



Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center



'Progress and Future' 2nd Transit Village Symposium

Summary of Proceedings

sponsored by:

Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

and

New Jersey Department of Transportation



with support from

The New Jersey State League of Municipalities



September 2006

Executive Summary

On Friday, June 9, 2006, more than 150 invited leaders from the public sector, private industry and non-governmental organizations gathered in New Brunswick to take stock in New Jersey’s effort to support the Transit Village Initiative, which facilitates targeted development and redevelopment near transit stations, a strategy known as transit-oriented development (TOD). The impetus for this gathering was, in part, the change in leadership in state government — now headed by Governor Jon Corzine.

Sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), the symposium was organized by the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Additional support was provided by the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

The New Jersey Transit Village Initiative seeks to revitalize and grow selected communities with transit as an anchor. A Transit Village is designated as the half-mile area around a transit facility (this is also typically referred to as a TOD district). There are currently 17 designated Villages: Belmar, Bloomfield, Bound Brook, Collingswood, Cranford, Jersey City, Matawan, Metuchen, Morristown, New Brunswick, Netcong, Pleasantville, Rahway, Riverside, Rutherford, South Amboy, and South Orange.

In opening remarks, **Dean James W. Hughes** of the Bloustein School pointed out that while New Jersey is the most densely populated state with the third longest commute time, there are very few other places that have equivalent public transit infrastructure. Consequently, future development in this congested environment will have to be linked to our public rail transit system as exemplified by Transit Villages. **Bill Dressel**, Executive Director of the State League of Municipalities, also praised TOD as an important economic tool for revitalizing our communities. He stressed that in this period of fiscal restraint at both the federal and state levels, mayors need the kind of support that the Transit Village Initiative offers.

Representing the new administration was **Kris Kolluri**, the new Commissioner of NJDOT and Chairman of NJ TRANSIT’s Board of Directors, who outlined the Corzine Administration’s vision for Transit Villages. **Kenneth Pringle** provided insight from his roles as a member of NJ TRANSIT’s Board of Directors and as the mayor of Belmar. **Brent Barnes**, NJDOT’s Director of Systems Planning and Research, described the program’s history and progress. **Professor Jan Wells** of VTC, who has been monitoring the Transit Village Initiative for NJDOT since 2002, discussed construction investment and results of commercial and household surveys in the Transit Village districts.

A panel of experts talked about how to achieve successful TOD. **Susan Burrows Farber**, Deputy Executive Director of NJ Future, served as moderator. **James Maley**, mayor of Collingswood, related the experiences of his borough as a Transit Village and **Stephen Santola**, Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Woodmont Properties, conveyed his insight as a builder of mixed-use, transit-friendly projects. **Kenneth Snapp**, Director of Project Planning at NJ TRANSIT, cataloged the limitations faced by local planning boards and provided a roadmap to address these concerns. The final panelist, **Eileen Swan**, Director of the state Office of Smart Growth (OSG), emphasized OSG’s commitment to foster TOD and address the identified barriers.

Commissioner Kolluri had three key messages:

- Now is the time to revolutionize the program. The state is committed to creating 100,000 units of affordable housing during the next 10 years. As such, the affordable housing component will be a primary element in how Transit Villages are designated.
- The state is working to expand the job base near transit locations. The Transit Village Initiative has grown to include urban centers — New Brunswick and Journal Square in Jersey City. New

efforts must connect employment centers located close to major stations with local business communities, as well as provide transit village residents better access to those work locations. It is a tool that can be used to encourage job growth in the state’s major cities. Transit-friendly is business-friendly.

- NJDOT will institute a policy of on-going acceptance of applications to become a designated Transit Village. That is, when a town is ready to submit its application, NJDOT will review it.

Mayor Pringle emphasized that significant challenges face development in transit locations. He urged NJ TRANSIT, along with other advocates of TOD, to continue to:

- Educate and support local leaders
- Maintain “good” project execution
- Keep pace with changes in the marketplace
- Help balance parking needs with development
- Promote smart growth and economic prosperity
- Address public perceptions
- Understand demographic trends
- Reinvest in public infrastructure and provide improved mobility choices

Professor Wells announced that, in general, Transit Villages get good marks for improvement.

- There was approximately \$522 million in construction investment from 1999–2004, of which \$191 million was residential, representing 879 new units
- Residential surveys of Transit Villages (Metuchen, Morristown, Rahway, South Amboy and South Orange) indicate overall satisfaction with their town’s progress and that people who live within a ½- mile of the transit station use transit more, have fewer cars, and feel that transit is important in housing location choice compared to those living farther from the station
- In commercial surveys of these Transit Villages, however, respondents (manager and owners) felt that the Transit Village designation had no impact on the downtown or their business — 43 percent were unaware of their town’s designation, probably because 64 percent of the respondents indicated that they are not residents of the town where they conduct business

Panel members spoke to the difficulties faced while developing transit-oriented projects. They offered the following advice about successfully realizing TOD:

- Publicize success stories
- Educate — public officials, community members, private developers, etc.
- Create a community vision
- Get good assistance
- Encourage mayors with tenure and experience
- Plan!
- Be proactive
- Think creatively
- Use incentives

In closing the symposium, VTC Director, **Martin Robins**, called for more empirical data, more planning support for municipalities, creative solutions to parking needs, and support for eminent domain in transforming Transit Villages.

INTRODUCTION

On Friday, June 9, 2006, more than 150 invited leaders from the public sector, private industry and non-governmental organizations gathered in New Brunswick to take stock in New Jersey’s effort to support the Transit Village Initiative — targeted development and redevelopment near transit stations, generally referred to as transit-oriented development (TOD). Sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and NJ TRANSIT, the symposium was organized by the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Additional support was provided by the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.



