Seattle received a $500,000 Federal Transit Administration grant to pay Metro (the transit authority) for the project on a fee-for-service-hour basis. The funding was provided through the Central Puget Sound Transportation Account.

The LINC service was free during the 6-month trial period. Start-up costs, from June 1994 through April 1995, amounted to $70,619 and the operating costs for the 6-month demonstration project came to a total of $538,134. This resulted in an average cost per passenger of $11.30, much higher than Metro’s latest estimate for regular bus service of $2.67 per passenger per trip in 1993.

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

Christopher Sims, the Project Manager of the LINC demonstration program, and Harold Lewis, his counterpart at Metro, both regretted that more time could not be spent with the community while developing the system. They emphasized the need for more community involvement in the future and the importance of educating the public about a new system such as this. The community planning phase was inadequate, not only in providing the information needed, but also in giving the community a sense of ownership of the system. Marketing the service to the public in advance is critical in building acceptance for a new transit service and this will be increased in the future.

Another difficulty was designing a system that could reach the entire community. Christopher Sims reported that the waterfront and marinas were not on the routes and that residents and businesses in this area expressed displeasure in being excluded. The LINC’s circular routes, although standard in many communities, did not correspond to the essentially linear layout of the Ballard community.

One of the major obstacles encountered by SED was simply running a transit system, because it is an engineering department not a transit provider. Although the drivers and equipment were provided by Metro, SED engineers and staff lacked the experience, flexibility, and training to operate a system efficiently. In future demonstration projects, an interagency team will be formed from SED and Metro staff dedicated to running the project.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

The very fact that the LINC demonstration project tested only one piece of the proposed three-tier program, without changes to the existing transit system, necessarily limited the scope of the experiment and the information that could be gained from it. Regional bus schedules were not changed to coincide with LINC shuttles; thus the ability to transfer smoothly from a local to a regional transit system was limited. The inter-community component is not yet in place and the transit centers where residents will transfer to regional buses are not yet built. Therefore, the pilot program could only be evaluated as a test of a local service and not of the entire LINC concept.

According to surveys conducted in September 1995, and published in Metro’s evaluation report in January, 1996, response to the LINC pilot project within the Ballard community was very positive. Of the 718 passengers questioned, 78 percent were very satisfied with LINC service and 88 percent were very satisfied with the comfort of the vans. Passenger counts, tabulated by means of random and non-random sampling techniques, showed that the average daily number of weekday passengers for all four LINC routes were 381 passengers in June and 277 in September. The 27 percent drop may have been due to the start of public school. The average weekday passengers per hour for all four routes was 6.3 passengers/hour in June and 4.6 in September. The average weekday passenger per hour was slightly higher for the fixed routes. LINC service appeared to have no significant impact on regular Metro ridership; ridership on the six regular routes remained constant between summer 1994 and summer 1995.
Surveys revealed that the majority (65 percent) of LINC riders were female and a large number (25 percent) were 65 years old or older. Fifty-seven percent of them did not work or volunteer outside of the home. The passengers took an average of 6.01 trips a week on LINC, but they said 44 percent of these trips would have been walking trips had LINC not been there. Only 6 percent of the trips would have been “drive alone,” thus LINC did not appear to replace SOVs as a means of transportation. In fact, for 72 percent of the trips, cars were not available. LINC appeared to serve primarily a non-working population without cars rather than commuters: only 3 percent of destinations mentioned were work related, while 71 percent were on their way home. The “flagging-down” option was not necessarily preferred: only 25 percent of the rides started by waving down a LINC van. There was also no preference for one type of route over another.

Robert Mattson, the manager of the city’s neighborhood service center in Ballard, believed that many people liked using the minibuses because they were free. In addition, they were perceived as being more comfortable and more user-friendly than the typical bus, especially since they were air-conditioned. Mr. Mattson also believes, that the system could have been integrated better into the community. He observed that the LINC system was not designed to meet a specific demand; Ballard residents and business owners did not seek the service, nor was the present bus system perceived as being inadequate. In addition, the nominal effort at citizen participation was not enough to build a mandate for the LINC system in the community.

According to Mr. Mattson, several flaws, inherent in a flexible neighborhood circulator, were mentioned by the users. Because the outbound LINC shuttles had no specific stops and could be flagged down, older people had no convenient and comfortable place to sit and wait (and the vans were not always on schedule). Many residents were also slow to learn how to flag down the minibus. Other complaints were due to the limited scope of the experiment. Since the normal local bus service was not suspended during the duration of the test, residents of Ballard often found the redundancy confusing and inefficient. Many residents believed the familiar bus service to be more convenient than the LINC shuttles on the inbound trips, although LINC was preferred on outbound trips because it provided door-to-door service. Because the transit center was not yet in place, LINC shuttle buses pulled into an existing parking lot to meet the regional buses, thereby blocking parking spaces and creating more congestion.

Metro has determined that three levels of transit would be unaffordable, but it is still planning some LINC-type, “level-3” services. Metro is working with the city to provide permanent service (not just demonstration projects) in western Seattle-King County. This service is anticipated sometime in 1997. This will consist of modifying existing bus service rather than overlaying new service as was done in Ballard. From the experience in Ballard, Metro has learned to allot more time for working with the community and to involve county and city planning offices.

CONCLUSIONS

Although ridership was not high and many feel that LINC was a failure because it did not get commuters out of their cars in the course of its 6-month trial period, two key lessons were learned. First, a new shuttle system should be integrated with other inter-community transit services to give passengers the ability to transfer smoothly to the larger web of transit service. Second, more time and resources are necessary to develop and market the system to the community.

In March 1995, the Regional Transit Authority’s referendum on a $6.7 billion regional rail transit system was defeated. Opponents criticized the plan for proposing to spend the bulk of the funds on regional rail systems focused on downtown Seattle without improving local service. The LINC concept places more emphasis on transit centers, thus creating a network of transit routes connecting the city’s neighborhoods, and provides a local transit service designed to address the livability needs of specific communities.

ENDNOTE


Case Study 9-3
Corpus Christi, TX: Staples Street Bus Transfer Station and the Downtown Trolley
Transit Reorganization Sets Stage for Downtown and Neighborhood Renewal

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has had a need to develop a number of facilities in major public transit areas. The agency determined that the greatest community benefit would be realized if these transit projects could be used to stimulate additional redevelopment in the areas around the transit improvement. This has required that different entities both public and private, work together to achieve this goal.

—Steve Ortmann, former Chief Development Officer, Regional Transportation Authority, Corpus Christi, TX
SUMMARY

In 1995, the Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) opened a new bus transfer station on North Staples Street, close to downtown and across from the new City Hall, to serve as the major hub of a new system of transit centers around the city. The new station replaced a string of bus stops along Staples Street, providing a more convenient and safer place to change buses. But this station was also intended to create a node of activity that would attract new business to a blighted neighborhood and help support the revitalization of the downtown. Corpus Christi, Texas, like many mid-sized cities, has seen the vitality and economic base of its downtown drained away by massive retail and residential development in the suburbs, leaving corporate and public institutions as the only presence in what was once the heart of the city.

The Staples Street Station is part of an RTA strategy to develop transit centers that can help improve service, while acting as catalysts for growth and development. Other transit centers are currently being planned.

PLANNING PROCESS

Corpus Christi is located on the Gulf of Mexico, about 200 mi southwest of Houston. The population of the city itself is 275,000, while the service area for the RTA is about 300,000. About 5 percent of the city’s total population is transit dependent. Since the retail and commercial activity has been dispersed to the suburbs, leaving corporate and public institutions as the only presence in what was once the heart of the city.

Therefore, the RTA devised a transit center-based approach to supplement or even replace the bus stops along corridors. This new strategy places transit centers where bus routes come together, thus potentially creating new nodes of retail or other activity, as well as pleasant places to wait that are safer and more comfortable than a typical bus stop. By rescheduling the bus system, the RTA has realized that by making the surrounding community safer and more pedestrian friendly, the overall experience of transit users is greatly enhanced. In planning its transit center-based system, the RTA not only developed design concepts for the new facilities but proposed other public and private improvements that could make an even greater impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Community involvement, both in terms of developing the design as well as in actual participation in the project, was deemed critical to the Staples Street Station’s success. As Steve Ortmann said, “It was important for the community to sense that this was their project rather than a project that was imposed upon the community.” Transit users, local businesses, and employees at nearby public agencies were surveyed for their suggestions for the design of the new facility. A series of meetings was held with businesses and city staff—the bus station’s neighbors—to determine key issues that would enhance the business environment around the station. In addition, numerous citywide public hearings were held to discuss the route and schedule changes necessitated by moving to a transit-based system. The public’s comments and ideas have been incorporated in many of the changes as well as in the design of the bus station. It was also decided that a participatory public art project would be a strong mechanism for ensuring participation as well as ownership in the project (see Chapter 4).

STRATEGY

Design Strategy. The station fronts squarely onto Staples Street. It has a strong sidewalk “edge” and resembles a Spanish-style civic building with its tall clock tower and arched portals. The colorful tiles produced by the public art project break up the expanse of stucco at the entry portal and at the bases of the columns. High metal roofs extend back, supported on steel columns, providing the feel of a 19th century train-shed structure. A central open space surrounded by trees in tiled planters is a focal point, intended for a future fountain or vending area. A small building at the rear has a restroom and small eating area for bus drivers.

The station can accommodate as many as 5,000 people a day, with benches and shelter for all. Phones, waste receptacles, and lighting are more than adequate, but the station as yet provides no restroom facilities or enclosed waiting area for transit users. Historic-style street lighting surrounds the building, while a replica of a historic Corpus Christi fixture, with globe luminaries, provides accent light-
The bus station was designed with the idea that small retail uses could be accommodated on its site: the front structure can be altered slightly to enclose retail kiosks within its walls, and the open space could accommodate several vending carts. These opportunities have not been taken advantage of, although the RTA is now considering sponsoring a vendor program.

Management Strategy. The transit center system has helped to streamline some management approaches. For example, the street supervisors, who circulate in cars to monitor bus operations, have found the transfer center system to be a more efficient way to check their routes; scheduling problems, breakdowns, emergencies, and other problems encountered within the bus system can be easily and closely followed.

Consolidating bus stops also makes patrolling them easier. Corpus Christi police officers are able to patrol the Staples Street Station on a random but frequent basis. Officers do not merely cruise by in their cars, as at many transit facilities, but actually stand with the bus passengers, offering information and assistance, and discouraging the homeless from settling in or from harassing transit users.

The Downtown Trolley. Enhancements to the transportation system were also deemed an essential component of the overall project. Strengthening downtown connections to the new facility would enhance the operation of the facility and would improve access throughout the downtown. Thus, a free downtown shuttle—a replica of an old trolley—was introduced, which operates every 10 min and provides an important link to the rest of downtown.

Pedestrian Improvements. The success of the Staples Street Station has encouraged the RTA to initiate two more community-based planning efforts that are being funded by the Federal Transit Administration’s Livable Communities Project. A plan is being to improve the pedestrian environment around the Staples Street Station and to link it to a nearby low income neighborhood, largely transit dependent, located on the other side of a major interstate highway. The area around another bus transit center, the Six Points Station, located in a small commercial center in a residential community, is also being targeted for improvements that will help to create a sense of place. Crosswalks are being added, traffic-calming measures are being introduced and landscaping and lighting are being enhanced in order to improve pedestrian access to the station, encourage more pedestrian use, and help revitalize the local businesses.
FUNDING

The Corpus Christi RTA and its capital improvements are funded by a 1/2 percent sales tax. In the completion of the Staples Street Station, a Federal Transit Administration grant of $800,000 was used. FTA Livable Communities funding is being used to make the pedestrian improvements to existing transit centers.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The station currently handles 14 bus routes in 10 slots, including the downtown trolley. Because of the tightness of the site, the bus area is smaller than is usually required for this number of bus routes. This necessitated the rerouting and rescheduling of the entire system to be able to use the facility more efficiently, but the RTA considered this to be a sacrifice worth making in order to provide better service.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The new bus station has met the RTA’s goals of providing a safer and more comfortable place to wait and it appears to have had a positive effect on ridership: the RTA counted 3,000 people per day using the many separate bus stops at Staples and Leopard Streets in 1990; whereas, in 1995, 4,000 people per day passed through the Staples Street Station. PPS conducted a survey to assess reactions to the new station and its impact on the surrounding community and made on-site observations. The following is a summary of the results.

The new bus transfer center has become almost a town square or plaza not only because of the number of people who pass through it, but also because it attracts other people who simply come there to “hang out.” This added benefit serves to make the place safer and more secure. In the afternoon, when the largest number of people were observed, the bus station had a festive feeling about it, with many people socializing and meeting friends. Bus drivers who stop there to wait for their riders also appear to be well-known by the passengers and often greet them, as well as chat with their colleagues. Passengers suggested that this pleasant atmosphere could be enhanced with the simple addition of a food and beverage cart and cafes or other retail opportunities surrounding the station, as well as by the addition of some simple entertainment.

Retail business in the area surrounding the Staples Street Station has not yet improved. Vacant storefronts are numerous and the primary businesses in the area continue to be bail bond establishments and pawn shops, although some of these appear to have recently gone out of business. A convenience store, located across Staples Street and one block north of the station, is the only store in the vicinity that sells food and beverages, except for a small Mexican restaurant next door. The manager of the store said that more than 50 percent of his customers are transit riders from the bus station. Likewise, the Mexican restaurant attracts a large number of transit users.

Although there was no explicit strategy to improve the retail activity in the area of the Staples Street Station, there was the hope that a new bus station across the street from the new City Hall would have a positive influence on what was perceived to be a blighted neighborhood. Although no new retail uses have opened since the completion of the bus station, the number of people who pass through the station everyday cannot help but create a new market that surely will be tapped.

Transit users questioned at the Staples Street Station were, for the most part, very pleased with the new station and found that taking the bus was safer and more convenient than it used to be. The major complaints expressed about the facility were the inadequacy of shelter during heavy rain and wind, and the lack of restroom facilities. In addition, many transit users wait at the station as long as an hour and requested food concessions at the station.

CONCLUSIONS

The RTA of Corpus Christi has found that by making people-friendly transit improvements, it can have a larger impact on the surrounding urban area, enhancing the vitality of the urban environment and encouraging economic activity. The Staples Street Bus Station has been well-received throughout the city of Corpus Christi and has been acclaimed around the country as a ground-breaking approach to the design of transit facilities. Its success has spurred the agency to reach beyond the boundaries of building a typical bus stop to the larger goal of helping to reshape communities.
Part III

A Guide for Implementation
CHAPTER 10

The Community-Based Process for Creating Livable Communities

Livable communities do not simply happen. They are the by-product of a coordinated and participatory transportation and community planning process where transit decisions are made in conjunction with decisions on land use and other transportation investments. The principles of livable communities can be instilled throughout the planning and project development process.

—“Planning, Developing, and Implementing Community-Sensitive Transit” (The FTA Livable Communities Initiative) [1]

As the case studies in this report clearly show, there is no single planning process that applies to all communities in which transit is seeking to support community livability goals. Every community has its own character, style of accomplishing tasks, and level of community interest. Moreover, legally mandated planning processes for transit agencies also vary according to such factors as state and local government requirements, project size and scope, and funding sources used.

Still, there are many common characteristics to the various processes used in planning and implementing the case-study projects, and it is these common characteristics that are addressed in this chapter. Specifically, the case studies demonstrate the impact of a community-driven project, where communities have been given the opportunity—not just to respond to a plan—but actively to take part in identifying issues, developing concepts, and evolving strategies in a manner that taps their own experience. In this way, they have become “owners” of projects and have retained a sustained interest and stake in future progress.

In this process, many transit agencies have formed active partnerships with community organizations. As the case studies in this report demonstrate, this approach can enhance resources—both human and financial—available to undertake projects: very often a small transit investment can leverage other substantial local contributions of time and money.

Sometimes such a process has been instituted after a previous approach failed because of community opposition. While a community-based process may not be always quicker, issues of community concern are identified early on, thus avoiding collapse of a project at the end of the planning process or at the beginning of construction, when delays become extremely costly.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN CURRENT TRANSIT PLANNING PROCESSES

Recent changes in federal transit planning processes and policies are very supportive of community-based processes for creating livable communities. A community-oriented planning and decision-making process for transportation projects is, indeed, mandated by law. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) is a landmark piece of legislation, which recognizes that the Interstate Highway System is nearly complete and that more emphasis needs to be placed on system preservation and efficiency rather than on new construction. ISTEA seeks to provide more local control over transportation
decisions and encourages coordination among states and metropolitan areas and among different forms of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, and transit uses—not just roads). ISTEA also emphasizes the importance of community participation and involving key stakeholders in transportation planning including the private sector, local community groups, and other government organizations.

This approach is also completely consistent with the new Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration Interim Policy on Public Involvement. The policy, which grew out of ISTEA, calls for “promoting an active role for the public in the development of transportation plans, programs, and projects from the early stages of the planning process through detailed project development.”

The responsibility for implementing ISTEA in metropolitan areas, including public involvement, falls primarily on metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); outside of MPO boundaries, the responsibility becomes one of the state department of transportation. MPOs produce a long-range (20-year) transportation plan as well as transportation improvement programs (TIPs), which describe projects that are to be funded and implemented over a 3–5 year period. The development of both the long-range plan and the near-term improvements offers a base onto which community involvement and transit and livability partnerships can be built. Because TIPs are updated at least every 2 years, they offer an ongoing opportunity for involvement and participation.

Other opportunities for building community partnerships arise when major projects (such as the construction of a new light rail system) requiring federal funds are planned. Such projects may require a major investment study (MIS) to evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of strategies to solve a specific transportation problem, which can include different combinations of transportation modes. Like the TIP, the MIS should be a collaborative process involving a broad cross-section of the community.

Public participation does not necessarily mean that communities are truly involved in a project or program especially if communities are asked to react to a plan rather than to help create and initiate concepts for improvement. Indeed, projects like Fruitvale Transit Village in Oakland, California were initiated because the community reacted negatively to the original project proposal by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). More common is the situation where projects proceed, but do not achieve their true potential because it is more difficult for people to be committed to projects that are externally conceived and do not stem from the needs of their communities.

On the other hand, the case studies show that, if the community is asked to define the problem from the
start rather than merely review a solution, the issues of concern to the community can be addressed. A community-based process, then, should include more than just approval or review, but should grow out of identifying community needs from the outset.

