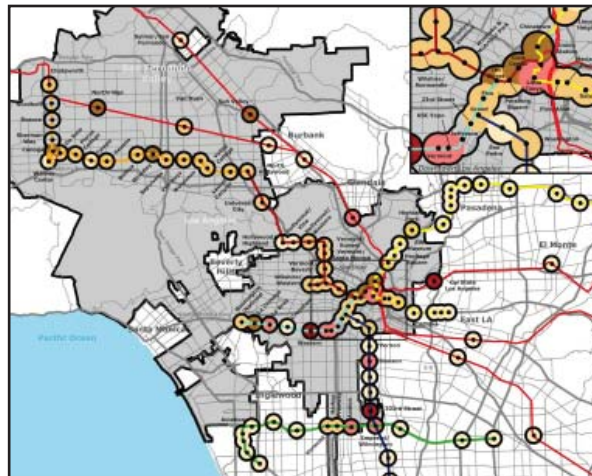


Creating Successful Transit-Oriented Districts in Los Angeles: A Citywide Toolkit for Achieving Regional Goals

Executive Summary

February 2010



About this Report

This report has been created as part of a grant from the California Department of Transportation (“Caltrans”), sponsored by Los Angeles Metro. The Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD) was funded by Caltrans to assess why stations are – or are not – supporting transit-oriented characteristics, and to identify strategies that could help station areas achieve high transit ridership, lower VMT, provide housing for a mix of incomes and guard against displacement, and create healthy, prosperous neighborhoods where people of all incomes have a multitude of travel options. In completing this assessment, CTOD has created numerous GIS-based and other data evaluation tools to help practitioners evaluate existing conditions and categorize existing and planned fixed-guideway station areas in the City of Los Angeles according to a variety of place types that provide a sense of their density, scale and mix of uses.

About the Center for Transit-Oriented Development

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development is the only national nonprofit effort dedicated to providing best practices, research and tools to support market-based development in walkable communities near public transportation. We are a partnership of two national nonprofit organizations – Reconnecting America and the Center for Neighborhood Technology – and a for-profit research and consulting firm, Strategic Economics. Together, we work at the intersection of transportation planning, regional planning, climate change and sustainability, affordability, economic development, real estate and investment. Our goal is to help create neighborhoods where young and old, rich and poor, can live comfortably and prosper, with affordable and healthy lifestyle choices and ample and easy access to opportunity for all.

Report Authors (in alphabetical order)

Amanda Gehrke
Gloria Ohland
Abigail Thorne-Lyman
Elizabeth Wampler
Jeffrey Wood
Sam Zimbabwe

Contributing Author

Winston Dong

Grant Manager

Irving N. Taylor, Los Angeles County Metro

Caltrans Contract Manager

Fernando Castro, California Department of Transportation

Steering Committee Participants*

Jesus Antonio Bermudez, McCormack Baron Salazar
Claire Bowin, Citywide Planning, City of Los Angeles
Maria Cabildo, East Los Angeles Community Corporation
Diego Cardoso, Los Angeles County Metro
Jeff Carpenter, Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA)
Joseph Carreras, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
Darrell Clarke, Friends Expo/Sierra Club/Green LA
Emily Gabel-Luddy, Urban Design Studio, City of Los Angeles
Veronica Hahni, Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative
Sophia Heller, Office of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa
Carol Inge, Los Angeles County Metro
Alexander Kalamaros, Los Angeles County Metro, Joint Development Department
Christopher Pak, Archeon Group
Simon Pastucha, Urban Design Studio, City of Los Angeles
Joyce Perkins, Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative
Neal Richman, University of California, Los Angeles
William Roschen, President, Planning Commission, City of Los Angeles
Irv Taylor, Los Angeles County Metro
Michael Woo, Planning Commission, City of Los Angeles
Paul Zimmerman, Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing

*Steering Committee Participants have not officially endorsed this report or its findings or conclusions.

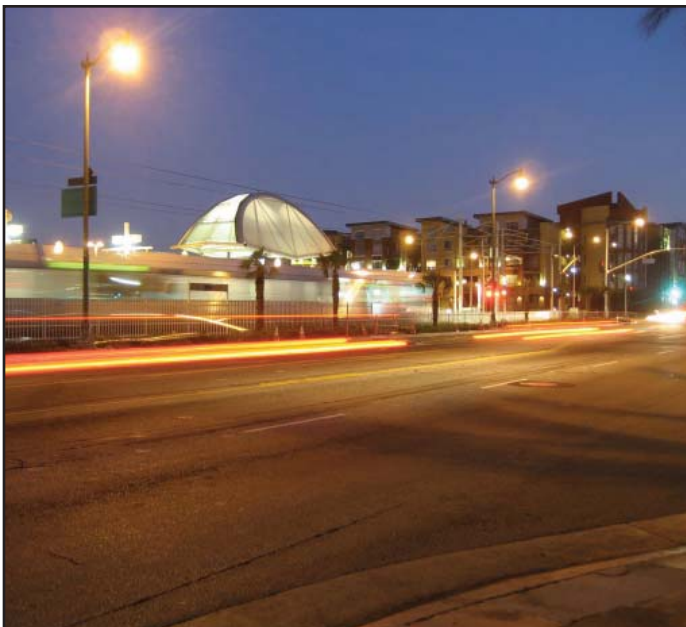
Transit and TOD: A New Regional Movement

