Maintaining Diversity In America’s Transit-Rich Neighborhoods:

Tools for Equitable Neighborhood Change

RailVolution Workshop on What the Research Says: Gentrification and Displacement in Transit-Oriented Communities

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We wanted to understand whether gentrification and displacement are actually occurring in transit-rich neighborhoods (TRNs).

To the extent that undesirable patterns of neighborhood change were found, we also wanted to understand the underlying mechanisms in order to propose policy tools that could be used to shape equitable neighborhood change in both old and new TRNs.
Transit-served metropolitan areas and their diversity

FIGURE 1.1 Transit-Served Metropolitan Areas

Diversity in Transit-Served Metropolitan Areas

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Diversity is more than an equity issue

- Core transit riders are disproportionately
  - Renters
  - People of color
  - Low income
- These three groups are also more likely to
  - Live in zero-vehicle households
  - Live in transit-rich neighborhoods
- There is a symbiotic relationship between diverse neighborhoods and successful transit
- Transit stations need “transit-oriented neighbors” who will regularly use the system
The research

- Studied neighborhood change in 42 neighborhoods in 12 metropolitan areas first served by fixed-guideway transit between 1990 and 2000
- Looked at a broad range of population, housing and transportation characteristics
- Compared changes in neighborhoods adjacent to transit to those in the Metropolitan Statistical Area
- Also looked more closely at
  - Those where the 1990-2000 change in a variable was 20 percentage points higher or lower than the change in the MSA from 1990-2000
  - Neighborhoods with new light rail (vs. heavy rail and commuter rail)
The results

Median Gross Rent
(Initial Analysis)

Greater Change in MSA
26%

Greater Change in Station Area
74%

Motor Vehicle Ownership
(Initial Analysis)

Greater Change in MSA
29%

Greater Change in Station Area
71%

Housing Costs
(Large Differences Analysis)

Motor Vehicle Ownership
(Large Differences Analysis)

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Our conclusions

- Gentrification (defined as a neighborhood change process characterized by increasing property values and incomes) occurred in an overwhelming majority of transit-rich neighborhoods studied
  - Neighborhoods with more renters are more susceptible to gentrification
- We did not find clear evidence of displacement
  - Racial/ethnic composition did not change significantly even while incomes rose
  - Instead we saw succession or “replacement”
- We saw two other negative consequences of gentrification
  - Higher rents for those who stayed
  - Rising vehicle ownership
Breaking the cycle of unintended consequences
A Toolkit for Equitable Neighborhood Change in Transit-Rich Neighborhoods

Planning Tools

Housing Market Tools

Transportation Management Tools

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Website for report and toolkit

http://www.dukakiscenter.org/TRNEquity