From the case studies presented here, three key strategies for enhancing the public participation process emerge again and again. These strategies focus on making places in communities more livable by forging community partnerships around those places and developing a step-by-step program of enhancements. This approach is very supportive of the existing planning processes transit agencies are already familiar with and practice. Making an extra effort allows transit to expand limited resources and builds a constituency for transit by linking it with community decision-making processes.

**Strategy No. 1: Focus on Place-Making**

As presented in Chapter 1, a place-making approach to community livability seeks to focus community participation around very specific issues to enhance quality of life in that place. Through this approach, people are encouraged to clearly define issues, contribute ideas and develop agendas that address their concerns as well as encourage them to participate in implementing strategies to address such questions as the following:

- What works and does not work about this neighborhood or space? What problems exist?
- What would make it work better? What kind of design improvements are needed? What types of management strategies should be introduced?
- How can transit support and enhance the activities of the place?

Addressing these questions not only allows for more concrete discussions of livability, but also encourages communities to look at problems and opportunities holistically—rather than as a series of separate, unrelated projects developed by different city agencies or different professional groups.

The case studies show that creating holistic communities requires that specialists such as traffic engineers, transit operators, architects, and community development officials work together towards the same community improvement goals. Focusing on what is needed to make a place better and relying on the input of those who use and experience that place on a regular basis helps to guide this coordination. Indeed, many of the successful case studies had architects and planners who approached the design from a community perspective, considered the broader needs of a place, and acted more as problem solvers and facilitators for community-identified issues. *Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon, Davis Square in Somerville, Massachusetts, and GO Boulder, Boulder, Colorado* are examples of projects which grew out of such a holistic approach.

Chapter 11 describes in more detail the techniques that can be used for learning more about how a place is currently used and perceived. This chapter also includes a checklist that can be used by a transit agency or community organization as it undertakes a community-based planning process. In general, these techniques go beyond community meetings for obtaining input and may include (depending on the size and scope of the project) detailed surveys of public opinion, focus groups, and brainstorming workshops as well as actual studies of how a space or place is used by people. *Woodbridge Station, NJ; Corpus Christi Staples Street Station; and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City* are all projects that involved extensive on-site observations, surveys, and analysis as part of the process of developing recommendations for improvements.

**Strategy No. 2: Step-by-Step Implementation**

These short-term projects are not interim solutions, but stepping stones within a plan’s longer range context that can act as catalysts for change, while providing immediate enhancement for communities. While
large-scale, capital-intensive projects still have their role, improvements that can be implemented quickly provide opportunities for immediately boosting public interest, morale, and use. These small projects also allow an idea or project to be tested in the field before beginning more widespread implementation. For example, LINC in Seattle began as a 6-month experiment to test public reaction and the Port Authority Bus Terminal Revitalization Program in New York City started as a vending cart program to understand how positive uses might inhibit security problems.

The Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI) projects are all designed to be completed in 6–12 months with the concept of maximizing the effects of small changes. For example, instead of placing a bus shelter at a location where the bus happens to stop, LANI works to coordinate it with other nearby amenities. The LANI approach is to work with a local business to put out a vending cart with cold drinks, a merchant’s association to donate a bench, and the city to plant some trees. With these elements, a community creates a place where before there was none. Because LANI is working in several neighborhoods concurrently, it is also able to organize many disparate smaller projects under one program. The New Jersey Transit Station Renewal Program is taking a similar approach to its commuter rail stations. The types of changes adopted by NJ Transit communities deal with a wide variety of place improvements: new seating and amenities; economic uses such as public markets, vendors and cafes; special events and ongoing space programming; and so on. These changes can be seen, used, and enjoyed. By showing actual accomplishments, these programs are sustaining community involvement and support while creating opportunities to test and evaluate the effectiveness of improvements.
While large capital construction projects require a different and more involved process (with more federal requirements), small projects can be locally driven and accomplished in-house with little governmental intervention and, ironically, little required public participation. Clearly, however, these small projects benefit from increased public participation and community partnerships, which increase the likelihood of acceptance and implementation, as well as opening up opportunities for leveraging additional funding.

Strategy No. 3: Developing Effective Transit/Community Partnerships

Case studies in this chapter focus specifically on partnerships between communities and public and private entities as a means to achieving a community’s vision. Community groups and transit agencies have found that, by working together, they create benefits beyond what a transit agency could do by itself and help to improve the livability of the entire neighborhood as a result.

The essential characteristic of a community partnership is that different government agencies, the private sector, nonprofit groups, and citizens communicate and work together on an ongoing basis. The process of analyzing problems and developing solutions together encourages people to work with each other in a constructive and creative manner. A momentum is achieved that would have been virtually impossible had people not been brought together to address common concerns.

The working relationship developed during the planning process can continue to function even after a plan is “complete” to guide future programs and projects. To ensure that such a relationship is sustained, an ongoing organization and public-private community partnership is needed that is vested with an appropriate level of financial, technical, and management support. This enables community members to continue their involvement to implement their plan, develop new ideas, and further fulfill the community’s vision.

A community partnership structured around a place should be representative of the different interests or groups of stakeholders who have some role in that place: businesses, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and so forth. Because every place is different, the composition and form of the community partnership will vary. The case studies demonstrate different types of organizational structures, ranging from ad hoc advisory groups to elaborately structured public-private community partnerships. It is for one structure to evolve into another, for example: a small advisory committee can become a board of directors for a permanent organization.

This approach suggests a different form of leadership in communities. A leader of a community partnership needs to inspire the active participation of people, but in a different manner than the more expected form of leadership, which tends to involve inspiration through force of personality or ideas. For this reason, a leader of a community partnership acts as a facilitator of ideas to ensure that every participant is heard in a fair and equitable manner.

Sustaining and Maintaining a Community Partnership

A transit agency participating in a community partnership will need internal organizational support and flexibility. Very often, however, there are internal needs—such as having to “fast-track” an important project—that transcend one department within an agency. The New Jersey Transit Station Renewal Program, for example, has a project manager within the agency that shepherds the projects through the various internal bureaucracies.

It is clear that community partnerships also take time, sustained energy, continual follow-up, and extensive communication with those involved to achieve desired results. The importance of communicating the visions to expand participation was often stressed by community leaders and transit agencies alike, to allow a project to leverage additional energy and support. This is why most community partnerships need strong staff support, usually from one organization that takes the lead. This organization does not necessarily have to be the transit agency. Fruitvale Transit Village in Oakland, California, is an example of one community organization that has taken on this responsibility. In Wilmington, Delaware, an MPO has taken on the role and the transit agency has benefited greatly from this community partnership effort.

Implementing Through Community Partnerships

The community partnerships presented have generally operated as collaborations where decisions are reached by consensus, multiple viable options are identified, processes are agreed to by parties, diverse perspectives are legitimized, stakeholders are involved at the earliest point, and there is free-flowing information. In addition, as seen in most of the successful projects, community partnerships provide an opportunity to pool funding and resources and to share responsibility for implementation and ongoing management.
Community partnerships present opportunities for participants to be responsible for specific aspects of a project and to identify new resources. During the visioning process for each Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative project, neighborhoods were able to identify complementary funds to achieve greater community impact. Moreover, as projects proceeded, new resources emerged, including contributions of volunteer or in-kind labor and materials. In Tucson, the Old Pueblo Trolley took this approach to the extreme by using community volunteers to restore a historic trolley line. The project obtained state funding only after years of effort.

Transit agencies themselves have resources valuable to communities that are not always recognized. Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon, became financially feasible because the transit agency could contribute funds to the construction of the square because it was to be the hub of its new light rail system. Along the Green Line in Chicago the transit agency controls a considerable amount of underused land, which it plans to sell to generate additional income for the agency and ridership for the subway, while helping to rebuild communities along the route.

Finally, community partnerships open up new funding sources that would not be available for a transit agency alone. Since funding sources also carry their own restrictions, skilled community partnerships like Fruitvale Transit Village in Oakland have learned to develop specific aspects of their projects so that they become eligible for those funds. Fundraising campaigns—like selling bricks engraved with a donor's name to help finance Pioneer Courthouse Square—can also be planned from the start of a project.

ENDNOTE


CASE STUDIES

Case studies in this chapter illustrate a variety of community partnership opportunities as well as planning processes for different transit-livability programs. These processes include use of community volunteers (Tucson Old Pueblo Trolley) and extensive community involvement and partnerships with grass-roots organizations (Fruitvale Transit Village). New Jersey Transit Station Renewal Program and the Denver Partnership have established strong links among transit, local government, and the business community. In Wilmington, Delaware, a transit agency is working closely with the MPO to achieve broadbased improvements to the downtown. Finally, South Station in Boston is an excellent example of a transit agency working with private developers to revitalize a historic train station.

Case Study 10-1: Tucson, AZ: Old Pueblo Trolley
Volunteers Revive Historic Trolley Line
Case Study 10-2: Oakland, CA: BART Fruitvale Transit Village
Using Transit to Leverage Funding for Community Development
Case Study 10-3: New Jersey Transit Station Renewal Program
Creating Partnerships with Community
Case Study 10-4: Boston, MA: South Station
Transit-Private Developer Partnership Transforms Historic Station
Case Study 10-5: Wilmington, DE: Wilmington Infrastructure Studies
Intergovernmental-Private Sector Partnership to Promote Enhanced Livability and Economic Development
Case Study 10-6: Denver, CO: The 16th Street Transitway
Twenty Years of Public-Private Partnerships and Reinvestment

Case Study 10-1
Tucson, AZ: Old Pueblo Trolley
Volunteers Revive Historic Trolley Line

Don't start a project like this unless you want to dedicate your whole life to it.
—Eugene Caywood, President, Old Pueblo Trolley

The trolley helps people decide to come to Fourth Avenue. We hope it can become a practical, usable, everyday “hop on/hop off” means of transportation.
—Libby Stone, Executive Director, Fourth Avenue Business District

SUMMARY

In 1983, the Centennial Coordinator for the University of Arizona came up with an idea: why not restore trolley service to the University as part of the school’s centennial celebration? With this goal in mind, an all-volunteer group called Old Pueblo Trolley began a 10-year odyssey to restore trolley service to downtown Tucson. Successfully achieved, although unfortunately missing the University’s Centennial by a decade, the first trolley to run along Fourth Avenue and University Boulevard in 60 years took its maiden voyage in May 1993. Old Pueblo Trolley has purchased and restored vintage electric streetcars and trolleys and their current fleet has
vehicles from Belgium and Japan as well as rehabilitated trolleys from other parts of the United States. The entire effort, from track laying to trolley repair, was accomplished almost entirely by volunteers. Today, restored trolleys serve shoppers, visitors, and university students and brings office workers to lunch at the many cafes and restaurants along Fourth Avenue. The trolleys serve about 20,000 people per year.

PLANNING PROCESS

The first electric street car graced the streets of then small-town Tucson, Arizona, on June 1, 1906, as a replacement for horse-and mule-drawn streetcars. Service, which continued for the next 24 years, started with five double-truck, two-man electric streetcars that the Tucson Rapid Transit Company (TRT) purchased from the Los Angeles Railway. The route ran to the University of Arizona campus from downtown via Congress, Stone Avenue, and Third Street (now University Boulevard) and a second route brought passengers to Carillo Gardens via South, Fourth Avenue, Stone Avenue, and Seventeenth Streets—both routes serving shopping and residential neighborhoods. Over the years, a total of 12 streetcars were used, which carried between 16 and 30 passengers each. In 1925, buses were added and the routes expanded. In 1930, a petition to permanently replace the streetcars with buses was approved by the Tucson City Council. Rail streetcar service ceased at midnight, New Year’s Eve, 1930.

The idea of restoring streetcar service to the University of Arizona was promoted by Ruth Cross, the University’s Centennial Coordinator, as a way of celebrating the school’s 1985 centennial anniversary. An all-volunteer group called Bring Back the Trolley (later officially named Old Pueblo Trolley [OPT]) was formed to realize Ms. Cross’s vision. The dozen members of Bring Back the Trolley (which became a non-profit corporation in September 1983) convinced the city of Tucson and state of Arizona to do a feasibility study in late 1983, which demonstrated that trolley service was both a feasible and useful addition to the city’s public transit fleet. The report called for an 18-hour operating schedule with four trolleys along a route between two major downtown destinations—the University and the Convention Center. Unfortunately, the study and community support notwithstanding, a trolley bond issue was defeated in May 1984. The fact that OPT only had 2 months before the bond election to promote the idea is the major reason given for its defeat.

Rather than signaling the end of this trolley initiative, it heralded its beginning. OPT’s members decided to continue the effort with the knowledge that 17,000 “yes” votes had been received for the trolley bond issue and that many other cities were undertaking similar efforts. A dramatically scaled back version was planned, which was to be accomplished solely with donations of money, materials, and volunteer labor. The strategy was to garner grass roots community support, build partnerships with the merchants, property owners, and the University along the proposed route, and start out small—with a manageable route and two trolleys.

In March 1985, OPT leased a historic streetcar from the Orange Empire Railway Museum (Perris, California) identical to TRT’s Car No. 10, the last streetcar to operate in Tucson. Hauled to Tucson by truck in time for the University of Arizona’s Centennial Founders Day Parade, the car took volunteers 8 years to restore to working order. The city’s second streetcar, which was originally built for Kyoto, Japan, was purchased in 1992 from the Osaka Hankai Electric Tramway Company using funds from the state grant (see funding).
In September 1985, OPT won approval from the city to build and operate a streetcar route between the University’s main gates and the OPT car barn, a building located on Fourth Avenue and Eighth Street that OPT leased for $1.00 per year. OPT volunteers also were permitted to work within the public right of way and the city agreed to expose existing historic tracks. Volunteers restored track salvaged from previous road work projects. From 1985 through 1993, OPT volunteers, including members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), patched concrete, restrung overhead electrical wires, constructed track, and installed historic light poles. Operation of the OPT officially began May 17, 1993, on a 1.1-mi route along Fourth Avenue from the main gate of the University to OPT’s trolley barn.

During the first two tourist seasons, the trolleys operated 7 days a week from November through May and on weekends the rest of the year, serving a wide variety of shops, restaurants, cafes, historic homes, and the University, and enhancing the retail activity along the Fourth Avenue corridor. This year, trolleys have only been able to maintain the summer schedule: Fridays from 6 p.m. to midnight, Saturdays from 10 a.m. to midnight, and Sundays from noon to 6 p.m.

OPT’s long-term plans are the completion of restoration of two additional historic streetcars, expansion of their route and service to the Convention Center through the Downtown Arts District and the Ronstadt Transit Center, establishment of an Arizona Transit museum and restoration facility at the car barn, and recruitment of additional conductors, operators, mechanics, and dispatchers.

STRATEGY

There are four elements of OPT’s strategy for getting a trolley system up and running again.

Track and Overhead. Volunteers, working in collaboration with the city’s traffic engineers, performed all the track work, with members of the IBEW stringing the overhead electrical wires. Old tracks buried under asphalt had to be uncovered and repaired and new tracks laid. The city assisted in this effort by permitting volunteers to work in the public right of way and by cooperating with OPT in salvaging rail for restoration.

Vehicle Acquisition and Restoration. Because of its limited funds and the fact that no original trolleys remain in Tucson, OPT has been necessarily resourceful in its acquisition of streetcars. For example, the Brussels trolley had been shipped to Phoenix in 1980 and became part of a restaurant project, which later went bankrupt. It was purchased at a bankruptcy sale by Rod Wattis, who later donated it to OPT. The 1953 Japanese trolley was purchased for very little from the tramway company in Osaka; however, the shipping costs totaled almost $30,000. The first car obtained by OPT had languished on a lot at MGM studios where it had been used in movies depicting Los Angeles in the 1940s, then later had been outside at the Orange Empire Railway Museum until it was in need of total rebuilding.

Operations. Volunteers continue to be recruited and trained to operate trolleys and restore vehicles. Operators take a mandatory 60-hour training course, while conductors go through a 20-hour course. OPT probably has the youngest conductor in the nation: Silas Montgomery, who is 11 years old.

Public Relations. OPT also publishes Trolley Tracks, a quarterly newsletter with news of the organization, updates on operation, and historical information about Tucson’s trolleys. OPT allows groups to charter its trolleys for educational trips, private parties, and other celebrations; the group is a member of both the Arizona Historical Society and the Association of Railway Museums.

FUNDING

The acquisition of streetcars, and everything to excavate the right of way, from cranes to crane operators, was donated or paid for through private contributions, support from the Fourth Avenue Merchants Association and University Boulevard property owners. During the first 7 years of planning, OPT was able to raise a total of $200,000. However, in 1990, the OPT faced a serious cash shortage, which threatened the successful completion of the project. In June 1990, the Arizona State Legislature allotted $500,000 in state lottery transportation funding to the OPT as a demonstration light-rail project, thereby ensuring that the project would come to fruition. OPT has applied for ISTEA funds for service extensions and improvements, including extension of the tracks and construction of a new “turn-around.” It currently receives support from 200 members nationally, local foundations and businesses, in-kind contributions, and fares from passengers. OPT needs a permanent revenue stream to allow operation when volunteers are not available. Cooperation between the city, merchants, and property owners will be essential in making that happen.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The primary obstacles overcome by the OPT project were financial ones. Though it did not provide funding, the city assisted in salvaging track and allowing...
the work to occur in the first place. Permitting volunteers to perform construction and electrical work on public city streets is truly remarkable. The state’s disbursement of $500,000 dollars in lottery funds to the project at a crucial moment may not have occurred had the project not come as far as it had working solely with donations and volunteer labor. However, keeping together a cadre of active and dedicated volunteers for an extended period of time is a labor-intensive effort. There is only so much that volunteers may be able to accomplish. Fundraising, similarly, is a full-time job.

The trolley faced some physical obstacles as well. The height clearance allowed by the Southern Pacific Railroad underpasses at the northern and southern ends of Fourth Avenue is inadequate to allow the trolley cars to pass underneath. In addition, the grade of the road as it passes under the railroad is so steep that the trolleys do not have enough power to travel up the slope, especially when full of passengers. However, the underpass, built in 1916, is due for rebuilding with the design request for proposal scheduled for 1996. Within 4 years, the new underpass will be built, which will allow the OPT to continue its route downtown to the Ronstadt Transit Center and, eventually, to the Convention Center.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

Since opening, OPT has served more than 60,000 passengers traveling through the West University neighborhood and Fourth Avenue business district on two restored trolleys. OPT is a popular attraction for tourists and provides low-cost transportation for university students, shoppers, and area residents, making it easier for people to leave their cars at home.