Los Angeles is a leader in a national movement of cities and regions that are investing in fixed-guideway transit. This movement is growing exponentially in the U.S. with the dawning awareness that the era of cheap, plentiful energy—the paradigm upon which our transportation systems and development patterns have been built—is drawing to a close. Consumers have been jolted by volatile gas prices and the severity of the foreclosure crisis—which hit suburban and exurban communities the hardest, especially where commutes are long and expensive. And concerns about climate change and the need to dramatically decrease driving and greenhouse gas emissions loom large on the horizon. Meanwhile, road building has done nothing to relieve traffic congestion. Los Angeles in particular increasingly suffers from its congestion, losing an estimated \$900 million annually from time spent driving. In fact, Los Angeles has the worst congestion in the nation, according to several studies.

This new reality wasn't lost on Los Angeles County voters who surmounted the two-thirds vote requirement to pass Measure R in 2008. **Measure R will raise \$30 billion for 11 new rail lines and extensions, including light rail, bus rapid transit, and the subway to the sea.** When combined with the existing and planned 100 miles of track and 71 stations in the city of Los Angeles

alone, this investment will create a system of significant magnitude, and will provide the infrastructure for a new pattern of growth and development in Los Angeles.

However, transit infrastructure alone is not enough to sustain the economic vitality of Los Angeles, nor to support residents in their ability to find affordable, healthy, and prosperous places to live. Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a the term used to describe **a fundamental set of objectives that can be achieved through integrated transit planning, development, urban design, streetscape improvements, and reinvestment.** In Los Angeles, where many areas are built out already, rethinking the neighborhoods around transit will require more than new development. Instead of transit-oriented *development*, **TOD in Los Angeles refers to transit-oriented districts**, where the aforementioned components contribute to creating livable neighborhoods, linking residents to jobs, and stabilizing low income communities.



Testing the Gold Line East Side Extension before service begins.



This mixed-use development over the Wilshire and Vermont station includes 90 affordable units.

TOD as a Tool for Change

The goals of TOD are broader than simply a better and more efficient transportation system, and can be broken down into two primary goals: one regional and one local.

At the **regional level**, TOD can facilitate and generate momentum for market-driven investment that can be self-sustaining over time. This goal relies on transportation networks and development patterns that support:

- Access to **economic opportunity** by linking residents with employment and service destinations and supporting synergistic growth of job centers;
- **Lower combined housing + transportation costs** through the reduced need to own and drive cars to get to work and daily needs;
- Reduced **public infrastructure costs** by directing compact development to existing developed areas while preserving regional open space and farmland;
- Improved **public health** by creating walkable neighborhoods that encourage physical activity; and
- **Cleaner air and water** by reducing traffic congestion and air- and water-based pollution.

At the **local level**, TOD can direct the velocity and trajectory of neighborhood change when necessary to provide neighborhood stability. This goal relies on transportation and development investments that:

- Support **community-based projects** that maximize the benefits transit hubs can offer Los Angeles's low- and moderate-income communities;
- Build transportation and housing that can **make target neighborhoods more regionally competitive**; and
- Promote the integration of public and private investments to address issues such as: weak real estate markets, undeveloped and underutilized land, and the disconnects between low-income people and affordable housing, employment and asset-building opportunities in the region.



Downtown Los Angeles workers board the DASH bus to begin their trips home.



Affordable housing development at the Hollywood and Western station offers low combined housing and transportation costs.



Downtown LA's proposed streetcar may run on Broadway, where many historic buildings have been creatively reused.

Transit and TOD in LA

As the most economically and ethnically diverse region in the country, with a range of development patterns spanning more than a century, Los Angeles's station areas encompass a broad array of demographic, physical, and economic characteristics. The transit network extends to neighborhoods with very low, low, moderate, and high incomes, nationally known ethnic enclaves, varying degrees of development opportunities, and some of the lowest—and highest—rates of car ownership in the country. Thus, the strategies to create successful TOD will differ depending on the current context of each station area.

Transit investment and transit-oriented districts are keys to enhancing affordable living.

