
4 TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of Transit-oriented Development (TOD), definitions of related terms, Sound Transit's TOD program and policies, and regional and corridor TOD.

Light rail, combined with favorable market forces, can increase the potential for TOD. Improved transit access can increase the convenience and desirability of surrounding residential, commercial, and office properties. Transit station areas with supportive plans and policies, available land and supportive zoning in place tend to support more intense, mixed-use development, including high-density residential, commercial, and office-related uses.

The experience of other communities in the United States has demonstrated that, although light rail transit does not, by itself, create new development, having transit-supporting plans and policies in place can influence both where development will occur and the types of development that occur. In a number of cases, transit stations – bus or light rail - have provided an opportunity for local jurisdictions to address redevelopment activities. Factors that affect and influence private development include local and regional market conditions and trends, zoning and other land use regulations, availability of credit, and interest rates. Experience around the United States indicates that development of new transit facilities has often occurred concurrent with major changes in development near stations— typically within a 5-minute walk or 0.25 miles of the station (Transit Cooperative Research Program [TCRP] 2007). The 5-minute walk sheds were mapped for each Lynnwood Link Extension station alternative and are included in Attachment D for reference (15-minute walk shed maps are included in the body of the report).

Studies have shown that jurisdictions with supportive policies, land use controls, and direct incentives can substantially increase the amount of development occurring near transit stations. Transit-oriented development generally takes place under three conditions:

1. When stations are located in prime regional and community centers of activity that are attractive to typical market forces
2. When regional and local real estate markets are active
3. When public policies and regulations permit or encourage intensive development in station areas

4.2 Economic Benefits of Transit-oriented Development

The benefits of successful TOD have included improved mobility, increased supplies of affordable housing, increased transit ridership in a more efficient urban form, and

opportunities for urban redevelopment (City of Seattle 1998). These benefits may result in the synergy of the interests of businesses and employees interested in locating within convenient access to the light rail line. This interest could lead to the development of higher density land uses around stations, which would result in increased economic activity at stations.

With the development of light rail stations, surrounding areas will see an increase of transit access and pedestrian activity. Improved transit access can positively affect the convenience, visibility, and desirability of surrounding residential and commercial properties. Increased pedestrian activity can increase the patronage of adjacent retail businesses.

Numerous case studies indicate that residential and commercial property values near light rail transit stations typically increase and are valued higher than similar properties that are not near the transit stations (TCRP 2004).

However, these benefits are not automatic; property-value increases generally require a strong demand for real estate, neighborhoods free from signs of stagnation and neglect, and public policies such as zoning bonuses that further leverage development. Property values are also affected by external forces and might change in response to fluctuations in the economy, consumer confidence, and local development pressures. In addition, because TOD takes time to evolve, property value benefits will also take time to accrue (TCRP 2004).

At the same time, with development and redevelopment potential adjacent to stations, there is the possibility of negative impacts such as a change in residential and business access, traffic flow, decreased parking availability, noise, and visual impacts; these changes might be felt most strongly by existing residents who are not interested in seeing changes in their neighborhoods. It is possible to mitigate many impacts through design.

4.3 Transit-oriented Development Vocabulary

Transit-oriented development can be very complex because many of the variables are not controlled by the transit agency, jurisdiction, or developer. Additionally, there is not a universal definition of what TOD means. Sound Transit recently refined its TOD policy and those refinements are included in this report. The following Sound Transit definitions and descriptions are used to guide this report. (Sound Transit 2012)

Transit-oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a land development pattern that integrates transit and land use by promoting transit ridership while supporting community land use and development visions. TOD typically consists of public and private development projects that create dense, pedestrian-oriented environments with a mix of land uses and activities at and around transit facilities. The design, configuration and mix of buildings and activities around the transit

facility, as well as the location and design of the transit facility, should encourage people to use transit and foster a healthy, livable environment. TOD is generally focused on land within approximately 0.5 miles, or a 10- to 15-minute walk, of a transit facility and along corridors that provide key connections to the regional transit system.

Sound Transit recently adopted policy language defining two primary categories of TOD strategies as defined below.

Agency TOD

Agency TOD strategies facilitate or create TOD on Sound Transit property that has been acquired for a transit purpose. Agency TOD may include joint development and other partnerships.

Sound Transit takes the lead role in identifying and implementing Agency TOD strategies. Sound Transit may consider delegating to a partner a prominent role in implementing certain aspects of a partnership, as agreed by the partners.

Community TOD

Community TOD strategies promote and facilitate TOD within the larger area around a Sound Transit facility (typically 0.5 miles, or a 10- to 15- minute walk, around a transit facility and along corridors that provide key connections to the regional transit system.) Community TOD strategies may be identified and implemented by Sound Transit or by others and may include partnerships.

Sound Transit may take either a lead or a support role in identifying and implementing Community TOD strategies.

4.4 Sound Transit Transit-oriented Development Program and Policies

Sound Transit adopted a TOD policy on December 20, 2012 to guide assessment and facilitation of transit-oriented development (TOD) during planning, design, construction and operation of the high-capacity transit system (Sound Transit 2012). This policy supersedes Motion No. 98-25 and Motion No. M99-60 (Sound Transit 1998).

Sound Transit established a TOD program shortly after passage of Sound Move in 1996, including adoption of Board policies and guidelines by Motion No. 98-25 and Motion No. M99-60. Sound Transit's TOD program was developed in response to its enabling legislation (RCW81.104 and 81.112). Pursuant to the legislation, Sound Transit is authorized to plan, design, build and operate the region's high capacity transit system and to use its tax revenues

for transit purposes. The legislation also guides Sound Transit to work with public and private interests to facilitate TOD.

Through implementation of its TOD policy, Sound Transit will work towards goals which include:

- Increase the value and effectiveness of transit by increasing transit ridership.
- Support implementation of state, regional and local growth plans, policies and strategies.
- Foster relationships with local jurisdictions, regional agencies, private developers, local residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders to facilitate TOD.
- Encourage convenient, safe multi-modal access to the transit system, with an emphasis on non-motorized access.
- Support economic development efforts.
- Encourage creation of housing options including market-rate and affordable units.
- Support implementation of other related Sound Transit plans and policies, with an emphasis on the agency's Sustainability Plan.
- Protect and enhance Sound Transit's assets and investments.

4.5 Regional and Corridor Transit-oriented Development

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), the regional planning agency for Central Puget Sound, recently received funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program. PSRC established the *Growing Transit Communities* program, focused on capitalizing on transit investments by growing and strengthening communities around station areas. A central strategy to achieving this goal will be to promote compact, equitable communities along the region's growing mass transit corridors. This includes equitable access to housing, jobs, and services close to transit that will make transit a viable and affordable travel option for many people. (PSRC 2012a)

The study area for the *Growing Transit Communities* work is much larger than the Lynnwood Link Extension project corridor and includes 74 light rail stations and transit nodes. As of this report's publication date, a *Draft Existing Conditions Report* and *Draft Transit-Oriented Development Market Study* have been completed. A number of Sound Transit employees are members of several GTC task forces and the oversight committee, and the agency continues to be involved in the program.