According to Libby Stone, Executive Director of the Fourth Avenue Business District, merchants within this business district are very glad that the trolley exists, because the trolley helps draw tourists to the area who spend money, while adding to the whole concept of Fourth Avenue as an eclectic shopping and dining district. Some believe, however, that the trolley is treated too much like a “museum on wheels” or a historic piece, and not enough like a practical form of everyday transportation.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The OPT could not have succeeded had it not been for community involvement and cooperative partnerships. The adage, “when the people lead, the leaders will follow” is particularly relevant to the OPT project. It has sought and gained national (and international) recognition in an attempt to convince suburban-dwelling Tucsonians that a livable center city is a viable place deserving their support and patronage. The dedication of the OPT members and volunteers is extraordinary and the success of the trolley is a tribute to their unflagging dedication and enthusiasm.

**Case Study 10-2**

**Oakland, CA: BART Fruitvale Transit Village**

**Using Transit to Leverage Funding for Community Development**

This project embodies the dreams of a community. Because of the dedication of citizens throughout the community and because of the dedication of Arabella Martinez, the dream will become a reality.

—former U.S. DOT Secretary Frederico Peña at the 1993 MTC Transportation Awards Program

There are two strengths of this project that have made it successful. One, SSUC mobilized neighborhood and political support from the onset of the project and two, they generated federal money to match private capital.

—Michael Bernick, BART Board of Directors

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) sees projects like the BART pedestrian plaza as a way to use transportation investments to serve larger community goals. It is probably the best example of bottom-up transportation planning in the Bay Area. We need more community-based groups that are willing to wade into the transportation arena to advance projects.

—Ellen Griffin, MTC

While the Fruitvale BART project presents an unusual opportunity to do “cutting edge” transit-based development in an inner city setting, perhaps the most unique aspect of the project is the grassroots origination of the project, and the collaborative approach to its planning. The leading role played by SSUC in the project will ensure that a community-based, collaborative approach will be maintained throughout the project and that community interests will remain at the forefront of development considerations.

—Rich Bell, Unity Council Fruitvale BART Project Manager

**SUMMARY**

The Fruitvale BART Transit Village development in Oakland, California, involves the conversion of BART’s parking lots and adjacent public and private properties into a transit-based, mixed-use development and community center with a variety of attractions and community services for this low-income neighborhood. The Spanish Speaking Unity Council (Unity Council), a 32-year-old, nonprofit community development organization, is the developer of this national model of community-based transit planning. The new Fruitvale BART Transit Village has the potential of being designated a “station-area redevelopment district” under California law. The project
aims to increase transit ridership and employment opportunities in the area, attract social service facilities and retail businesses, and generally improve the quality of life and livability of the Fruitvale neighborhood. The vision for the Fruitvale BART Transit Village includes the following:

• A pedestrian plaza connecting the BART station with the East 14th Street commercial district;
• Two parking structures containing retail stores and restaurants on the ground level and community facilities on the second and third levels facing the pedestrian plaza;
• Other public and private agencies such as La Clinica de La Raza, a senior center, a child development center and the Unity Council’s headquarters;
• Affordable housing, including housing for senior citizens;
• Additional retail on the private parcels;
• An intermodal bus transfer facility behind the BART station; and
• Façade and street streetscape improvements along the East 14th Street retail corridor.

Although this project has yet to be built, the extensive community planning and visioning process already undertaken is perhaps one of the best examples of its kind in the United States. With the help of a $6.6 million EZ grant, the Unity Council and its partners have more than $23,000,000 in funds for predevelopment planning and for the construction of the Fruitvale BART Transit Village. Funding sources include the city of Oakland, DOT/FTA, BART, the Ford Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Levi Strauss Foundation, the BankAmerica Foundation, Citibank and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Health and Human Services.

PLANNING PROCESS

Oakland’s Fruitvale is primarily a low-income Latino, Asian, and African-American community. Five major and several smaller nonprofit, grassroots community and social service organizations have established themselves in the community. One of the oldest is the Unity Council, a community development corporation whose mission is to reverse the deterioration of the neighborhood through a comprehensive program of physical, economic, and social development.

The Fruitvale Transit Village initiative got underway in 1991, when two contradictory assessments stirred extensive debate about the future of the East 14th Street commercial district. While the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum had identified this area as a prime community development opportunity and recommended integration of the commercial district and the existing transit station, BART had proposed constructing a multilevel parking facility on a site adjacent to the Fruitvale station.

Seeing a new parking structure as offering little to benefit to the community, the Unity Council took the lead in organizing a broad, community-based planning process not only to develop alternatives to the parking structure, but also to conceive an overall vision for the project and a long-range plan for the Fruitvale neighborhood. The Unity Council began discussions and hosted planning sessions with the community out of which developed a proposal to create a pedestrian plaza linking the BART station with the East 14th Street business district. In 1992, the city provided the Unity Council with a $185,000 planning grant to further develop the project, marking the beginning of the city’s commitment to the Fruitvale neighborhood.

The Unity Council continued to work with the community to formulate the neighborhood development plan and to meet with community leaders and representatives from BART and the city. It sponsored a design charrette in which five major architectural firms developed alternative land-use plans that were reviewed at a community design symposium in May 1993. Soon thereafter, the Unity Council established a public-private partnership with BART and the city to work together to develop the transit village. It signed a memorandum of understanding with the two public agencies and subsequently signed an exclusive negotiating agreement (ENA) with BART. It also completed a market study, a financial feasibility study, a Phase I EIS, a Phase II toxic assessment for the senior housing project, and a preliminary traffic impact study.

In late 1994, the Unity Council consultants prepared design guidelines for East 14th Street, with the involvement of the merchants, property owners, and interested residents. The city is likely to adopt these as part of the revision of its general plan and specific neighborhood plan.

In February 1995, the Unity Council also selected an architectural firm to lead the community site-planning process. Three public meetings and several forums addressing specific development issues were held with special constituencies such as youth and senior citizens, as well as with the city, BART, and AC Transit. A consensus plan emerged from the discussions that proposed closing East 12th Street. Because of community concerns, however, a second plan was developed merely to narrow the street. The new plan has received positive feedback from the city, BART,
FTA, and a number of community groups that have seen it and mitigates many of the environmental impacts of the consensus plan.

STRATEGY

In response to BART’s proposal to build a new parking structure for the Fruitvale station, the Unity Council and the Fruitvale community developed a vision to do the following:

- Revitalize the area around their BART station;
- Create a transit- and pedestrian-friendly urban center for Fruitvale;
- Integrate the BART station into the community by creating a pedestrian-friendly link between BART and East 14th Street, housing, and existing community facilities;
- Improve bus and pedestrian access to the station as well as to the adjacent commercial district;
- Draw commercial activity to the area, particularly toward East 14th Street;
- Enhance the safety of residents and transit passengers alike, particularly along East 14th Street;
- Introduce entrepreneurial and job opportunities into the community by locating community services and commercial facilities at the site;
- Make street and facade improvements along East 14th Street; and
- Build affordable housing to decrease overcrowding, improve security in the area through an “eyes-on-the-street” approach and enhance retail sales in Fruitvale.

As proposed, the Fruitvale Transit Village will encompass 15 to 24 acres of BART land, adjacent city streets and private properties and will cost approximately $100 million to develop. Phase I will include the intermodal bus transfer facility, two parking structures (one for BART and the other for the tenants of the transit village), and the pedestrian plaza linking the BART station to the commercial district. Retail and community office space, a medical facility (Clinica de la Raza), a child care center, senior housing and the Unity Council’s headquarters (housing other public and private agencies such as the Latin American Library) will also be built in Phase I. Phase II will include a supermarket, other retail uses and housing. The first elements of Phase I to start construction will be the senior housing and child care facilities in September 1996, after environmental clearance is received.

The Unity Council will initiate the facade and street streetscape enhancements in 1996. It will coordinate its efforts with the city’s Office of Economic Development and Employment (OEDE) and its Neighborhood Community Revitalization Program. The city has already installed historic-style street lights, planted street trees, contracted with local artists to design and install an arch to span Fruitvale Avenue at the corner of East 14th Street, and initiated a facade improvement program using Americorps volunteers.

The Unity Council has established a community design board that will make recommendations as to which stores in the commercial corridor will get the facelift. Given limited funds, decisions will be made in accordance with guidelines that have been established to ensure that the facade improvement program complements the transit village. The Unity Council will hire a contractor and work with a crew of the East Bay Conservation Corps to do the work. It will provide business assistance to those property owners and merchants who want to make more improvements than are possible with Unity Council and city funds. They will be provided assistance with putting together business plans and loan packages to upgrade their businesses as well as their buildings. The program also includes an arts program that will hire local artists to produce a logo and banners with that logo to provide an identity to Fruitvale. The work of local artists will be displayed in empty store fronts. All of this is part of a marketing plan to enhance the image of Fruitvale and improve the business environment.

Construction of the other elements of Phase I is scheduled to begin in March 1997 and to reach completion 18 months later. Construction of Phase II is scheduled to begin immediately after that and be completed in the year 2001. After the transit village is finally built out, the Unity Council will focus on obtaining available, adjacent private parcels of land beyond the transit village.

The BART ENA with the Unity Council will lead to a development implementation agreement when the Unity Council completes all the requirements of the ENA. It will be the first time that BART has not issued a competitive request for proposal for bids for a joint-development project.

Controversial, unresolved issues, such as the type, location, and density of the proposed residential units, have been left open for discussion while other aspects of the plan, where consensus has been reached, have moved forward.

FUNDING

The key to the success of the Fruitvale Transit Village initiative has been the ability of the Unity Council to attract funds from a range of sources to
Figures 10-8 and 10-9. Case Study 10-2. Proposed plans for the Fruitvale BART Transit Village, Oakland, CA, feature a central square, senior housing, day care facilities and residential units to replace a parking lot and existing transit station. Key to Figure 10-8: 1-Existing BART Station; 2-Bus Plaza; 3-Festival Plaza; 4-Parking Structure; 5-Retail/Commercial; 6-12th Street; 7-34th Avenue; 8-Residential over Parking/Retail; 9-Retail; 10-Day Care Facility; 11-Senior Housing; 12-Surface Parking; 13-Playground; 14-Senior Center. (Credit: MV&P International and Legobreta Arquitectos)
fund the many elements of the transit village project. In 1992, the city awarded a $185,000 planning grant to the Unity Council for planning the BART station area redevelopment project. In 1993, former U.S. DOT Secretary Frederico Peña and FTA Administrator Gordon Linton gave the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) a $470,000 planning grant for the Fruitvale project. To date, more than $23 million has been raised or allocated by the Unity Council and its partners, including the following:

- $6.234 million for the senior housing;
- $780,000 for the pedestrian plaza;
- $2.675 million for the intermodal bus transfer center;
- $2.250 million from the city of Oakland for a multipurpose/senior center;
- $1.869 million for predevelopment planning from the city, FTA, and foundations;
- $1.246 million for land assembly and relocation from the city, Department of Health and Human Services (Head Start), the Unity Council and La Clinica de La Raza; and
- $917,000 for the East 14th Street façade and street streetscape improvements from the city and Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Hope VI funds through the Oakland Housing Authority.

Not included above are the staff costs of the city, BART, AC Transit, or La Clinica or the costs of the city’s and BART’s environmental impact studies. Also, not included is the $45,000 raised by artist Carolyna Marks from local community organizations, corporations, foundations, and individuals to finance the creation of her “Peace Wall” for the Fruitvale station, made of 3,600 tiles painted by students, community groups, merchants, local politicians, celebrities, and BART officials.

There are pending grants and loans from federal, state, and local governments as well as foundations and banks. This pending funding exceeds $10,000,000 and is subject to completion of specific grant conditions prior to disbursement.

There are financial gaps for some of the specific elements of the development, but most will be filled by borrowing from private lenders because projections show that debt can be repaid from the income flows from specific projects. A major financial gap of more than $10,000,000 relates to the BART parking structure. The gap exists because BART has a “no parking fee” policy which means there is no income to service debt. This is being discussed with BART and the city’s redevelopment agency.

The Unity Council has used the transit village development to attract millions of dollars to the Fruitvale community that might not have been forthcom-
ing without the transit initiative. This transit project has served to generate momentum and, most important, funding for a myriad of other community and economic development programs.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Inner city neighborhood redevelopment is a complex and extremely difficult undertaking. Private developers have usually shied away from such projects because of the difficulties. Few community development corporations have attempted to undertake a project of the scale of the Fruitvale BART Transit Village.

The Unity Council has faced a number of challenges and obstacles, and these have changed as the development advanced. The initial challenge was convincing BART, the city, and others that the Fruitvale BART Transit Village was not a dream. There were questions about the Unity Council’s development capacity and its ability to raise large sums of money. These concerns were legitimate because the Unity Council is a relatively small community development corporation, had not been in the development business for a number of years, and did not have staff with mixed-use and large-scale development experience. These doubts have for the most part been overcome as the Unity Council has demonstrated its capacity to raise substantial dollars. Particularly important in changing perceptions were FTA’s planning and HUD’s senior housing grants. The concerns about the Unity Council’s development capacity have subsided as the Unity Council completed one task after another and is now poised to begin construction on the senior housing. The concern about the Unity Council’s development capacity has now changed to concerns about its implementation capacity. To mitigate this concern, the Unity Council is exploring the possibility of selecting a joint-venture partner with financing and large-scale construction experience.

A second challenge has been finding resources to build the BART parking structure. Building the parking structure is critical as an integral element of the pedestrian plaza, plaza retail, and community facilities. Also, its construction in Phase I allows for the building of the Phase II housing on BART land. Unfortunately, the capital improvement funds that BART was going to invest in the Fruitvale parking structure were used to build a parking structure at another station. The Unity Council initially thought these funds were replaceable, but this may not be the case. The Unity Council is discussing working with BART and the redevelopment agency to address this major financial gap.

A third challenge has been environmental clearance. The Unity Council could not begin the final environmental clearance process until there was a final site plan. The community site-planning process was extensive and time-consuming. The consensus site plan would have had substantial environmental impacts that would have been costly to mitigate because of the closing of East 12th Street for which there was also some community opposition. In addition, the amount of time needed to obtain environmental clearance for the consensus plan might have jeopardized some of the funding for the transit village. The Unity Council decided to develop an alternative site plan in which East 12th was narrowed, but not closed.

A related challenge has been the numerous and conflicting government rules, regulations, conditions, and timelines of the various grantors. DOT, HUD, and Health and Human Services (HHS) environmental clearance rules and processes are different from each other. The city and the state of California air quality requirements are different from the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

Release of funding is also caught up with environmental clearance. The Unity Council has had to use its scarce unrestricted dollars to cover property acquisition until other funding is released.

The lack of funds has meant that the Unity Council missed the opportunity to land bank earlier in the planning stage when there was still some skepticism about the reality of the transit village. Now some property owners hope to make financial profits on properties that were not salable 2 years ago. This has raised the cost for the development of the transit village, and it may be difficult to attract retail because the land costs will not allow for rents that are in keeping with those of other developments in the area.

Beyond the technical and funding issues are community issues. The issue of the closing of East 12th Street has been partially resolved with the new site plan, although the issue of the type and density of new housing to be constructed at the site has been a long-standing point of contention. Some community members were exposed to a variety of types of affordable housing and ways in which they have been integrated into different communities through a series of slides, which were presented at one of the community site planning meetings. While it is clear to many people that the Unity Council and other nonprofit developers are responsible builders and landlords, they are afraid that the proposed up-zoning around transit hubs in the new general plan will encourage outside
private developers to come into these areas and construct very dense, structurally poor housing for low-income renters who do not have a stake in the housing or the community.

The community is concerned that building new housing will exacerbate the already overcrowded public schools of the area. Residents and other stakeholders are concerned with the low level of owner occupancy and the current housing market. The Unity Council will not be able to address all these fears, but it believes that some of these will be mitigated once it is able to develop the housing element in more detail.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

Through the use of a community-based planning process, the community has reached agreement on a conceptual site plan as well as on the design program for the East 14th Street renovation and facade improvement component of the project.

Because the Fruitvale Transit Village project has not yet been implemented, the greatest impact of this project thus far is as a national model for planning community-based, transit-oriented developments. It is a model for demonstrating how communities, especially those with economically and ethnically diverse populations, can use transit projects to achieve community economic revitalization and development.

When fully implemented, BART anticipates 40 percent more people will leave their cars at home to take public transit from this station. More than 750 jobs will be created and retail sales and income will increase as will property values. More than 250 units of affordable housing, including nursing homes for senior citizens, will be built and the physical environment will be greatly improved by the new construction and facade improvement program. The area will be safer as a result of increased numbers of people in the area during the day and evening. The city will benefit from the recognition that it has succeeded in revitalizing one of the most seriously blighted, economically depressed neighborhoods in the city and from increased sales and property taxes.

**CONCLUSIONS**

From a $185,000 planning grant, the Unity Council and its partners have been able to leverage nearly $17 million to fund the development and construction of the Fruitvale BART Transit Village and all of the community and social service facilities to be housed there—uses which will make a substantial contribution to the livability of the neighborhood. The Unity Council in general, and Arabella Martinez, its Chief Executive Officer, in particular, are given credit for mobilizing and maintaining the broad community base of support for the Fruitvale BART development, which represents a model for the integration of transportation, land use, economic development, and community development. The development and construction funds the Fruitvale BART Transit Village has received attests to the success of its planning strategy and ability to bring together and sustain a coalition of public and private sector groups to work with a community in order to realize its vision.

**SOURCES**

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Metropolitan Transportation Commission, *Transactions*, Oakland, CA (October 1993).

*The most important thing we did differently was we*

**Case Study 10-3**

**New Jersey Transit Station Renewal Program**

**Creating Partnerships with Community**

worked in partnership with a lot of people and organizations locally that we don’t always work with.

—Rick Richmond, Director, 
NJ Transit Department of Engineering

[Woodbridge Station] is more than a railroad station; it is an example of how people in a community can invest in that community and make it a rallying point of how vital the community is. Through this project, we recognize we’re a vital part of the community we serve.