- The Los Angeles region is notorious for high housing and transportation costs, even in the current recession. Nationally, the combined cost of housing and transportation averages about 47 percent of household income, but households in Southern California pay about 54 percent of regional median income.ⁱ
- However, transit-rich neighborhoods in the city offer much lower transportation costs. The average cost in Koreatown—with its very high employment and housing density, wide array of housing types, and rich transit network including four subway stops—is just 31 percent.
- A 2009 study by the American Public Transportation Association found that households that used transit saved an average of \$10,000 in Los Angeles.ⁱⁱ



When residents can walk, bike or take transit instead of driving, communities can lower their total GHG emissions.

Transit-oriented districts are a climate action strategy.

- CTOD found that households living near public transportation can reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 43 percent. Households living in central business districts, which typically have the richest mix of jobs, transit, destinations and density, could reduce their vehicle related emissions by 78 percent.
- A recent survey of the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (Gateway COG) showed that 80 percent of cities in the Gateway COG had considered TOD as a way to reduce vehicle miles traveled, and a majority had also considered land-use strategies including promoting infill and mixed-use development to increase residential and employment density.ⁱⁱⁱ



Wilshire Blvd. connects residents to the Metro's purple line and to the broader network of rapid buses.

There is growing support for TOD from market and business interests.

- The new Urban Land Institute/Pricewaterhouse Coopers “Emerging Trends in Real Estate Report” for 2010, while cautioning that little development will occur in the near term, is bullish on the future market for infill development in walkable neighborhoods near transit.
- A growing coalition of private actors—including labor, environmentalists and business—show keen interest in jumpstarting Measure R

investments, and possibly accelerating the 30-year program so that system expansion could be completed in 10 years.

- A number of national studies have demonstrated that property values in walkable urban neighborhoods have increased or held steady in value more than comparable properties in suburban locations. The price of homes in some communities in Los Angeles is local evidence of this trend.¹⁷
- Even the Urban Land Institute’s Los Angeles District Office has recognized the importance of TOD investments and is subsidizing technical assistance panels for five cities that are offering properties near stations up for development.



The Warner Center plans to transform from a suburban office park to a transit-oriented “downtown” for the San Fernando Valley.

Planning for transit-oriented districts is already well underway.

- The Southern California Association of Governments’ Compass Blueprint Two Percent Strategy stresses that new development should be focused near stations;
- Mayor Villaraigosa promotes mixed-income, mixed-use development near 20 stations in his 5-year housing plan, and planning efforts are underway at 10 of them;
- the Planning Department is integrating TOD planning into community plan updates the Expo and Eastside Lines;
- both the Community Redevelopment Agency

and the L.A. Unified School District understand the value of these sites.

Achieving TOD success will require the involvement of many public and private organizations, not just one.

- The current real estate downturn offers an opportunity for public agencies and private or non-profit advocates to align resources and plans before the market heats up and raises the cost of development near stations.
- A successful TOD strategy will involve not just putting supportive land use regulations in place, but also ensuring future stations are designed to maximize development opportunity, creating a street network that caters to pedestrians, bicycles, and cars, acquiring and assembling key parcels for development, and ensuring that there are programs in place to build and preserve housing for low and moderate income households.



Santa Monica may be connected to the Metro transit system through a line nicknamed “Subway to the Sea.”

