



4.0 TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE LAND USE

Maximizing the benefits of an investment in transit requires complementary land use development of areas surrounding boarding locations. A planning protocol to achieve such complementary development that has become increasingly common is transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD results in moderate to higher density development in the area within walking distance of a transit station. TODs generally include a mix of residential, employment and retail that are designed for pedestrians but without excluding the auto. To encourage adoption of TOD principles to the KACOT station areas, this study focused on educating land use decision-makers in the corridor on the TOD concept.

On December 15, 2006, a "Transit Supportive Land Use Workshop" was held in the Manteno Community Center for the KACOT Task Force and various municipal and county staff. It was followed by an afternoon bus tour of transit supportive land uses within select Metra station areas. The purpose of the workshop and bus tour was to familiarize the participants with transit supportive planning principles and precedents, and to educate them on related criteria in the federal evaluation process for the New Starts funding program. Two products were provided to workshop participants. A sixteen-page Transit Supportive Planning Primer¹ describes TOD concepts and principles, including representative examples using maps and photos. In addition, a CD containing several published research documents and a list of useful web site addresses was provided.

This chapter provides an overview of transit supportive principles and precedents, as well as related plans and policies needed to successfully achieve TOD and secure federal funding for new commuter service. The chapter concludes with an overview of current plans and policies used within the proposed corridor, and what each political jurisdiction may do to improve the transit supportive environment within its area.

4.1 TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE PRINCIPLES

Transit supportive development typically occurs within one-half mile of a transit station. This distance encompasses a comfortable 10-minute walking route from the station to nearby destinations. It is within this area that greater diversity and concentrations of development provide the most benefit to a transit

¹ Transit Supportive Planning Primer, Kankakee County Commuter Transit Project (Phase-II) Feasibility Study.



investment by bringing potential riders closer to the transit facilities and increasing the likelihood that they will use the service. It is also the area in which the greatest potential transit impact on economic development lies.

Transit supportive development is about “place making” – creating a special living, entertainment, and work environment all within the station area. Residents who live close to commuter stations look for a special lifestyle environment where most, if not all of their daily conveniences can be met without using the automobile. Thus, a transit supportive environment is one that offers access to transit and creates a desirable lifestyle environment, attracts potential transit riders to live within or close to the station area, and has a strong impact on system ridership.

There are three general dimensions of transit supportive development that will create a strong sense of place when working together in a complementary fashion. Briefly, these are characterized as follows:

1. Design:

- Multiple transportation connections and amenities
- Preferences for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Shared commuter and commercial parking and reduced off-street parking

2. Diversity:

- Mixed uses and varied housing types
- Public spaces integrated into the station area
- Market-driven development that serves commuters and local area

3. Density:

- Higher density uses closer to the transit boarding location
- Balance higher densities with public parks and plazas
- Station area residents provide additional support to local businesses

It is important to point out that the degree to which these factors are present in a given station area is a matter of local land use policy. It is essential that the physical environment be oriented towards pedestrian comfort and safety.



4.2 TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE PRECEDENTS

The Chicago region contains one of the largest commuter rail systems in the U.S., with 500+ route miles and 238 stations along 11 rail service lines. Many communities have recognized commuter rail service as an economic development asset and created transit supportive plans to spur new development and increase transit use. On December 15, 2006, the KACOT Task Force participated in a bus tour of successful transit supportive areas within the Chicago region. The following summary highlights some of the communities visited during the transit supportive precedents bus tour.

4.2.1 Village of Orland Park

The “Collette Highlands” near Orland Park’s 153rd Street Metra station along Metra’s SouthWest Service Line represents a master planned community. Metra and Orland Park worked directly with a developer and created a transit supportive framework near the station. Based on planning and financial consultant services, the developer was convinced that a mixed-use program with multi-family, single-family, and commercial uses was preferable to single-family uses only (see Figure 4-1).



Figure 4-1. Multi-family homes

4.2.2 Village of Tinley Park

The Village of Tinley Park completed a transit-oriented development (TOD) study in 1998 for its Oak Park Avenue Rock Island Line Station within the Village’s historic downtown. As a result, a new Metra station has been built that includes commercial space. A new public plaza has been constructed adjacent to the station, and commuter and shopper parking areas have been upgraded. Lastly, new mixed-use and commercial development has also occurred (see Figure 4-2).



