

The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities

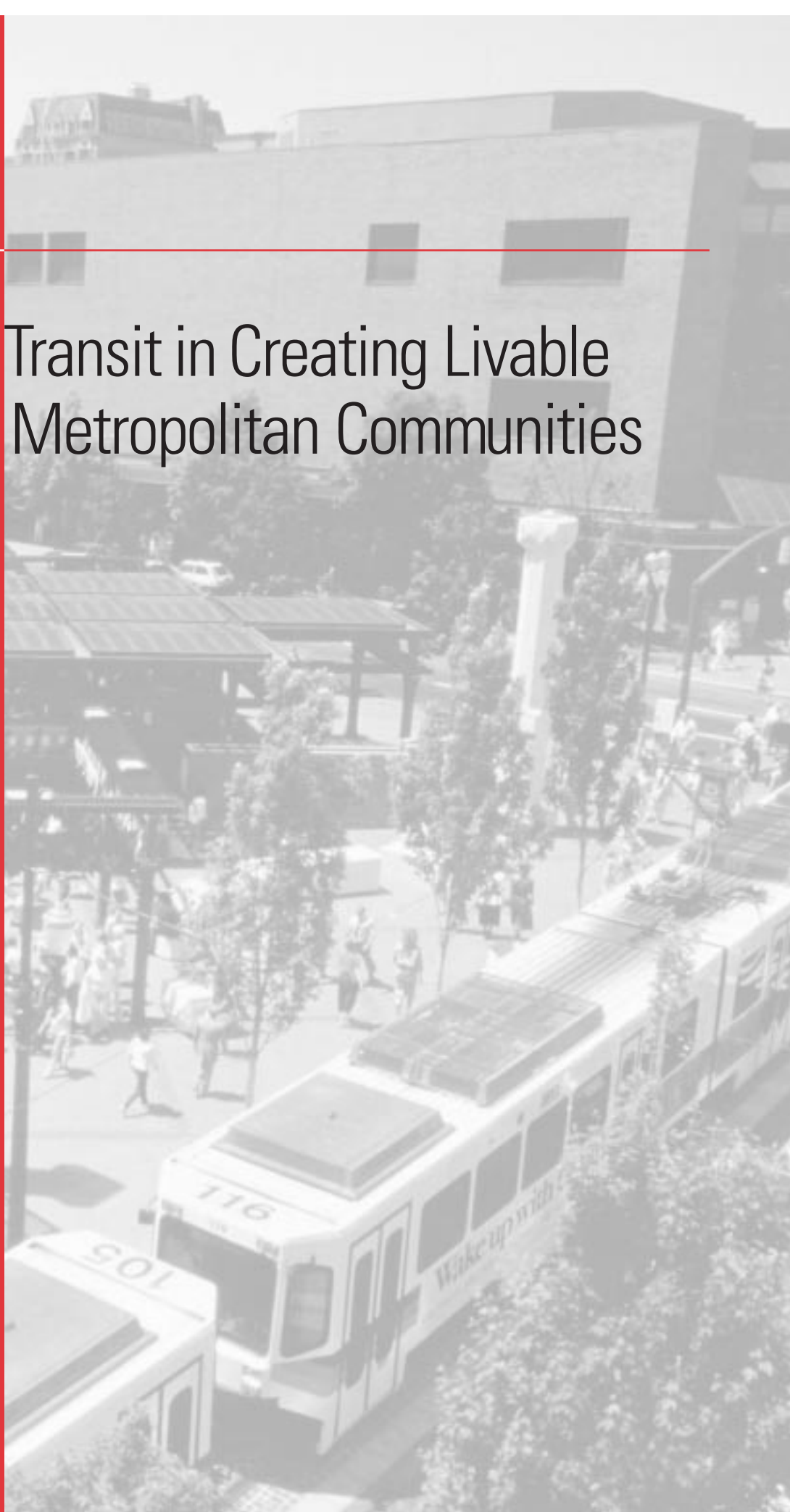
TCRP Report 22

Transit Cooperative Research Program

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The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities

TCRP Report 22

Project for Public Spaces, Inc.
New York, NY

Transit Cooperative Research Program

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The Federal Transit Administration

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The nation's growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, to adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and to introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in *TRB Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions*, published in 1987 and based on a study sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A report by the American Public Transit Association (APTA), *Transportation 2000*, also recognized the need for local, problem-solving research. TCRP, modeled after the longstanding and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program, undertakes research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The scope of TCRP includes a variety of transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, policy, and administrative practices.

TCRP was established under FTA sponsorship in July 1992. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by the three cooperating organizations: FTA, the National Academy of Sciences, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB), and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by APTA. TDC is responsible for forming the independent governing board, designated as the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee.

Research problem statements for TCRP are solicited periodically but may be submitted to TRB by anyone at any time. It is the responsibility of the TOPS Committee to formulate the research program by identifying the highest priority projects. As part of the evaluation, the TOPS Committee defines funding levels and expected products.

Once selected, each project is assigned to an expert panel, appointed by the Transportation Research Board. The panels prepare project statements (requests for proposals), select contractors, and provide technical guidance and counsel throughout the life of the project. The process for developing research problem statements and selecting research agencies has been used by TRB in managing cooperative research programs since 1962. As in other TRB activities, TCRP project panels serve voluntarily without compensation.

Because research cannot have the desired impact if products fail to reach the intended audience, special emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended end users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. TRB provides a series of research reports, syntheses of transit practice, and other supporting material developed by TCRP research. APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by urban and rural transit industry practitioners.

The TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. The TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.

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The members of the technical advisory panel selected to monitor this project and to review this report were chosen for recognized scholarly competence and with due consideration for the balance of disciplines appropriate to the project. The opinions and conclusions expressed or implied are those of the research agency that performed the research, and while they have been accepted as appropriate by the technical panel, they are not necessarily those of the Transportation Research Board, the National Research Council, the Transit Development Corporation, or the Federal Transit Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Each report is reviewed and accepted for publication by the technical panel according to procedures established and monitored by the Transportation Research Board Executive Committee and the Governing Board of the National Research Council.

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FOREWORD

By Staff
Transportation Research
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This report will be of interest to individuals seeking to improve the livability of their communities and to those concerned with the role public transportation can play in pursuing this goal. The report combines guidelines and case studies to provide a comprehensive approach for improving community livability and transit ridership in the United States. It is directed toward a broad range of individuals and groups in the public and private sectors associated with community, business, and civic organizations, including public transportation providers, local and metropolitan governments, community groups, and private businesses.

A livable community is something that everybody wants, but it does not mean the same thing to all people. There is some agreement on the characteristics of “livability” or quality of life, such as safe and healthy neighborhoods; sustainable employment; adequate housing, retail and community services; positive image; sense of community; and neighborhood-based cultural and recreational opportunities. Transit can be integral to making communities more livable by providing access to goods and services and can support attainment of complementary community goals in other investment areas as well.

The objective of TCRP Project H-4D, *The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities*, was to explore the relationship between transit and livable communities. The research team—lead by Project for Public Spaces, Inc., and supported by its subcontractors (the International Downtown Association, the National Association of Neighborhoods, TransManagement, Inc., The Urban Partnership, and the Urban Mobility Corporation)—explored a “place-making” approach where a local community, working in partnership with a transit agency, plans and implements neighborhood-scale projects and programs that are mutually supportive of community livability and transit ridership goals.

The final report from this research provides considerable information and guidance. The report’s 12 chapters are divided into three major parts as follows:

- **Part I. Overview and Context.** The first two chapters of the report define the concept of livability and the impact of transportation on livability. These chapters also describe federal support for transit and livable community initiatives, the “place-making” approach to livability, and transportation strategies that impact livability.
- **Part II. Roles of Transit in Creating Livable Communities.** In conducting this project, the research team met with numerous people in many communities throughout the United States to examine diverse examples

of how public transportation supports and enhances community livability. This research, documented and presented in Chapters 3 through 9, includes “examples,” which briefly summarize the experience of the individual communities, and more lengthy case studies. More specifically, the examples and case studies are organized by the following topics:

- Creating places for community life,
- Using transit as a catalyst for downtown and neighborhood renewal,
- Creating opportunities for entrepreneurship and local economic development,
- Improving safety and amenity,
- Making communities accessible and convenient, and
- Shaping community growth.

The use of examples and case studies provides practical concepts and demonstrates how public transportation can meaningfully contribute to the livability of metropolitan communities.

- **Part III. Implementation.** Chapters 10 through 12 provide a guide to implementation by describing the importance of a community-based process for creating livable communities. (This process involves early participation in transportation planning and partnerships with public and private organizations implementing transportation and community projects.) Part III then describes specific planning, design, and management strategies for livable places and concludes with suggested next steps to increase awareness of livability-oriented transit programs.

This report is a valuable resource for executives, decisionmakers, managers, and planners from transit systems, local governments, community organizations, MPOs, the FTA, the FHWA, and other public and private organizations involved with public transportation and community livability.

In addition to the final report, a video was prepared by the research team. The video provides an overview of key attributes of livable communities and shows how transit systems contribute to community vitality. The video is available from the American Public Transit Association. Inquiries regarding the video should be addressed to:

TCRP Dissemination
American Public Transit Association
1201 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
FAX: (202)898-4019
Internet: <http://www.apta.com/tcrp>

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The Role of Transit in Creating Livable Metropolitan Communities

THE ROLE OF TRANSIT IN CREATING LIVABLE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITIES

SUMMARY

This report describes transit's increasingly important role in improving the livability of communities.

Concerns about livability affect every community: inner cities, suburbs, small towns, and rural areas. The report explores a "place-making" approach where a local community, working in partnership with a transit agency, plans and implements neighborhood-scale projects and programs that are mutually supportive of community livability and transit ridership goals.

Part I of this report describes the place-making approach to livability and explores the relationships between transportation and livability that are keys to understanding the case studies.