In opening remarks, **Dean James W. Hughes of the Bloustein School** reminded the audience that the



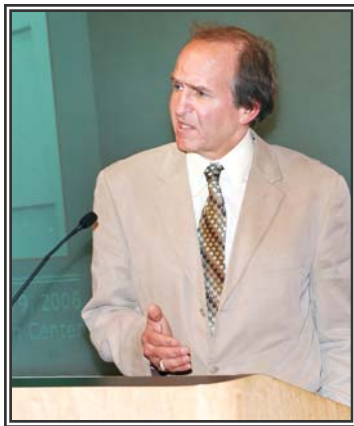
current decade has produced unexpected economic changes — globalization, deregulation and accelerating technological change have become the predominate dynamics in the world economy of the new century. These forces, as well as very aggressive investments in economic infrastructure by other states and nations, have really reshaped New Jersey’s competitive economic environment. Unfortunately, this has not been very beneficial to New Jersey and the economy is struggling. The bottom line is that the economic, development and policy protocols of the past have now changed quite dramatically and economic “business as usual” is no longer an option. One of the policy imperatives facing the state is investing in the economy of the future. Until now we have been consumed by current expenditures. Current consumption has trumped the long-term investments necessary to grow the economy and income.

In contrast to the economy, what *was fully anticipated* for the new century was that the old protocols of land development would change quite dramatically and that transit villages would become the new focal point for development. This is a new way of investing in the future and something that New Jersey has not adequately attended to in the economic realm. Dean Hughes reviewed four key factoids about the Garden State. In 2004, according to the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, New Jersey:

- Had the highest median family and household income in the United States (38% higher than that of the nation), but also ranked number one among the states in median housing costs (52% higher than that of the nation) — we have a major housing affordability problem throughout the income spectrum that transit villages may well help to solve.
- Ranked second in public transit usage among the 50 states. There are very few other places that have equivalent public transit infrastructure. Thus, we have unique opportunities to position transit villages compared to most other states.
- Ranked third in the United States in the length of commute which indicates that we have reached the limits of sprawl.
- Ranked first in density, a position we have held since 1970. We are the only state with more than 1,000 people per square mile, a status we achieved in 1982. Our current population density is 1,173 per square mile. This compares to Japan at 835 people per square mile and India at 928 people per square mile.

This densely congested condition means that we have to link future development to our public rail transit infrastructure — there is certainly little room to expand our highway infrastructure. Consequently, because of these factors, Dean Hughes concluded, “You can rest assured that there is a Transit Village in your future.”

Martin Robins, Director of VTC, explained that the purpose of the symposium was to bring together distinct perspectives on TOD and the New Jersey Transit Village Initiative. Much has happened since the first symposium in October 2003 — 10 new Transit Villages have been named, including the first truly urban locations (New Brunswick and Journal Square, Jersey City) and the first in the Highlands (Netcong). There have been new housing and commercial projects built and a significant reuse of brownfields. Transit Villages have begun to contribute to NJ TRANSIT’s growing ridership. In addition, there have been increased opportunities for good TOD as the transit system has expanded: new stations on the Hudson Bergen Light Rail line, the opening of the RiverLINE in south Jersey and the launching of the new Secaucus Junction. “We want to reflect on the progress that has been made through the Transit Village Initiative — to find out what is working and what barriers to good TOD planning and implementation still exist.”



These thoughts were echoed by **Bill Dressel, Executive Director of the State League of Municipalities**. He lauded the advancing of this very important concept which he feels can be an economic tool for revitalizing our municipalities. He also praised state leaders for recognizing the importance of the Transit Villages. He acknowledged that mayors need tools and assistance, “While there are success stories, mayors have to do it by their bootstraps as there is little help coming from Washington or from state government given the current fiscal environment.” He reiterated that the League is pleased to be a platform for TOD, through its magazine, seminars and annual conference.

The impetus for this gathering was, in part, a change in leadership in state government — headed by Governor Jon Corzine. This was a chance to assess and evaluate past work, current challenges and future opportunities for TOD in New Jersey. In particular, the symposium highlighted the perspectives of state leaders, local officials and private developers. These views, from both above and below, offered a comprehensive look at the conditions facing transit-oriented development and an occasion for people from various vantage points to learn from each other. The state’s view outlined the history and future of the Initiative, emphasizing policies to combat sprawl and congestion by targeting development in established locations. Local input balanced this view by providing insight based upon real-life experiences with bringing transit-oriented development to fruition.

Representing the new administration was Kris Kolluri, the new Commissioner of NJDOT and Chairman of NJ TRANSIT’s Board of Directors. He described his department’s sponsorship of the Initiative and outlined the administration’s vision of the future. Kenneth Pringle straddled the state and local

perspectives, providing insight from his roles as a member of NJ TRANSIT’s Board of Directors and as the Mayor of Belmar. Brent Barnes, NJDOT’s Director of Systems Planning and Research, supplied more perspective on the Transit Village Initiative, recounting its origins, purpose and growth. Professor Jan Wells of VTC, who has been monitoring the Transit Village Initiative for NJDOT since 2002, presented data showing construction investment in the Transit Village districts since the start of the program and described some of the problems of evaluating success.

During the second half of the program, a panel of experts convened to share tales from the trenches and make recommendations on how to achieve successful TOD. Moderating the panel was Susan Burrows Farber, Deputy Executive Director of NJ Future, a statewide research and policy group advocating land and natural resource protection, neighborhood revitalization, affordable housing and transportation choices. Panelist James Maley, Mayor of Collingswood, related the experiences of his borough as a Transit Village and how the town has successfully acted as its own developer.