—NJ DOT Commissioner Wilson

**SUMMARY**

Despite significant investment in New Jersey Transit’s (NJ Transit) 158 passenger facilities over the past 15 years, many of the rehabilitated stations have been vandalized and have become deteriorated because of poor maintenance and a lack of on-site management and/or sufficient operating funds. Efforts to rehabilitate these stations also were hindered by the poor quality of the adjacent environment and lack of maintenance resources. Many stations and their environs were perceived as unsafe by NJ Transit customers, and only a few stations had the kind of
passenger-oriented amenities that commuters want, such as a newsstand or a concession with hot coffee and breakfast food. Some did not have sheltered outdoor seating areas and a number of station buildings had been closed by NJ Transit or rented to other non-transit-related businesses. Clearly, there had to be a better way.

In 1991, a concept for a station renewal program designed to address these issues was developed through discussions between NJ Transit and Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS). The goals of the program were to improve the condition, appearance, uses, and, most important, the management of its commuter rail stations to serve passengers more effectively, promote public transit, and act as a catalyst for economic development in the communities in which they are located. This program has employed an innovative, community-based approach to guide NJ Transit in its ongoing station renewal efforts.

PLANNING PROCESS

Five train stations were evaluated during the course of the program, including Bradley Beach, Maplewood, Netherwood (in Plainfield), Rahway, and Woodbridge (see Case Study 4-2). Each station offered a unique opportunity for making improvements that not only would help increase ridership, but would better integrate these stations into their communities and create sustainable partnerships between NJ Transit and each community. The five stations represented a cross-section of station types and environments, including a tourist location (Bradley Beach), a suburban station in a residential/business district (Maplewood), a historic station in a depressed urban center (Netherwood), a station with a high volume of passenger use (Rahway), and a station at the confluence of major highways and train lines in New Jersey (Woodbridge).

The planning process used in each community consisted primarily of meetings with communities and NJ Transit management; detailed observations of passenger use at stations at various times; surveys of train passengers; interviews with nearby retailers; informal discussions with ticket agents during peak and off-peak times; and studies of where people waited for trains, where they were picked up and dropped off, and what routes passengers used to enter and leave each station. In the survey, people were questioned about their general impression of the station, about types of retail and other services for the station, about other kinds of activities for the station and the surrounding area, and about their primary transportation needs and concerns. All of this information helped to create a clear picture of how each station was currently used and perceived.

In addition, community meetings were held to gain additional insight and share findings and observations with passengers, local residents, merchants, and city representatives. Participants identified their most pressing needs and concerns for each station and made suggestions for improvements to station buildings and adjacent areas. These meetings were arranged by NJ Transit in conjunction with representatives from each city and with local organizations, such as merchant associations.

The following common issues and problem areas were identified.

Lack of On-Site Management of Station Buildings and Adjacent Areas. At several stations, there was widespread concern among passengers that stations were unsafe and, in most of the communities studied, that the stations were poorly maintained. This perception was created by several overlapping aspects of the station surroundings, including boarded up and closed station buildings, poor maintenance of buildings and grounds, inadequate lighting of platforms and parking lots, litter, and graffiti. The combination of these problems had a major impact on passengers’ sense of safety and security and detracted from the surrounding areas as well.

Most of the train stations operated by NJ Transit did not have regular on-site management. Bradley Beach and Netherwood lacked a management presence altogether. At many stations, people who provided transit-related information or sold tickets, refreshments, newspapers, and other items were only at the station for limited hours. At other times, the stations were closed and no active amenities were offered. Although general station maintenance was provided, small-scale maintenance and cleaning was not done on a regular basis. This gave stations the appearance of being uncared for and unmanaged.

According to NJ Transit, constrained operating budgets have limited management and regular maintenance of stations, station buildings, parking lots, and adjacent areas. It was also difficult for NJ Transit to implement even minor, yet highly visible improvements. Another approach was needed, therefore, to guarantee the management and maintenance of these stations in a manner that serves the needs of passengers, communities, and NJ Transit.

Underutilization of Station Buildings for Passenger and Community Use. Many of NJ Transit’s station buildings lacked clear identities as train stations and did not provide adequate levels of service to passengers. Lack of attention to the historic character of the buildings, poor visual and difficult physical access, absence of identifying station signage, and lack of visual and
physical connections between stations and their communities contributed to this lack of identity and sense of place. Furthermore, many of the station buildings have been adapted for other purposes (e.g., banks, real estate or physicians’ offices). While this has solved some maintenance problems for NJ Transit, it also resulted in facilities whose transportation role was subsumed by the prominence of the tenant use.

Lack of Community Input into the Station Design Process. The station design process typically used by NJ Transit and other transit agencies in developing plans for new and rehabilitated stations was neither community- nor user-based. Rather, concepts were first developed by the transit agency, and communities were asked to react and give input.

STRATEGY

NJ Transit’s lack of success with a typical planning approach made it clear that a new way of designing and managing stations and working with local communities was necessary. The current system worked neither for NJ Transit nor for communities. Opportunities for stations to become integral to the vitality of their communities and catalysts for economic and community revitalization were being overlooked.

Community-Based Design Process for Project Development. Through the process used in the five communities, NJ Transit learned that community involvement and participation, from the start of the design process through the implementation of station improvements, are key elements of a successful broad-based approach to station design and are essential to the development of community support for transit projects. Such an approach focuses on an understanding of the important and often disparate issues and needs within each community and relies on information gathered through station observations, interviews and community input to help design station improvements.

By establishing a program of uses for the station before the concept design is developed, appropriate, mutually acceptable, and beneficial uses evolve. Also, the community has the opportunity to share responsibility for ongoing maintenance and management of the station and the adjacent public spaces.

Public/Private Community Partnerships. The NJ Transit Station Renewal Program is an initiative in which individual communities share responsibility for designing and implementing station improvements as well as for ongoing maintenance and management of stations.
and adjacent public spaces. Moreover, activities such as supplementing existing security services, retail leasing, and coordination of customer and community information is provided by communities in partnership with NJ Transit. Implementing such an effort enables NJ Transit to draw on a community’s vast array of economic, creative, and human resources.

In this approach, communities have a major impact on the quality of the station environment. Some of the specific activities that have been undertaken by NJ Transit in partnership with communities at its commuter rail stations include the following:

- Working with the community to define issues and potential solutions and implement changes at the Woodbridge and Netherwood commuter rail stations.
- Providing maintenance for the station building (excluding major capital improvements). At the Maplewood station, local artists repainted a mural in the passenger tunnel. At Netherwood, a major neighborhood group is organizing a project at a local middle school in which students will paint murals on the tunnel walls and adjacent buildings.
- Working with residents of the Maplewood community to maintain station landscaping around their rail station. In Netherwood, a local community group entered a partnership with the Home Depot to fund and install flower planters on the station platforms. The group also helps maintain landscaping.
- Evaluating the need and providing for the informational and amenity needs of the community at the stations. An artist was commissioned by NJ Transit to create a decorative map at the Woodbridge Station of all retail, community, and recreational points of interest in the town.
- Developing a program of community social and cultural activities and events for public spaces adjacent to train stations. Several of NJ Transit’s other stations have been the site of “First Night” family-oriented New Year’s Eve celebrations for the past 2 years; in addition, a weekly farmer’s market takes place at and under the East Orange train station during that city’s free summer jazz concerts, and weekly farmer’s markets at the Bernardsville station creates activity at the station each Saturday during the summer.

*Passenger Service Center Programs Using Existing Station Buildings.* When NJ Transit seeks to attract vendors and businesses to its stations, it looks first to businesses in the immediate vicinity before soliciting interest from national chains or retailers from other townships. In this way, local businesses are not forced to compete with out-of-town operations and are provided with additional retail outlets and a larger customer base, which helps them and adds to the economic vitality of the town as well. Train stations also are appropriate centers for incubator-retail activity, where small vendors or emerging retailers are given an opportunity to market goods and services or to try out new product lines.

As this program was being developed, the idea emerged that NJ Transit could encourage retailers or a “concierge” to run “passenger service centers.” These centers are intended to make available to passengers the services and products of local businesses, either by providing retail spaces at stations as satellite business opportunities for local retailers, or through a concierge program in which the goods and services of local businesses would be sold by a concierge at the station, an on-site manager who contracts with local businesses to sell goods and services on their behalf, such as film and dry cleaning drop-off. This program is in the process of being implemented in Maplewood.

**FUNDING**

The plan for the NJ Transit Station Renewal Program, including station improvement concepts for five stations, was funded jointly by NJ Transit and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. The Dodge Foundation is concerned about revitalization of communities in the state and provided a planning grant to Project for Public Spaces, Inc. In the long term, NJ Transit plans to partially fund managerial activities at stations through an income stream generated from selected parking fees dedicated to this purpose. These funds can then be deposited into a fund administered by a local entity (e.g., a downtown or merchants’ association or nonprofit organization) responsible for station management and under contract to NJ Transit.

Station management projects will continue to be funded at NJ Transit by New Jersey Transportation Trust Funds, FTA capital funds, including ISTEA enhancement funds, and private funds. For example, the $2.1 million Netherwood Station Renewal Project, which is really a coordinated set of separate projects and funding sources, is a combination of grants to NJ Transit from the FTA (ISTEA), State Transportation Trust Funds; grants to the city of Plainfield from the Federal Highway Administration, FTA/State of New Jersey (ISTEA) and Urban Enterprise Zone Authority; and private developer funding (for station tenant).

In the short term, the community volunteer groups and city governments contribute time, project support
and implementation assistance as well as re-prioritize their own improvement plans so they are coordinated with those of the station renewal project. In the long term, the coordinated set of improvements and attention to the station and adjacent public spaces by a partnership of interest generates a viable, livable community capable of sustaining itself.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

This project changed the way NJ Transit views and manages its facilities. Change is usually difficult, particularly within a bureaucracy. While several NJ Transit managers were extremely supportive and excited about the community-based process to improve the train stations, others were skeptical and even uncooperative and went so far as to view this approach as subversive. The ultimate success of the Woodbridge project, which was the first to be completed, has done much to build confidence in the community-based approach to station renewal in the eyes of NJ Transit engineers.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The approach used in the NJ Transit Station Renewal Program greatly facilitated project implementation. With strong local support and a creative vision, these projects were selected for implementation by NJ Transit over others proposed. All of the improvements recommended for the Woodbridge station have been implemented. NJ Transit has received a design award from the Downtown New Jersey Association and has been nominated for an American Planning Association design award (see Case Study 4-2). The exterior restoration of Netherwood Station has been completed and work has begun on the parking lot and park redesign. A retail tenant is in negotiation to create a café in the station. In Maplewood, the concierge program is underway and landscaping and tunnel improvements have been made to the station by the local business association. At Rahway, a new station design has been accepted and construction is underway. The city and NJ Transit are moving forward to develop a concept plan to turn the plaza in front of the station into a large, urban central square.

NJ Transit has continued to work in partnership with these five communities on project implementation. In addition, NJ Transit staff has begun to understand the larger role that transit plays in communities and the importance of obtaining community involvement early in the project design process. This approach will be used in the redesign of future stations, such as Red Bank and Perth Amboy.

CONCLUSIONS

By jointly developing and implementing station improvement plans with communities, NJ Transit has demonstrated that stations can have active, publicly oriented uses and programs that contribute to the livability of the community. As projects are completed, security is improved, station revenues are increased, riders are attracted and stations can begin to act as catalysts for economic development in the surrounding areas. The partnership concept is necessary in order to manage and maintain train stations so that they can meet these ambitious goals and ensure the commitment of the community to sustaining the vitality and livability of the station area.

Railroads tend to build cities—whereas cars tend to destroy them. That’s because a railroad system concentrates life and activity around its stations.

—Robert Campbell, The Boston Globe, Tuesday, November 21, 1989

[We all] began to realize what a wonderful place this is and how much better it is for all of our customers. We had better work well together because it is in our mutual interest.”

—Jim Wright, project manager

SUMMARY

South Station serves as a gateway to Boston’s revitalized financial and retail center. The station is the multimodal transportation hub for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail, Red Line Subway service, long distance inter- and intra-city buses, and Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor train service. Slated for demolition in the 1970s to make way for the new headquarters of an engineering firm, South Station was saved when the Head House (main building) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was renovated as a result of increasing transit ridership during the 1980s. It is now the second busiest transportation center in New England.

South Station reopened in 1989 after undergoing major renovation, the concept for which has successfully transformed a rundown terminal plagued with
security problems into an active public amenity and focal point for the area around it. The renovation was funded through a three-way private-public partnership among the MBTA, the owner of the Station; Amtrak, an anchor tenant; and Beacon South Station Associates (BSSA). Beacon Management Company manages the facility today.

PLANNING PROCESS

South Station, a neoclassical revival-style building predating Grand Central and the old Penn Station in New York City, was dedicated on New Year’s Eve 1898. For the next several decades, it was the busiest railroad station in the country, serving nearly 40 million passengers annually. By the 1960s, however, South Station was dilapidated and virtually unused. While saved from demolition in the 1970s, the station continued to function as a train facility both for Amtrak and commuter rail and had only one working elevator and one open staircase. In addition, the third floor had been closed after a fire and the fifth floor was completely abandoned. The desolate facility had become a haven for the homeless, which only served to exacerbate its negative image.

Restoration of the structure, which was performed by the MBTA, began in 1983 and was completed in 1989 under the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project. Funded by the federal government, this $4.4 billion program paid for the renovation of Amtrak train stations from Washington, DC, to Boston, Massachusetts.

The station was renovated in order to act as a catalyst for further development of the South Station/Fort Point Channel area; add an integral part to the city’s patchwork of streets, parks, and public spaces; enable the MBTA to better meet the public’s needs and to improve transportation service; and create a market square and public gathering place where people could comfortably meet, eat, shop, and mix.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) hired the firm of DeLeuw Cather/Parsons to do conceptual designs for the entire transit corridor. Each station then sent out its own requests for proposals (RFPs) to select local designers for each part of the project, including station buildings, track beds, and platforms. Design fees were paid by the FRA directly to the local designers. As owners of South Station, the MBTA was involved in the design and worked with the local architect to build out the concourse, platforms, and tracks. At this point, the MBTA advertised for a developer manager to build out the concession and tenant floor. Beacon Management was selected through an RFP process. The specific development and management responsibilities were divided between the MBTA and Beacon and were put into a 65-year lease agreement.

STRATEGY

South Station handles about 36,000 passengers per day and runs 210 commuter and 27 Amtrak trains daily. About 1,000 passengers take Greyhound buses and 37,000 passengers use the Red Line subway each day. A new bus terminal is being constructed as part of the South Station Transportation Center.

Management. While the station is still run by the MBTA, Beacon Management Company develops and implements the merchandising plan for South Station and currently performs retail tenant management, the leasing of retail and office space and planning of special events. The company is also responsible for day-to-day management, maintenance, and security at the facility. Beacon Management Company hires and supervises maintenance staff and handles all public relations, including producing and distributing posters, brochures, and advertising of all station events.

Design. South Station is a five-story structure, the facade of which is Stony Creek granite and features 16 ionic columns. It was built as a double-deck station with 28 tracks. Two wings extend out from each side of a center section. The restaurant has coffered ceilings and the station has terrazzo floors, retail, a food hall, a grand concourse that is 300 ft long and 45 ft high, 125,000 sq ft of office space, and 25,000 sq ft of retail space.

Before the station renovation, the longer east wing, which ran along Summer Street, was torn down to
make way for Stone and Webster, an engineering firm, to construct their new headquarters. Originally, the firm had planned to demolish the entire station before landmark designation saved the building. The smaller west wing also had been partially destroyed. As part of the renovation, the MBTA made the two wings the same length and joined the ends with a glass wall; this served to create a new, larger concourse area.

Other unique design features include the only remaining double three-legged, hand-wind clock mechanism in New England, in the style of London’s Big Ben. There is an eagle with an 8-ft wing span atop the station building. Much of the interior is mahogany and polished brass. As part of the historic restoration, original gas lights and station signage were also restored.

Beacon Management created standards for kiosk design, signage, and facades. They built four kiosks in the grand concourse, which camouflage ventilation shafts. Eight wooden benches conjure up images of historic train station decor. Additionally, more than 25 tables with chairs are located in the grand concourse and substantial seating is provided in the food court mezzanine.

**Community Services and Events.** More than 50 events per year are hosted by the Beacon Management Company at South Station. On a daily basis, there are exhibits, concerts, fund-raisers, performers, musicians, ballroom dancing, family-oriented programming, and health-related activities such as blood pressure testing. These events draw more than 50,000 people annually and help to support the station’s 20 retailers. The community has been actively involved in running and advertising community-oriented special events and activities at the station.

**Retail.** Some 14,000 sq ft of retail space at South Station currently are occupied by 20 food, gift, and service providers. The retail mix reflects a wide variety of commuter-oriented services, which make South Station a convenient place for passengers to shop and reinforces the station’s role as the “market square” for the area. Retailers include a florist, an accessory store, a bank, cafes, bakeries, a photo lab, trolley tours for tourists, a newsstand, a bookstore, and several local and national bars and restaurants.

**Security.** Security was not a design issue for the renovated station, as evidenced by the fact that there are now many more doors than before. Security has been improved primarily through the increased presence of several types of security personnel at the station. Boston City police patrol the exterior of the station, MBTA police have jurisdiction inside the station facility, Amtrak security handles the platform areas and trains, and the local private security forces, hired and supervised by the Beacon Management Company, monitor the station concourse and waiting areas. However, few security problems were cited at South Station; the large numbers of people using the station every day (50,000 total; between 3,000 and 5,000 area workers come to South Station daily for lunch alone) help create an active, safe environment. Later in the evening, security personnel ask people in the waiting room to show a purchased train or bus ticket.

**FUNDING**

South Station cost $100 million to restore. The FRA contributed $30 million, the FTA provided $10 million, and the remaining $60 million was funded through state bonds. In addition, Beacon Management spent approximately $25 million to develop the interior of the station, including the retail kiosks, seating, and so forth. Management and events programming are partially funded under tenant leases, including fundraising events to benefit the station, rental of the station to groups for private events, and by the MBTA’s budget. Special events are paid for by sponsors and raise money for specific community causes (such as the Children’s Museum). Profits, after all costs, are split evenly between Beacon Management and the MBTA.

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

Multiagency partnerships can be unwieldy to handle, at least initially, if partners experience difficulty in sharing control. In the case of South Station, one partner oversaw station restoration (the MBTA), another manages the facility (Beacon Management), and both the MBTA and Amtrak run trains through it. This sort of arrangement can create design and maintenance difficulties, but they can be avoided if the people coordinating and overseeing the project understand all the key issues. Had the private developer/manager been brought on board sooner, the station build-out would have been more streamlined and cost-efficient because they would have had more input into the design and been better able to shape the retail and public areas, which they now lease, manage, and maintain. However, the partners at South Station have developed a good working relationship.