In Chapter 2, the role of transportation in building communities through transit programs, strategies to "calm" traffic in residential and commercial neighborhoods, and a new understanding of the relationship between transportation and land use is explored.

Part II of the report—Chapters 3 through 9—presents examples and case studies of transit facilities and services that achieve community livability goals; the role played by communities, transit agencies, municipal agencies and authorities, and the federal government is also discussed. Each chapter in Part II has two sections: (1) an introduction with highlighted example projects and (2) case studies. Chapter 3 describes the selection criteria for case studies and the research approach used in collecting the data and background information for the case studies.

Livability topics covered in Chapters 4 through 9 include transit's role in the following:

- Creating places for community life,
- Acting as a catalyst for the renewal and revitalization of neighborhoods and entire downtowns,
- Creating opportunities for entrepreneurship and local economic development,
- Making communities safer and more comfortable,

- Making connections between neighborhoods, downtowns, and community destinations more accessible and convenient, and
- Shaping community growth.

Part III of the report is a guide to implementation. Chapter 10 outlines a series of model partnerships created between communities and transit agencies, a specific process for developing such partnerships, and steps to follow for involving communities in the planning, design, and management of transit projects and other livability initiatives. Chapter 11 provides a checklist of design, management, and transit strategies and how they can be used to address specific local problems as part of a place-making process.

Chapter 12 concludes by offering the next steps in this evolving partnership between transit and communities.

A bibliography and related literature and the results of research conducted to define livability, as well as actual livability studies, are found in Appendixes A and B, respectively.

Part I

Overview and Context

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A revolution is going on today in American communities. Citizens are discovering that by working in partnership with government, they can reshape their neighborhoods and downtowns into vital, attractive, comfortable—and more livable—places.

A potent tool has emerged in this movement, one that is an important but still largely unrecognized catalyst for improving community life. That tool is transportation. Transportation facilities and networks are natural focal points for the kinds of activities that help restore a positive sense of community. This expanded role for transportation started with transit and has now spread to traffic planning.

This report is based on a year-long research effort to identify examples of best practices and provide concrete evidence of how transit can be a contributing force in achieving greater livability in all communities. Following a brief overview of the role played by transportation in community life, case studies are presented in which transit serves to foster livability. To assist in applying this process to other communities, a process for planning and implementing improvements, whereby transit agencies work in partnership with communities, is also presented.

WHAT IS “LIVABILITY”?

Bookstores today are filled with guides to “the best places to live in America.” Using census statistics, weather data, broad community surveys, and a range of other methods, researchers found when people say “livability,” they mean clean air and water, safe streets, positive race relations, affordable homes, quality public schools, greenery and open space, uncongested roads, and low taxes, among other things. (A detailed discussion of methods used to define livability and their findings appears in Appendix B.) Indeed, the avid interest in livability today seems to have emerged because people are

increasingly recognizing the unlivable aspects of the places where they live, work, and spend recreational time.

People express their strongest concerns about the livability of their communities when referring to problems encountered on a daily basis. For example, they talk about difficulty crossing streets and feeling threatened by automobile traffic. They grieve about the replacement of distinctive local structures with sterile and characterless architecture. They complain about a lack of parks to sit or stroll in and the dearth of scenic vistas. They lament the disappearance of centers where people once came together and took part in activities such as shopping, mailing letters, eating out, going to the theater, catching a train or bus, visiting the library, or meeting friends. These concerns reflect an underlying sense of isolation and erosion of community life. The result is more and more people are feeling a loss of community as well as a lack of control over and connection to their changing local environment.

Even though “livability” is difficult to define, people are able to apply it as a concept to their own community and way of life. Striving for livability puts the unlivable aspects of communities into clear focus and helps channel local energies into projects and programs that address daily livability problems. The case studies presented in this report clearly show how this process works: how communities set priorities for improving livability and establish programs that address community needs, problems, and visions for betterment.

CONCERNS ABOUT COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

People everywhere are concerned about the livability of their communities. Specifics cited include safety and fear of crime, easy access to jobs, availability and affordability of housing, diminishing environmental



Figure 1-1. Peachtree Street in suburban Atlanta, GA, lacks a sense of place. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

quality, educational quality, race relations, runaway growth, and traffic congestion.

Concern about livability is not confined to neighborhoods in large inner cities: it exists in suburbs, small towns, and even in the smallest villages. This concern is expressed by residents of cities losing population as well as by city dwellers in booming regions. It comes up in poor and wealthy communities alike, and among people of varied ages and backgrounds. It is clear that Americans are facing a national livability dilemma.

Transportation strongly impacts community livability concerns. People are beginning to realize that



Figure 1-2. Livable places bring people together. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

designing cities and suburbs to accommodate the automobile has often diminished, not improved, quality of life. Intrusive roads have created barriers that disrupt communities and erode their physical and social cohesion. At the same time, public transportation options are often viewed as inadequate alternatives. As a result, many communities end up with transportation networks that simply pass through them, without responding to community needs, relating to their surroundings, or reflecting local character.

A PLACE-MAKING APPROACH TO LIVABILITY

... Places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short the places where we spend time affect the people we are and can become. [1]

—Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place*

The two concepts of community and place are inseparable. 'Place' is the vessel within which the 'spirit' of community is stored; 'Community' is the catalyst that imbues a location with a 'sense' of place. The two are not divisible. You cannot have community without place; and a place without community is a location. A group of people with a shared concern but not a shared place is an interest group, not a community. [2]

—Donovan Rypkema

Urbanists focus on the micro before wrestling with the macro and understand that, in reality, the macro only changes for the better in micro steps . . . Innovation and ingenuity are the prevailing characteristics. Perseverance in the face of naysayers and determination in the face of obstacles are prerequisites. Step by step, essential and natural growth follows and spreads until larger areas prosper over time. [3]

—Roberta Gratz, *The Living City*

This report explores a place-making approach to livability, an approach that involves assessing the concerns and needs of a local community and then using this assessment to make improvements to the many places in that community. Because this approach focuses on “places,” it can apply to any community, regardless of differences in socioeconomic status, demographic makeup, or even geographic location.

Discussions about livability are often too broad or attempt to cover too large a geographic area to lead to the development of practical strategies that address local community concerns. Making communities livable through a place-making approach connects the concept of livability to the specific places used by people in communities. It begins at a scale that a community finds both manageable and relevant: a small area



Figure 1-3. A revitalized street corner in downtown New Haven, CT, features amenities and activities of a successful “place.” (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

around where people live or work, one that is probably no larger than a downtown or a neighborhood. When “closer to home” problems are defined, residents of an area are not only better able to identify priorities, but they are also more likely to become involved in a place’s improvement.

Communities are usually composed of many small areas, and improvement to specific places can cumulatively produce success on a broader scale. This place-making approach thus provides a way for municipal agencies and transit operators, which operate on a metropolitan or regional level, to take steps toward addressing a community’s livability goals.

While place-making does include design strategies, design is only a part of it. Many places have been improved through better provision of municipal services without any physical changes at all. Improving the maintenance and management of a public space, upgrading security, or establishing a special-events or vending program are all strategies for improving a place without making design changes. The development of special management districts to oversee such activities, funded by special assessments agreed to by property owners, has flourished across the country in both large cities and small towns as more local organizations have begun to take responsibility for ensuring that their commercial districts are safe, attractive, clean, active, and comfortable.

TRANSIT AND PLACE-MAKING

There is a kind of mass transit cities used to be very rich in . . . the kind that is part of the fabric of the city itself, doesn’t just go overhead and take people whoosh, but links all kinds of places within the city and that’s the kind of

mass transit we need to reconstitute . . . In a really healthy city, it’s something that knits the whole thing together . . .
—Jane Jacobs [4]

When you have this train running down the middle of the street every 3 ½ min, you don’t believe there’s going to be murder and robbery and violence.

—Alec Keefer, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario [5]

A focus on place-making can bring the ridership goals of the transit agency and the livability goals of the community together. For transit operators, this means that each decision made to provide service, locate a station or stop and maintain that station should be made in the context of how transit can contribute positively to the experience of that place. Mobility options must be developed and improved in response to expressed as well as observed community needs. These transportation options also must be regarded as a set of alternatives (cars, buses, trains, vans, bicycles, walking) that fit into a community’s broader vision as well as its self-image. When there is no existing community-based vision, transit planners should be prepared to insist that one be developed or learn to facilitate its development. Regardless of who guides this process, transit decisions should be made so as to complement and help realize a community’s vision and plans.

Opportunities for Communities

Case studies in this report demonstrate how transit services and facilities are already contributing to the livability of metropolitan communities throughout the United States—although clearly much more can



Figure 1-4. Harvard Square, in Cambridge, MA, is not only a world renowned “place” but also a transit hub serving both residents and tourists. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

be done in many more communities. This report presents projects that involve communities, not just in a pro forma “approval” process, but in assuming a fundamental role transforming transit stations, and even bus stops, into community focal points. Transit agencies are establishing facilities like day care and senior centers as part of transit facilities. Transit is being integrated into downtowns in a visible and positive manner, through the creation of centralized transfer centers and specially designed streets that help stimulate economic development. New, flexible, neighborhood van systems now exist that cater to the needs of residents who find existing public transit to be inaccessible or inconvenient. Many of the new light rail systems around the country have brought new riders aboard—sometimes many more than expected—and have successfully changed transit’s image and use in automobile dominant cities like St. Louis and Denver.

Although the process for developing projects of this type is not new, recognition of the relationship between transit and the needs of communities and of the importance of a process that facilitates transit’s response to these needs is new. Community groups are rediscovering the value of services offered by trains, buses, and community shuttles and are embarking on projects that expand their use. More importantly, they are recognizing how transit services and facilities can enhance the livability of a downtown or a neighborhood. Although many projects are small or still in the planning stages, research for this report revealed that this community-oriented approach to addressing livability through transit is gaining momentum and that passion and dedication for community projects is waiting to be tapped.