Stephen Santola, Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Woodmont Properties (designated developer of the station project in Morristown), conveyed his insight as a builder of mixed-use, transit-friendly projects in the state. His remarks reflected his experiences not only as a private developer and land use attorney, but also as former mayor and current council member of Livingston Township. Kenneth Snapp, Director of Project Planning at NJ TRANSIT, cataloged the limitations faced by local planning boards and provided a roadmap to address these concerns. The final panelist, Eileen Swan, Director of the state Office of Smart Growth (OSG), noting the comments of her fellow panelists and audience members, reiterated the position of OSG to foster TOD and address the identified barriers.

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT?

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is compact, mixed use development near new or existing public transportation infrastructure that serves housing, transportation and neighborhood goals. Its pedestrian-oriented design encourages residents and workers to drive their cars less and ride public transit more. The TOD area or district is within easy walking distance of transit, usually defined as a half-mile. This form of development is shaped by its proximity to transit such that its particular mix of uses, building orientation, density and parking requirements are all informed by its relationship with the transit service.

TOD BENEFITS

This form of development derives significant benefit from its location. As one might expect, the residents and workers in a TOD travel less by private auto and more by transit. This behavior has a positive effect on the environment by reducing emissions. An additional environmental benefit is that TOD provides housing, commercial and office locations that do not consume undeveloped land (or “greenfield” sites.) Development in transit-rich locations can also decrease local costs by making use of existing infrastructure, rather than requiring developers and communities to build new roads and utility infrastructure. Finally, TOD can enhance property values by developing and redeveloping underutilized and underperforming land parcels.

WHAT IS THE TRANSIT VILLAGE INITIATIVE?

Brent Barnes, Director of Planning for NJDOT, explained that the Transit Village Initiative is an effort by several New Jersey agencies, together with leaders in public and private development, which seeks to revitalize and grow selected communities with transit as an anchor. New Jersey has taken a lead role nationally in TOD through this initiative by fostering active planning and intergovernmental cooperation on land use and transportation issues.



The Transit Village Initiative began in 1999 as a response to growing problems in New Jersey with:

- Ever-increasing traffic congestion
- Loss of open space due to continuous outward expansion
- Decline of our older towns and cities
- Poor urban form in developing towns

The Transit Village Initiative fits into New Jersey’s larger Smart Growth agenda because it helps to promote the growth of businesses and residential population around existing (or planned) transit facilities. Its aim is to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by promoting increased use of transit, pedestrian activity and bicycle use. At its heart is the goal of creating or maintaining vibrant neighborhoods around major transit nodes through economic revitalization and improved housing stock. Smart Growth has emerged in recent years as densely populated regions of the United States, such as New Jersey, struggle to control increased traffic congestion, air pollution, and sprawl suburban development. To date, 17 Villages have been named: Belmar, Bloomfield, Bound Brook, Collingswood, Cranford, Jersey City, Matawan, Metuchen, Morristown, New Brunswick, Netcong, Pleasantville, Rahway, Riverside, Rutherford, South Amboy, and South Orange.

The Transit Village Initiative rewards towns that plan for housing, retail shops, jobs, offices, services, civic uses, etc. within walking distance of transit. The Task Force that guides the program consists of representatives from NJDOT and 10 state agencies.

- NJ TRANSIT
- Department of Community Affairs
- Office of Smart Growth
- Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency
- Main Street NJ
- Economic Development Authority
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Commerce & Economic Growth Commission
- NJ Arts Council
- NJ Redevelopment Authority

CHALLENGES TO TRAVEL IN NEW JERSEY:

CONGESTION, SMART GROWTH AND THE TRANSIT VILLAGES INITIATIVE

Kris Kolluri, Commissioner, NJ Department of Transportation and Chairman, NJ TRANSIT Board of Directors, began with an overview of the role of NJDOT in TOD. He explained that the Transit Village Initiative is a fundamental part of the state’s strategy to combat congestion — the most significant challenge facing New Jersey. New Jersey loses more than 260 million hours sitting in traffic which is equivalent to \$7.3 billion in lost productivity. Nationally, congestion costs the economy \$200 billion and outranks both education and health care as the leading issue of concern. New Jersey can no longer build its way out of this problem and it cannot be solved through one single program. Additional road capacity will not allow us to travel freely while simultaneously providing adequate safety, reduced congestion, improved quality of life and economic growth. Instead, a multifaceted or holistic approach must be taken to meet the demands that cause congestion.



The state budget reflects these views. In the upcoming fiscal year, \$3.2 billion in state and federal dollars will be going into our transportation capital infrastructure. Examples of investments include: creation of 4,500 parking spaces at train stations, launching a program to replace every transit bus in the system, \$525 million spent in repairing and rehabilitating bridges, and improvement of 125 intersections across the state. Moreover, capacity expansion will be limited to 3 percent of the capital program. As a final budget point, the state wants to help keep its residents moving via transit. The Corzine Administration has devoted 40 percent of the state’s transportation capital budget (\$1.3 billion) toward public transit improvements. Public transportation should be viewed as a first option instead of a last resort.

It is said that 70 percent of the New Jersey population lives within five miles of a train station. The Transit Village Initiative represents a smart way for the state to grow and advance the New Jersey State Plan’s mission to preserve and enhance the quality of life for all of its residents. A program of investment near stations supports a host of policy goals: spurs urban revitalizations, expands suburban redevelopment, meets and expands housing development, creates economic growth, increases transit ridership and eases highway congestion. Transit Villages play a vital role towards the maintenance and creation of pedestrian friendly, mixed-use development.