Financing also was difficult due to a complicated ground lease. In addition, the station has become so popular as a community gathering place that often times there is not enough space to accommodate the number and size of activities that occur there.
IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Once somewhat isolated by its location, the revitalization of this part of downtown Boston has created more than 6 million sq ft of office space in the area surrounding the station. Because South Station was in place, it provided a central focal point for the area and new developments have taken place around the station.

In 1990, the restoration of South Station was recognized by the Boston Preservation Alliance as the Best Large Scale Project and by Building Design and Construction as the Best Reconstruction project. In 1991, it was named the best Historical Commercial Rehabilitation project by the National Commercial Builders Council. South Station received a Merit Award in 1993 in the International Council of Shopping Center’s MAXI Awards ceremony for community programming and received the 1995 International Building of the Year Award from the Building Owners and Managers Association.

Working with a private developer on the project has been so effective that the MBTA has privatized the management of South Station’s new bus terminal over the train yards and contracted with Beacon Management Company for these services.

CONCLUSIONS

Through a public-private partnership, the MBTA has been able to create a transit facility that is integrated into and serves the downtown Boston community and provides innovative management and security strategies. These goals were achieved through the expansion of amenities and services at the station, which have helped transform South Station into a major activity center and contributed to the livability of the neighborhood, the downtown, and the city as a whole.

SUMMARY

The Wilmington studies are a series of planning and design projects in the city of Wilmington, Delaware, intended to promote a balanced transportation system in the city giving full consideration to all modes of travel; to promote livability in downtown Wilmington and adjacent districts by providing a better connection between development, transportation, and public spaces; and to promote additional residential and commercial development in the city as a result of these proposed environmental and transportation enhancements.

The Wilmington studies include the following specific projects:

- A multimodal downtown circulation study;
- Four downtown gateway enhancement projects;
- Four residential traffic-calming and environmental enhancement projects;
- Two neighborhood retail district environmental enhancement projects;
- One major corridor design project;
- A transit center design project;
- Three intersection safety projects;
- One industrial development access project; and
- A signage program for downtown and adjacent districts.

All of these projects are being carried out under an innovative partnership among the transit agency, the city, the state transportation agency and the MPO.

PLANNING PROCESS

Downtown Wilmington is a typical U.S. city in many ways. Bounded both to the north and the south by rivers, the downtown is further defined by a major arterial street on the east and Interstate 95 on the west. With a shift of retail to the suburbs, the downtown, slightly more than 1 sq mi in size, has become primarily an office center, with more than 40,000 workers. The downtown has a small and weak retail core and several in-town residential rowhouse neighborhoods.

As in many cities, changes have been made over the last 40 years to the downtown to accommodate more and more vehicle capacity. Streets have been converted from two directional to one direction and many have been widened. Large surface parking lots have replaced aging residential and commercial structures to provide more parking for office workers. Superblocks have been created. Not surprisingly, over time, the downtown has become less transit, pedestrian, and bicycle friendly and more oriented toward private vehicles. In addition, the greatly modified traditional grid system does not even function very well in connecting vehicles with all desired destinations within the downtown.

In 1995, the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO), the designated MPO for the Wilmington region, the city of Wilmington, and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), en-
tered into a partnership to enhance the environment of downtown Wilmington and adjacent residential and commercial corridors. The goal of the partnership is to promote the livability of the downtown and adjacent areas through the provision of a balanced transportation system that promotes a higher level of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit activities.

There are major jurisdictional overlaps related to the Wilmington studies. DelDOT, the owner and operator of a number of the streets downtown and in adjacent neighborhoods, serves as the operator of the transit system and as the primary source of transportation funding in the region. WILMAPCO is a regional planning agency that produces the regional long-range transportation plan and transportation improvement programs that guide funding. The city of Wilmington government regulates development in the study areas and also controls some potential funding. A program to substantially change the infrastructure and transportation services supporting downtown and adjacent districts requires a high level of cooperation among these institutions.

The Wilmington studies would not have proceeded had these agencies not undergone internal reorganization first. Specifically, WILMAPCO, as part of its long-range transportation-planning process, identified the need to reinvest and reinvigorate existing communities, a substantial policy change from existing transportation and land-use development trends. DelDOT, the operator of the state’s road network and transit system, has recently gone through an extensive reorganization and reorientation as a result of a change in agency leadership. Historically, DelDOT, like many other state DOTs, was focused on new road construction, with less emphasis on maintaining the integrity of the existing system or promoting a balanced transportation system. As a result, the state entered the early 1990s with a very limited transit program and almost no investments in pedestrian or bicycle systems.

The city of Wilmington, in an effort to improve its image and the quality of its business district and adjacent neighborhoods, initiated a citywide environmental enhancement planning program to create urban design guidelines and streetscape concepts for a number of key gateways and corridors in the city. The city plans to implement future plans through a series of demonstration projects funded through the regional transportation improvement program process and through a city capital improvements bond issue.

All of these very positive efforts to rethink public investments in urban environments at all levels of government are coalescing into a coordinated investment strategy for the city of Wilmington. The organizational structure of the Wilmington studies provides one of the key linkages between these initiatives.

In addition to this partnership, a broader steering committee, which oversees the progress of these projects, was organized. In addition to representatives of the three partners, the committee includes representatives of community groups, the business community, and special interest groups like the Delaware Greenways. The steering committee provides policy guidance and oversight for individual projects as they move through the planning and design phases. The steering committee had a significant role in amending the list of projects and project scopes to be included in the Wilmington studies. As a result of this committee’s input, one major study corridor was substituted for another and project study boundaries were modified for several projects.

The organization for the Wilmington studies also has included the formation of a technical committee to provide technical guidance, coordination, and input into individual projects. For some projects, such as the multimodal downtown circulation study, the technical committee is central to the development of viable alternatives to be presented to the steering committee. The technical committee is composed of senior staff planners and engineers from the city, DelDOT, Delaware Transportation Corporation (DTC), WILMAPCO, and consultants. With this structure, a partnership is established both at the policy level and the technical level, which is proving to be very important in building and maintaining support for the projects.

**STRATEGY**

These Wilmington studies focus on developing recommendations for improving the downtown environment and creating opportunities for new development through transportation enhancements. Specific recommendations will be made for the transit system, bicycle routes, pedestrian environment,
and street configurations as means to enhance the livability of the downtown and the region.

Based on many meetings and community outreach, consensus formed around the importance of beginning with the multimodal downtown circulation study and phasing in the other projects. A consultant team was selected in December 1995 to begin work on this study. The multimodal downtown circulation study is structured as an intensive 7-month planning process that will include a series of four workshop cycles with the various committees and the public.

Although the time frame for completion of all planning and design work associated with the Wilmington studies is 15 to 18 months, particular emphasis will be given to early action items that can be implemented quickly and at a moderate cost. This is intended to build credibility and support for the project’s longer term recommendations.

**FUNDING**

Planning and design efforts related to all of the Wilmington studies are anticipated to be well in excess of $1 million (exclusive of staff time from the agency partners). Final estimates are not available because some project teams have not yet been selected and as a result, scopes have not been finalized.

Funding for the planning studies comes from all three partners. For example, for the multimodal downtown circulation study, the city of Wilmington has funded an urban design consultant to establish urban design guidelines and streetscape concepts for the downtown; WILMAPCO, in turn, has funded consultant work for partnership coordination, public outreach, and an economic development assessment. DelDOT is funding the consultant team conducting the transportation assessment. This pooling of funds also supports the development of multiagency partnerships.

Funds have not yet been set aside for implementation of project recommendations, although three funding tracks have been discussed. First, once project planning recommendations have been made, these projects are eligible for funding through the TIP process, which uses state and federal program funds. A second potential source of project funding is a capital bond issue to be floated by the city of Wilmington in 1996. A third source of funding being explored for specific projects is the business community. Downtown Wilmington has a large corporate presence for a city of its size and there is a long history of corporate support for streetscape, parks, and road improvements adjacent to their buildings downtown.

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

A number of institutional obstacles have been overcome to create an effective partnership. Most of the programs now being planned in a coordinated manner initially originated as independent projects of the three partners, with different but overlapping sets of stakeholders and technical consultants. A lack of coordination among the city, DelDOT and the MPO (which has the potential mechanism for funding) could have led to significant problems. For example, the city could go ahead with design plans for streets without input from the MPO and DelDOT. Likewise, DelDOT (the agency responsible for detailed planning and design for street, walkway, and transit improvements in the city) was formerly able to proceed without coordinating its efforts with the city and the MPO. This approach would have resulted in conflicting programs and counterproductive investment. Poor communication and institutional resistance to shared decision making were overcome through an ongoing series of intra-agency coordinating sessions where each agency presented its plans and issues. The limited pool of infrastructure funds played a major role in bringing all parties to the table.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Effective communication and coordination between various levels of government on a targeted urban planning and investment strategy, which coordinates transit and transportation issues, is difficult to achieve but essential to producing positive results. Prior to the establishment of the Wilmington studies planning process, agency efforts were proceeding independently and were often at cross-purposes. Now, the cumulative impact of a coordinated multiagency investment plan in a targeted area is likely to produce greater tangible results with broader impact on the livability of Wilmington than had each agency proceeded alone.

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Case Study 10-6
Denver, CO: The Sixteenth Street Transitway
Twenty Years of Public-Private Partnership and Reinvestment

Over the years, the mall has been the constant—growing in use and importance—as the downtown changes around it.

—Richard Bradley, President,
International Downtown Association
SUMMARY

Denver’s 16th Street Transit Mall—a mile-long transit way and public promenade lined with trees, shops, and restaurants—serves as a transit and pedestrian thoroughfare and demonstrates how a transit partnership can help create a livable metropolitan area. Exemplifying elements of innovative transportation services, high-quality design, and attention to management detail, the mall is an integral part of downtown Denver, nationally known as one of the most attractive and economically viable city centers in the country. The Downtown Denver Business Improvement District, originally called the 16th Street Mall Management District, is a public/private partnership that maintains the mall. Over 45,000 transit passengers use the mall daily and 45,000 pedestrians walk portions of the mall.

PLANNING PROCESS

The original concept for the downtown mall was developed in the early 1970s when downtown business advocates detected the same decline in retail sales experienced in other U.S. center cities. At the same time, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) was investigating methods to alleviate congestion, caused in part by downtown bus circulation, while improving the efficiency of its transportation services. In 1976, Downtown Denver, Inc. (DDI), a private-sector business association, joined the RTD and city officials to conduct feasibility studies for a combined pedestrian and transit way mall along 16th Street.

In August 1977, the architectural firm of I.M. Pei and Associates of New York, consultants hired by RTD, unveiled a model for a 13-block 16th Street Mall with bus transfer centers at each end. The entire 80-ft right of way would be dedicated to a pedestrian and transit path, flanked by retail shops. Within the “new” right of way, sidewalks would be widened and rebuilt with gray and red granite slabs. A 22-ft, extensively landscaped pedestrian area down the center of the street would divide two 10-ft lanes for specially designed shuttle buses. Except at cross-streets, all nonemergency vehicles would be excluded from the mall.

The plan received the enthusiastic support of most businesses, which saw in the proposal a way to create an attractive, pedestrian-oriented activity center that would entice people downtown and revitalize retail activity. An economic benefit study estimated the new mall would increase sales by 7.5 percent to 10 percent and that gains would be higher if the mall was properly maintained and managed.

Construction of the mall began in February 1980 and the 13-block transitway, the project’s centerpiece, opened in October 1982. Patterned granite blocks replaced former street and sidewalk surfaces. Mature locust and oak trees, water fountains, special lighting fixtures, benches, and planters were all part of the unified design to enhance pedestrian use and enjoyment.

STRATEGY

There are two essential dimensions to the mall’s effectiveness: the transit way with its free shuttle system, and the property owner assessment program, which privately maintains the mall.

Express, intercity, and regional bus routes were revised to terminate at the two transfer facilities rather than travel through the streets of the CBD to pick up and unload passengers. Twenty-six free-fare, custom-designed shuttle buses distribute passengers along the mall at 70-second intervals during peak periods, and at 3.5-min cycles during off-peak hours. This shuttle bus fleet has become a mile-long “horizontal elevator,” serving downtown users 7 days a week.

The lower downtown Market Street Station, an underground, 10-stall bus transfer facility as well as new, aboveground headquarters for RTD, was completed in 1983. A year later, the Civic Center Station opened, incorporating a 9-stall bus transfer facility and underground parking garage.

To provide a broad array of supplemental maintenance, security, repair, programming, and marketing services required by a facility such as the mall, the downtown interests initiated in 1978 an amendment to
the city charter authorizing a special mall benefit district to pay for the care, management, and operation of the mall. The 16th Street Mall Management District (MMD) policy was set by a five-member board, composed of property owners, appointed by the mayor and headed by the city’s manager of public works. The District was staffed by the Downtown Denver Partnership, which was created to manage DDI and the MMD according to the terms of a management agreement. Assisting the board is an advisory group of representatives from RTD, Downtown Denver Partnership, the city council, the police department, and various downtown business and residential communities. The mall’s shuttle bus service and transfer stations are operated and funded separately by RTD.

Twenty years after its initial conception, the Denver transit mall is still part of conversations about the future of the downtown and the city. In 1992, when the original enabling legislation for the Mall Management District expired, a lengthy debated raged around issues as fundamental as the continued existence of the maintenance district. The outcome was the establishment of the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District, a self-taxing authority, which included a larger area of the downtown (while still focusing on the mall). The idea of mall management grew into the idea of downtown management.

The BID was expanded to include 130 blocks, or any property within four blocks of the 16th Street Mall. The BID now includes all of the lower downtown historic district, up to the southern boundary of Coors Field. The BID today provides the following mall enhancing services:

- Sidewalk area and transit way washing and sweeping;
- Trash pickup and removal;
- Landscaping and maintenance of trees and seasonal flowers;
- Lighting, electrical, and plumbing services;
- Granite paver maintenance and repair;
- Graffiti removal;
- Snow removal;
- Banners, public art, mall use permits, and management of sidewalk vending programs;
- BID management and administration;
- District-wide marketing, publicity, communication, and promotion;
- District-wide business retention and recruitment programs;
- District-wide support of city security services; and
- Special-events programming.

FUNDING

When the new mall was proposed, it received the blessing of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA, now FTA), which approved federal funding for 80 percent of the construction cost, with the balance provided by the RTD. UMTA agreed with RTD that the mall’s shuttle buses and transfer facilities would significantly improve accessibility to and within downtown as well as increase transit capacity and efficiency.

Capital costs for the entire project totaled $76.1 million, including $29 million for mall construction and $5.1 million for the initial fleet of 19 shuttle buses. The remaining budget provided for the construction of two transfer stations and renovation of the RTD administration building.

The $70 million public investment in the transit way leverages a $2 million annual assessment on private property (totaling $20 million to date) to help maintain and guide activities on the mall. The district’s budget is raised through an annual assessment of district property owners. The assessment is calculated against land area and 5 percent of building area based on proximity to the mall, and currently ranges from 10 cents to 56 cents per square foot of land.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The formation of the transit and pedestrian corridor was supported by the city, building owners and managers, retail and hoteliers, and downtown residents.

In the past several years, however, major discussions have focused on issues related to development policies and the use of public incentives to support new economic activity along the mall, particularly to support retail uses that have been negatively impacted by the loss of downtown department stores. The appearance and marginal use of many of the buildings is a growing concern. As the economy of the center city changes, as new entertainment and sports facilities expanded at one end of the mall, traditional retail and office use began to decline. The result of the debate has been the decision to support the construction of a convention center, hotel and entertainment retail complex to help anchor the east end of the mall and to upgrade the attractiveness of this area.

The 13 year-old mall is also undergoing a significant capital improvement program to renovate and, at times, replace trash receptacles, street signs, maps and light fixtures. The BID is dedicating significant funds to this program. In addition, RTD is accepting propos-
als for newly designed and built shuttle vehicles to replace the current ones.

**IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT**

While the Downtown Mall Management District initially included only those properties between 14th and 20th Streets, in 1984 it was expanded to encompass approximately 865 property owners within a 130-block area of downtown.

The mall’s unified design and creative solution for successfully combining pedestrian and transit users has received national acclaim. Major national retailers have been attracted to the mall, led by the two-block long, three-story Shops at Tabor Center, developed by an affiliate of the Rouse Company of Columbia, MD.

Moreover, the management district has been able to make many improvements, including reducing crime on a continuing basis. For example, in the last 3 years crime has been reduced by 17 percent, and now the downtown is considered to be one of the safest areas in Denver.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Today, downtown Denver is undergoing a dramatic resurgence. In the last 3 years, $500 million in public and private money has been reinvested in the downtown and an additional $250 million is planned to be invested in the next several years. While it is difficult to attribute this success exclusively to the pedestrian transitway, clearly many of these major investments are taking shape around the 16th Street Mall. Because the transitway has proved that it is an effective transportation link, it has laid the basis for the new cultural and entertainment economy in the city. Because of its dynamic nature, the 16th Street Mall continues its function as downtown’s spine and civic open space, serving as a host, a beacon, and an entertainer for its diverse array of users and visitors.
As the case studies demonstrate, there are many simple and practical planning, design, and management strategies used by communities to enhance their livability. This chapter presents a process for developing these strategies as well as examples of typical projects and programs that can be developed to address a specific need or problem, including the following:

- Ways to identify whether or not a place is successful, using on-site observations and visual clues;
- Different methods for measuring and systematically identifying these problems;
- A summary of model design, management, and transit-related approaches that can be tried; and
- References to relevant case studies from this report.

This checklist is not intended to be all-encompassing, but rather to serve as a starting point for a community-based planning process. It can be used by professionals and lay people alike; professional planners may find it especially useful in developing more detailed plans and design proposals.

ABOUT PLACE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

People often ask, “How can we avoid repeating past mistakes and build transit facilities that contribute rather than detract from the livability of our communities?” This section describes one method: “Place Performance Evaluation” (PPE). PPE is a series of tools that professionals and community members can use to measure the overall performance of an existing place (e.g., a bus stop, a train station waiting room, or the site of a future bus transfer center) using specific “livability” criteria.