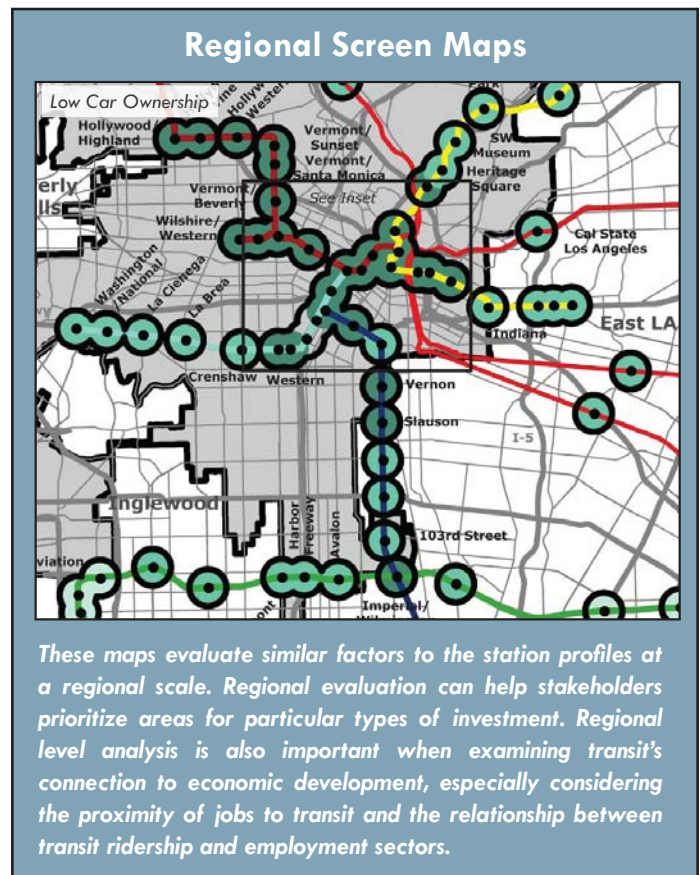
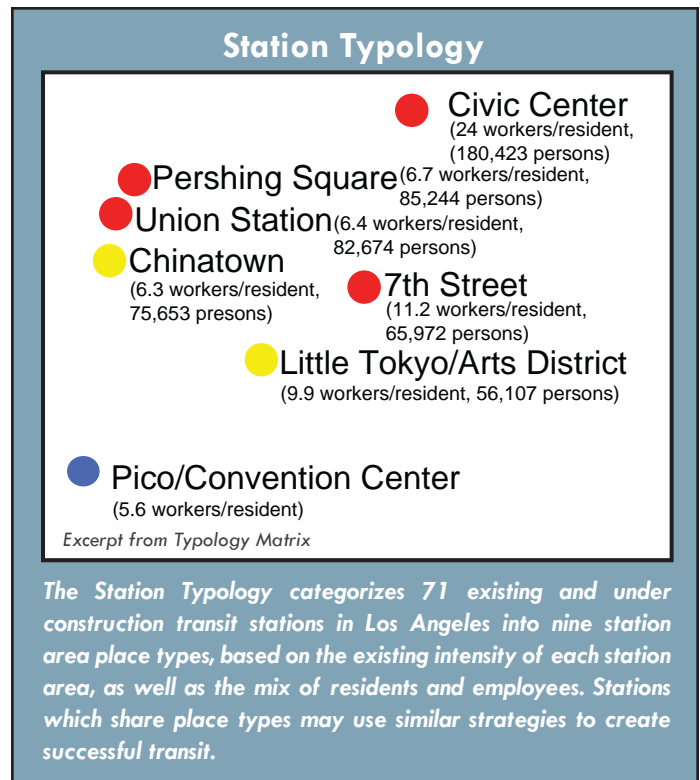
The TOD typology, station profiles and other tools offered in this report offer a basis for understanding how stations currently perform relative to TOD goals, how investments might be prioritized and coordinated in the future, who should play a role in future TOD implementation, and how to bring TOD from “clever exceptionalism” to widespread implementation.

Project Overview

Practitioners and advocates in the transportation, land use, economic development and housing fields in Los Angeles know that we have a long way to go to maximize TOD potential. Therefore this report, completed with funding from a Caltrans Community-Based Transportation Planning grant, set out to determine **why good TOD is – or is not – occurring around stations**, and to strategize about ways that station area performance could be improved. CTOD examined the current success of transit-oriented districts through a data-driven analysis and a discussion with focus groups from five transit corridors in the city. CTOD created a variety of tools measuring current performance including a station typology, station area profiles, and a set of regional screen maps that analyze demographic and economic conditions throughout the City.

This toolbox provides the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority with a **big picture view of how all station areas in the city relate to one another**, and provides snapshots of station area information including ridership, auto ownership, commute mode, and neighborhood change. In a state where station area plans can average about \$500,000 each, and in a city with 71 existing and under construction stations, this approach offers a cost effective way to provide the City, community advocates, and Los Angeles County Metro with information that can enhance future TOD opportunities.

CTOD also conducted a case study analysis of five corridors. These corridors were composed of clusters of stations, including: the Gold Line from Little Tokyo to Indiana; the Red Line from Vermont/Wilshire to Vermont/Sunset; the Orange Line from Sepulveda to Warner Center; the Expo Line from USC to Crenshaw; and a key portion of the proposed downtown streetcar alignment. CTOD invited **stakeholders from these corridors to talk about the opportunities and the challenges to achieving TOD**. Participants included staff from several city departments and various agencies including CRA-LA, the Planning Department, and LA Metro, as well as community members and organizations, institutional property owners and major employers, as well as other planners, developers, activists.