However, obstacles still exist. The public, community organizations, and local governments do not always understand the connection between transit and livability. Most quality-of-life studies show that transportation in general is not currently a primary determining factor in influencing where people choose to live. Transit agencies themselves, therefore, need to recognize that the services they provide and facilities they create can have an enormous, positive impact on the livability of the neighborhood places they serve.

Opportunities for Transit

Historically, transit has been the central organizing feature around which communities were built and functioned. Today, transit needs a new direction if it is to continue to function effectively in metropolitan areas designed around the car. This challenge is par-

ticularly critical in areas outside the northeastern United States and other major transit cities. However, the long-term decline in transit ridership, even in cities like New York, shows that this problem is not geographically limited.

To ensure its own future, transit must become more visible and connected to people’s lives and the lives of the communities it serves. A transformation is required, much like the recent turn-around in the field of urban policing. Cities like New York, St. Louis, and Seattle have experienced extraordinary decreases in crime, largely because of the return of the “cop on the beat” and “community policing,” where police, citizens, and communities work together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life. This has completely changed the way police departments provide services and the way communities and police interact with one another.

While contributing toward the livability of a community is an admirable goal in itself, it is important to emphasize that there are other important benefits of this approach for transit agencies. Community building is an important and visible public business: the result can be tangible projects to which local officials can point with pride, thereby helping to build future support for transit. Working directly with communities, especially people who only occasionally use transit, helps to build a broader constituency of support for transit as well. Making transit better serve the needs of a community can translate not only into new transit riders, but a force that can lobby for funding to expand and improve service.

Finally, direct economic benefits also can accrue to a transit agency when it develops its facilities and properties to incorporate uses and activities—ranging from cafes to post offices—that generate income while providing a much needed service to transit patrons. Although such benefits are routinely considered part of major rail investments, they are often overlooked by the nation’s bus operators who handle most of today’s transit riders.

A community-based approach for transit works. In a day when many focus on the limits and constraints of transit, there are reasons to be optimistic about the future role of transit in communities. The key is enabling transit agencies to recognize and value their relevance in people’s lives and to encourage more communities to work in partnership with transit agencies.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR TRANSIT AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Many of the activities described in this report would not have been possible without the support of

the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Livable Communities Initiative and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. By fostering new approaches to applying transportation in the service of community life, both are bringing about positive changes.

The **FTA's Livable Communities Initiative** has provided major funding and support for projects around the country, including many presented in this report. The FTA's Livable Communities Initiative has 15 capital demonstration projects underway. It also is sponsoring a series of transportation-based town meetings and developing an innovative traveling exhibition promoting a holistic approach to transit, including a video for display at conferences, workshops and symposia across the United States. The FTA also is writing a guidebook for livable communities and is developing guidelines for public/private partnerships around its facilities. *Growing Smart* is a planning document being produced by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in partnership with FTA, Environmental Protection Agency, and American Planning Association. It will significantly update examples of model United States development and planning guidelines to combat sprawl and promote transit-oriented development. In 1996, the initiative focused on evaluating projects underway in order to document the benefits of community-sensitive transit.

ISTEA, which has fundamentally redirected transportation policy, was also instrumental in many of the projects presented here. ISTEA has expanded local discretion for transportation investment decisions, including the diverting of highway funds into transit, pedestrian, and bicycle projects. ISTEA has also mandated greater public participation in decision making, encouraging investment in projects that link transit facilities to their communities and in projects that enhance livability through transit.

This report arrives at the moment when the U.S. Department of Transportation has committed itself to a new initiative, the National Partnership for Transportation and Livable Communities. This partnership brings together public and private nonprofit entities as well as foundations to advance the place of transportation (transit and highway) as a tool for creating livable communities. This will be achieved through education and outreach, research and information

exchange, and technical assistance and demonstration projects.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is divided into three parts.

Part I, the Overview, describes the place-making approach to livability and explores the relationships between transportation and livability that are keys to understanding the case studies presented in the report.

Part II presents the specific ways in which transit can support the livability of communities, using extensive case studies as examples.

Part III is a practical guide to implementation, including a planning process and helpful suggestions on implementing the process. Case studies of partnerships involving transit agencies with city governments, community organizations and private developers are also presented to show the numerous ways programs and projects can be implemented.

The Appendixes A and B, respectively, contain a bibliography and related literature and the results of the in-depth research conducted on livability and quality of life and what these mean to communities.

A video was produced in conjunction with this report that presents an overview of the case studies covered and the planning, decision making, and place-making approaches outlined in the report. This video is intended to be used to assist communities in implementing projects and programs similar to those described in this report. (See Foreword for availability.)

ENDNOTES

1. Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, New York (1990) p.1.
2. Donovan Rypkema, "Place, Community, and Economic Development," a talk delivered at the Annual Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in St. Louis (September 29, 1993) as quoted in Roberta Gratz, *The Living City*, p.iii.
3. Roberta Gratz, *The Living City: How America's Cities Are Being Revitalized by Thinking Small in a Big Way*, The Preservation Press, Washington, DC (1994) pp.ii-iii.
4. Gratz, p.xxiii.
5. Alfred Holden, "Why Toronto Works," *Planning Magazine*, American Planning Association, Chicago, Illinois (March 1995) p.6.

CHAPTER 2

The Impact of Transportation on Livability

Transportation is at the core of everything.

—Roberta Gratz, *The Living City* [1]

Transportation plays a role in almost everyone's daily life. It is intrinsically woven into the fabric of our existence, encompassing not only how we get from place to place, but also how we conduct our daily routines and the choices we make about what we do. Getting to work, school, or appointments, running errands, shopping, socializing and recreational pursuits are among the many things we do that are affected by the kinds of transportation available (or not available) to us. Location of transportation facilities, design of streets and sidewalks and even placement of on-street parking can make all the difference in how we experience these day to day endeavors.

Because transportation is so tied to our daily lives, it provides a perfect opportunity to address the livability concerns of our communities. For example, when train stations, bus stops or transfer facilities are centrally situated, easy to reach, with convenient connections, they make it simple to get where we're going, without having to drive. Ample sidewalks and safe-to-cross streets also simplify our lives by giving us opportunities to walk, bicycle or stroll to our destinations while being able to look around, mingle with others and take part in all kinds of other activities, like shopping, eating, and entertainment.

Transportation can also enhance the quality of the general living environment when it responds to people's needs. When transit facilities provide pleasant waiting places with comfortable seating, congenial food service, clean restrooms, helpful signage and other amenities in lively, attractive surroundings, they become important places in their communities that people can enjoy. Similarly, streets designed to the scale of people, with colorful plantings, pleasing street furniture and positive activities, offer environ-

ments where people can feel safe, relaxed and free to savor life around them.

What's more, when transportation is people-oriented, it can help build communities and restore community life. It can provide the accessibility and exposure that helps develop business. It can allow for entrepreneurial opportunities by molding public spaces and transportation facilities that can nurture start-up enterprises. It can spur the identity and cohesiveness that bring communities together and help them grow and become safer and more attractive.

A ROLE FOR TRANSPORTATION AS A PLAYER IN BUILDING COMMUNITIES

For transportation to play an effective role in improving the livability of communities, it must become more of an integral part of community life and have a more direct link to the idea of "place." This view of transportation, as a catalyst for strengthening community life in the United States, also calls for a new way of measuring the success of transportation facilities.

In the case of streets and roads, the idea of transportation as a catalyst for community livability goes beyond the movement of vehicles as the sole bellwether of success to encompass the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists as well as the accommodation of alternative mobility options to meet the varying needs of different individuals within the community. It also includes requirements for an attractive, inviting, more human-scale street environment that reflects, preserves and enhances a community's unique personality, provides opportunities for people to come together and is supportive of local

businesses. This translates into commercial and residential areas where traffic moves more slowly in streets that are not excessively wide and are better connected to adjacent uses, in terms of scale, function and design. It also sets the stage for well marked pedestrian crosswalks, light cycles that are timed for walkers, not just drivers, convenient on-street parking, public amenities, attractive landscaping and management practices that increase the flexibility of existing roadway space to accommodate different kinds of uses at different times.

In the case of transit facilities, such as those presented in this report, this idea extends beyond system operations. It includes serving passengers' preferences and needs and focusing on how transit facilities can act as catalysts for regenerating surrounding communities as well as on how they can serve as centers of community life. This translates into transit facilities that are conveniently located in downtowns rather than on the outskirts of town. It also has resulted in stations and transfer centers that look inviting, are easily accessible on foot, provide amenities, and encourage local businesses to supply on-premise services, or to take part in local activities. It has created facilities like bus and trolley stops that are combined with other community uses that spur improvements to surrounding areas and create centers of activity. In the case of transit services, it has meant a new flexibility in providing alternative transit options such as small scale van and circulator systems.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES IMPACTING LIVABILITY

Three overall transportation strategies that impact livability are explored below. They are transit strategies, traffic-calming strategies, and transportation and land-use strategies. Of these, only case studies of transit strategies are presented in this report. [2]

Transit Strategies

Transit strategies that help create livable communities are presented in this report, with Part II devoted to presenting many specific examples and case studies of how transit makes an impact. Strategies fall into two basic categories: design-oriented strategies and service-oriented strategies. Although they can be discussed separately, they very often work together.

Design-Oriented Strategies

Bus, light rail, heavy rail, and subway stops have the potential to be centers of community life. Design-



Figure 2-1. This bus shelter in Portland, OR, is one of many amenities provided on this successful downtown transit mall. (Credit: Tri-Met, Portland)

oriented strategies enhance the comfort and convenience of transit users, while having a positive impact on the surrounding area. With proper design and incentives, transit stops can attract a variety of activities and uses (like retail, community services, and special events) which increase the sense of security and help create an incubator for small retailers and entrepreneurs from the local community.