As the next generation of young adults moves into the housing market, it represents tremendous potential for Transit Villages. Young households are interested in living in vibrant urban centers — locations with active downtowns and good job access via transit. This group, together with empty nesters, is the largest market for Transit Villages. Empty nesters no longer need or want large homes on single family lots. Instead they are drawn to cities to access both work and entertainment, enjoying the community, dining and shopping — communities enlivened as Transit Villages.

The state is working to expand the job base near transit locations. The Transit Village Initiative has grown to include urban centers — New Brunswick and Journal Square in Jersey City. New efforts must connect employment centers located close to major stations with local business communities as well as provide Transit Village residents better access to those work locations. NJ TRANSIT stations along the Northeast Corridor, such as Trenton, New Brunswick, Rahway, Newark and Secaucus, and other rail lines such as the RiverLINE represent places of opportunity. New Jersey has the potential to add jobs at sites close to each of its train stations and can no longer afford to view transit merely as a service for New York-bound commuters. It is a tool that can be used to encourage job growth in the state’s major cities, especially its urban centers. Transit-friendly is business-friendly.

However, Transit Villages represent, figuratively, the intersection of Smart Growth and economic development. This is why there should be a focus not only on jobs, but also on housing, particularly affordable housing, and mixed-use investment. Now is the time to revolutionize the way we promote the program. The state is committed to creating 100,000 units of affordable housing during the next 10 years and, as such, affordable housing will become a primary element in how Transit Villages are designated.

In conclusion, Commissioner Kolluri announced that in order to encourage the growth of the Transit Village Initiative, NJDOT will institute a policy of on-going acceptance of applications to become a designated Transit Village. That is, when a town is ready to submit its application, NJDOT will review it.

PATHWAYS TO TRANSIT VILLAGES (AND TOD)

Kenneth E. Pringle, Mayor of the Borough of Belmar and a member of the NJ TRANSIT Board of Directors, followed Commissioner Kolluri with a presentation on how the agency fosters well-planned TOD. He noted that the communities of New Jersey are richly varied, from large urban centers to rural small towns. Similarly, the 17 designated Transit Village municipalities and the other communities that have chosen to pursue TOD contrast widely in their situation and approach. He stressed that there is no one single successful path to creating a Transit Village. Each is unique and informative.



For example, Netcong, with help from the Regional Plan Association, developed a community vision for its Transit Village district through a series of transit-friendly planning exercises. Both Rutherford and Rahway implemented infrastructure renovation projects proximate to their train stations. In Jersey City and in Burlington County, efforts are underway to create TOD corridors — areas of intensive residential, commercial and office use along the state’s two light rail lines, the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail and RiverLINE. Development along the RiverLINE continues in Camden as that city has created a plan for development adjacent to its Walter Rand Transportation Center.

NJ TRANSIT is often a key player in this process as it owns a significant amount of underutilized property, most for surface parking adjacent to transit stations. By incorporating structured parking into its redevelopment efforts, NJ TRANSIT is able to bring vitality and more intensive use to downtown locations. A primary example is the *Highlands at Morristown Station*, a joint development project between NJ TRANSIT, Woodmont Properties and Roseland Property Company, for 3+ acres of NJ TRANSIT-owned property located across from its historic train station. The project includes 219 luxury units and 8,000 square feet of retail space as well as a 740-space parking deck to be shared by residents, shoppers and commuters. Goals of this and similar efforts include the provision of revenue to the agency, expansion of commuter parking (where needed or appropriate), creation of an economic return to the host municipality (tax ratable) and enhancement of the vibrancy and “sense of place” of the transportation facility, particularly as it relates to the host community. Pending projects include mixed-use development at Bound Brook, Hamilton and Netcong rail stations.

Mayor Pringle cited several factors that are favorable to the growth of the TOD movement:

1. Livable, Pedestrian-Friendly Environments and the Demand for TOD Housing

According to the October 2004 American Community Survey, Americans want to live in walkable neighborhoods in transit-accessible cities and suburbs. TOD creates and enhances pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods which, in turn, are good places for many people to live. By developing along a compact, mixed-use model, Transit Villages are able to satisfy many of their residents’ daily needs.

2. Demographic Trends

As the U.S. population ages, the demand for housing near transit will continue to grow. TOD is especially well-suited to two significant segments of the population — singles and couples without children (“twenty-somethings”) and households headed by individuals aged 65 and over (“empty nesters.”) According to the October 2004 American Community Survey, it is anticipated that in just one generation 70 percent of all households will consist of singles, empty-nesters or couples without children. These groups favor mixed-use environments that include diverse housing, cultural, shopping and transit choices.

3. Proven Projects Ease the Way for Transit Village Advocates

Development near transit has been growing. With each new, successful project, the process of bringing a TOD into existence gets just a bit easier. These built projects lend credibility to those who wish to begin a project in a new location or initiate an entirely new Transit Village. Elected officials and developers can draw on the examples built in New Jersey’s 17 Transit Villages to show their own communities *why*, and perhaps more importantly, *how* to promote development near transit.

4. Empirical Data Will Overcome Sprawl-based Attitudes toward Density, Height and Parking

Concerns about increasing school costs, more congestion, and parking conflicts arising from additional new households created in TODs are being dispelled by ongoing research.

5. More TODs Mean More Ideas Generated and Greater Experimentation ... and Better Outcomes

As more and more diverse transit-oriented projects come into existence, Transit Village advocates have a wider range of examples from which to learn. Each new project has its own unique challenges and solutions, from project conception and early planning efforts, through land acquisition, financing, and design, and finally to construction and occupancy. With each project, new ways of addressing these challenges are found as well as new ways to enhance the livability and amenities provided by TOD. With success comes more experimentation, often more daring, to create exciting new projects that perhaps even outshine their predecessors.