Measures of Current Performance

The average household in the Los Angeles region spends 54 percent of its income on housing and transportation, well above the national average.^{vii}

These high average costs make it especially important to consider both housing and transportation costs when promoting affordability. The average local household might pay a third of their income on rent for affordable housing, but transportation costs in the city can range from a low of \$2,900 to a high of \$12,000 a year.^{vi}

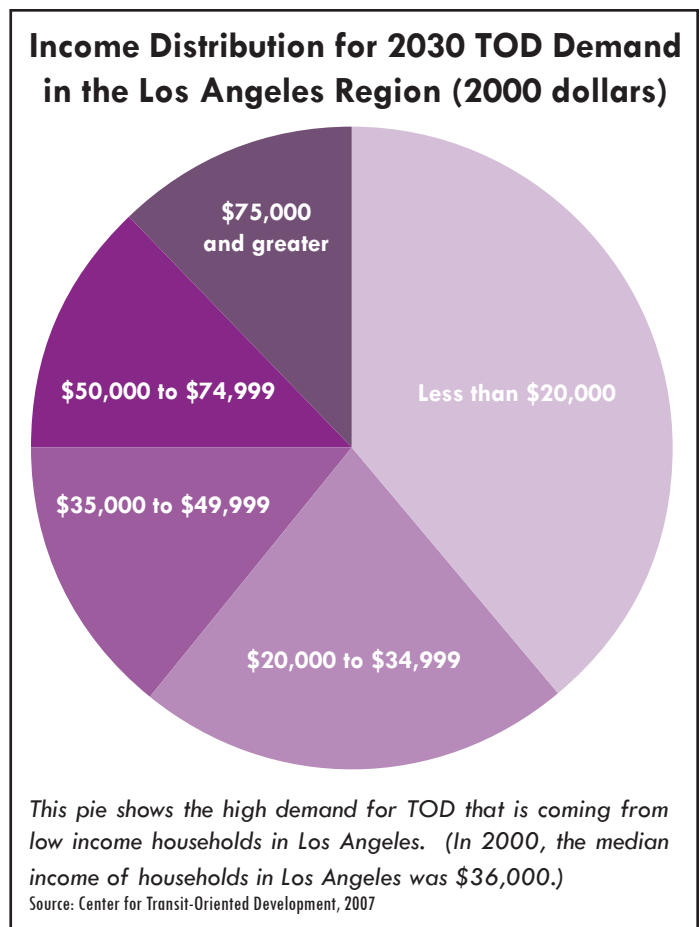
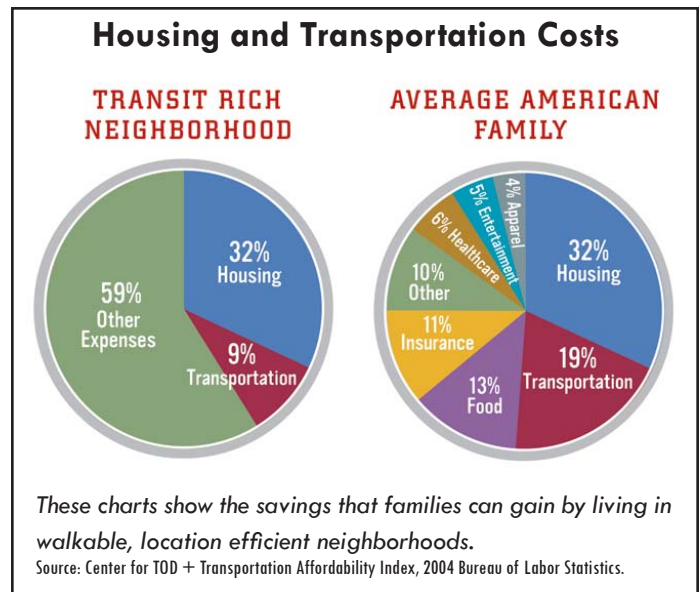
Families living in walkable, location efficient neighborhoods can save up to \$10,000 a year on transportation costs in Los Angeles.^{viii}

A key component of reducing transportation costs is lessening auto dependence: households who must drive long distances to get to work, or to get groceries or take their children to school, will spend more money on transportation. Low transportation costs are found in places where residents and workers have the choice to walk, bike, or take transit when commuting or doing other errands, and can thus live with one less car.

In addition to lower transportation costs, communities with reduced auto-dependence experience a multitude of benefits, including: more stable transportation costs, even when gas prices increase; a reduced need to expand freeways or other roads to accommodate new growth; healthier residents who walk more, which reduces both individual health care costs as well as public health expenditures; and a more stable and sustainable source of transit ridership, which leads to additional fare box recovery and revenue for transit agencies.

The demand for transit-oriented living in the Los Angeles region is strong and growing; nearly two-thirds of this demand is likely to come from households earning less than the city's median income.^{ix}

Whereas in 2000, less than six percent of all households in the region—or about 300,000 households—lived near transit, CTOD has forecasted that over 1.7 million households or about 22 percent of the region will want to live near transit by 2030. This demand makes it more important than ever to ensure that equity, and affordable housing preservation and production are core to the planning process for Los Angeles's station areas.