Figure 4-2. Mixed-use retail/housing



4.2.3 Village of Homewood

The Village of Homewood contains a traditional mixed-use downtown adjacent to its train station on Metra's Electric District Line. Although its downtown contains many older buildings that have been revitalized and reused, the Village also works to maintain the downtown environment through sensitive infill and mixed-use development. A clear example of this practice is a mixed-use retail and office building, as well as a Starbucks coffee shop, built close to the street to maintain a "street wall" near the train station (see Figure 4-3).



Figure 4-3. Mixed-use retail/office

4.3 TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE PLANNING

Transit supportive planning around station areas should seek to accommodate a mix of residential, commercial, employment, and institutional land uses to create a unique district or neighborhood. Rail infrastructure requires substantial financial investments that can only be justified if enough people are using the service. Rail service can be supported by higher residential densities (with an average of 12 or more dwelling units per acre), major employers, or park-n-ride lots that serve commuters driving from other area. Ideally, transit supportive planning includes shared parking within a mixed-use context.

FTA "New Starts" Criteria: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) applies its "New Starts" criteria to evaluate candidate transit improvement projects seeking federal capital funding. Applying for New Starts funding is a nationally competitive process. The more a project can demonstrate land use and development planning and policy commitments to transit, the better the chances for funding support. The criteria by which transit-supportive land use and future development patterns are evaluated include:

- Existing land use and development character within the proposed alignments;
- Regional and community growth management, such as the concentration of development around established centers and regional transit;
- Transit-supportive corridor policies, such as those that encourage higher density development patterns and enhance pedestrian access;



- Supportive zoning regulations near transit stations, such as increased density, appropriate building placement, and reduced off street parking requirements;
- Performance of land use policies, such as demonstrated cases of development and current development proposals within station areas; and
- Potential impacts of a transit investment on overall land use, such as the adaptability of station area land for development or redevelopment.

It is important to point out that not all of these existing conditions, plans, and policies need to be operating and in place at this time, but a commitment and progress towards implementing them should be shown as the potential transit service evolves through the project development process. Any early policy initiatives that can be undertaken consistent with the FTA New Starts Criteria would enhance the project's overall competitiveness and future funding potential.

4.4 CURRENT TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE PLANS, POLICIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

To assess community plans and policies, a request was made of corridor municipalities for current and relevant maps, plans, and other information. This information was reviewed and formed the basis for the findings described below. The community data received is listed in Appendix 2.

The proposed commuter rail corridor and station areas contain varying existing conditions, as well as plans, policies, and opportunities, that should be further evaluated to improve the overall transit supportive environment. For instance, Monee and Bourbonnais' station areas do not have much development, plans, or policies to support transit. Conversely, Manteno's station area could be considered to have a medium level of transit supportive development, plans, and policies. Likewise, Kankakee's downtown station area could be considered to have a medium/high level of development, plans, and policies to support transit. Each community may strengthen its level of transit supportiveness by updating its comprehensive plans with transit supportive plans, policies, and implementation actions. The following summaries for each governmental jurisdiction along the proposed commuter corridor highlight current plans, policies, and opportunities received by the KACOT team for future TOD planning.



Kankakee County:

- Kankakee County adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 2005
 - Recognizes significant growth in county and in “Tri-Village” area
 - Promotes growth management with “Town & Country” concept
 - Promotes concentrating growth within the city and villages
 - Promotes contiguous municipal growth, not leap-frog growth
 - Promotes farmland preservation through agriculture zoning
 - Promotes rural growth through conservation subdivisions that preserve open spaces
- Kankakee County is assisting “Tri-Village” area to revise and update new zoning
- Kankakee County could implement new zoning and planning tools
 - Reduce oversupply of unincorporated single-family residential zoning
 - Create new conservation subdivision regulations and incentives
 - Create programs to support “Main St” programs and infill development

City of Kankakee:

- City of Kankakee adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 1997
 - Promotes maintenance of existing mix of uses
 - Promotes new convention center near I-57 Exit 308, which is also a potential KACOT station site
 - Promotes outward expansion and growth
- Good potential station site in downtown
 - Historic train depot was rehabilitated
 - Multi-modal station area with Amtrak service and bus service
 - Traditional street grid is pedestrian-friendly
 - Historic and new developments provide “sense of place”
- City of Kankakee could create a TOD plan for downtown station area that promotes infill and redevelopment
- City of Kankakee could create a TOD plan for Exit 308 station that unifies development and promotes access to employment and airport

Village of Bourbonnais:

- Bourbonnais works with County and villages on planning initiatives



FINAL REPORT

- Tri-Village Zoning initiative
- County’s 2006 Comprehensive Plan and North I-57 Corridor Sub-Area
- Kankakee Area Transportation Study (KATS) Transportation Plan
- Bourbonnais adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 1999
 - Promotes general outward growth within extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ)
 - Village could create a TOD plan for St. George station area that unifies future employment and commercial uses
- Bourbonnais could concentrate new growth within existing ETJ to capture its share of market demand and minimize service costs

Village of Bradley:

- Bradley works with County and villages on planning initiatives
 - Tri-Village Zoning initiative
 - County’s 2006 Comprehensive Plan and North I-57 Corridor Sub-Area
 - KATS 2004 Transportation Plan
- Bradley adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 1998
- Good potential sites at South Street/Brookmont Blvd or at Broadway
 - Traditional street grid and pedestrian network
 - Relatively dense residential neighborhoods nearby
 - Potential redevelopment sites are prime TOD opportunities
- Bradley could create a TOD plan that focuses on a “transit village” concept of mixed residential & commercial uses

Village of Manteno:

- Manteno works with County and villages on planning initiatives
 - Tri-Village Zoning initiative
 - County’s 2006 Comprehensive Plan & North I-57 Corridor Sub-Area
 - KATS 2004 Transportation Plan
- Manteno adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 2006
 - New comprehensive plan recommended new site and TOD concept plan
 - Promotes general outward growth within its ETJ and new “Main Street”
- Good potential station site in downtown Manteno



FINAL REPORT

- Traditional street grid is pedestrian-friendly
- Relatively dense residential neighborhoods nearby
- Potential redevelopment sites are prime TOD opportunities
- Manteno is promoting station area development through Tax Increment Finance (TIF), façade, streetscape & parking improvements, and land banking

Will County:

- Will County is included within six-county Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) area
 - 2040 Regional Framework Plan promotes “smart growth” concept with centers, corridors, and green areas
 - 2040 Framework Plan also recognizes South Suburban Airport (SSA)
 - Future transportation plan and investments to support land use framework
- Will County adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 2002
 - Recognizes significant growth, especially in northern Will County
 - Recognizes SSA as a “project of regional significance”
 - Promotes growth management with “Forms and Concepts” Handbook
 - Promotes growth within county seat, villages, and hamlets
 - Promotes preservation of farmland through its Open Space Element
 - Promotes conservation subdivisions in rural areas
- Will County could create policies, regulations, and incentives to concentrate growth near station areas in Peotone and Monee

Village of Peotone:

- Peotone is included within six-county CMAP planning area
 - 2040 Regional Framework Plan identifies village as a community center
 - 2040 Regional Framework Plan recognizes SSA
- Peotone adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 1997
 - New comprehensive plan is underway
- Peotone owns significant portions of railroad right-of-way, and considers tax abatement and TIF to promote development
- Peotone could create a TOD concept plan for potential station



FINAL REPORT

- “Transit village” concept could include new employment uses and gateway development for future SSA

Village of Monee:

- Monee is included within six-county CMAP planning area
 - 2040 Regional Framework Plan identifies village as a community center
 - 2040 Regional Framework Plan recognizes South Suburban Airport
- Monee adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 1997
 - Future growth relies on the SSA
- Monee contains numerous medium-sized industrial and commercial employers
- Monee could create a TOD concept plan for potential station
 - Concept should focus on existing employment uses, new commercial uses, and improving access between station area land uses

In summary, all county and municipal governments have active planning programs and were receptive to learning more about TOD planning and its impact on their areas. Many good TOD opportunities exist and a Transit Supportive Land Use Program would appear to be strong, which would contribute to a successful future New Starts funding application.