Mayor Pringle highlighted the fact that NJ TRANSIT coordinates and works closely with local leaders, other state agencies, the private sector and concerned citizens to:

- Provide technical expertise and empirical data to support local officials in the TOD planning, consensus-building and development process
- Offer and enhance mobility choices in and around TODs
- Educate and inform residents, employers and employees about their mobility choices

NJ TRANSIT tries to “think creatively” to accomplish these goals. For example, the agency’s “Station Car” pilot programs and shared vehicle arrangements increase mobility of transit users. The Station Car programs provide low speed vehicles at stations for use by employees who work at the periphery of a Transit Village and by others in the evenings and on weekends. This shared vehicle arrangement expands the mobility of TOD residents and provides an additional reason not to own a car. NJ TRANSIT is also looking for ways to use “intelligent information technology” to help transit riders make informed travel choices.

Using its TMAC (Train Management and Control) system, the agency provides near real-time train arrival information that could be made available to riders via cell phones and in other ways. In addition, NJ TRANSIT is exploring ways to use technology to evaluate trip duration in real-time. This initiative would use the status of transit and other travel modes and provide users travel time projections depending on mode and route choice, thus allowing users to more accurately choose among transit modes (rail vs. bus); or, to choose transit over driving in order to minimize travel time. The day is not far off when residents and employees in Transit Villages will be able to utilize intelligent information systems to choose the best mobility choice at any moment.

However, even with NJ TRANSIT’s commitment to the Transit Village Initiative, Mayor Pringle emphasized that significant challenges face development in transit locations. He urged the agency, along with other advocates of TOD, to continue to:

- Educate and support local leaders
- Maintain “good” project execution
- Keep pace with changes in the marketplace
- Help balance parking needs with development
- Promote Smart Growth and economic prosperity
- Address public perceptions
- Understand demographic trends
- Reinvest in public infrastructure and provide improved mobility choices

He concluded: “By making the most of each of these opportunities, Transit Village advocates can help New Jersey’s communities meet the challenges of redeveloping close to transit and creating vibrant places for people to work, play and live.”

PROGRESS OF THE NEW JERSEY TRANSIT VILLAGES

VTC Assistant Research Professor Dr. Jan Wells, monitors the progress of the Transit Villages for NJDOT. She explained that it is helpful to assess the Villages with some categorization. The first seven Villages are considered “First Generation” Villages. They essentially were pioneers, having been named between 1999 and 2002 when the program was just getting started. Subsequently named Villages, from 2003 – 2005, are considered “Second Generation,” having seen and learned from the progress and process of their older siblings. It is also useful to think about these communities in a typology — again to put their TOD achievements in perspective: Traditional Bedroom Communities (Belmar, Bound Brook, Collingswood, Cranford, Matawan, Metuchen, Morristown, Netcong, Rutherford and South Orange); Urban-Industrial Based Communities (Bloomfield, Jersey City, New Brunswick, Rahway and South Amboy); Non-Commuter Rail Communities (Pleasantville — bus, and Riverside — light rail.)



Census 2000 demographic baselines have been established to monitor changes in population, density, income, transit usage, etc. Another strong indicator of success has been construction investment using building permit data. The first generation saw approximately \$218 million in investment from 1999–2004, of which \$62 million was residential, representing 632 new units.

The second generation shows an impressive \$285 million from 2003–2004, with residential construction valued at \$129 million, representing 240 units. Second generation Villages include the more urban towns of New Brunswick, Jersey City and Bloomfield which are hosting numerous large development/construction projects. Overall construction trends suggest that towns have had to concentrate on downtown improvement in order to be more attractive to developers, and that there is still resistance to housing because of the fear of more school children and traffic.

All New Jersey Transit Villages Residential and Non-residential Construction Activity Summary 1999 - 2004				
Year	Total Construction Activity	Non-residential	Residential	Housing Unit Change
1999	\$ 1,712,410	\$ 996,354	\$ 716,056	1
2000	\$ 6,077,247	\$ 4,986,439	\$ 1,090,808	151
2001	\$ 104,993,078	\$ 90,427,610	\$ 14,565,468	210
2002	\$ 32,853,008	\$ 27,126,269	\$ 5,726,739	27
2003	\$ 62,549,123	\$ 33,989,227	\$ 28,559,896	97
2004	\$ 313,733,209	\$ 173,418,141	\$ 140,315,068	393
Grand Total	\$ 521,918,075	\$ 330,944,040	\$ 190,974,035	879