Regional, City, and Transit Zone Demographic Characteristics, 2000

Measure	Region	City of Los Angeles	Los Angeles Station Areas
Share Taking Transit, Walking, and Biking to Work	8%	14%	24%
Share Households with 0 or 1 Car(s)	46%	57%	66%
Median Household Income	\$45,280	\$36,687	\$29,726
Share of Renter Households	46%	61%	73%
Average Household Size	3.00	2.83	3.02

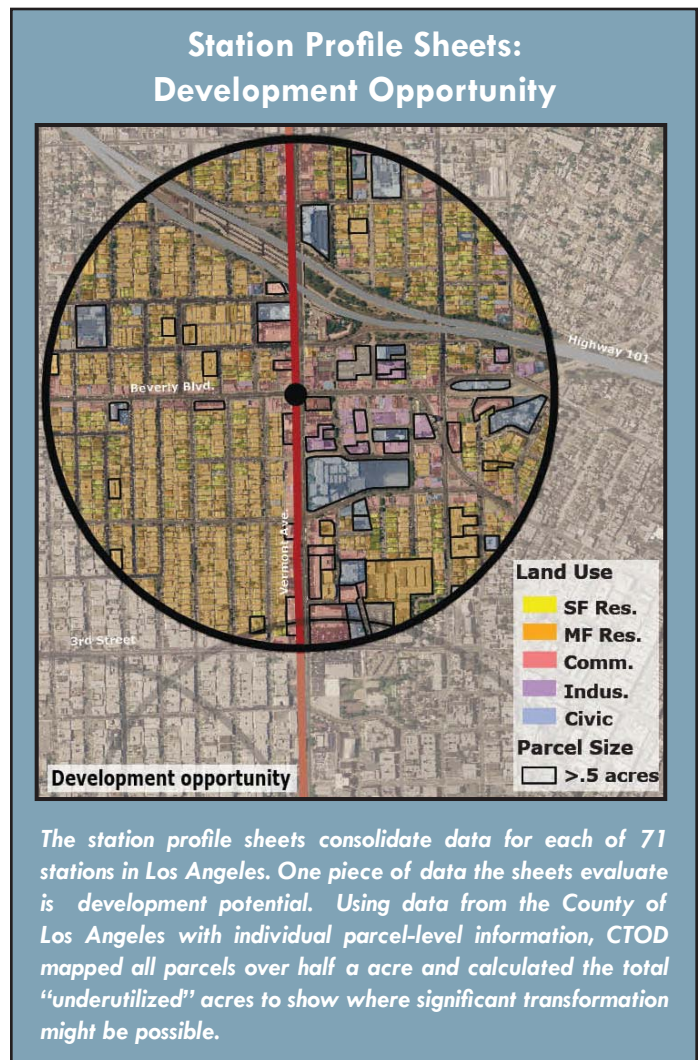
Source: U.S. Census, 2000; CTOD

Transit serves many of the city's existing lower income neighborhoods, offering residents regional access but increasing their vulnerability to displacement over time. Residents in transit rich neighborhoods own fewer cars and are three times more likely to use transit, walk, and bike to work than on average in the city and region. The median income of transit zone residents is significantly lower than the regional median income, despite the fact that household sizes tend to be similar. And, these lower income households are also significantly more likely to be renters, thus making households more susceptible to displacement if housing prices rise.

Small parcel sizes near some transit stations will require proactive implementation. Parcel assembly, development incentives such as density bonuses, brokering negotiations between property owners and developers, and modifying land use regulations such as parking ratios can all be strategies to facilitate small parcel development.

Housing preservation will be a key component of station area planning. Contracts on over 20,000 units of affordable housing will expire by 2014.* While many of these units are owned by public or non-profit agencies with an interest in renewing their contracts, other owners may choose to opt out of maintaining the affordability of units.

22.4 percent of jobs in Los Angeles County are connected to transit.* Rapid Bus networks in the city provide some connectivity to jobs, but could



be improved dramatically with expansion plans and investments in last mile connections to job centers that are not adjacent to stations. Future transit infrastructure investments can also improve connectivity for other job centers like Century City and Ventura Blvd.

Percent of Employment in Transit Shed of in US Transit Systems

Region	Transit Network Size	% of employment within a half mile of transit
Atlanta, GA	Medium	13.7
Los Angeles, CA	Large	22.5
Minneapolis - St. Paul, MN	Medium	19.6
Philadelphia, PA	Extensive	29.8
Phoenix, AZ	Small	11.2
Portland, OR	Large	33.8

Source: Center for Transit-Oriented Development, U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics, 2006

Job centers are important places to increase residential housing. Non-CBD job centers are limited in the pool of workers that can access these places on transit alone. Enhancing the concentration of housing in these job centers is important for increasing overall workforce access to jobs and can accommodate future economic growth without increasing freeway congestion. These non-CBD job centers will also likely be hot markets for future real estate development.

