

OUTREACH

DEVELOPMENT



GROWTH



AWARENESS



VISION

**MUNICIPAL IMPLEMENTATION TOOL # 1 :  
TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)**



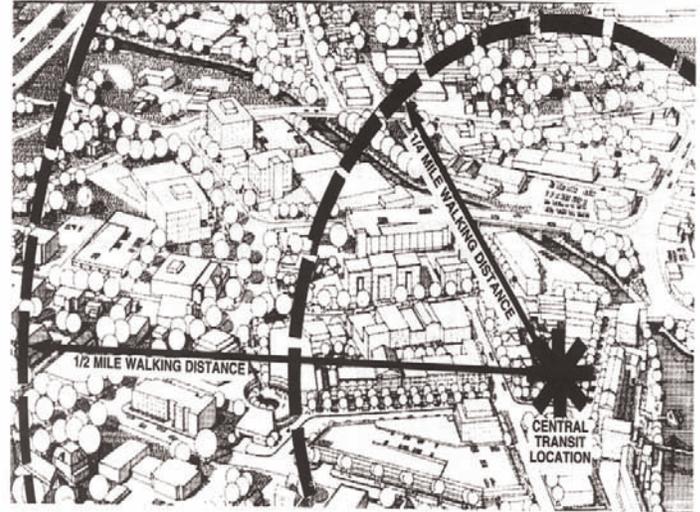
Delaware Valley Regional  
Planning Commission

**AUGUST 2002**

This brochure is the first in a series of "implementation tools" brochures based on the recommendations in *Horizons 2025*, the region's long-range plan, prepared and adopted by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). An introductory brochure, *Horizons 2025 Implementation: Municipal Tools and Techniques* is also available and describes numerous planning tools that municipalities can use to better plan their futures. Transit-oriented development (TOD) techniques recognize the importance of the rail or bus station to a community, and try to shape surrounding growth or redevelopment to better serve residents, commuters, and visitors.

### Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is:

- A means to support local planning and community development goals;
- A means to increase transit ridership;
- A means to create or reinforce neighborhood community identity and centers of activity;
- A mix of uses, including residential, commercial, and office or some combination;
- Moderate to high density, matching the existing scale of development;
- Within an easy walk of a transit station, depending on impediments, and designed for the pedestrian;
- Either new construction or redevelopment;
- Where new transit investments are proposed, it is a means to enhance prospects for federal investment in a project.



*The transit planning area should initially be defined based on walking distances of approximately 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile.*

Source: New Jersey Transit.  
*Planning for Transit - Friendly Land Use:  
A Handbook for New Jersey Communities.*  
June 1994.

Implementing TOD requires a concerted effort by local governments to amend their comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance to add or refocus on those uses and development patterns that are "transit supportive".

### **What uses are transit supportive?**

Uses that are transit supportive include those that cater to convenience goods and service needs of residents, employees, and transit stop users. This can include:

- food markets
- restaurants
- salons
- dry cleaners
- newsstands
- bookstores
- hardware stores
- other retail uses

Uses that entertain or create activity on the street, or attract day and night activity are all transit supportive, such as:

- movie or professional theatres
- sidewalk cafes

### **What uses aren't transit supportive?**

Uses that are not transit supportive are those that detract from or interrupt the flow of interesting, pedestrian-generating uses along the street, such as:

- surface parking lots
- gas stations
- car washes
- large auto repair shops

Uses that specialize in large bulky items, businesses that require excessive space, who have few employees per square foot, or who do not attract pedestrians or transit-oriented patrons, such as:

- big box retail
- warehousing

### Transportation Benefits

- Increases transit usage, by providing higher density housing along the rail line, and by improving the aesthetic environment of the station area;
- Decreases amount of trip making, by allowing for trip chaining (accessing multiple destinations in one trip), through mixing land uses (allows residents who commute on the rail line to access goods and services near station all in same trip);
- Reduces auto use and lessens dependence on the automobile;
- Diminishes the need for road widening or large investments in highway repair and building.

### Environmental Benefits

- Preserves land resources and diminishes storm water runoff (by developing in centers or redeveloping existing buildings);
- Minimizes the need for the expansion of sewer systems, and maximizes existing capacities;
- Lessens dependence on domestic and imported oil, by reducing auto dependence;
- Improves air quality at a regional level, by reducing auto usage.