Acting as a stimulus for commercial redevelopment and neighborhood renewal, the stop or station can contribute toward the livability of an entire neighborhood area. Examples of these design-oriented strategies are redesign of bus and trolley stops to support adjacent retail uses; introduction of improved public spaces around a commuter rail station; and creation of transportation centers and intermodal terminals that serve as catalysts for neighborhood-scale development.

Service-Oriented Strategies

Service-oriented strategies are essentially transit services that increase mobility within a neighborhood area. For the purposes of this study, service-oriented strategies that only target special user groups (like special vans to transport the elderly or people with disabilities to specific social services) were excluded. The focus is on services that are currently available to the general public (including these special user groups) to improve livability through better mobility and access.

Service-oriented strategies include transit shuttles and connectors, which link residential neighborhoods with commuter rail and rapid transit stations; circulators and trolleys, which enable shoppers, visitors and office workers to move more freely about the central business district; and neighborhood-based



Figure 2-2. This historic style “trolley” bus links a downtown terminal in Corpus Christi, TX, with local attractions. Since the “trolley” was initiated, ridership has increased significantly. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

transportation services. Introduction of these local transportation services helps support the goals of neighborhood livability by facilitating internal circulation to local destinations not well served by regular transit services. These new services carry residents to and from homes to jobs, shops, and local services: they transport the elderly to medical appointments, take children of working parents to day care centers and schools, serve the disabled, and transport residents to community-based social services. In metropolitan areas served by rail transit or regional bus services, small vans shuttle neighborhood residents to the nearest stations, providing convenient access to economic, educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities offered by the region.

While all these service-oriented strategies have the potential to add to community convenience and livability, it is important to remember that their effectiveness depends on their management. This includes, for example, efficient scheduling along with providing scheduling information, coordination of connections, user orientation, vehicle maintenance, and sensitive and responsive personnel.

“Traffic-Calming” Strategies

The impact of both design- and service-oriented kinds of transit improvements will be reduced, however, unless streets or roads also support community character and needs. Streets and roads can knit communities together and enhance the character and identity of the places where they pass. They can become symbols of pride for a community, have a considerable economic impact on local businesses and

help create strong and viable community centers. In other words, improving the livability of streets is not just a pedestrian, vehicle traffic, bicycle, or transit issue—all must be considered together. It is important to balance all of the functions on a street so that they serve users. This balanced approach to the use of streets has come to be known as “traffic calming.”

Traffic calming is a term that emerged in Europe to describe the practice of slowing down cars, but not necessarily banning them, as they move through commercial areas and residential neighborhoods. The benefit for pedestrians, transit riders, and bicyclists is that cars now drive at speeds that are safer and more compatible with walking and bicycling. Buses no longer have to vie for limited space and access. There is, in fact, a kind of equilibrium achieved among all of the uses of a street so no one mode can dominate at the



Figures 2-3 and 2-4. European experience with traffic calming is very extensive; this town is one of hundreds in Denmark that have redesigned their residential and commercial streets to make them more pedestrian-friendly (Figure 2-3). In the United States, cities like San Bernardino, CA, have begun traffic calming efforts of their own, in this example by introducing diagonal parking (Figure 2-4). (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

expense of another. The objective of traffic calming therefore necessitates a change in the role and goals of traffic engineers who traditionally have been asked to move traffic as efficiently and quickly as possible.

Traffic calming also requires an understanding of new techniques: one based on traffic-management strategies, the other on physical design. Traffic-management strategies include issuance of center-city passes, truck restrictions, signalization systems, transportation system management, parking management, traffic-reduction ordinances, car and fuel taxation, and speed limits. Traffic-calming design techniques create physical impediments to speeding, such as road narrowed lanes for vehicles, undulations in the roadway, crosswalks raised to sidewalk level, and elements that create pinch points or gateways to a street. Because a wide and straight street with perfect visibility is most conducive to speeding, these and other similar approaches are intended to alter driver perception and encourage slower speeds.

In general, well-conceived traffic-calming programs address the broad issues of a street and go well beyond vehicle concerns to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit activities. For example, a sidewalk can be widened at an intersection to create a larger space for a bus stop shelter and seating. This wider sidewalk also reduces the width of the street for pedestrians who are crossing. The bus no longer has to pull in and out of traffic to pick up or drop off passengers, thereby speeding service, although momentarily delaying traffic. If the crosswalk is raised to sidewalk level, drivers are further encouraged to drive at lower speeds. Perhaps an adjacent business is created (or a newsstand located) to serve transit riders. All of these strategies work together, therefore, to create a balance of uses at that corner.

Transportation and Land-Use Strategies

Where and how Americans live has changed almost completely in the past 50 years. Fifty years ago, there was little suburban sprawl. People lived in small towns near cities, or they lived in cities or towns themselves. Compact, dense development was created by, and continued to be supported by, an extensive network of public transportation. Fifty years ago, even Los Angeles had its “Red Car” trolley system, which is now gone. During the first half of the twentieth century, people marveled at the growth of cities. This has paled by comparison with the growth during the second half of the century.

This massive transformation of cities, suburbs, and towns has been paralleled by unprecedented economic prosperity and growth. Yet it is clear that this

transformation has not been without its costs. The “American Dream” of spread-out, free-ranging development has come home to roost in places that lack human scale or identity, and with serious damage, if not downright destruction, to the central locales and neighborhoods that have long given people their communal focus and sense of belonging.

Much of this sprawling development has been related to land-use policies that favor low density and complete separation of residential and commercial uses. In the long run, if lasting and effective transportation improvements that act as a permanent, positive force for livability are to be achieved, then they must take place within the context of an overall land-use policy designed to further the preservation and



Figure 2-5 and 2-6. Aerial views of Harvard Square in Cambridge, MA (Figure 2-5) and suburban Los Angeles, CA (Figure 2-6) illustrate dramatically the difference between traditional and contemporary land-use patterns and transportation networks. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

revitalization of dense, lively town centers as well as the creation of new nodes near public transportation. Such a policy can nurture initiatives that cluster activities around transit hubs, provide opportunities for short commutes and easy walking, promote alternative transit use and avoid the wastes of energy, land, and the environment that sprawl creates.

There is considerable existing literature on the subject of how macroscale land-use patterns and urban form encourage or discourage transit-oriented communities. This literature describes the principles (such as “The Ahwahnee Principles”) of changing the way American suburbs are structured to encourage more dense, transit-oriented communities. The “neotraditional” communities movement is an important lead in this effort. (See, for example, *Land Use Strategies for More Livable Communities*, by The Local Government Commission, Sacramento, CA.) The TCRP also has completed major research toward this effort (*TCRP Report 16, “Transit and Urban Form”*).

Fortunately, there are encouraging signs today of a broadening perspective, a growing awareness of the role of transit in the development process and in the creation of livable communities. A growing recognition of the importance of land use broadens the discussion further. Transportation planners increasingly view transportation and land use as complementary components of the larger metropolitan system. Now the question transportation planners often ask is: how can communities be designed to provide a better

environment for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders, and thus reduce automobile dependence? They also may ask: how can more opportunities and activities be provided within closer distances, and thus reduce total travel? Transportation planners are implicitly asking: how can accessibility be enhanced by changing land-use patterns rather than only by expanding the transportation system?

CONCLUSIONS

The case studies that follow in Part II show how the transit strategies discussed above are being used in communities throughout the United States and how they are succeeding at fostering greater livability. Each of these strategies has its own specific applications in response to specific local issues and opportunities, and all of them are not necessarily applicable in all cases. In many cases, however, a combination of strategies are at work, which demonstrate the intrinsic relationship between transportation and community life.

ENDNOTES

1. Roberta Gratz, *The Living City*, p.xviii.
2. In 1997, additional research will be completed to document specific case studies of management strategies, which enhance streets so that they too contribute to community livability goals and support more efficient, effective, and convenient transit operations.

Part II

Roles of Transit in Creating Livable Communities

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CHAPTER 3

Introduction and Approach to Case Studies

This chapter describes the many ways that transit currently helps to create livable metropolitan communities. Case studies, which describe in detail the origin, planning process, overall strategy, and assessment of each program exemplify specific roles. The research team has organized the case studies according to specific livability issues in order to reinforce the connection between transit strategies and broader community goals.

The case studies are not meant to illustrate every possible program and role that transit can play, rather, they are indicative of types of projects. The research team has attempted to provide a variety of innovative case studies representing different geographic areas, transit operating environments, transit ridership levels, and types of transit modes. Most of the projects conform to the overall place-making framework that is presented in Chapter 1, that is, they entail a high level of community involvement in design, planning, and implementation through some kind of community partnership. Because most projects fulfill more than one community livability goal, the introduction to each chapter cross-references case studies from other sections of the report that are relevant to the livability issues under discussion.

CASE STUDY SELECTION CRITERIA

The case studies presented in the report were selected according to the following criteria:

- *They demonstrate a link between transit and community livability objectives.* Case studies illustrate “best practices” in one or all of the following ways and transit is a key component of these efforts:
 - Active community involvement in planning process;
 - Integration of facility or system as part of larger community development or improvement strategy—encouraging a high level of accessibility with less auto-dependence;
- Facility design, amenities, elements, public services and activities that respond to transit user and community needs;
- Innovative implementation strategies, through community-based, public-private partnerships; and
- Innovative management strategies for security, maintenance, and other operations.
- *There is considerable transferability to other places in the United States.* The examples included in the site visits and case studies will illustrate initiatives or objectives that other communities could pursue and achieve. Indeed, it is important that readers interested in a specific geographic area or transit mode consult all the case studies, because there are “generic” aspects of all of them that may have bearing on a specific local situation.
- *Different locations throughout the United States, as well as different sizes and types of communities and transit systems, are included.* The examples will show that the concept of transit contributing to livable communities can be effectively pursued, regardless of geography or type of transit service. Examples include both suburban areas and inner city communities, as well as downtowns and neighborhoods, large cities and small. Examples also provide a range of transit strategies, including place-oriented strategies and service-oriented strategies.
- *A range of budgets is represented.* The case studies illustrate short-term, small-scale efforts that have had an impact, as well as major and costly capital programs and redevelopment projects. Even many of the major, expensive programs had components that were inexpensive and were implemented in a short period of time.

