



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607-4700
TEL 510.817.5700
TDD/TTY 510.817.5769
FAX 510.817.5848
E-MAIL info@mtc.ca.gov
WEB www.mtc.ca.gov

Memorandum

TO: Planning Committee

DATE: January 2, 2009

FR: Executive Director

W. I. 1611

RE: The Choice to Reside in a Transit Oriented Development: Study Update

Background

People living and working close to transit walk and use transit more than those living farther from transit, as established in previous analytical studies at MTC and elsewhere. However, research is incomplete to determine why people choose to live in transit oriented development and how they choose their travel modes. Transit-oriented development is a key component of our smart growth initiatives, and transit, walking, and biking are key travel modes to help the region address increasing vehicle miles of travel and greenhouse gas emissions. We are looking to better understand how to improve transit oriented development as a housing choice and how to increase the use of non-auto travel modes.

Last year MTC began this Caltrans-funded study, entitled “Understanding and Supporting the Choice to Reside in a Transit Oriented Development”. The study is exploring why people choose to reside in a TOD and the impact of individuals’ attitudes and preferences on travel behavior, developing information on demographics and travel patterns of TOD residents, developing a standard set of performance measures to determine the top factors that lead to successful TODs, and defining effective policy approaches to encourage more Bay Area TOD. We engaged the assistance of a consulting firm, Cambridge Systematics, to assist us in this effort.

We are focusing on the following questions:

- Why do some people choose to live in transit-oriented developments?
- Why do some people choose to not live in transit-oriented developments?
- What socioeconomic populations are most likely to live in a TOD in the Bay Area?
- How do people who live close to transit choose their travel modes?
- What are the public policy implications - what public policies would make TODs more attractive to these potential markets? How can we help build the market for TODs by making them more attractive through public sector activities? How can we make non-auto travel modes more attractive?

Progress to Date

We have held focus groups and conducted a survey, resulting in the definition of key “TOD Potential” market segments, as detailed below:

Focus Groups – We held several focus groups of individuals who had recently moved or were interested in moving soon to help us understand various issues of concern.

Survey – We conducted a survey of over 900 individuals, asking about factors considered when choosing to live in TODs within the Bay Area. The samples were drawn from a new mover list, a random dial list, and a random sample of cell phone numbers – only respondents who had recently moved or were planning to move were interviewed. The survey includes all movers, not just those interested in TODs.

Analysis of the Survey - The results of the survey were statistically analyzed to define six “preference” factors that are important to people when deciding where to live; these factors were combined with socioeconomic information to define eight potential “market” segments (see attached powerpoint presentation for details regarding each of the eight market segments; note that positive preferences are expressed with positive numbers, negative preferences with negative numbers).

Key User Segments - Of greatest interest for this effort, there are a few market segments that we would classify as “TOD Potential” – that have some interest in some of the aspects of transit oriented development, such as good transit access and convenience to do errands by walking and bicycling, but have some distinct concerns about TOD style living. We are analyzing the attitudes of these groups more closely in order to determine factors that can be addressed with public policies to improve their attractiveness for these potential TOD groups.

Next Steps

1) Follow-up Interviews - We will be conducting a small follow-up questionnaire with a sample of the survey respondents from the “TOD Potential” market segments in order to better understand their concerns and the relative value of public policies that might make TOD attractive. The purpose of the follow-up interviews with the target segments will be to:

- Improve our understanding of how the “TOD Potential” segments might respond to specific public policies intended to improve the attractiveness of TODs.
- Gain qualitative, narrative information on the housing and travel choices of the respondents in the target market segments. This will add narrative richness to the briefing book that will be the product of the study, making it more accessible.

2) TOD Choices Study workshops – We are developing two small workshops to address potential public policies to support TODs. Possible attendees include planning commissioners, members of parks departments, police departments, transit agencies, chambers of commerce, redevelopment agencies, private developers, and local elected officials.

The workshops will share information among participants regarding the challenges of TOD, share the results of this study, propose TOD performance measures, and culminate in identifying the key public policies and actions to support TODs and the transportation effectiveness of TODs.

The recommendations will be brought back to the Planning Committee for comment and potential action by Spring 2009.

Steve Heminger

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