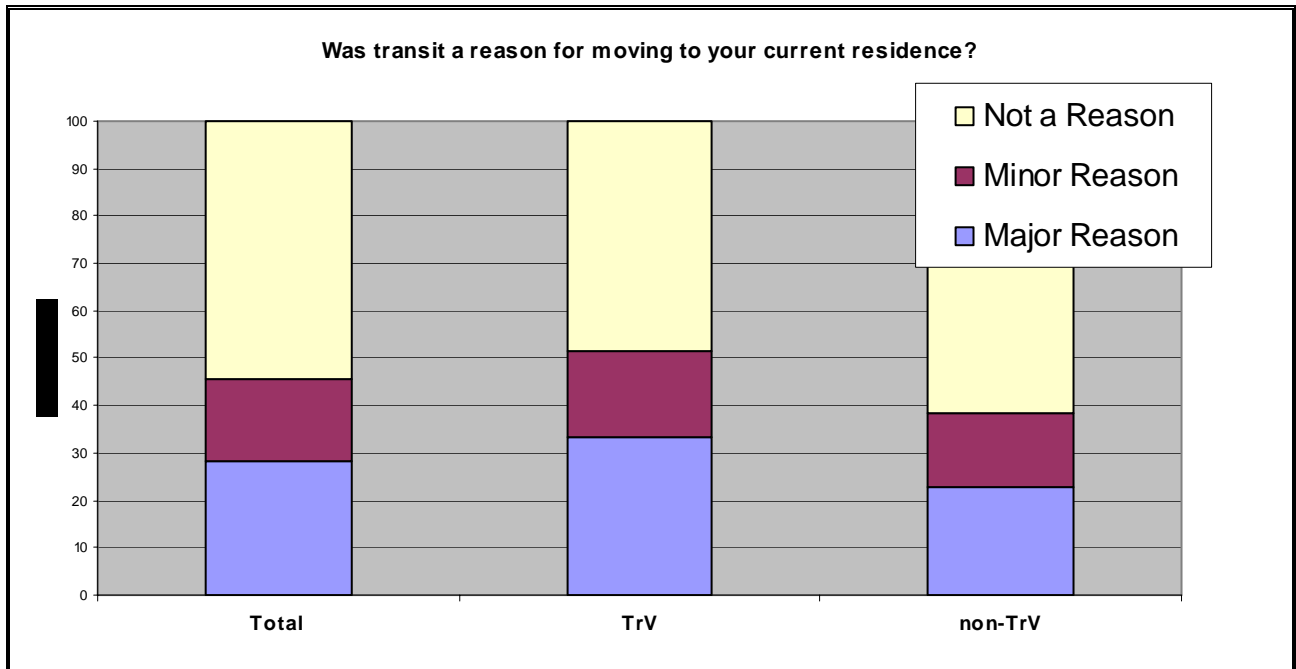
Note: 2004 data was not available for South Amboy
 Source: NJ Department of Community Affairs; Morristown, South Amboy, and South Orange building departments

Residential and commercial surveys have been conducted in five Transit Villages: Metuchen, Morristown, Rahway, South Amboy and South Orange. Across the towns:

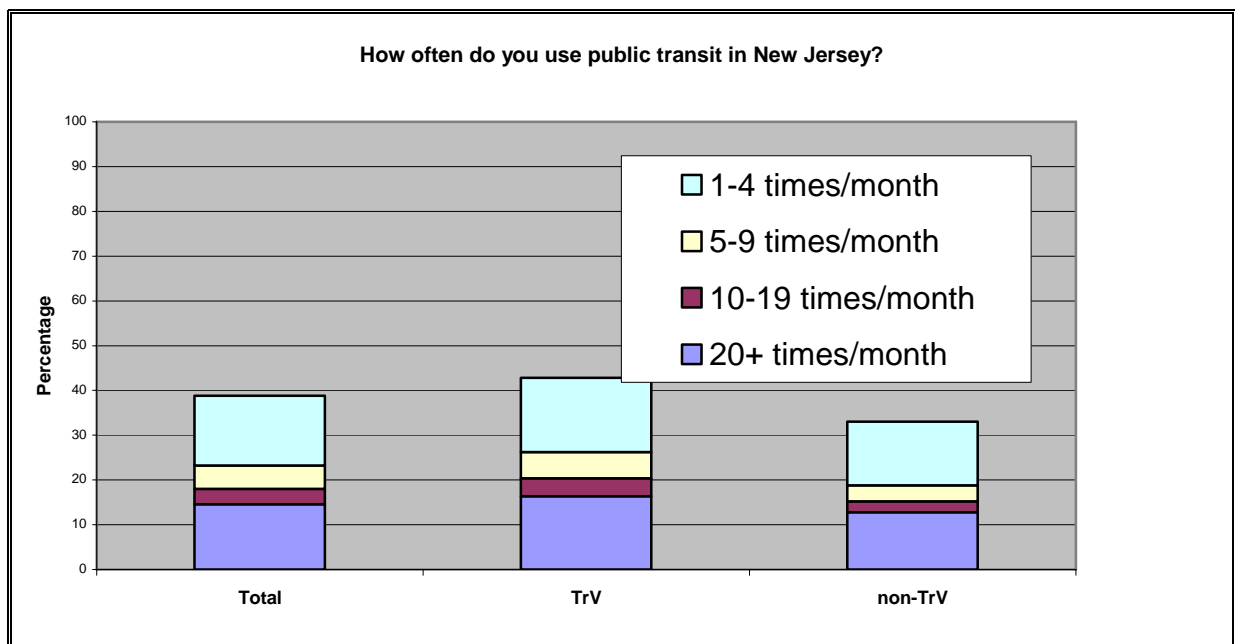
- Over 60% of all residents felt their towns were somewhat or much more attractive than the previous three years