- *Transit has had an impact.* Case studies clearly show how and why transit was critical to improving livability.
- *Transit and land-use policies are linked.* The relationship between transit and supportive land-use policies is important and is illustrated, especially in Chapter 9, “Shaping Community Growth.”
- *Transit investment is performed differently because a community is already livable.* Case studies demonstrate how communities benefit from customer-focused transit services and investments and how transit benefits from livable communities through increased ridership, more positive public image, and better use of facilities.
- *Obstacles have been overcome.* Transit innovations often face many internal as well as external obstacles and barriers. In nearly every project covered, obstacles had to be overcome, which influenced the nature of the final outcome and made a project or program even stronger.
- *Practitioners will find useful information and insights.* The transit industry and local communities are primary audiences for the research results. Consequently, they should benefit from the information and be able to use it to improve communities and local transit services quickly and easily.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Research for this study was accomplished through a series of site visits to ten communities to observe and document actual projects and programs that have been implemented, as well as to discuss projects with innovative planning processes where implementation is in process. The following communities were selected:

- Boston, Massachusetts;
- Boulder, Colorado;
- Chicago, Illinois;
- Corpus Christi, Texas;
- Los Angeles, California;
- New York City/New Jersey*;
- Oakland, California;
- Portland, Oregon;
- Tucson, Arizona; and
- Suburban Washington, DC.

* Statewide programs of New Jersey Transit

For each site, the research team accomplished the following activities.

Background Research

In preparation for the site visit, the research team conducted telephone interviews to identify innovative local programs and potential participants for the focus group discussion. In addition, PPS collected background planning reports, program evaluation studies, and current relevant socioeconomic data.

Focus Groups

PPS facilitated focus group meetings with local transit, transportation and community development officials to describe projects and programs taking place elsewhere in the country. This gave local officials more information about what was happening elsewhere, as well as an opportunity to discuss specific local livability concerns and projects and services that exist or are needed in their communities. Each of the focus groups was different; while the same types of people were invited to each group (a mix of public and private sector representatives as well as people from local community organizations and advocacy groups) and the same slide show was presented, the discussion varied greatly according to local issues and the interests of those attending.

The following specific topics were discussed during the focus groups:

- Perceptions of livability: what are the community’s key livability issues?
- Community development and improvement activities that have been implemented over the past decade that were designed to improve the livability of the community.
- Relationship between the transit agency and other community development activities and organizations.
- Transit strategies implemented related to enhancing livability and responding to customer needs, and what worked and what did not work; strategies that are in the planning process.
- If strategies were successful, where and how they worked, including the extent of community involvement in the planning process and the types of ongoing relationships and complementary actions initiated between transit and community development activities.
- Applicability of local successes to other localities. What was special or unique about these efforts?
- What still needs to be done and how this report could be of help.

Case Study Interviews

From each focus group site, specific projects were selected, and these are highlighted in this report. In addition, detailed interviews were conducted with transit staff and local community development officials responsible for the project or program. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain answers to the following questions:

- What prompted the project or program? Was there a particular opportunity you were taking advantage of, or a particular problem you were trying to solve?
- Where did the ideas originate? Within the transit organization? If so, in which department(s)? Outside the organization? If outside, was it another agency? If so, which one? A community group? Other? Was the program or project part of a larger redevelopment or improvement strategy for the area?
- How was the decision made to go ahead with the program? What was the process used? How long did it take? Was there a reason why a specific location was selected for the project/program? How was this decided?
- What was the public process used (workshops, public hearing, focus groups, etc.)? Was the process successful in obtaining community input and support?
- What role did other organizations or government agencies (such as community development, tourism, land-use planning, etc.) play? Was it a collaborative effort or an effort primarily of the transit agency?
- Who funded the project start-up? Were there other complementary activities or components to the project that came from other sources? Who funded these activities?
- Who operates or manages the program/project? (Is it public? private? public-private?) What is the relationship to the transit agency? What does operation and management entail? (maintenance? security? marketing?) How much does it cost to operate/manage? Who pays these operational costs?
- What obstacles did you face in implementing the program? Were these obstacles primarily within the transit agency or outside or both? Was the role of the transit agency different for this project/program than for its usual activities? If so, has this role carried over into other projects or programs?
- How did you overcome these obstacles? Do obstacles still exist? Who within the transit agency has been most instrumental in dealing with obstacles?
- Did you set a goal to describe what you wanted to achieve with these changes? Do you think you were successful in achieving your goals? What is left to be done? Have the goals been changed or refined over time?
- What has been the response from customers/users about the program? Do you have any demographic information about users? Surveys of users or community? Ridership/usage information? Other impacts,

such as increase in retail sales or decrease in vacancy rates? Job creation? New real estate development? More pedestrian traffic in area? How has the image of the transit agency changed as a result of the program?

- What would you do differently if you were starting over?
- Is your experience transferable to other transit agencies or communities? Do you have suggestions for how we might distribute the results of this research so that other communities might benefit from your experience?
- Is there anyone else we should talk to?

Detailed User Case Study Evaluations

In three cities (Woodbridge, NJ; Portland, OR; and Corpus Christi, TX) a series of systematic data collection efforts was undertaken to study people's actual use and perceptions of specific transit facilities. (The exact methodology used in each case study was tailored to the particular project, although methods for all case studies were consistent to allow cross comparisons.) In addition to the materials collected during the site visits, detailed user studies included the following activities:

- Additional interviews with transit operating staff (drivers, maintenance workers, and ticket agents); local officials; representatives of downtown or neighborhood associations and merchant associations; and other key individuals. When appropriate, interviews were conducted in a focus-group format.
- Behavioral observations of activities within and around the facility during the course of at least one full day, including the types of activity (waiting, eating, and socializing), the type of user (age, sex, and so forth), and the location of that activity. These observations and studies of activity patterns at the facility were evaluated to determine general types of uses and users.
- On-site surveys of users of the facility, nearby businesses and residents. PPS has developed and tested survey forms, which were used to solicit perceptions about a facility, frequency of use, general demographic information, and suggestions for improvement.

Telephone Surveys of Selected Model Projects

To supplement the information collected during the site visits, the research team conducted telephone surveys of projects that were of substantial interest and

value to the study, but for which a site visit was not warranted or possible. Telephone surveys of the following cities were conducted:

- Aspen, Colorado;
- Denver, Colorado;
- Meridian, Mississippi;
- St. Louis, Missouri;
- Wilmington, Delaware; and
- Seattle, Washington.

Preparation of Case Studies

Using the information collected, draft case studies were prepared. When necessary, additional interviews were conducted to obtain more information or to obtain the viewpoint of another person or organization within the community. Draft case studies also were circulated to the local contacts listed on each case study for comment and to check the accuracy of facts. These comments have been integrated into the final case studies presented in this report.

LIVABILITY ISSUES PRESENTED

To present the case studies, the research team focused on six major livability issues. These livability issues are not, however, meant to be an exhaustive list and are also not intended to imply that there are not other issues of concern to communities. Rather, these livability issues are ones that were important to community studies and ones in which transit played a key role in addressing.

These are the six livability themes presented in this report.

Creating places for community life: Transit can support places—public spaces, streets and buildings—helping to enliven their usage and making them centers for a range of community activities.

Serving as a catalyst for downtown and neighborhood renewal: Transit can serve as a key force in the re-vitalization of neighborhoods and center cities.

Creating opportunity for entrepreneurship and economic development: Transit can help create new businesses and improve access to job opportunities.

Improving safety and amenity: Transit can help make communities safer, in part by making them more comfortable and attractive.

Making communities accessible and convenient: Transit services and facilities can be tailored to meet community needs to provide a viable alternative to the automobile.

Shaping community growth: Transit can be a key component of efforts aimed at reducing sprawl and encouraging development of mixed-use centers.

Each chapter contains an introduction, which briefly presents the nature of the specific livability issue and how communities are addressing the concern. The specific roles of transit are then presented, cross-referencing case studies from other chapters where appropriate. (Case study names are shown in *italics* in the text.) Each chapter includes (1) brief examples, which summarize particularly relevant projects, and (2) more detailed case studies.

CHAPTER 4

Creating Places for Community Life

The road is now like television, violent and tawdry. The landscape it runs through is littered with cartoon buildings and commercial messages. We whiz by them at fifty-five miles an hour and forget them, because one convenience store looks like the next. They do not celebrate anything beyond their mechanistic ability to sell merchandise. We don't want to remember them. We did not savor the approach and we were not rewarded upon reaching the destination, and it will be the same next time, and every time. There is little sense of having arrived anywhere, because everyplace looks like noplace in particular.

—James Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere* [1]

INTRODUCTION

One of the continuing themes in livability and quality of life studies is the issue of “sense of place.” The combined impacts of sprawl, urban neglect and disinvestment, traffic, and city budget constraints have led to a situation in which we have few common places that bring people together and serve as a focal point for community life.

This was not always the case. Once, almost every place in a community—whether it was a downtown or a public library—served that goal. Today, many economic centers are located in suburban areas where pedestrian life tends to be nonexistent except in privately owned, legally restrictive shopping centers. As a result, there are few locations where a variety of people can come into contact with each other in a positive and inviting public environment.

In older cities, where spaces once thrived, public places have been decimated by the same economic and social forces. “As more and more private space is created,” PPS staff wrote in a recent op-ed piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, “true public spaces are under increasing pressure to accommodate the cultural diversity of Los Angeles and to survive economically. . . . Malls cannot replace the traditional town square.” [2] The result in small towns, suburbs, and cities alike is a lack of what can be broadly described as “places for community life.”