Evaluation of the issues particular to a place can be undertaken through a variety of techniques. These include systematically observing and recording activities at relevant locations, conducting special interviews with community members to elicit ideas and opinions, distributing community surveys to gather input on a variety of issues, and, in some cases, taking time-lapse film and still photographs to illustrate issues of concern. When communities actually take part in collecting data, there often is a significant increase in the quality of information collected and the level of involvement in project implementation. Users of a place have a great deal of valuable personal experience and knowledge, even though they may never have observed or thought about how others use it. [1]

Evaluation tools include the following.

Systematic Observations. Observation is the best way to learn how a place is used, whether the place is a small neighborhood bus stop or a train station used by thousands of people each day. However, transit planners often focus on operational efficiency—for which there is generally much data—without examining how transit facilities are actually being used. The result is that issues of operational efficiency instead of issues of customer comfort and use become the primary criteria used in transit planning.

Systematic observation techniques are simply tools that help focus casual observations and help document issues or problems that might be overlooked. These techniques also enable an observer to quantify what would otherwise be regarded as intuition or opinion, contributing to a better understanding of the full extent or severity of a particular problem. Observation techniques include behavior mapping, where an observer records the location and type of activities taking place as well as information about
users at regular intervals throughout the day and over a period of time, pedestrian counts of major routes and “tracking” routes or paths taken by users through a space. Time-lapse filming is a more sophisticated tool that can be used to collect this type of information, which also has the advantage of being an effective means of presenting results.

In general, observation techniques help to define, in real terms, how transit can contribute to the livability of a community. For example, when judging the performance of a specific bus stop, or making sure that it is situated in the proper and most convenient location for current and future riders, one would be able to answer questions such as the following:

- How easy is it to get to and from the bus stop to the surrounding neighborhood?
- Are there places to sit in the shade if it is a hot climate; does it look inviting and attractive; are people waiting comfortably?
- Is the area “busy”—with activity either at or around the stop or in areas near to the transit stop?; and
- Do people speak to each other or interact with each other; do they seem to know each other or recognize friends?

**Surveys and Interviews.** In addition to observing how a place is being used, understanding people’s perceptions is also important, particularly the perception of people who do not use a place. The main objective in measuring people’s perceptions should be to find out what people like and dislike about a place and how they think it could be improved. Qualities such as cleanliness, safety, and availability of amenities such as food, newspapers, and restrooms can be rated by transit users if they are asked about a specific place with which they are familiar. These questions should also be posed to area businesses and other adjacent uses, as well as to people living and working in the immediate vicinity.

For the non-users of a place, the questions must be different and should address why they do not use a place and what, if anything, could be done to encourage them to use it. A similar approach is used if a place does not yet exist, such as a new transit facility. Surveying non-users is in many ways more complex than observing or surveying an existing place. However, with today’s computer technology, it is not difficult to conduct mail or telephone surveys and tabulate the results.

Finally, interviews should also be conducted with key individuals and representatives of organizations who could play a role in implementing a project or program. These interviews are especially important as the first step toward building effective, ongoing partnerships.

**Focus Groups.** In many situations, small focus group sessions or informal discussions with targeted audiences (such as seniors, students, merchants, or a combination of groups) can be especially useful in the early, exploratory stages of a project before detailed observations and surveys are undertaken. Through these open, informal discussions, which can be guided by the same questions that are used for a survey, people talk and share their ideas about existing projects and programs with others. This invariably leads to numerous creative ideas for improvements that people and organizations can cooperatively undertake.

**Community Workshops.** Large community meetings are also useful, when properly managed, not only to involve people, hear what they have to say and resolve conflicts, but to challenge people to raise their expectations. To elicit the creativity of the community, to stretch perspectives and encourage bolder thinking, examples from other cities should be sought to demonstrate possibilities that stir people’s imaginations. These examples can also stimulate thought and discussion about additional issues and potential solutions that can be put into action, which is usually most effectively accomplished in smaller focus groups. These groups can then report their findings to the larger reassembled workshop.

**DEVELOPING THE VISION**

Qualitative and quantitative information about the use of places that is gained from observations, meetings, and surveys can then be combined with information about demographics, transit ridership, and market research information. Together, all this information provides a picture of the broad range of issues that need to be addressed in planning a transit facility or service so that it contributes to the livability of the community that surrounds it. Some of the issues will directly impact transit, while others will not. An understanding and commitment to dealing with both transit and community issues provides an opportunity to develop important working relationships with community organizations, many of which may not have worked with a transit agency before. The result of this process is a vision: ideas for the program, goals of the community, and organizations or individual partners who should be kept informed and involved, very often through some kind of task force or working group, and the “tasks” to be accomplished.
LIVABLE PLACES: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on its own research as well as quality of life research, Project for Public Spaces, Inc., has developed a simple graphic that describes a model for evaluating the attributes of livable places. These attributes reflect the common issues that people tend to identify when they talk about livability in their communities, and include tangible, statistical aspects as well as the intangible qualities that people feel toward a place or a neighborhood. These attributes, which are presented in Figure 11-1, fall into two categories:

- **Key Attributes** of places are the components which, based on livability research, are essential ingredients of a place: uses and activities, comfort and image, access and linkages, and sociability. These general criteria arise again and again when people talk about the problems and needs of their communities.

- When people describe their communities, they use words like “safe,” “fun,” “charming,” and “welcoming.” These words describe the **Intangible Qualities** of communities that relate to specific types of attributes.

An important consideration in developing this model was not making value judgments as to the relative importance of different attributes to different communities. Rather, it is up to each community to choose its own priorities. Different socioeconomic situations, living conditions, and political context make each community unique. A community is also in the position to determine the scale of improvement, that is, whether a project or program should be initiated at a “place” versus in a larger neighborhood context.

This model can be extended to include other issues. For example, one of the challenges in creating livable places is the general lack of communication between different city agencies, professions, and interest groups responsible for a place. This model helps to identify groups (chambers of commerce, block associations, and so on) associated with specific attributes that could be approached to participate in a project.

Figure 11-1. This diagram depicts the principal attributes people want in their communities. (Diagram by Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)
STRATEGIES FOR CREATING LIVABLE PLACES

Each of the following sections presents a different attribute from Figure 11-1.

Uses and Activities

"Uses and Activities" are the basic building blocks of any place: they include all the reasons why people come to an area. The types of land uses or activities help determine what makes a place in a community special or unique. Uses and activities do not necessarily have to be inside a structure; public spaces, too, can accommodate a variety of activities.

Very often, transit uses and functions operate separately from other community activities. For example, many bus transfer terminals located in isolated areas have no other use than providing access to other buses. In this situation, where there is little or no other activity taking place, it is less likely that transit is a factor in enhancing livability, other than providing mobility. However, if the bus terminal is more centrally located, and there is a place where one can buy a newspaper, get a snack, visit a farmer’s market, or window shop, then the transit use will be contributing to the overall activity and livability of that area.

Visible Signs . . .

. . . of Success

- Many different types of activities are occurring.
- Many different kinds of people and different age groups are using a place (children, elderly, families).
- Activities are not necessarily related to a specific facility or a planned event.
- There are several “choices” of things to do, and it is easy to go from one choice to another.

. . . of Problems

- Spaces are empty of people for all or part of the day.
- Security problems are evident (broken windows, graffiti, vandalism).
- Buildings are vacant or underutilized.
- Uses are isolated from each other or cannot be seen.
- Spaces are too small and congested for the number of transit riders present.

Ways of Measuring

- Record the number and type of activities at different times of the day and of the week.
- Survey the community or space users about their perceptions of current uses and activities and what they would like to see there in the future.
- Inventory existing land-use patterns to determine what activities are present or missing.

Approaches . . .

. . . to Design

- Create a public space that can be programmed for a variety of uses.
- Provide amenities that support desired activities.
- Provide specific uses and activities in adjacent or nearby structures.

. . . for Management

- Program community events and activities, such as markets and local festivals.
- Develop strategies to lease empty buildings to help revitalize an area.

. . . for Transit

- Make a transit stop the central feature of a place.
- Develop easy transfers between buses or modes of transportation.
- Provide amenities for transit patrons.
- Provide information about attractions in the area.
- Designate a liaison from a transit agency to coordinate with users in the area.
- Train on-site transit personnel (such as ticket agents) to provide information about uses and activities in the areas adjacent to a facility.

Selected Case Study References

- Green Line Initiative, Chicago
- Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland, Oregon
- Woodbridge Station, New Jersey
- KidStop, Shady Grove Metro Station, Maryland
- Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts
- Downtown Crossing, Boston, Massachusetts

Comfort and Image

“Comfort and Image” reflect the subjective experiences of people as they use a place. Issues like safety and cleanliness are often uppermost in people’s minds. Other issues are less consciously acknowledged,
although people are absorbing tremendous amounts of “data” being projected by the environment: scale, character of buildings, sense of safety, and “charm.” People become aware of other specific aspects, however, like the need for a bench when they want to sit down.

Transit patrons are concerned about comfort and image during their entire experience: from the time they enter a station and board a vehicle until they reach their final destination. For this reason, issues of security and cleanliness to a community also affect transit riders. How a transit agency manages its facilities affects a broader area. In the same way, transit facilities can increase comfort in an area; for example, benches used by bus riders can also be used by shoppers if they are in a location convenient for both. Or, an attractive, pleasantly scaled transit facility can contribute to the attractiveness of a whole area.

Visible Signs . . .

. . . of Success

- Spaces are clean and free of litter.
- Seating is located near other activities.
- Users have a choice of places to sit or use, either in the sun or shade; appropriate weather protection is also offered.
- Antisocial activities are not able to dominate use of a space.
- Someone seems to be in charge.

. . . of Problems

- Few places exist for people to sit.
- The environment generally appears unattractive or unsafe.
- Buildings or spaces lack human scale.
- Litter and other signs of lack of maintenance are evident.
- Poor environmental (air, water, etc.) quality exists.
- No one is obviously in charge.
- There is a lack of weather protection.

Ways of Measuring

- Review actual crime statistics and complaints.
- Survey people’s perception of an area (safety, attractiveness, and cleanliness).
- Analyze actual use of amenities such as seating.

Approaches . . .

. . . to Design

- Upgrade the physical appearance of a place with improved materials.
- Add public amenities (seating, telephone, and waste receptacles).
- Provide information (for transit facility and surrounding area).
- Create community-oriented public art.
- Restore or renovate existing buildings.
- Add trees and landscaping.

. . . to Management

- Provide special security programs, such as community policing.
- Increase security presence through uses and activities, or by having someone in charge of the area.
- Upgrade maintenance, including both daily cleaning as well as preventive maintenance of physical facilities.

. . . for Transit

- Ensure customer-friendly operations on and off transit vehicles.
- Initiate special security services for transit riders.
- Establish cooperative efforts with local communities and police.
- Reorganize organizational structure to create station and transit terminal managers.

Selected Case Study References

- Tohono Tadai Transit Center, Tucson, Arizona
- Station Managers Program, New York City
- Port Authority Bus Terminal, New York City
- Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative, Los Angeles, California
- Rider Advocate Program, Portland, Oregon

Access and Linkages

Transportation “access and linkages” are ways to connect places in communities. A successful neighborhood allows access to and linkages between places: a variety of options for people to get from one place to another (that is by walking, transit, bike, or car). Or, said another way, a successful place has a variety of ways to get to it (not just by car).

Access and linkages also refer to how well a specific place, like a transit facility, connects to the immediate area around it, and the ability of people to circulate within that place and to reach different uses. There is a qualitative component to access as well: access is affected by other factors, including physical
elements (a continuous row of stores along a street is more interesting and generally safer to walk along than a blank wall or empty lot) as well as perceptual (ability of people to see a transit stop from a distance).

Visible Signs . . . of Success

- People can easily walk to the place; they are not darting between moving cars to get to the bus stop.
- The interior of the place or transit stop is visible from the outside.
- Sidewalks lead to and from adjacent areas, allowing for convenient pedestrian access.
- Occupants of adjacent buildings use the place.
- Continuity of street-level for uses makes for a pleasant walking environment.
- A variety of transportation options provide access (transit, car, and bicycle).

Visible Signs . . . of Problems

- Traffic is congested or fast-moving, acting as a barrier to pedestrians crossing the street.
- Bicycles are infrequently used as a way of access.
- People are walking in the street or along areas not paved as sidewalks.
- Pedestrian-oriented uses (such as storefronts) are discontinuous, creating an unpleasant walking environment.
- There is insufficient parking.

Ways of Measuring

- Conduct observations, counts, and tracking of pedestrian circulation within and around a place.
- Record the location and finish treatment of sidewalks and number of curb cuts to determine suitability for walking.
- Map the area (to determine which uses generate pedestrian activity).
- Survey pedestrians to determine attitudes and patterns.
- Survey the broader community to determine how and why different modes of transportation are used.
- Conduct parking turnover studies to determine efficiency of use.
- Conduct traffic studies to determine level of use during the day and, the week, as well as occupancy of vehicles.

Approaches . . .

. . . to Design

- Widen sidewalk or provide sidewalk extensions at crosswalks, better balancing pedestrian uses with other uses of street (vehicles, transit vehicles, bicycles, and deliveries).
- Construct more clearly marked or more conveniently located crosswalks.
- Make accommodations for bicycle users (bike lanes, lockers, and storage racks).
- Infill vacant lots with structures and uses to create continuity of pedestrian experience.
- Balance on-street parking with other uses.

. . . to Management

- Change traffic signalization or street utilization to improve pedestrian access.
- Improve utilization of parking through changes in enforcement or regulation.

. . . for Transit

- Establish neighborhood shuttle or circulator vehicles.
- Adjust or expand route locations and schedules.
- Create intermodal centers, allowing transfers between transportation modes.
- Establish services for special users (children, teenagers, and the elderly).

Selected Case Studies

- Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland, Oregon
- Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts
- Wellston Station, St. Louis, Missouri
- Aspen City Shuttles, Aspen, Colorado
- Watts Shuttle, Los Angeles, California
- GO Boulder, Boulder, Colorado
- LINC, Seattle, Washington
- Staples Street Station, Corpus Christi, Texas

Sociability

Because neighborhoods are social places, the attribute of “sociability” is a crucial component of any good community place. When people meet friends, see and greet their neighbors or even feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of place or sense of attachment to their community.

This is generally a difficult quality to achieve around transit facilities, because the type of activity (waiting
**USES AND ACTIVITIES**

1 - Transit is a key use!

2 - Plaza becomes opportunity for new small businesses using kiosks and vending carts.

3 - Adjacent businesses benefit from spinoff activities.

**COMFORT AND IMAGE**

4 - Plaza provides variety of places to sit and attractive landscaping.

5 - Information kiosk about local services and transit.

6 - Shelters provided by transit riders, who can also wait in the plaza.

**ACCESS AND LINKAGES**

7 - Community vans connect to variety of local destinations.

8 - Regional buses connect to other communities.

9 - Sidewalks widened to improve pedestrian access.

10 - Streetscape amenities improve connection to adjacent retail area.

**SOCIABILITY**

11 - Plaza provides setting for a variety of community events.

12 - With combination of transit and retail activities, plaza and cafe becomes a social gathering place.

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Figures 11-2 and 11-3. Proposed LINC Neighborhood Transit Center (Figure 11-2) and proposed development near a historic station in San Bernardino, CA (Figure 11-3) illustrate place-making principles. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USES AND ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>COMFORT AND IMAGE</th>
<th>ACCESS AND LINKAGES</th>
<th>SOCIABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Historic train station renovated for commuter rail &amp; Amtrak.</td>
<td>3 - New community plaza created with variety of amenities.</td>
<td>6 - Station re-opened for new commuter rail.</td>
<td>10 - New community center/catering hall created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Existing shopping center redesigned to create new space for local businesses.</td>
<td>4 - Retail business and direct visual access help improve security.</td>
<td>7 - New bus stop connects to downtown.</td>
<td>11 - Plaza provides space for small events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>8 - New grand stair connects plaza and retail center.</td>
<td>12 - Grand station lobby becomes space for community activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 - Pedestrian improvements to parking lot improve access.</td>
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for a bus or train) is not often a social experience; in addition, the vehicles themselves can create barriers to the sociable use of a space, through noise, fumes, and so forth. However, successful transit stops that integrate other uses and activities help to create an environment where socializing can naturally take place.

Visible Signs . . .

. . . of Success

- People use the place (or facility) regularly by choice.
- Users know each other by face or by name.
- “Triangulation” occurs (an event occurs causing strangers to talk to each other).
- People bring their friends and relatives to see the place or they point to one of the elements with pride.
- People are taking pictures; many photo opportunities are available.
- Strangers make eye contact; people smile and display affection.
- There is a mix of ages and ethnic groups that generally reflects the community at large.
- People tend to run into someone they know.
- People tend to pick up litter when they see it.

. . . of Problems

- People do not interact with other users of the place.
- There is a lack of diversity of people using a place.

Ways of Measuring

- Record people’s use and behavior at different times of the day, week, and year.
- Record the location of activities.
- Survey people about perceptions of a place.
- Identify the number of people who volunteer to help or just assume responsibility for a particular area.

Approaches . . .

. . . to Design

- Develop public gathering places to accommodate a variety of community activities.
- Arrange amenities to encourage social interaction (groupings of seating, moveable seating, etc.).
- Provide a variety of uses in adjacent buildings to attract a diversity of people.

. . . to Management

- Stage special events and activities to draw people.
- Encourage community volunteers to assist with improvements or maintenance of a place.

. . . for Transit

- Integrate transit stations into spaces where socializing and community activities take place.
- Design facilities so that there is room for social activities to occur.

Selected Case Study References

- Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland, Oregon
- Downtown Crossing, Boston, Massachusetts
- Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts
- South Station, Boston, Massachusetts
- Staples Street Station, Corpus Christi

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

To create livable places in communities requires that many physical aspects of place be orchestrated at the same time as the planning process described in Chapter 10, which, as has been seen, is equally important to the final results. Each of the case studies has “put it all together” in different ways. The two examples shown here apply place-making strategies to two very different communities: LINC in Seattle (see Case Study 9-2) and a historic train station in San Bernardino.

ENDNOTE

1. Two publications by Project for Public Spaces are especially useful in understanding and applying different observation and survey techniques. They are What Do People Do Downtown and User Analysis for Park Planning and Design. Both are available for purchase through PPS at 153 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10014.
Historically, transit has played a crucial role in advancing the livability of American communities. For nearly a century, until the late 1950s and early 1960s, transit was a potent force in spurring the development of communities and shaping community life, as well as providing the connections within communities that brought people together. Increased emphasis on automobile travel changed this situation. However, as the case studies show, transit is once more fostering communities where people can come together in a hospitable and livable environment.