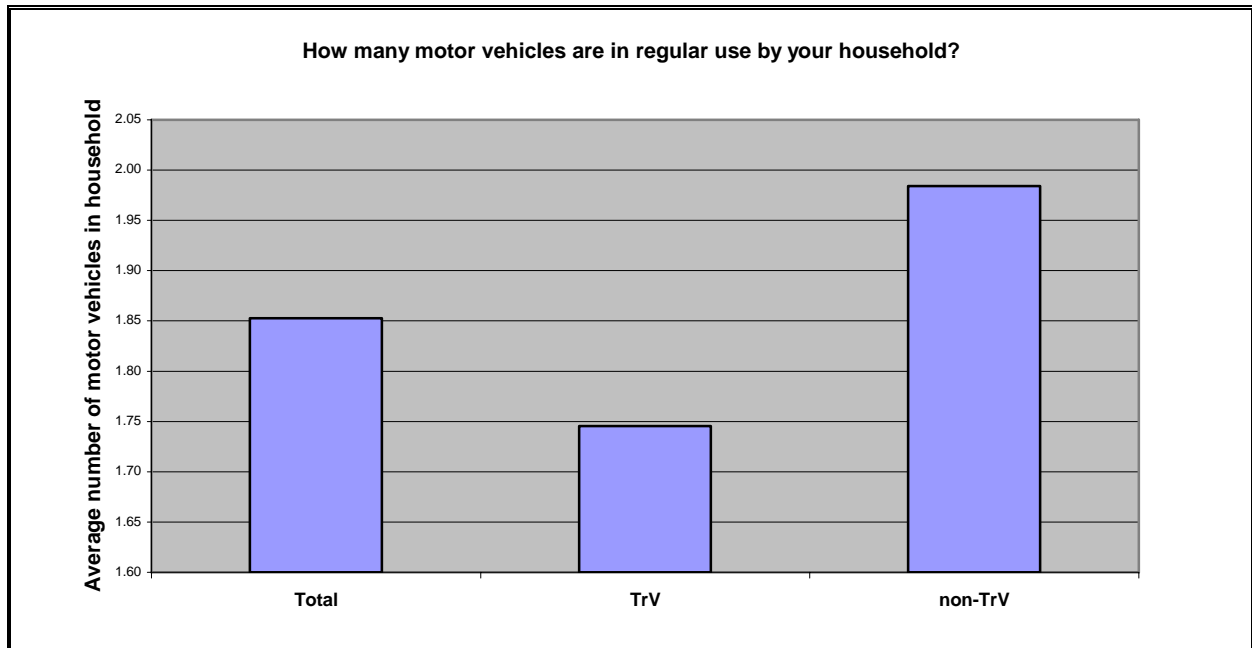
- A higher percentage of residents in the Transit Village district (just over 50%) indicated that transit was important in their decision in choosing housing location, as opposed to those living outside the half-mile circle around the station (38%)



- A higher percentage of residents in the Transit Village area (42%) used transit more often than those outside the TV district (32%)



- Residents in the Transit Village area had a lower vehicle ownership per household (slightly less than 1.75) than those outside the TV district (almost 2)



Commercial survey respondents generally support Smart Growth and housing construction in the downtown area and feel that the downtown areas are more attractive and pleasant than three years ago. Still, they felt that the Transit Village designation had no impact on the downtown or their business. In fact, 43 percent were unaware of their town’s designation. This is probably because 64 percent of the respondents indicated that they are not residents of the town where they conduct business.

Overall, Transit Villages get good marks for improvement. However, Professor Wells cautioned that in making an evaluation it must be remembered that the time period is still relatively short (six years) and that each Village is different — their goals and resources vary greatly.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

IDEAS FROM OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS

While significant obstacles that discourage widespread TOD can exist, there are many innovative ways to encourage development in transit-rich locations. Some communities are “naturals”— many of the criteria that encourage TOD are already in place. Other communities need only a small amount of change to

overcome local resistance and to entice private development within a short distance of transit.



Panel members spoke to the difficulties faced while developing transit-oriented projects. Mayor James Maley and Stephen Santola have each acted as mayors and developers. Eileen Swan, too, was a mayor before taking her post in state government. Ken Snapp has been active in local government in addition to his tenure with NJ TRANSIT and other agencies.

The main message Mayor Maley brought to the conference was “don’t forget south Jersey.” While much of the state has good rail and bus infrastructure, this is less so in the southern part of the state. The primary rail transit service to Philadelphia is not under the purview of NJ TRANSIT, but rather is operated by PATCO (Port Authority Transit Corporation), an agency administered jointly between New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Working with an agency that answers to two states can be challenging for a municipality. For example, improvements to the Collingswood station are delayed because of conflict over an unrelated PATCO issue. In addition, differences in objectives between the states have, at times, limited efforts to redevelop near stations in New Jersey. TOD has not yet become an important issue for the Philadelphia-based agency.

Developer Stephen Santola explained that some of the challenges faced by communities come from the



communities themselves. For many residents, the benefits of TOD are not readily apparent. Residents may want improvements in transit service or to their train station, but do not see any benefit from gaining additional residential or commercial development around that station. Instead, many current residents view development of any kind through the lens of the nascent problems associated with increased density. For many New Jersey residents, density is not seen as the opposite of sprawl, but as a component of it. It is feared that with increased density comes increased traffic, school-aged population and demands on limited services. In addition, he cited changes in municipal administration as one

frustration faced by developers. When public sentiment for a project has not been secured, redevelopment is often used as a wedge issue to oust current office holders.

Other challenges facing TOD reside in the real estate community — the private developers who might be interested in pursuing these kinds of projects. Redevelopment projects can be more difficult to complete than those in greenfield locations. In some instances, municipalities have needed to partner with a developer or act as its own developer to overcome this difficulty. One example of this is the work that was done in Collingswood under the direction of Mayor James Maley. Collingswood, unable to attract a private developer for its redevelopment project, implemented the project on its own. The borough, under Mayor Maley’s leadership, bore the risks and reaped the rewards.

Ken Snapp made a well-informed and thoughtful presentation outlining four steps to follow to improve



communities and implement TOD. He first cited the need to educate local community boards and leaders about planning, urban design and TOD. Second, he summarized what could be gained through a visioning process to scope out the future plan of the community. Third, he talked about the need for a comprehensive and correct master plan that reflects community values.

He also described the limitations of planning boards, noting that volunteer boards need to learn what comprises transit-friendly design in order to overcome the reactionary nature of and the local fear found in most communities. He, too, underscored the problems created by the vagaries of the local political cycle. And, lastly, he spoke about implementation, stating that communities need to have good oversight of any project — demanding what they want from developers, rather than just reacting to proposals.