Overview of Community Strategies

There is new interest today in reversing this trend. Communities are working on a variety of “places” where people can come together. These places include public spaces—such as central squares, waterfront promenades, and parks—as well as traditional, stand-alone public institutions like libraries, schools, museums, public markets, and city halls. All of these traditional uses are being reconsidered in cities across the country and are becoming more multipurpose community-gathering spots.

Pioneer Square in Portland, Oregon, is one of the first in a new generation of public squares. No longer just passive green spaces, these squares are designed to be programmed and used by the public. In fact, the infrastructure for such uses is built in, and the spaces have management entities in charge of them to ensure their effective use.

Streets as important community public spaces are also being addressed. The impact of traffic, in particular, on inhibiting pedestrian activity and making spaces less hospitable for community activities was discussed in Chapter 2. Indeed, without effective traffic control in the future, it will be difficult to create more places for community life.

Finally, there are some more subtle design issues related to the goal of creating centers for people.



Figure 4-1. Harvard Square T-Station, Cambridge, MA, is a community gathering place. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

Public art and special amenity features, for example, also contribute to a “sense of place,” as well as to people’s use and enjoyment of public spaces. Artists are now much more involved in street and public space projects where they actually create public amenities—lights, benches, and other features—rather than stand-alone sculptures. Many spaces are activated with temporary rather than permanent installations, or by art which invites public participation and comment. All of this helps to reinforce the goal of creating places that reflect the values and heritage of a community.

Role of Transit

Because transit brings people to a location, it influences the use and activity of these spaces and, indeed, transit is instrumental in making them work effectively. Transit can enhance destinations, helping to create community places by supporting existing spaces, as well as providing a place for new activities and services. A transit facility need not be just a place for transportation but can also become a setting for community interaction and a place that accommodates a diversity of people.

Because transit stops come in all shapes, sizes, and levels of use, there are abundant ways that transit can support places for community life. The transit services and facilities mentioned below are discussed in this report.

Linking transit to existing public places is the simplest, and probably the most obvious and common strategy. Transit agencies usually plan their stops so that they correspond to destinations like a main square or a public library or school. The case study for

the *Watts Shuttle in Los Angeles*, however, shows how the main transit system for the city did not adequately serve local, neighborhood destinations; the new shuttle now does.

There is a difference between providing a transit stop at a public place and making that stop truly integral to it. *Pioneer Square in Portland, Oregon*, is one of the premier examples in the country where transit is integrated into a public square known as “Portland’s Living Room.” Indeed, the two were designed at the same time. At a larger scale, *Union Station in Chicago* and *South Station in Boston*, both major commuter rail, bus, and Amtrak stations, have been revitalized to become focal points to the surrounding downtown areas.

Transit centers constitute a broadly defined strategy in which a bus stop, bus terminal, or train station becomes more than just a place for transportation. For example, *Woodbridge Station in Woodbridge, New Jersey*, was a well-used commuter rail station but was considered to be a maintenance burden by the transit agency and in a state of disrepair. Its case study shows how spaces around rail stations offer many positive opportunities for the surrounding community: train stations can become centers of community life, be welcoming gateways, and provide places for information about local attractions.

By creating places where people come together, transit centers can create focal points for a variety of activities, as well as links to the larger regional transit system. It is possible, for example, that a bus transfer center could include a staging area for employee commuter vans, a terminal for a local neighborhood circulator, and a taxi stand. Such centers are planned for *LINC in Seattle*.

Serving as a neighborhood focus, the center can act as a catalyst for neighborhood-scale joint development. With proper design and incentives, transit centers can attract a variety of activities and service establishments, such as open-air fresh produce markets (see Chapter 6), coffee shops, newsstands, video store rentals, branch bank offices, health clinics, and day care centers (e.g., *KidStop Child Care Center*, *Shady Grove Metro Station*, *Rockville, Maryland*.) *Staples Street Station in Corpus Christi* is designed to accommodate future small-scale retail.

These types of uses need not be permanent. In Tucson, the downtown transit center is used twice a month as the center stage for “Downtown Saturday Night.” In Portland, the Portland Saturday Market, which is served by a Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) light rail line stop in the center of the market, is a vibrant weekend attraction and a parking lot during the week.

ENDNOTES

1. James Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere*, Simon & Schuster, New York, New York (1993) p.131.
2. Fred I. Kent and Stephen C. Davies, "Hello, City Walk: But Can It Replace a Town Square?" *Los Angeles Times* (August 1, 1993).

EXAMPLES

Portland, OR: Tri-Met's MAX Station Anchors Saturday Market

For 20 years, the Portland Saturday Market has brought thousands of shoppers every weekend to the old warehouse district in downtown Portland, Oregon. As the largest craft market in continuous operation in the country, the market has not only revitalized the district around it, but has created thousands of jobs. The market features over 200 vendors every Saturday and Sunday from March through December, and offers a wide variety of products: household wares, jewelry, furniture, sculpture—all made and sold by local artists. Adding to the festivity of the place are food vendors and live entertainment.

When the market first opened, it was located under the Burnside Bridge next to Ankeny Park because it offered protection from Portland's unpredictable weather. Today, the market has expanded from this location, so that vendors extend across the street and into adjacent open areas. Several warehouse buildings now feature craft shops indoors.

The MAX light rail line, which began running in 1986, includes a stop right in the center of the market. When MAX was originally proposed, organizers of

the Saturday Market opposed the project because they feared that the presence of trains would cut the market in two and destroy the pedestrian environment. After careful planning work and attention to detail by Tri-Met, the system operator, exactly the opposite happened.

The result is a place where transit could not be more integrated; indeed it becomes part of the vitality of the market. Moreover, it brings hundreds of customers to the market and increases transit ridership. In a survey the research team conducted of people waiting for the train, the market was the main reason people were riding the train. In addition, market vendors surveyed believed MAX was very important to their businesses, so not surprisingly the market is prominently advertised in the trains themselves. The Portland Saturday Market has been enhanced as a community institution.

Boston, MA: Health Clinic Becomes Visible and Provides Accessible Community Service at Roxbury Crossing T-Station

The Health Station at Roxbury Crossing T-Station is run by the Whittier Street Neighborhood Health Center, which in 1993 moved into a space adjacent to the Orange Line subway station. The Roxbury Station is one of many newly built or renovated stations along the Orange Line, completed as part of the Southwest Corridor project (see Case Study 5-1). As part of its renovation program, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) built space for retail into its new stations.

The T-Station location, the newest of three run by the Whittier Street Neighborhood Health Center, is used



Figures 4-2 and 4-3. Portland, OR, Saturday Market. The Portland Saturday Market is the largest craft market in continuous operation in the United States. The market is served by the MAX light rail and transforms a downtown parking lot adjacent to a transit stop into a community center every weekend. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)



Figure 4-4. Health Station at Roxbury Crossing. By integrating a public health center into a subway station, the Whittier Street Neighborhood Health Center at Roxbury Crossing in Boston is able to reach and serve more of the people who require their services. The subway station entrance is located at the far left of the photograph. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

for the Center's "Healthy Stop" community education and outreach programs, which aim to prevent substance abuse and teach good parenting skills; Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and optometry services are also offered.

The Whittier Street Neighborhood Health Center is currently investigating additional MBTA property to house an "urgent care" out-patient, walk-in center. It is anticipated that many of the patients who visit the emergency center will come by train. This new space will have entrances leading directly into the station and out onto Main Street.

One difficulty that the operators of the center describe is a lack of visibility because the building does not open directly into the station. In addition, working with the state and city authorities to build out their space was time consuming and occasionally frustrating. Overall, the operators of the Health Station feel that their location adjacent to the T-Station, centrally positioned on a main street, has been good for business, particularly in terms of attracting people from the community for the health screenings and polls they conduct.

Tucson, AZ: Downtown Saturday Night Transit Center Becomes Focal Point for Downtown Revitalization Event

The Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc. (TADP) is a 5-year-old arts organization created to develop

and manage the Tucson Arts District, a cultural district intended to better serve the arts community and revitalize downtown Tucson. One of the TADP's most successful programs is "Downtown Saturday Night," an arts and events series produced in collaboration with Sun Tran, the transit agency of the City of Tucson. The "main stage" of the series is at the Ronstadt Transit Center on the first and third Saturdays of each month.

Downtown Saturday Night functions as a community-wide arts district open house that attracts thousands of Tucson residents and visitors alike to the bus transit center for concerts, dance performances, theater, archery demonstrations, midnight basketball, and socializing. In addition to these events, adjacent shops, cafes and galleries stay open late to serve event-goers.

The Ronstadt Transit Center, built in 1991 at a cost of \$6 million, is located near the Amtrak station and airport buses serving seniors, students, and commuters traveling through the downtown corridor. The Ronstadt Transit Center was not originally designed as a venue for events and performance; utilities and other equipment were added to the facility after it was built. Because Sun Tran bus service at Ronstadt stops at 8 p.m. on Saturdays, however, there is no conflict in usage. A new strategy is now needed so that people can take the bus to Ronstadt to participate in the special events held there.



Figure 4-5. Tucson, AZ, Downtown Saturday Night. On the first and third Saturday nights of the month, the Ronstadt Bus Transit Center in downtown Tucson becomes a center stage and a venue for performances, concerts, and other community events. (Credit: Jerry Ferrin Photography)

Corpus Christi, TX: Staples Street Bus Transit Center Using Public Art to Inspire Community Ownership of a Transit Facility

You hear all those clichés about community involvement and sense of ownership, but here, it became a reality. It was a great thing to be part of.

—Ed Gates, artist

Active participation in the public art-making process can help a community develop a sense of ownership about its local transit facilities. The Regional Transit Authority and project architect and planners of the Staples Street bus transit facility wanted to integrate the transit facility into the community. Under the guidance of a local artist—who had a budget of \$25,000—residents produced 1,500 hand-painted ceramic tiles, which have been incorporated into the Staples Street bus transit facility (see also Case Study 9-3).