History, however, is not exactly repeating itself. The old horse-drawn and electric trolley cars of the past now have a modern, more comfortable counterpart in light rail. Technology is not the only thing that has changed. Communities today face new challenges, conditions, and needs. As the programs presented demonstrate, innovative approaches can knit together communities and restore their livability—when they are designed in response to local needs through a partnership process that links transit agencies with the communities they serve.

Recent changes in federal transportation planning processes are very supportive of this new partnership role. While obstacles remain, all of the initiatives presented were able to overcome these obstacles to achieve improvements in transit and community livability that, in many cases, exceeded expectations.

The chapters—each presenting different livability themes—offer evidence of the potential for this approach to enhance many different facets of community life. They show the powerful role that transit can play in the creation of livable communities by doing the following:

**Creating Places for Community Life.** Livable communities are communities where people socialize and come together, which reinforce a sense of common purpose and establish centers for public life. Transit facilities are themselves activity focal points. The transition from transit stop to public space involves linking together activities that already take place or could take place in most communities.

**Acting as a Catalyst for Downtown and Neighborhood Renewal.** Livable communities are communities that have accessible and convenient commercial centers that support a community economically and socially. Commercial districts in downtowns and neighborhoods have traditionally been among the most important destinations for transit services. It is not a coincidence that the economic decline of these districts has been mirrored in the decrease in transit ridership across the United States. At the same time, transit facilities—whether they are simple bus stops or major stations—can act as “ground zero” for the rebirth and revitalization of downtowns and neighborhoods.

**Creating Opportunity for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development.** Livable communities are communities that offer economic opportunity to all citizens. Transit brings the foot traffic necessary to support small businesses and provides access to jobs. In today’s society dominated by retail chains in far flung suburban locations, support for small, independently owned businesses and entrepreneurs is essential for the long-term economic growth of most communities.

**Improving Safety and Amenity.** Livable communities are communities where people no longer fear for their personal safety and feel comfortable in a public environment. With the loss of places where people feel comfortable has come the perception by many that transit facilities are places to fear and avoid, even though statistically they are usually safe and virtually free of crime. As a perceptual problem, the solution to crime cannot be separated from other livability issues and, in particular, from the need to create an en-
vironment where people feel comfortable and safe. Making transit facilities an asset and an amenity is an important step in improving safety.

**Making Communities Accessible and Convenient.** Livable communities are communities where people have a variety of transportation alternatives. The basic mobility function of transit is, indeed, integral to the livability of a community. Special services and approaches are emerging to enable transit to serve a community more effectively and efficiently, while encouraging new land-use policies that center around transit as a fundamental choice.

**Shaping Community Growth.** Livable communities are communities where growth enhances community life, not destroys it. Mismanaged growth erodes all aspects of a community: its accessibility and convenience, its centers of public life, its sense of safety and amenity. Transit can act as a focal point for reorganizing urban growth and creating mixed-use centers. It can also be an essential component of new land-use policies that set the stage for future, more livable places for people to live and work.

This report presents a compelling picture of what has been accomplished across the United States. It reveals the common threads that can link these separate themes into a more holistic vision of transit’s role in enhancing community livability. The case studies and examples are presented in order to stimulate other communities throughout the United States to undertake similar innovative transit programs to address their own particular livability needs. At the same time, the work in the communities that the case studies have presented is by no means finished. Most of the projects presented, exemplary as they are, could be improved or built upon to generate even greater community improvement—whether it be minor design modifications or a major new development.

What must be done now is to raise widespread awareness of the viability of these programs as springboards for rekindling the kinds of comfort, activity, and convenience that enhance community life. The programs described herein can act as a beacon for future initiatives, along with other livability-oriented transit programs taking place that still need to be investigated. In addition, other, untried transit innovations must be applied, tested, and evaluated, and those already in place have to be tried in other settings and situations.

Clearly, what is needed is a broad campaign to advance such efforts and integrate the community partnership approach into the way transit agencies plan, design, and build transit. In fact, this approach needs to be applied to transportation planning in general. It is hoped that communities and transit agencies alike will find this report a useful tool in this vital effort.

Figure 12-1. The Big Blue Bus, Santa Monica, CA, circa 1955. (Credit: The Big Blue Bus)
APPENDIX A

Bibliography and Related Literature

I. GENERAL REFERENCES ON LIVABILITY

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TCRP Project B-8: Effective Methods of Marketing Transit Services to Business.

TCRP Project B-9: Market Segmentation Strategies to Increase Transit Ridership.

TCRP Project B-10: Role of Passenger Amenities and Transit Vehicle Characteristics in Building Ridership.

TCRP Project B-11: Customer-Defined Transit Service Quality.


TCRP Project H-3: Policy Options to Attract Auto Users to Public Transportation.

TCRP Project H-4A: Strategies for Influencing Choice of Urban Travel Mode.


TCRP Project H-4E: Sustainable Transportation.

TCRP Project H-8: Using Public Transportation to Reduce the Economic, Social, and Human Costs of Personal Immobility.

TCRP Project H-10: The Costs of Sprawl—Revisited.
From the research conducted for this study, there seem to be three different schools of thought on quality-of-life research, research that actually reflects the approaches of different disciplines (economists, sociologists, and geographers) who have conducted the research.

**THE STATISTICAL APPROACH**

One school of thought states that quality of life can be measured statistically through variables available from census data, climate information, economic measurements, demographics, and other government statistics. For example, one team of economists developed a sophisticated model using census data on climate, environmental, and urban conditions to rate 253 urban counties. Their highest ranked: Pueblo, Colorado; Norfolk, Virginia; and Denver-Boulder, Colorado. Their lowest ranked: Birmingham, Alabama; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and St. Louis, Missouri. [1]

Many popular publications have taken this same approach to quality of life: rating and comparing hundreds of towns and cities across the United States. With names like *Places Rated Almanac: Your Guide to Finding the Best Places to Live in America*, these books appeal to Americans looking for that greener grass or corporations thinking about relocating to a more “livable city.” Unfortunately, comparisons between cities are based solely on the variables an author selects, which are subjectively weighed relative to other factors. Even with more sophisticated models, the results of such approaches are questionable, because the statistics selected for analysis ultimately pre-determine the outcome.

Not surprisingly, different authors have come up with radically different ratings for the same cities. “Comparing the rankings of some cities in *Places Rated* with those in the *National Metropolitan Area Study* is like comparing dirt to diamonds: The ranking for Midland, Texas shot up from 258 in *Places Rated* to 1 in the new survey. Rochester, Minnesota, jumped from 200 to 7 overall. These results are so encouraging that the city plans to incorporate them in a marketing program for the area . . .” [2]

Of course, the volatility of these factors should warrant suspicion about their value—although people in communities (especially those given low marks) take them quite seriously. The authors of *Places Rated* report, “We get a lot of mail about our book. Some of it ticking.” [3]

This outpouring of community pride, whether the city is rated high or low, shows that there is a great deal more to livability than a collection of statistics, and that community perceptions need also to be considered. For example, in the 1987 *Places Rated*, Austin was given a very low rating for climate; however, surveys of residents of Austin show that people do not dislike their climate. [4] In addition, as one author pointed out about these rating systems, “Is climate more or less important than the number of jobs, the employment level, in the community? In practice, researchers usually give each factor the same weight. This is the most unrealistic but most convenient thing to do. These factors are not equally important in the mind of the individual.” [5]

**THE PERCEPTUAL APPROACH**

The realization that quality of life can vary according to “the mind of the individual” has led to the next most common approach to studying community livability: surveys that ask people to actually rate quality of life in their own city or region. As one analyst pointed out, these surveys are more useful because “Quality of life means different things to different people . . . (It) is in the eye of the beholder.” [6] Surveys of this type have been done in hundreds of communities, as well as on a national level. In a cross section of
Americans asked to define quality of life, in fact, the main response was “getting good things, living well, and enjoying peace, security, and happiness.” [7]

While it is hard to argue with these principles, city-specific surveys are more useful because they can form a basis for understanding how people rank different factors about livability. For example, in a study by Donald Appleyard, San Francisco residents were asked to state what was most important to them when choosing a street to live on. “The two most dominant concerns were “cleanliness” (86%) and “crime” (86%). . . . (The extremely high emphasis on “cleanliness” and “appearance” was further confirmed by widespread mention of “neighbors keeping up property” (78%), “attractive appearance” (74%) and “greenery” (71%). . . . It was much higher than mention of social or economic qualities. Access to public transport (79%) was the third most common priority. This was considered substantially more important than other aspects of access. Of these others, “good walking conditions” was followed by “access to shops” and “parks.” Access to parks, sixteenth on the list, was very much lower than expected. . . . Of the traffic-related emissions, “minimal air pollution” (75%) was the fourth priority overall, while “peace and quiet” was the tenth, followed by “safety from traffic.” [8]

“What people want from a residential and street environment,” Appleyard concludes, “may be security, peace and quiet, comfort, cleanliness, attractive appearance, privacy, territorial control, convenience, good parking, street life, neighborliness, or other amenities. Expectations can significantly affect perceptions and satisfaction. . . . The more affluent are likely to be more critical of their streets because they know of other choices, whereas lower-income groups may be satisfied with what they have.” [9]

In a larger survey of New York State residents, people were asked to rank the importance of different factors in helping a person decide where to live. [10] “Not surprisingly, the sample of New Yorkers chose economics as the most significant feature of the place they would like to live, followed by climate, crime, housing, education, health care and environment, recreation, transportation, and finally, the arts.” [11]

Surveys of community perception of livability have been compiled into a unique publication that compares 261 separate surveys that evaluated both local government services and quality of community life throughout the United States. Published by the International City Managers Association, this book, Citizens Surveys: How to Do Them, How to Use Them, What They Mean, by Thomas Miller and Michele Miller, standardizes the results of these surveys so that future studies would have a benchmark for comparison. [12]

Miller and Miller asked what distinguishes a community whose residents gave high marks to quality of life in the community. What they found is that “The community where quality of life is more likely to be rated high is the one that has outcommuters (is a suburb), has between 10,000 and 250,000 residents, has lower crime rates, has residents with higher incomes and more education, and provides good services as evaluated by the residents themselves. Almost half of the variation in ratings of community quality can be explained by a community’s size, perceived level of local government service, wealth, and proximity to a metro employment center.” [13] However, Miller and Miller could not find a correlation between general perceptions of quality of life in a community and the rankings of specific city services.

From the 261 surveys, Miller and Miller developed what they call “percent to maximum” norms for different categories of quality of life. In other words, they adjusted the findings of different surveys (which used different types of rankings), so that results could be compared. A city conducting a new survey can therefore see how it compares with other cities asking the same question. A few examples follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of City</th>
<th>76.8 PTM*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Schools</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Community</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit/Bus System</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic and Light Timing</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Opportunity</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percent to maximum

The overall evaluation of community services showed that the average rating was 67.2. It is important to note that transit/bus systems are typically rated significantly lower by residents than other services, such as parks, police, and schools (perhaps because so few people across the United States use transit on a regular basis).

One of the conclusions that one can draw from this work is that, as one reviewer noted, “Most people tend to like what they have and the places in which they live, wherever they live. Most Americans think that the quality of life which they enjoy is better than that of other people living in other parts of the country.” [14] A 1995 “Quality-of-Life Poll” conducted by the Regional Plan Association and the Quinnipiac College Polling Institute compared quality of life issues in the New York City region with Atlanta, Dallas-Fort Worth, Seattle, and Los Angeles. It is interesting to note that there is virtually no difference in opinion
between the five cities about the “very important issues” to quality of life. A minimum of 80% of those surveyed in all the cities said these issues were clean air and water, safe streets, race relations, and quality public schools. A minimum of 50% (and usually at least 60%) said greenery and open space, sense of community, uncongested roads and highways, and low state and local taxes.

Perhaps more revealing, however, was the response to a question about the “one or two things you like about your local community.” In all five cities—a minimum of 45% responded, “a strong community”; 20–30% responded, “access or convenience”; and less than 15% said, “low crime,” “environment,” or “recreation or culture.” Indeed, this strong appreciation about “sense of community” as well as “access and convenience” is one that can provide support for new thinking about how transit initiatives need to be more closely allied with efforts that build a “sense of community.” [15]

Despite their value, surveys of quality of life have their limitations. The way that quality-of-life questions are asked will determine the type of response. Many quality-of-life surveys, for example, focus more on “personal well-being”: family life, job satisfaction, salary, recreational opportunities, etc. They do not ask about “shared community factors. . . . which are drowned out” by a focus on people’s personal lives. For example, one survey in Austin that asked about “your quality-of-life” and another one that asked about “Austin’s quality-of-life” yielded significantly different results. In the personal well-being survey, quality-of-life satisfaction was increasing; in the city survey, it was declining. [16]

Another limitation: quality of life measured at the citywide scale will not reflect variations within one city. What is valued in one neighborhood may not be of importance in another. Indeed, people often feel more positive about their own neighborhood than about the city as a whole.

For example, in New York City, the Commonwealth Foundation asked a random sampling of New Yorkers about their perceptions on “quality of life” in New York (this predates the Regional Plan survey mentioned above). The survey evaluated the city on scores of issues ranging from safety, to air quality, to appearance, to general subjects like “as a place to raise a family.” While it may not come as a great shock to most non-New Yorkers, perceptions about the city were extremely negative. Two-thirds rated New York City as “negative” as a place to live, and only one-third said “positive.” Other negative factors were extremely high: safety on the street (88% negative), cost and quality of housing (85%), street cleaning and garbage collection (67%), and so on.

Only 21% were “positive” about New York City as a place to raise a family. [17]

What is interesting, however, is the difference in these perceptions compared with surveys PPS has conducted in individual New York City neighborhoods. For example, in a survey conducted in 1991 of residents of the Sutton area, located on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, only 17% rated safety and security as the most important neighborhood improvement and 6% rated cleanliness and garbage collection as the most important. Most people felt safe both during the day (96%) and in the evening (67%). [18] While the Sutton area is regarded as one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the city, the difference between the surveys cannot be explained simply by demographics or location. Indeed, the issue is that people feel more positive about the place that they know and are familiar with than with the city as a whole.

This is borne out in the responses to many other PPS surveys, which show that people generally feel safe in places they use. For example, in Belmont Shores, California, 79.1% of residents considered their shopping district safe during the day, and 52.1% felt it was safe during the evening. 67.9% of Brooklyn Heights residents felt that safety on Montague Street was good during the day, 25.7% felt it was fair, and 80.5% thought it was good or fair in the evening. In Hoboken, New Jersey, 80% deemed downtown safety good or excellent in the day, while 67% felt the same about safety at night. In Springfield, Massachusetts, 53.5% of surveyed pedestrians gave safety during the day a “good” rating, 36.8% said it was fair, and 60.3% said evening safety was good or fair. [19]

Perceptions of quality of life are clearly not fixed, and can almost be viewed as a kind of “moving target.” “For example,” one researcher writes, “an easy commute to work and easy access to the workplace can change as growth brings the traffic congestion they tried to escape five years ago.” [20]

Finally, quality-of-life surveys may not adequately account for why people feel as they do. Factors influencing livability are often at a very small scale, and people may not be conscious of how these almost trivial aspects of their daily lives influence them—especially if the livability survey focuses on broad issues at the citywide scale. In his introduction to a series of papers published in The City Journal about Quality of Life in New York City, noted urban analyst Roger Starr writes:

Cities should be comfortable places. People should be able to expect good things from the cities where they live, trivial as well as major things: a cheerful wave from a neighbor, the replacement of their garbage can covers by the refuse collectors, a prompt and pleasant ride—perhaps even a seat—on the bus or subway, a
good education for their children, an unbroken lock on their front door. All of these simple hopes combine a major expectation: that life will be increasingly fruitful in the future because its essence, the quality of life, will continue to improve.

In an uncomfortable city, by contrast, people expect bad things to happen: to find trash deposited on the sidewalk in front of their homes, to be subjected to the verbal assault of a mugger, to discover that their car stereo has been stolen, to face constant reminders of poverty and depression. All too often, this is the image people have of New York today.

The term “quality of life” has come into common use as the impression continues to spread that in big cities, and perhaps above all in New York, the specific circumstances the term comprises are in fact getting worse not better. A deterioration in the quality of life affects people in subtle ways. One may fear auto theft because one’s best friend’s car has been stolen—or because the garbage collector has made a mess of the sidewalk in front of one’s home. If the city doesn’t care about one aspect of its citizens’ lives, they infer, it probably doesn’t care about others. Thus, poor garbage collection implies careless policing, inadequate schooling suggests the deterioration of the city’s infrastructure, official tolerance of aggressive panhandling hints that citizens are vulnerable to theft or violence.

In an almost subliminal way, urban residents sense the connection between signs of deterioration they glimpse around them and the potential for other kinds of harm. . . . Understanding precisely what causes the public to perceive such decay is essential if the government and other organizations are to establish rational priorities for making the city more comfortable. [21]

**PLACE-BASED APPROACH**

Although people’s perceptions about quality of life enhance understanding of the purely statistical approach, geographers and many urban experts alike argue that there is still something missing: an approach to defining quality of life and livability that includes people’s often deep attachment to the places where they live and work. This spotlight on “place” and desire for “strong community” adds another dimension to understanding quality of life, a dimension that actually helps bring the whole discussion into clearer focus.