Eileen Swan described a common fallacy held in many communities — the falsehood that New Jersey towns are not growing. She stated that all of the state’s municipalities are

growing, so that they better get out in front of the growth and plan for it. All towns will need to accommodate more population and more school children. The challenge is to plan in such a way to both grow and preserve open space and community character. Finally, she said that she would serve as a conduit for information — bringing the ideas expressed at the symposium back to state leaders.



Voices from the audience stated that while supporting TOD, they are frustrated by what they see as conflicting objectives of different state policies. Cited examples of conflict were the provision of affordable housing and locally funded public education. The conflict lies in the fact that any addition, even a small one, of school-aged children to a community increases educational costs.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE TOD

The panel of experts offered the following advice to successfully realize TOD:

Publicize Success Stories

Nothing sells like success. As more projects are built, promoters of TOD need to let the public know about the advantages of this kind of development for their communities. Newspaper, radio, television and other media like *Transit-Friendly Development*, an electronic newsletter of TOD in New Jersey, all get the message out.

Educate – Public Officials, Community Members, Private Developers, Etc.

Knowledge is power. Community members who are knowledgeable about urban design and planning are able to make better decisions and to achieve the results desired. Communities are well served by those who understand the choices that face them and the consequences of their decisions. In addition, residents need to understand the benefits of transit-friendly development in order to be supportive of the changes that may be occurring in their community.

Create a Community Vision

Communities at large need to learn that they do not have to accept projects as offered by developers — they can and should require changes that satisfy community needs. To facilitate this, however, communities need to agree what their needs are and have a vision of what the future could bring. Towns, with assistance from planning organizations such as the Regional Planning Association, can commit to a visioning process in order to formulate a blueprint from which to work toward a successful transit-oriented redevelopment plan. This process can help a municipality get ahead of projects, to know the kind of projects it envisions — what a project will look like (what is its character), what needs it will serve, and how it will fit into the existing fabric of the community.

Armed with a vision of the future generated through a cooperative process involving all segments of the community, towns are better able to maintain community character or to bring about desired change. Knowing that the essential character of a community will not change with development — and, in fact, can be enhanced through this kind of redevelopment — will help to squelch objections about increased density at a town’s center.

Get Good Assistance

While well informed, public officials and community residents should not need to be real estate or transportation professionals to adequately govern or to bring TOD to their community. Lay people rely on the advice of experts. In doing so, they should strive to hire consultants that believe in TOD and Smart Growth, and who support the efforts of community.

Encourage Mayors with Tenure and Experience

The towns that most often have achieved success with TOD have been those with capable leadership. Often this comes in the form of a long-seated mayor who champions redevelopment efforts. Because even the quickest redevelopment projects take a number of years to be completed, consistent leadership throughout the process is helpful. While more intensive redevelopment can be used as a wedge issue to oust a supportive administration, at least one New Jersey mayor was able to use his community’s transit village project to win re-election — Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh of West Windsor.

Plan!

Use a variety of planning-based activities to improve redevelopment efforts. Municipalities should take a fresh look at their master plans and zoning codes. Has the plan and/or code produced the community desired? If so, great! You are ahead of the game, keep implementing that plan. If not, why not? Figure out why the plan and/or codes have not achieved community goals. Is the plan outdated? Is it underspecified? Does it permit building that is out of character with the existing built environment? Does it inadvertently allow overbuilding in locations not well-served by transit?

Perhaps it is time to revisit the master plan to assure that it maintains and grows the community desired by residents and fulfills their needs. For example, municipalities can replace current text-based building code with form-code. This kind of building code makes explicit the building size and details that are permitted in a particular location. Many towns do not include a transportation element as part of their master plan. Look to including a transportation and/or pedestrian and bicycle element in the master plan.

The impact of visual information cannot be overemphasized. **Eileen Swan**, of OSG, described an effort to survey public opinion on cluster development and open space preservation from her tenure as Lebanon Township mayor. When residents were asked their position of cluster development through a written survey, public opinion was extremely negative. When the same survey was re-administered with drawings illustrating the principles of clustering, public opinion was overwhelming positive.



Be Proactive

Figure out what needs to be done and get busy. Identify properties that are in need of redevelopment, or so-called “soft” properties. Eileen Swan suggested that communities use OSG’s new Brownfields Site Mart (<http://www.njsitemart.com/>), a multiple listing type service to advertise potential redevelopment locations.

Think Creatively

Design flexibility of use into any new development. For example, an eventual goal of a redevelopment project might be increased office space. However, the community might not be able to market a large number of new offices at the present time. The same kinds of space used by offices can be used as residential or live-work loft space. If planned for in advance, buildings can be more easily adapted for desired uses and be more marketable overall.

Use Incentives

All of the panelists, as well as audience contributors, agree that better incentives need to be in place to foster development near transit. Some suggestions were:

- Increased assistance with the municipal visioning and planning process
- Incentives for density
- Modification of Council on Affordable Housing rules that act against people living and working in the same town
- Modification of Residential Site Improvement Standards, such as parking requirements that burden development in downtown areas
- Offer municipalities “transportation enhancement districts” that allow assessments for maintaining the district

In closing the symposium, VTC Director, Martin Robins called for more empirical data, more planning support for municipalities, creative solutions to parking needs and support for eminent domain in transforming Transit Villages.

The full proceedings of the June 9, 2006 conference can be viewed and heard by linking to the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center website at <http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/tvs/index.htm>. Photos taken at the event and a list of the symposium attendees can also be accessed through this link.