### Economic Benefits

- Saves tax dollars by using the existing infrastructure more efficiently;
- Raises local tax revenues by promoting infill and redevelopment of parcels along the transit corridor;
- Increases land and home values;
- Increases disposable household income, by reducing auto dependence and the resulting costs of owning and repairing a car; thus, by buying "less car", one can buy "more house".

### Quality of Life Benefits

- Provides walking and transit options for commuting, errands, and entertainment, can also lead to better health;
- Improves the identity of a corridor through the transit system;
- Enhances the sense of community, and may become or reinforce a town center, where people meet and interact;
- Promotes tourism;
- Creates continuous activity near the station (as a result of mixed land uses), which provides less opportunity for crime.

### **Comprehensive or Master Plan:**

- Incorporate need for TOD and clear policy support in the plan.

### **Zoning and Land Development Ordinances:**

Encourage or require more intensive development patterns by:

- establishing minimum densities
- offering density bonuses in exchange for station area improvements or design features
- reducing parking requirements
- permitting uses that are transit-supportive, such as high density residential and certain retail and commercial facilities
- prohibiting uses that are not transit supportive, such as drive-through restaurants and warehouses.

### **Regulatory Techniques to consider include:**

- **New By-Right Mixed Use Zoning District** that requires mixed uses, without having to meet certain conditions. Such a district could replace a zoning classification that previously only permitted one type of use, or perhaps allowed a mix of residential and commercial as a conditional use. A new district would work well in a jurisdiction where the land use objectives and goals have changed significantly, such that minor revisions would not work.

- **Transit Overlay Zoning District** is a method used to apply provisions in a specific area that supplements the standards of the underlying or base zone. A transit overlay zone might restrict certain uses (such as auto-oriented or warehouse uses) or allow higher densities than would be permitted in the same zone in other parts of the municipality. It is most appropriate for municipalities that find no need to change underlying zone boundaries, and the zones around the station allow for various uses. Thus, only minor modifications are needed. The benefit of this approach is that because it is more incremental, it can seem less threatening to property owners than an entirely new by-right zoning district. A potential drawback is the increased complexity of an additional layer of regulations.
- **Design Standards** can address issues of building design, site planning, vehicular access, parking, landscaping, and pedestrian orientation. Zoning codes normally regulate more easily determined and quantifiable characteristics like use, height, bulk, and setbacks. Design standards are instead quite flexible. Design review adds a refining tool to the project review process, without necessarily needing to add to the length and cost of the process. Design standards can also help to create better-designed communities.



**“BEFORE”** PHOTOGRAPH OF EXISTING  
CONDITIONS, HORNBERGER AVENUE, VILLAGE OF  
ROEBLING, FLORENCE TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

Hornberger Avenue is the main approach road to a new light rail station in the historic village of Roebling, part of Florence Township in Burlington County. It is a depressed commercial and residential street, with a few remaining businesses, empty lots, and a lackluster streetscape. Adjacent to this area is the former Roebling Steel Mill and Wire Rope Factory, now a Superfund site, whose closure in the 1970's brought decline to surrounding properties. Redevelopment of the site is planned.



*Photo simulations by Brown and Keener Urban Design.*

## **“AFTER”** PHOTO SIMULATION HORNBERGER AVENUE, VILLAGE OF ROEBLING, FLORENCE TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

A photo simulation of this commercial street shows what influence the arrival of light rail and the support of transit-oriented development (through zoning and master plan changes, access improvements, infrastructure investment) might have in the future, including:

- Streetscape improvements, including renovated facades, interesting storefront signage, sidewalk bulb-outs, enhanced crosswalks, brick pavers, street trees, benches, and underground utilities (rather than unattractive overhead wires and old poles).
- New infill retail, with potential for apartments above.
- Increased pedestrian traffic from nearby existing residential neighborhoods and future subdivisions along U.S. Route 130.



**“BEFORE”** PHOTOGRAPH  
OF EXISTING CONDITIONS  
BEVERLY, NEW JERSEY

Vacant or underutilized industrial buildings abound near railroad corridors, and have great potential for redevelopment if transit-oriented development regulations and market incentives are encouraged. One example is this vacant building in Beverly City, New Jersey, next to railroad tracks that will soon carry light rail vehicles between Camden and Trenton. It is also well situated within a quarter mile of the light rail station and Beverly's downtown.