The City of Los Angeles’s Employment Land Preservation Policy is an important component of transit-oriented district planning and will require further research and analysis. Many of the city’s new station areas – including Little Tokyo, Pico Aliso, USC / Exposition Park, and the extension of the Orange Line to the Chatsworth Metrolink Station – are located in or near areas zoned for employment uses. Because many of

these areas many experience market demand for TOD as well, there is some potential for these stations to feel increased pressure for conversion to residential, retail, or other uses as market demand for TOD increases.

Focus Group Findings

A. Build community support for TOD

Many community groups and neighborhood council members are prepared to advocate and support TOD, particularly in light of SB 375, but they are often left out of the decision making process. The Council Districts in particular could be strong forces for TOD in LA, but without grassroots support for the movement, locally supported council decisions do not always coincide with the broader interests of the city or region as a whole. While many groups in the City are ready to support efforts around SB 375, they need to be brought together into a broad coalition.

B. Establish supportive policies, regulations, programs

Some regulatory changes are necessary at the city level: parking requirements should be examined and special consideration should be given to the city’s employment preservation areas near stations, because some jobs are more transit-oriented than others. While station area planning will still be important to establish a community vision and implementation strategy, some policies can be modified using the data that has been gathered for this report. For example, many regions have implemented regional and citywide TOD strategic plans to prioritize stations for investment, and to provide basic land use guidelines for developers and community advocates until station area plans can be completed.

C. Improve coordination and collaboration among public and private entities

The City, Metro, and other stakeholders need more inter-agency and inter-departmental collaboration and coordination to maximize leveraging of resources in support of TOD. Public partners with a stake in TOD include: City Planning, the Planning Commission, LA Metro, CRA-LA, the LA Transportation Department, the LA Housing Department, the Mayor’s Office, HACL A, even LAUSD.

Strategies for Expanding TOD in Los Angeles

A. Build Community Support for TOD

Strengthen regional leadership to guide SB 375 efforts. Authority over the way land use and transportation decisions are made will still rest with local governments, who may not agree that the most environmentally sustainable pattern of future growth is in their best interest. Enhancing regional leadership and advocacy for SB 375 will ensure that SCAG is able to maximize the number of decisions that are made in the best interest of the region as a whole rather than of individual communities, and balance issues related to the environment, economic development, and equity. One strategy for quickly generating this regional leadership is to draw together advocates from regional initiatives related to labor, health, affordable housing, and other areas of concern that directly pertain to or benefit from TOD and sustainability.

Build citywide capacity for better Council, agency support of TOD. Achieving successful TOD in Los Angeles can require the support of a wide number of different City, County, and regional level public agencies. Offering staff in City agencies more technical support through education and best practices, and generating support for TOD at the community and neighborhood scale, can help to ensure that the many departments involved in creating successful TOD do not work at cross purposes.

Build capacity at the neighborhood level. Planning involves a wealth of technical terminology and processes that can be difficult to understand, particularly among residents in multilingual communities. While several neighborhoods in the city have dedicated community groups that can both help educate residents and advocate for their interests, expand the efforts of these community groups is crucial and can be achieved through supporting the education of local residents about planning processes, creating broader networks of neighborhood groups to share information, and offering these groups the analytical tools they need to understand what is happening in their communities, quantitatively.

B. Establish supportive policies, regulations, programs

Evaluate, promote, and support existing TOD efforts. There are a range of existing regulations, policies, and implementation programs that already exist in the City of Los Angeles to support TOD. As these efforts should be considered as examples of supportive TOD policies, they can lay the groundwork for creating a more wholly supportive set of strategies to promote TOD in Los Angeles.

Reevaluate certain regulations and policies. Though the city may not have the resources to complete station area plans for all 71 existing and under construction stations, there are certain citywide regulations and policies that can be revisited in a more cost-effective, incremental way. The City's Community Plan Implementation Overlay (CPIO), which is currently in the conceptual stages, will offer a more flexible tool than the Community Plan Update for land use regulation that accounts for the unique FAR and density possibilities, parking needs, and traffic characteristics of TOD throughout the city. Additionally, the CPIO will enable development projects that support livability and walkability goes to undergo a faster review process, thus supporting the construction of regionally significant projects.

