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Trends in Transit-Oriented Development 2000–2010

Background

In the decade since the new millennium, the U.S. has seen unprecedented shifts in our economy, housing market, and transportation costs. We have experienced the greatest economic decline since the Great Depression, witnessed a foreclosure crisis that radically altered the housing market, and experienced gas price spikes that have dominated the headlines. At the same time, commitment to environmental issues was rekindled, with sustainability strategies permeating multiple sectors of our society and economy, including housing, transportation, education, consumer goods, and personal lifestyles. One major trend that did not receive the headlines it deserved is the resurgence in transit ridership across America.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to analyze the trends in transit regions and transit-oriented developments (TOD) from 2000 to 2010, illuminating changes in how and where we live, travel, and work. Three case studies provide a closer look at how transit-oriented development impacts local communities.

Findings and Conclusions

Households near transit are smaller and denser, and transportation patterns reflect advantages of proximity to transit, including an increase in the number of jobs near transit.

This report resulted in the following findings and conclusions:

- **Transit is expanding.** The number of regions with fixed-guideway transit systems increased 43 percent, growing from 28 regions to 40. This included heavy rail, light rail and streetcars, and bus rapid transit (BRT) with dedicated right-of-way. Since 2000, 879 new transit stations were built, an increase of 25 percent, bringing the total number of U.S. stations to 4,416.
- **More Americans are living near transit.** The number of people living within ½-mile of a transit station increased 6 percent; the total number of households in the same area increased 8 percent. Large, medium, and small system transit sheds captured a significant portion of their transit region's population growth, ranging from 4.5 to 6 percent. Extensive systems also experienced growth, but as a smaller percentage of the regions' total, likely due to being fairly built out by 2000.

- **Households near transit are smaller and denser.** Transit sheds are capturing an increasing share of small households, with 1- and 2-person households increasing 3 to 6 percent and 3-person households decreasing 8 percent. The average number of housing units per acre near transit has increased, ranging from an 8 percent increase in extensive systems to a 23 percent increase in small systems.
- **Household transportation patterns reflect advantages of proximity to transit.** Auto ownership is consistently lower in all transit sheds in comparison to their regions, with households in extensive system station areas owning, on average, 0.5 fewer autos. In large, medium, and small systems station areas, the rate of ownership ranged from 0.25 to 0.5 fewer autos. In all transit sheds, a significantly larger percent of commuters take public transit, bike, or walk to work than in the transit regions. Since 2000, auto ownership rates have increased everywhere, with the exception of the station areas in San Francisco. Housing and transportation costs as a percent of income rose in most transit sheds and regions, but the rate of growth was less in the transit shed compared to the region.
- **The number of jobs near transit is increasing, particular in fast-growing educational and medical services sectors, although job decentralization continues.** The number of jobs located within ½-mile of transit rose 24 percent, primarily driven by transit system expansion. The new transit systems that were built in the 2000s provided access to 1.2 million jobs by the end of the decade. Overall, 22 percent of all employees in 37 transit regions worked within ½-mile of transit in 2009. Transit sheds established prior to 2000 held their overall share of regional employment of approximately 22 percent, with some large regions experiencing growth and others experiencing declines consistent with a national trend of job decentralization. Transit shed employment is concentrated in the educational and medical services sectors, which are expected to experience growth in the coming decades.

Benefits

This investigation of trends in TOD provides an in-depth understanding, grounded in data, of how our communities are changing around fixed-guideway stations, both nationally and at the system level. Reported trends in demographics, transportation behavior, and employment around transit investments provide vital information for planning and projection of future trends. Case studies offer a closer look at how community attributes, access to transit, and local policies relate to these trends. This information can inform decisions around transit capital investments needs, including transit asset management, as well as national transportation policy and FTA programs. The findings enhance the understanding of the economic factors of TOD, which benefits planning for urban development and investment needs, housing supply, population growth, housing and transportation affordability, transit ridership, aging population, and value capture. The trends data offer benefits to efficiency planning by providing a better understanding of travel patterns in large urban, transit-served cities, potential for GHG mitigation, and reduced VMT and auto ownership.

Project Information

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This research was conducted by the Center for Transit Oriented Development. For more information, contact FTA Project Manager Jeff Price at (202) 366-0843, Jeff.Price@dot.gov. All FTA research reports can be found at www.fta.dot.gov/research.