- **Change zoning to encourage or require mixed uses** (rather than single uses) within a ¼ mile to ½ mile walking distance of the train station.
- **Offer developers density bonuses and a reduction in parking requirements**, if the developer agrees to pay for the station or station area improvements. Developers can make more profit on higher density housing, but are usually restricted from such densities in local zoning. Similarly, developers must provide a certain amount of parking under local zoning, and a reduction in this requirement can lessen the developer's cost, while also preserving more land near the station for transit supportive uses. Reducing parking can be contentious, because transit agencies want to provide ample parking to attract riders, developers look to comply with building industry standards for required amounts of parking, and lenders want to ensure the future marketability of their investment.
- **Improve building orientation to stations**, by locating surrounding building entrances towards the station stop, rather than placing large parking lots between the station and the building. Defined pathways or walkways between the station and area buildings should be created. If a large amount of parking is necessary, locate spaces in scattered lots, or implement a shared parking program with other land uses. Park and ride lots can be created in one quadrant of the larger TOD, rather than right next to the station.
- **Streamline the permit review process**, as often this process can be longer and more complicated for mixed use projects. Municipalities could give higher priority to mixed use projects, by fast-tracking them or moving them to the top of the review list.
- **Allow developers to phase the different elements of the development**, to permit uses that will generate an income stream first (usually residential) to finance other uses (such as commercial). Obviously, no developer is going to be interested in building commercial stores where there is little to no surrounding residential market to support it. Allowing developers more flexibility in phasing should facilitate a project's residential and commercial success.
- **Offer tax incentives** to developers to build TOD, particularly when the market is slow. A tax abatement, deferment, or reduction can help reduce the risk the developer is taking by building outside of the traditional single use paradigm.
- **Provide public investment** in streetscape improvements to spur private TOD development. While developers can pay for some of these, a municipality can provide streetscape improvements, such as sidewalks, bulb outs, benches, special paving, or interesting light fixtures.

**Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission****(DVRPC)** <http://www.dvrpc.org/planning/tod.htm>

DVRPC has undertaken two studies on TOD. These include the *Schuylkill Valley Metro Station Planning and Implementation Study* with SEPTA, and *Transit Village Design in Burlington County* with New Jersey Transit (a publication abstract can be found at: [www.dvrpc.org/data/abstract/02013.htm](http://www.dvrpc.org/data/abstract/02013.htm)).

DVRPC staff has also been active in drafting proposed Pennsylvania legislation to encourage TOD through Transit Revitalization Investment Districts (TRID), which is now House Bill 2464.

In addition, *Great Places with Transit* is a quarterly newsletter produced by the **Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)**, under contract with DVRPC, that highlights local and regional efforts to create vibrant places around transit. It can be found at:

<http://www.dvrpc.org/planning/tod/svm/newsletter.htm>

For more information, contact Karin Morris, Regional Planner, 215-238-2858 or Richard Bickel, Deputy Director, Regional Planning Division, 215-238-2830.

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority****(SEPTA)** [www.septa.org](http://www.septa.org)

SEPTA is the fifth largest transit authority in the nation, operating bus, rail, and light rail services for the five counties in the Philadelphia metro region. For more information, contact

Chris Patton, Director of Capital and Long Range Planning, at 215-580-3771 or Dave Fogel, Director of Long Range Planning, at 215-580-7238.

**Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO)**<http://www.drpa.org/index.html>

PATCO operates the 14.2-mile Hi-Speedline rail service between Lindenwold, New Jersey and Center City Philadelphia, with 9 stations in New Jersey and 4 in Philadelphia. For more information, contact Robert Box, General Manager, at 856-772-6926.

**New Jersey Transit (NJT)**<http://www.njtransit.com/>

New Jersey Transit is New Jersey's public transit corporation, providing bus, rail, and light rail transit services. The *Transit Friendly Communities for New Jersey* program provides technical assistance to rail station communities throughout the state. For more information, contact Vivian Baker, Program Manager, at 973-491-7822.

**New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)**<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/>

NJDOT is the state of New Jersey's department of transportation. In partnership with NJ Transit, the *Transit Village Initiative* program raises municipal interest in transit stations, by acknowledging best practice models and increasing priority for other state grants. For more information, contact Monica Etz, Transit Village Coordinator, at 609-530-5957.

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Created in 1965, the **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)** is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey. DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



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