Tiles decorate the facility's entrance arch, bases of columns, benches, planters, light fixtures, and telephone booths. The Staples Street bus transit center was the recipient of a 1995 Presidential Design Achievement Award and is featured in a recent joint publication of the U.S. DOT and FTA regarding art-in-transit projects.

CASE STUDIES

Cases studies illustrate different aspects of how transit can create places for community life. Although the projects deal in different types of transit (bus, light

rail, commuter rail, and subway), each one involved expanding the traditional role of a transit stop into a place for a variety of community activities.

Case Study 4-1: Portland, OR: Pioneer Courthouse Square

Transit Key in Creating the City's "Living Room"

Case Study 4-2: Woodbridge Station, NJ: Creating a Sense of Place at a Commuter Rail Station

Case Study 4-3: Shady Grove Metro Station, MD: KidStop Child Care Center Helps Make a Community "Family-Friendly"

Case Study 4-1

Portland, OR: Pioneer Courthouse Square Transit Key in Creating the City's "Living Room"

It's not just about transit. It's about a city.

—PPS focus group participant

Building rail lines is not an end in itself. The Portland story is more about community building than light rail building. MAX has been an effective means to the end of a livable community. What the community is interested in is livability. We enjoy great support for transit and land use because they are the tools we use to achieve a livable community.

—G.B. Arrington, Director, Strategic Planning, Tri-Met [1]

Pioneer Square respects the street. It respects the city.

—William H. Whyte

SUMMARY

The creation of this public space in downtown Portland cannot be separated from the fundamental role played by Tri-Met, the city's transit agency. Planned concurrently with the new Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) light rail system, Pioneer Square was an idea that dated back to the 1950s when the site was a parking lot. Tri-Met leveraged its funding for transit stops and an information center and helped to make the Square financially possible.

With extraordinary public support, the Square was built to be "Portland's living room," a center for the life of the city. Funded in part by the residents of Portland, the Square has continued its tradition of citizen participation with thousands of community events held during the past decade. With the opening of the light rail system in 1986, Pioneer Courthouse Square became both the city center and the bustling hub of transit for buses and light rail, as well as the main information center for Tri-Met.



Figure 4-6. Corpus Christi Staples Street Bus Transit Center. Local artist, Ed Gates, worked with more than 1,500 members of the community to create hand-painted tiles which decorate this new downtown transit facility. (Credit: Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority)



Figures 4-7 and 4-8. Case Study 4-1. Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square, nicknamed "Portland's Living Room," is both a central square and the bustling hub of bus and light rail service. (Credit: C. Bruce Forster, Figure 4-7 and Project for Public Spaces, Inc., Figure 4-8)

PLANNING PROCESS

The Pioneer Square site has served many purposes. Once home to Portland's first public school, it became the Hotel Portland in 1883—the place to stay and the center of downtown life. In the early 1950s, the hotel was razed and became a parking lot for the adjacent department store. Although the idea of making the parking lot a public square was discussed at that time, it was not seriously considered until 1969, when the department store proposed a 10-story parking garage on the site. The Portland Planning Commission, after several heated public hearings, denied the permit for the garage and recommended that a public square be built instead, with other peripheral sites chosen as alternative sites for garages.

The parking garage crisis initiated a planning dialogue between the city and the business community about the future of the downtown area itself. In 1972, Portland adopted its innovative downtown plan—the plan that served for more than 20 years as the guiding vision for the city. This plan contained a strong transportation component: reducing reliance on the automobile, increasing use of transit, and setting strict limits on the amount of parking in the downtown. Coupled with the establishment of an urban growth boundary for the region and efforts to promote pedestrian orientation downtown, the stage was set for the rebirth of the declining city core.

It is not coincidental that one of the first major projects resulting from the plan was the Portland Mall, a largely federally funded transit mall, which extends over 20 blocks on two parallel streets and provides comfortable waiting areas in attractive shelters, up-to-the-minute transit information, and easy transfers between lines. For the downtown, it provides an attractive brick promenade with trees and amenities for shoppers and downtown office workers.

Pioneer Courthouse Square itself was seen as one of the key projects of the plan, a space that would complement the new investment in the transit mall. Luckily, the square was being planned at the same time as the new MAX light rail system and Tri-Met, a tri-county transportation agency, saw the opportunity to leverage its construction budget for light rail stops and a central information center to help unify the square. Not only did this funding make the square economically possible, but the coordination of the two design processes created a seamless design for the square, which integrates transit with larger community goals.

The planning and design of the square took many interesting twists and turns that left an imprint on the final product. While there was general consensus that the square should become a "people place," an active plaza rather than a passive park, and that it should be built with private as well as public support, a design competition was needed to give these public goals a

tangible form. The rules for this competition stated that the square should do the following:

- Respond to its location as a major transfer/information point—the focus of a region;
- Provide unrestricted pedestrian access and general visibility from surrounding streets—open on all sides with no more than one-third of the square covered;
- Have a unified design concept, with multifunctional-functional spaces, commercial uses (like a cafe), which support the design program, and places of refuge, interest, and information for users; and
- Recognize the significance of Portland's history.

A two-step competition process was implemented: an open competition (to which 162 entries were submitted) from which five finalists were selected and paid a modest fee to produce a more detailed design. This process allowed the public to see a variety of ways that the square could be designed and how transit stops could be integrated into it. Options presented ranged from glass conservatories to fir groves to water gardens; transit shelters were free-standing, incorporated into arcades, and left virtually bare of amenities.

The winning team, led by Will Martin, consisted of Portland natives. More than a group of architects, the team included a writer, a historian, and two artists. Will Martin himself was a painter, sociologist, humorist, historian, and inventor.

The square took 5 years to build and overcame many obstacles that threatened to prevent its completion. Concerns about the design, lack of funding, and fears of uncontrolled activities on the square shaped the final product considerably. An extensive fundraising campaign raised \$1.7 million from the community. The design was modified, but its initial integrity was retained despite pressures for greater modifications. An innovative management program was set up to oversee maintenance, security, and events in the square.

The square had its grand opening in 1984. It was not until 1986, however, that the square was truly complete, with the opening of MAX light rail transit service connecting downtown to the eastern suburbs. A westside line is now nearing completion, which should increase use of the square as a transit hub. A new north-south line in the planning stages will share the existing transit mall along the square with buses and cars. Over the past decade, both MAX and the square have become virtually synonymous with the revitalization of Portland as a city and its new identity as a livable community.

STRATEGY

Design. The design of the square—with its brick-paving and historic elements—complements other projects like the transit mall. It fills an entire block downtown, lending it great visibility. Throughout downtown—on the transit mall, at the square, along the MAX line—there is an evident commitment to quality which goes beyond the functionality of the transit routes. Portland is walkable: sidewalks have been widened and many street amenities and art added. The overall result is that the square is integrated into everything around it.

Transit facilities are carefully integrated into the overall design. Columns and ledges under a glass canopy form the waiting area for light rail. MAX's stop on the square is heavily used; in fact, it has the highest ridership of any MAX stop, with 2,500 daily boardings. Pioneer Square also features infrastructure that allows it to be used for a wide variety of events and activities. Because of sloping topography, the square features a series of crescent-shaped steps which form a natural amphitheater. The square is the site of hundreds of small and large events each year, many of which have already become Portland traditions, such as the following:

- The nation's tallest Christmas tree with 8,000 lights and 12,000 carolers;
- Peanut Butter & Jam lunchtime jazz concerts;
- Festival of Flowers, an artist's design constructed in flowers;
- Series of children's hands-on activities "Kid-sational"; and
- Festa Italiana and other ethnic food and music festivals.

Tucked under the amphitheaters are the Tri-Met information center, restrooms, a travel bookstore, and the management offices for the square. Above, there is a pavilion structure with a successful cafe. A small area is devoted to pushcart vendors. These businesses bring income to offset the management of the square and encourage activity on a regular basis even when events are not underway.

Finally, architectural elements symbolizing history and themes of Portland abound in the square, including the original gates from the Portland Hotel, plaques about the history of Portland, and a column with the "rose city" motif. These elements add to the special character of the square.

Management Program. The nonprofit corporation that manages the square has contributed significantly to its success. A paid staff, including a full director and staff

assistants, works under the direction of a board composed of community members, business leaders, and a commissioner from the Parks Department. The management coordinates its own events and issues permits for events by others; oversees maintenance and security, including hiring of its own security guards; supervises vending and retail tenants; raises funds for the square; and handles public relations, including promotional activities and a monthly newsletter.

FUNDING

The square was built with a variety of funds. The total project cost was \$6.8 million, with financing provided by the Portland Development Commission, Tax Increment Funds; federal grants from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now the Federal Transit Administration) and the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Services (now defunct); the city of Portland; and the adjacent local department store.

Another key source of funds was the community itself. When the construction of the square was threatened by a lack of money, the Friends of Pioneer Courthouse Square, a nonprofit advocacy group, took on the challenge of raising the needed \$1.7 million. In order to raise the money, some 60,000 paving bricks for the square were imprinted with sponsor names ("Bake Your Name in Brick"). The 200 volunteers who sold the bricks not only successfully raised funds, but also helped create a built-in constituency for the square. A second campaign to "sell" design elements in the square (from the amphitheater to drinking fountains) yielded more than \$1 million. One indication of the community support amassed for the project: architects, artists, and volunteers arrived unannounced and painted a full-scale plan of the square over the parking lot asphalt, even covering the attendant shack and an abandoned 1960 Ford sedan.

The annual budget for the management of the square is about \$623,000. Funds are contributed by the city (\$240,000); fees, membership, and fundraising (\$60,000); and income from retail businesses makes up about one-third of the budget. The remaining funds come from sponsored events and rental charges. The management organization is currently conducting a fundraising campaign for square repairs, soliciting government, private, and foundation donations to complete a \$1 million repair and restoration project.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

After the winning design was selected from the competition, it almost was not built. The design was

criticized, particularly by a downtown business group that wanted the square to be covered. The group suggested rejecting federal funds and starting over. Covering the square reflected more than just climatic concerns; the main question was whether or not the square would become a haven for anti-social activities. To address this issue, the Pioneer Square Management Advisory Committee was established to review the design. In the committee's debates, it became clear that the issue was not the design itself, but the activities that would take place in the square. The committee's report—critical to the success of Pioneer Square—outlined the management program for the square to establish a mechanism for overseeing activities and events, provide maintenance and security, and ensure the square lived up to its potential.

