Making the Connection: Cities + Transit Agencies in New Starts Land Use and Economic Development

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New Starts Program Overview

- **What is a New or Small Start?**
  - New “fixed guideways” and extensions to existing systems
  - Includes light rail, heavy rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit

- **A Discretionary & Competitive Federal Grant Program**
  - $1.99 billion appropriated in Fiscal Year 2010
  - Demand for funds exceeds supply
  - Historical average federal New Starts share = 50%

- **Evaluation** – As directed in law, FTA evaluates and rates projects against multiple criteria, including land use and economic development:
  - Annually in a Report to Congress (due First Monday in February)
  - For entry into Preliminary Engineering
  - For entry into Final Design
  - Prior to Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA)

- **Record of Success** – Over 100 major projects over 35 years
New Starts Project Development Process

- Project Development: Typically 6-12 Years

Some local keys to accelerate a project: consensus (route, mode, stations), funding, and environmental work
FTA’s Land Use and Economic Development Criteria

- **Land Use**
  - Existing population and employment within ½ mile of station areas

- **Economic Development**
  - Transit Supportive Plans and Policies
    - Growth Management
    - Transit Supportive Corridor Policies
    - Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations
    - Tools to Implement Land Use Policies
  - Performance and Impact of Plans and Policies
    - Demonstrated cases of TOD
    - Station area development proposals and status
    - Adaptability of station area land for development
    - Corridor economic development
Growth Management

- Concentration of development around regional activity centers and transit
  - Regional plans
  - Regulatory or fiscal incentives
  - “Smart Growth” policies, comprehensive plans, and zoning

- Land conservation and management
  - Growth management boundaries
  - Preservation of open space, sensitive habitat, farmland, or areas of rural character
  - Incentive or mandates for land conservation
  - Actual land conservation purchases or designations
Transit Supportive Corridor Policies

- Plans and policies to increase corridor and station area development
  - Benchmarks for floor area ratios or residential dwelling units
  - Planned high trip generators in the corridor

- Plans and policies to enhance transit-friendly character
  - Mix of land uses
  - Building design characteristics (facades, windows, setbacks, height limits)

- Plans to improve pedestrian facilities, including facilities for persons with disabilities
  - Capital improvement programs for sidewalks, connected pedestrian paths, street crossings, and facilities for persons with disabilities
  - Adopted or proposed design guidelines

- Parking policies
  - Parking limits
  - Provisions for shared parking
  - Parking fees
Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations

- Existing and proposed zoning that supports increased development density in transit station areas
  - Density bonuses
  - Housing fund subsidies
  - Expedited zoning reviews

- Zoning ordinances that enhance transit-oriented character of station areas
  - Mixed use zoning
  - Ordinances addressing placement of building footprints, pedestrian facilities, façade treatments
  - Architectural guidance

- Zoning allowances for reduced parking and traffic mitigation
  - Minimum and/or maximum parking requirements for residential and commercial development
Tools to Implement Land Use Policies

- Outreach to and endorsement by public agencies, community organizations, and the general public in the planning process
  - Outreach program
  - Resolutions, letters of endorsement etc.

- Regulatory and financial incentives to promote TOD
  - Density bonuses
  - Streamlined processing of development applications
  - Reduced or waived zoning requirements for traffic mitigation fees
  - Tax increment financing zones, tax abatement or TOD loan support
  - Revitalization strategies

- Efforts to involve the development community
  - TOD market studies
  - Joint development strategy
Economic Development Rating Based on Project Phase

- FTA applies a higher standard as projects progress from preliminary engineering to final design.

- At entry into PE, conceptual plans should be underway and work with local jurisdictions should have begun:
  - Transit oriented development proposals drafted
  - Discussions held with local jurisdictions about revising comprehensive plans, master area plans and station area plans
  - Identification of capital improvements for station areas
  - Initiation of public outreach efforts

- At entry into FD, must show some demonstrated progress on implementation of plans and policies such as:
  - Plans and policies adopted;
  - Development proposals underway;
  - Regulatory of financial incentives adopted; and/or
  - Zoning changes implemented.
New Starts project sponsors are typically transit agencies that have no defined role in local land use planning.

Land use and economic development plans and policies are critical to a successful project rating and receipt of Federal funding.