Develop local and regional tools to support the Sustainable Communities Strategy, which will implement SB375, AB32. The implementation of SB 375 in general will require a significant change in community sentiments about density and development, particularly in Los Angeles where many of the transit station areas will be designated as regional priority areas for long-range growth. One way to do this is to address concerns about traffic and parking by showing examples of recent TOD projects that have indeed generated fewer car trips, and lower car ownership in general. Table 2 shows that residents in Los Angeles's station areas are three times more likely to walk, bike, or take transit to work than residents throughout the region, and are nearly 50 percent more likely to own one or fewer cars. Statistics such as these can help to assuage

neighborhood concerns about traffic and parking, and demonstrate that growth near transit will, indeed, help to reduce congestion throughout the region as a whole.

C. Improve coordination and collaboration among public and private entities

Improve inter-agency teaming when planning TOD. Planning for TOD is a multidisciplinary exercise, requiring the coordination of numerous public agencies, departments, and political leaders within the City and County. Ongoing coordination could also help these actors understand each other's objectives, strategies, limitations and resources, creating a culture of cross-disciplinary learning that is so critical to ensuring the long-range implementation of successful TOD throughout the city.

Increase coordination with local, citywide, regional community groups and the private sector. There is no agency or entity will be able to single-handedly maximize TOD success throughout Los Angeles. Private actors including regional housing, economic, and health advocates, local CDC's and community groups, and for-profit and affordable housing developers will need to play an important role in the implementation of TOD. To start, an inventory of local finance resources, policies, and tools along station areas and corridors can be very effective to help both public and private partners understand what is available, and coordinate their own resources with existing ones. Additionally, involving private developers in focus groups and stakeholder committees can provide significant insight into the regulatory barriers that might be hindering TOD in any given station areas.

Align existing financing sources and pursue new ones. Station area investments to improve TOD can take a variety of forms, including affordable housing production or preservation, land use planning and visioning, and infrastructure improvements to enhance local pedestrian, bicycle, or bus access. There are a range of existing funding sources to support each of these types of investment in the city, which are distributed by a number of different agencies (such as Metro, the City,

LAHD and SCAG), but creating a single clearinghouse or easily accessible resource for those seeking information about these funds would improve the efficacy of these programs.

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- ix Harrell, Rodney, Allison Brooks, and Todd Nedwick, "Improving Affordability and Access in Livable Communities: Subsidized Housing Opportunities Near Transit and the 50+ Population." Washington, D.C.: AARP Public Policy Institute, September 2009. Available at www.reconnectingamerica.org/reports/. "Federally Subsidized" units include Section 202, Section 236, and Section 811 subsidies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
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A Guide for Using This Toolkit

Successful transit-oriented districts can provide regional and local benefits to a variety of public, private, and non-profit interest groups, including those interested in:

public health,



economic development,



affordable housing, and











climate change and SB 375 goals.



The tools developed for this report will be useful for these groups in moving TOD forward in Los Angeles. The LA TOD website (latod.reconnectingamerica.org) links to a series of fact sheets that make the connection between TOD and these four topics. Each fact sheet makes the case for why TOD is important to each of these topics, gives a quick overview of how Los Angeles is performing and how CTOD measured that performance, and identifies some key strategies in which TOD can be utilized in the future to support public health, economic development, affordable housing, and SB 375 goals.

The chart below identifies different TOD strategies that tie in to each topic (the icons corresponding to each topic are in the “Relevant to” category). For more detailed information on how TOD supports these goals and how each are currently performing in Los Angeles, download the fact sheets available at latod.reconnectingamerica.org.

Relevant to...	Strategy	Measures to Examine	Resources
	Preservation of Affordable Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expiring Affordable Units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Screen Map of Expiring Units Station Profile Sheets
	Offering High Quality Transit Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing + Transportation Affordability Index 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CNT's H+T Index (www.htaindex.cnt.org) SCAG H+T Index Toolkit (http://www.compassblueprint.org/toolbox/affordabilityindex)
	Prioritize New Public Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing + Transportation Costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Screen Map of Transportation Cost Regional Screen Map of Median Income Mixed Income 201 Available at reconnectingamerica.org
	Mixing Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Mix of Land Uses Community Amenities in a Station Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typology Matrix Station Profile Sheets Amenities Map
	Increase Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Density in a Station Area Developable Land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typology Matrix Station Profile Sheets Parcel Map LOTS Database Regional Screen Map with Development Opportunity
	Increase Housing Near Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Density in a Station Area Developable Land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typology Matrix Station Profile Sheets Parcel Map LOTS Database (lots.ucla.edu) Regional Screen Map with Development Opportunity
	Improve Walkability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block Size in a Station Area Mobility Barriers in a Station Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station Profile Sheets Mobility Map Regional Screen Map of Block Sizes
	Enhancing Access to Job Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity and Regional Transit Links to Existing Job Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Clusters Map Transit and Employment 202 (Available at: reconnectingamerica.org)