Susan Cutter, a geographer, perhaps summed it up best when she wrote: “A geographical definition of quality of life incorporates the concept of individual well-being but focuses more on places rather than individuals. . . . From a practical standpoint, geographical quality of life is the measurement of the conditions of place, how those conditions are experienced and evaluated by individuals, and the relative importance of each of these to the individual.” [22] This approach avoids value judgment as to whether a place is the “best” or the “worst” and recognizes that “everyplace is different and has good and bad attributes.” [23]

This approach to livability involves holistic understanding of a place: concrete, quantifiable, and statistical measurements as well as people’s perceptions about the place. Cutter suggests that “The art—science to some—of evaluating quality of life in a place involves two states: a goal state and an appraisal state.” Goals are what people would like to have in a place, while appraisals measure what is actually there. Quality of life is the “measured” difference between the two. These measurements must take into consideration objective measurements (climate, socioeconomic data, etc.) as well as the more subjective attachment that people have to places: What is the image of the place? What experiences do people associate with a place? How do they feel about it? As Cutter writes, “Often, our individual image of a place overtly or covertly biases our evaluation of quality of life found there.” [24]

Social ecologists take this approach further to explain how human activities are influenced by the physical space or place in which they occur as well as how neighborhoods become locations for groups of people and their activities. As early as 1946, observers like Walter Firey were exploring the implications of these factors—especially the sentimental values people associate with places. He writes of his research in Boston where he discovered that “land can be put to uneconomic and even dis-economic uses—all because certain values have become attached to a locality and have in that way found symbolic representation.” [25] He continues:

Boston, more than most other cities, has a great many historic sites which serve as “reminders” of its civic identity. The presence of old colonial dwellings, venerable cemeteries, ancient public buildings, hallowed churches, and distinctive neighborhoods exerts a definite civic-building influence upon the residents of a community. Out of such an influence emerges the kind of sentiments upon which real citizen participation depends—loyalty, a feeling of belongingness, and a purposefulness that goes beyond individual ambitions. Boston needs these sentiments. Through them it can win the interest and support of its people in civic improvements. Without them it can only appeal to the varied special interests of pressure groups to accomplish its objectives. Sentiment is one of the surest community-building forces that any city can have . . . No city or metropolitan plan would be complete which overlooked this. [26]

Herbert Gans, a sociologist and urban planner, studied a Boston neighborhood a decade later while it was in the midst of massive redevelopment. Gans writes that the social and community networks are essential to the neighborhoods being disrupted. “Since relocation procedures do not allow for the transfer of the social system, the shock of the reloca-
tion process itself is likely to affect negatively a number of people who have never lived anywhere except in the West End, and where social and emotional ties are entirely within the neighborhood.” [27] Unfortunately, he was absolutely right.

George Hemmens adds a third dimension to the relationship between spaces and activity—that of time. He indicates that people’s decisions as to whether or not to undertake an activity (like shopping) are influenced by the location of the activity as well as the time of day and the length of time an activity takes. This model brings into clearer focus the role that transportation plays. “If facilities for a particular activity are relatively inaccessible that activity will likely be performed infrequently. And it may be that an activity will have a longer duration when access is difficult than when access is easy.” [28]

The interrelationship between places and activities makes the place-based approach to livability a practical tool: it allows people to take concrete steps to improve their lives by improving the places where they live and work. As one city planning researcher Dowell Myers suggests, “planners, local officials, and interest group leaders must negotiate knowledge about local quality of life.” [29] He recommends a “community trend” approach that stresses that quality of life is part of an ongoing development process and that encourages participation of local citizens as part of the “negotiation” process. “The data that result form a realistic description of the community’s quality of life, broadly enough based that all segments of the community can accept it as a basis for subsequent decision making.” [30]

The place-based approach also recognizes that here is an interactive relationship between places and people, and that places influence us in ways we are often not aware. Tony Hiss, in The Experience of Place, put it this way: “These places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become.” [31]

Livability of Places: Literature Review

Over the last three decades, during which time concerns about livability have grown, there has emerged a new understanding of how people experience and perceive places in their communities. This literature also focuses on specific measures that can be taken to improve the livability of important places in communities: streets and sidewalks, parks, plazas, and the public environment. Much thought has also been given to the role of communities in making their public environments work more effectively.

An early such observer was Jane Jacobs, who, in 1961, wrote the remarkable The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Her works opened people’s eyes to the complexity of their surroundings, and the fact that environment does influence how we think about and use our communities. Until her book, most descriptions about cities lamented their ills and evils: density, poverty, crime. Urban planners were often more interested in how to tear it down through redevelopment, rather than build it up. Ms. Jacobs was interested in celebrating the city and studying “how cities work in real life, because this is the only way to learn what principles of planning and what practices in rebuilding can promote social and economic vitality in cities, and what practices and principles will deaden these attributes.” [32]

Ms. Jacobs explained what many, if not most, people who lived in cities already knew: that cities were a place of great melting pots of social interaction, and that they were largely safe and supportive places to live. She did not achieve this argument, however, in great sweeping generalizations, but in startling detail based simply on seeing how all types of public spaces and places actually work for people. For example, she wrote about the sidewalk: “A good city street neighborhood achieves a marvel of balance between its people’s determination to have essential privacy and their simultaneous wishes for differing degrees of contact, enjoyment or help from the people around. This balance is largely made up of small, sensitively managed details, practiced and accepted so casually that they are normally taken for granted.” [33]

Other journalists, urban analysts, and researchers—many without formal training—have further contributed to the understanding of the livability of communities and those “taken for granted” influences of which Jane Jacobs wrote. Many, like James Kunstler lament the loss of sense of place caused by suburban sprawl. Others discuss more broadly the value of public places: “Cities were invented to facilitate exchange of information, friendship, material goods, culture, knowledge, insight, skills and also the exchange of emotional, psychological and spiritual support . . . if we are to grow into our fullest potential, we need what other people can give us . . . mutual enrichment . . .” [34]

Still others, like William H. Whyte, have focused on what makes places in cities work and offer suggestions for how they can be better designed or managed to be more effective places for people. Mr. Whyte, an early pioneer of studying how people use public spaces, quantified many of Ms. Jacobs’ observations and developed criteria for creating successful, well-used public spaces. He pioneered the use of time lapse filming and systematic observations, and his contribution was to describe how the design of
public spaces actually determines whether people will use a space or not. Mr. Whyte is highly critical of architects who design spaces to be seen but not used. He has said that it is difficult to design a public space that will not be used by people, but what is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished. [35]

Mr. Whyte’s books go on to elaborate on the success-able is how often this has been accomplished. [35]

able ingredients for a public space that works for peo-
ple: amenities, shade, activity generators like food
service, visible access to the street, and so on.

The need for communities to define their own
problems and priorities in terms of improving livabil-
ity clearly makes it essential that the community be
actively involved. Indeed, the livability literature
stresses the importance of involving communities in
a step-by-step process of renewal of places and
spaces—a process where “micro” changes cumula-
tively add up to “macro” results in their improve-
ment and development. Roberta Gratz, in The Living
City, goes beyond the concept of the importance of
public space to community life to discuss the process
of change that has worked to rebuild places as hearts
of community. She writes that change should begin
with the community itself, often in small steps and
writes about “urbanism” as the art of understanding
the city. Urbanists, who “understand and practice
that art . . . learn how a city works through intimate
contact with it. Experience, observation, common
sense, and human values are fundamental to an
urbanist’s view of city issues. Urbanists focus on the
micro before wrestling with the macro and understand
that, in reality, the macro only changes for the better in
micro steps . . . . Innovation and ingenuity are the pre-
vailing characteristics. Perseverance in the face of
naysayers and determination in the face of obstacles
are prerequisites. Step by step, essential and natural
growth follows and spreads until larger areas prosper
over time. Any look, therefore, at rebirth of cities
inevitably spotlights areas rebuilt from the bottom up
by citizen activists, urbanists whether residents, busi-
ness people, design professionals, or small develop-
ersts who understand what makes a real place work,
who are the ones actively involved and getting things
done.” [36]

In addition to research and publications that focus
on the design process and design elements of places,
there has been, over the past decade, a new under-
standing of the value of management of public spaces
as a tool for changing public perceptions. PPS’s own
work, Managing Downtown Public Spaces, was devel-
oped for downtown organizations to take on a larger
role in terms of maintenance, security, public events,
marketing and promotion, and public-space ameni-
ties. The development of management districts,
funded by special taxes that are agreed to by property
owners, has flourished across the country in both
large cities and small towns as more and more local
organizations take responsibility for making sure
their commercial districts are safe, attractive, clean,
active, and comfortable. Many of these districts, like
the Grand Central Partnership around Grand Central
Terminal in New York City, include important transit
and transportation facilities.

There are many, many more examples of livability
of place research: Donald Appleyard’s seminal work
on creating livable residential streets; Christopher
Alexander’s innovative “patterns” for making more
humane environments; Mark Francis’ and Clare
Cooper Marcus’ guidelines for all kinds of urban
open spaces; Anton Nelessen’s “visual preference”
methods to help communities decide what character
and design elements they want in their public envi-
ronment; Anne Vernez Moudon, Allan Jacobs, and
Raquel Ramati’s separate books on achieving great
commercial streets. All of these writers—as well as
other researchers in the field of environment and
behavior—essentially support the same conclusion:
that our public environment and spaces greatly influ-
ence how we use our communities and perceive
them—the extent to which we socialize, are economi-
cally successful, and even work together on shared
actions and activities.

Project for Public Spaces Research
on Places

Project for Public Spaces, founded in 1975, has also
conducted a great deal of the work in this field to
reveal the perceptions and interactions of people in
the public places they customarily use. An outgrowth
of Mr. Whyte’s “Street Life Project,” PPS has studied
how people use public spaces and what they need in
order to feel comfortable in public environments in
more than 500 communities throughout the United
States and abroad. PPS accomplishes this by gather-
ing information through time-lapse filming, system-
atic behavioral observations, customized interviews,
and user-oriented surveys.

With these tools, PPS examines people’s uses and
activities, experiences and opinions of the small-
scale, site-specific places intrinsic to the fabric of
urban neighborhoods, such as plazas, street corners
and transit stops, as well as impressions of whole
neighborhoods, such as downtowns, residential, and
commercial districts. The comments elicited in sur-
veys and interviews not only help PPS determine
the kinds of improvements people require and want
in these places, but they also provide important clues
to what people consider essential for making their
communities livable.
Attitudes about what makes an area livable may vary from place to place in response to divergent conditions like climate, as when in Corpus Christi, Texas, 84% of people surveyed at a bus stop cited shade as important for a new bus transfer center. Nonetheless, PPS has found that many “wish lists” are surprisingly similar in hundreds of questionnaires answered by diverse communities. For example, food stores and services appear to be highly desirable to community residents: 69% indicated they shop in the Greenmarket at a plaza on 9th Avenue and West 57th Street in Manhattan, and 96% of people surveyed at the Corpus Christi bus stop wanted a place to buy snacks and drinks. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. Of those surveyed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the following were either desirable or very desirable downtown: 55% said more butchers, bakeries, and other food stores, 57% said more ethnic food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants. In Tucson, Arizona, 23.4% thought food restaurants, and 81% said more moderately priced restaurants.

Similarly, greenery and park environments are indicated to be in demand in communities as different as Red Hook in Brooklyn, New York, where 59% of those surveyed favored a waterfront park and 45% suggested children’s playgrounds for a neighborhood pier, and Manhattan’s Upper East Side Sutton Place community, where 45.9% of surveyed residents felt more trees, flowers, greenery, and children’s play areas would improve the area’s plazas. Again, in surveys of that same Sutton community (very urban) and the vastly different suburban Belmont Shores in Long Beach, California, vehicular traffic problems, such as congestion, noise, and vehicle speeds were rated by both as the most important area for improvement. Another need often mentioned is for entertainment, such as movies, theater, concerts, and nightclubs, in surveys of communities ranging from 81.2% in Springfield, Massachusetts, to 43.2% in Tucson, Arizona, to 51% in Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights, New York.

Not surprisingly, security comes up often, although sometimes it is not as high a priority as might be expected because people already feel safe in familiar areas. For example, in a survey of the Upper East Side Manhattan area between 59th and 96th Streets, having a secure/safe neighborhood was ranked highest in importance by 58.4% and at the Corpus Christi bus stop, 44% of those interviewed suggested a security guard for the new bus transfer center. Cleanliness also is cited frequently, like in Red Hook, Brooklyn, where it was a concern of 64% of surveyed residents, and in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where making downtown cleaner and more attractive was the second most desirable improvement of surveyed pedestrians. Another prevalent concern is parking, for example, of those surveyed, parking was a concern to 36% in Hoboken, New Jersey, 29% in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, 25.8% in Tucson, Arizona, and 17.1% of merchants in Brooklyn Heights.

Out of such suggestions and expressed needs emerges a pattern of broader livability issues, such as comfort, convenience, accessibility, social opportunities, safety, activity, and relaxation. People have a vision, in their own minds, about what a place should be; it becomes a fairly easy task for them to suggest ways that the place could change to better meet with their ideal view of it. What is amazing is that there is so much consensus within communities, despite differences in age, income, and other demographic factors.

**ENDNOTES**

7. Ibid.
9. Ibid., pp. 34–35.
11. Ibid.
13. Ibid.


23. Ibid., p. iii.

24. Ibid., p. 2.


26. Ibid., p. 331.


30. Ibid., p. 357.


33. Ibid., p. 59.


37. Survey data is from aforementioned PPS surveys.
The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities

Concerns about livability are shared by every type of community, in inner cities, small towns, and rural areas. This handbook explores how communities are working in partnership with transit agencies on locally initiated projects and programs to create livable “places” and build transit ridership.

WHAT MAKES A LIVABLE PLACE?

COMFORT AND IMAGE
the subjective experiences of using a place, such as safety and cleanliness.

USES AND ACTIVITIES
why people come to an area and what makes a place in a community special or unique.

ACCESS AND LINKAGES

SOCIABILITY
the qualities that make a good place to meet people and create a sense of community.
Creating **Places for Community Life**

Transit can support the creation of places—public spaces, streets and buildings—helping to enliven their usage and making them centers for a wide range of community activities.

A Jazz Festival and Community Market are weekly events at the NJ Transit East Orange Train Station, East Orange, New Jersey.

Pioneer Square in Portland, Oregon, has become Portland’s “living room” as well as the hub of the light rail and bus system.
Catalyst for Downtown and Neighborhood Renewal

Transit can serve as a key force in the revitalization of neighborhoods and center cities.

Residents work together on small projects, like tree planting and transit improvements, as part of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI).

Davis Square in Somerville, Massachusetts, has undergone major revitalization since the opening of a subway station in the late 1980’s and the introduction of attractive public space improvements.
Creating Opportunity for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

Transit can help create new businesses and improve access to job opportunities.

Downtown Crossing in Boston, a central transit hub served by all major subway lines, is the heart of the downtown retail district and features a vibrant marketplace with pushcart vendors.

An abandoned factory complex adjacent to the Wellston light rail station in St. Louis is getting new life as a business incubator and job training center.
Improving **Safety** and Amenity

Transit can help make communities safer, in part by making them more comfortable and attractive.

In Portland, Oregon, transit amenities have contributed to the revitalization of downtown.

New York City has initiated a station manager program to help keep stations clean and safe, as well as improve customer service.
Making Communities Accessible and Convenient

Transit services and facilities can be tailored to meet community needs while providing a viable alternative to the private car.

In cities ranging from Aspen, Colorado, to Seattle, Washington, small shuttle buses are providing more flexible and convenient service to communities.
Shaping Community Growth

Transit can be a key component of efforts aimed at reducing sprawl and encouraging development of mixed use centers.

Tucson’s Tohono Tadai transfer center is one of a series of facilities intended to improve amenities and safety for passengers and improve links to surrounding communities.

New bus transfer centers in Corpus Christi not only improve service for customers but provide a focal point for developing stronger districts around them.
Implementation Through Partnerships

Community groups and transit agencies have found that by working in partnership, they can improve the livability of their community and increase transit ridership.

Volunteers initiated and largely implemented the rebuilding of the Old Pueblo Trolley in Tucson by restoring cars, laying track, and operating the cars to connect a university to a revitalizing commercial district and developing a new tourist attraction for the city.

Denver celebrates the opening of its Sixteenth Street Transit Mall in 1982, built and operated by a unique public private partnership that has helped to guide the dramatic resurgence of downtown.
THE TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD is a unit of the National Research Council, which serves the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering. It evolved in 1974 from the Highway Research Board, which was established in 1920. The TRB incorporates all former HRB activities and also performs additional functions under a broader scope involving all modes of transportation and the interactions of transportation with society. The Board’s purpose is to stimulate research concerning the nature and performance of transportation systems, to disseminate the information that the research produces, and to encourage the application of appropriate research findings. The Board’s program is carried out by more than 400 committees, task forces, and panels composed of more than 4,000 administrators, engineers, social scientists, attorneys, educators, and others concerned with transportation; they serve without compensation. The program is supported by state transportation and highway departments, the modal administrations of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and other organizations and individuals interested in the development of transportation.

The National Academy of Sciences is a private, nonprofit, self-perpetuating society of distinguished scholars engaged in scientific and engineering research, dedicated to the furtherance of science and technology and to their use for the general welfare. Upon the authority of the charter granted to it by the Congress in 1863, the Academy has a mandate that requires it to advise the federal government on scientific and technical matters. Dr. Bruce M. Alberts is president of the National Academy of Sciences.

The National Academy of Engineering was established in 1964, under the charter of the National Academy of Sciences, as a parallel organization of outstanding engineers. It is autonomous in its administration and in the selection of its members, sharing with the National Academy of Sciences the responsibility for advising the federal government. The National Academy of Engineering also sponsors engineering programs aimed at meeting national needs, encourages education and research, and recognizes the superior achievements of engineers. Dr. William A. Wulf is president of the National Academy of Engineering.

The Institute of Medicine was established in 1970 by the National Academy of Sciences to secure the services of eminent members of appropriate professions in the examination of policy matters pertaining to the health of the public. The Institute acts under the responsibility given to the National Academy of Sciences by its congressional charter to be an adviser to the federal government and, upon its own initiative, to identify issues of medical care, research, and education. Dr. Kenneth I. Shine is president of the Institute of Medicine.

The National Research Council was organized by the National Academy of Sciences in 1916 to associate the broad community of science and technology with the Academy’s purpose of furthering knowledge and advising the federal government. Functioning in accordance with general policies determined by the Academy, the Council has become the principal operating agency of both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering in providing services to the government, the public, and the scientific and engineering communities. The Council is administered jointly by both Academies and the Institute of Medicine. Dr. Bruce M. Alberts and Dr. William A. Wulf are chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of the National Research Council.

Abbreviations used without definitions in TRB publications:

- AASHO American Association of State Highway Officials
- AASHTO American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- APTA American Public Transit Association
- ASCE American Society of Civil Engineers
- ASME American Society of Mechanical Engineers
- ASTM American Society for Testing and Materials
- FAA Federal Aviation Administration
- FHWA Federal Highway Administration
- FRA Federal Railroad Administration
- FTA Federal Transit Administration
- IEEE Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
- ITE Institute of Transportation Engineers
- NCHRP National Cooperative Highway Research Program
- NCTR National Cooperative Transit Research and Development Program
- NHTSA National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- SAE Society of Automotive Engineers
- TCRP Transit Cooperative Research Program
- TRB Transportation Research Board
- U.S.DOT United States Department of Transportation