There was also a lack of funding to complete the square as designed. It took the coordinated participation of the transit agency and the community itself to make the square possible. As G. B. Arrington, Director of Strategic Planning for Tri-Met, has stated, "Pioneer Square is a wonderful example of what you get when you think of a transportation investment first as the means to the end of a livable community. By turning over our station budget, we helped make the square real and got a station in Portland's living room. Pioneer Square is the most important block in the state because it's where everything comes together, it's a symbol of our revitalized downtown, it's the first place you take out-of-town guests, and it's the centerpiece of our bus and rail system."

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Portland's transit programs and the square are considered success stories both locally and nationally. The square attracts thousands of people downtown for its events and activities. As a focal point for community celebration, this generates a great deal of positive publicity for downtown as radio, TV, and newspapers cover the activities. The square has become the primary retail location downtown as buildings have been refurbished and new businesses opened. It is heavily used by tourists and residents.

There is a strong symbiotic relationship between the square and transit. The square gives a visible center to transit, makes the events and activities accessible and convenient, and increases ridership on the buses and light rail. A survey of transit users and businesses around the square conducted in 1995 by the research team showed generally positive ratings about the design of the transit stop, except for the amount of seating, safety during the evening, and the number of telephones. Businesses said that while the stop was

“somewhat important” to their own businesses, it was “important” or “very important” to the overall area as a place to do business.

Fears that the square would be the scene for anti-social activities never materialized, although there have been problems about which businesses and transit users are still concerned. Still, the management organization is ever-vigilant in addressing security issues as they arise. This has benefits for transit as well: Tri-Met users surveyed in 1994 reported that “personal safety when waiting for the bus or MAX” was one of the most important factors in deciding whether to use the system.

The investment in transit and public improvements downtown, which was based on the 1972 plan, has revitalized the downtown. There has been an increase in downtown jobs from 50,000 in 1975 to over 86,000 today. Air quality has actually improved and traffic congestion has not increased because nearly 40% of the downtown work trips are on public transit. A 1984 study estimated that without transit, six 42-story parking structures would have to be built and two more lanes to every highway coming downtown would need to be added. Development near the square itself has included a new shopping center, Pioneer Place, as well as many new retail stores and shops.

Why has it worked here? Portland’s citizenry have a sense of common purpose, a commitment to quality and a perseverance that keeps Portlandites anchored to their city. People who developed the original vision are still around to see it from a different perspective. As one commentator put it: “Portland may well depart from the norm in metropolitan growth. The sense of common purpose, the easy communication among the area’s leaders, and the long-standing conviction that Oregonians should conserve the good life, even at the sacrifice of some self-interest, point toward an outcome at variance with that in Los Angeles and most other American cities.” [2]

CONCLUSIONS

Pioneer Courthouse Square, with its transit activities, is the product of a visionary process and is now a symbol of the city’s livability. The process of creating the square—the public debates, the fundraising process, the grand opening—all worked to involve the broader community. Transit provided key funding and continues to bring people to the square and downtown as a whole. Building on the positive start, with an effective management organization running it, the square has become the city’s place of pride and a focal point for all kinds of community activities. The revitalization of the downtown is testimony to the square’s profound impact on the livability of Portland.

ENDNOTES

1. G. B. Arrington, “Beyond the Field of Dreams: Light Rail and Growth Management in Portland,” *Tri-Met* (March 1995) p.8.
2. Philip Langdon, “How Portland Does It,” *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1992) p.141.

Case Study 4-2

Woodbridge Station, NJ: Creating a Sense of Place at a Commuter Rail Station

When is a railroad station not a railroad station? When it is in Woodbridge, because it becomes a very important part of the community . . .

—NJ DOT Commissioner Frank J. Wilson

This train station is about the public, is about our citizens; it is about using our train station to attract people to our downtown community.

—James McGreevey, Mayor, Woodbridge Township

What we did differently with this project, for openers, was to look at this station as a part of the community and most, if not all, of the effort was to try to create more of a sense of place here, a sense of community, and a sense of location.

We also tried to tie the station into the surrounding areas . . . and to broaden out the reach of the station . . .

—Rick Richmond, Assistant Executive Director, NJ Transit Department of Engineering

SUMMARY

The 1995 renovation of the commuter train station in Woodbridge, New Jersey, provided New Jersey Transit (NJ Transit) with the opportunity to do more than just routine physical improvements to a station building. NJ Transit viewed the project as an opportunity to use transit to make a significant difference in the community. Woodbridge was sorely in need of work: the “train station” was nothing but a graffiti-filled, dimly lit tunnel in the side of a railroad viaduct overgrown with weeds. Here was also the chance to try out a broader approach to station improvement; the Mayor of Woodbridge Township and other local leaders were eager to try to integrate the station into the town.

The project, one of five pilot projects of *NJ Transit’s Station Renewal* program (see Case Study 10-3), involved the renovation of existing facilities, the construction of a new entrance to the train station and the addition of amenities to better serve NJ Transit users. More significant, however, was the planners’ effort to enhance the role and visibility of the station in the town, while improving pedestrian access from Main

Street, thereby creating a sense of place at the station where previously there had been none. In addition, the station project complemented a streetscape and downtown revitalization project underway in Woodbridge.

PLANNING PROCESS

Although the renovation of the deteriorated train station was a major goal of the Woodbridge renewal project, L. Richard Mariani, Manager of Passenger Facilities of NJ Transit and the Project Director, sought to build a stronger connection between the station and the downtown area in order to efficiently expedite the project as well as build alliances with the township and local businesses.

The Woodbridge Train Station is located a few blocks from the heart of downtown Woodbridge, New Jersey. Woodbridge is the fifth largest city in New Jersey with a population of about 93,000 inhabitants, and it is the oldest original township in the state. The station's intermodal role is ensured because it is also within a few hundred yards of the New Jersey Turnpike (Interstate 95) and is served by several bus routes. The station serves a major commuter line: the North Jersey Coast Line. Before the recent improvements were made, approximately 1200 commuters passed through the station every weekday. Most riders commute into New York City, about a 40-min ride. Many passengers arriving at Woodbridge transfer to buses to reach a popular destination, the Woodbridge Center Mall, one of the largest indoor shopping malls on the East Coast.

The station building at Woodbridge is at the far end of an elevated viaduct and had little visibility either

from the street or from the adjacent downtown area (i.e., the station cannot be seen from Main Street). This was deemed detrimental to NJ Transit's ability to attract additional riders, and to efforts on the part of Woodbridge businesses to attract train passengers to stop and shop on their way to or from the station. The platform and station building are reached by a tunnel and stairway at the north end—serving as the main entrance and providing access from Pearl and Poillon Streets—and by a stairway from Green Street at the south end. Before the improvements, the only visible presence of the station at the street-level main entrance was two enormous advertising billboards flanking the gaping hole of the tunnel. The minimal design of the station and its total lack of presence compelled one passenger to remark before the renovation, "You can't even tell you're at a train station."

Information was collected through surveys of passengers, NJ Transit employees and adjacent retailers regarding their concerns about the station and suggestions for improving its design and function. Parking, circulation, seating placement, station upkeep and patterns of use at the station throughout the day were also observed. A series of recommendations for design improvements was developed based on this input.

Transit users and local retailers who were questioned expressed a need for additional retail services at the station and in the surrounding area. Thus, retail opportunities were included in the new design in the form of two kiosks flanking the Pearl Street entrance to be leased by NJ Transit to local businesses for use as newsstands, concessions or other businesses.

While planning work was underway, the Downtown Woodbridge Merchants Association was creating a special improvement district to implement a



Figures 4-9 and 4-10. Case Study 4-2. The goal of the Woodbridge Station Renewal project, shown here before and after renovation of the facility, was to create a "sense of place" for the station and to make it more appealing to and function better for transit passengers. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

streetscape project along Main Street and to help organize downtown events. The streetscape enhancements included brick-paver sidewalks and the installation of historic light fixtures and benches along Main Street to Pearl Street. As part of the planning process, NJ Transit worked with the township to select the same light fixtures to be installed at the train station. In addition, the brick pavers, which were to end at Main and Pearl Streets, were continued along Pearl to the entrance of the train station.

STRATEGY

Partnerships. Creating a new identity for the station, and undertaking a major renovation in an era of budget cuts and personnel shortages, relied on forging a new relationship with the surrounding community. Mr. Mariani stretched the funding further and got the job done faster because he orchestrated a partnership between NJ Transit, the township, the Downtown Woodbridge Merchants Association and other organizations. These partnerships gave the community a new stake in its train station that had never before existed.

Using funds from NJ Transit, the Township agreed to take control of the street-level portion of the construction project. While NJ Transit retained responsibility for the overall design and policy, Woodbridge Township took over the implementation of the design, preparing final design and construction documents and managing the construction process. NJ Transit used state rail crews and its own contractors to implement the improvements to the platform level, and had the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) repair the three commuter parking lots. The township also worked with NJ Transit to improve parking at the station.

Design Strategies. Design focused on elements that would enhance the presence of the station and link it to the surrounding area. To create a strong presence at Woodbridge Station, canopies were constructed to extend out over the tunnel entrances. The primary entrance was flanked by two small buildings designed for lease to local entrepreneurs, the sidewalk area was enlarged, and a canopy was added to the Poillon Street entrance. New amenities introduced at the entrance included historic-style benches, new trash receptacles, a historic-style clock, telephones, bike racks, and new cases that display both schedule and community information. On the platform, New Jersey Transit added new benches, information kiosks, telephones, and trash receptacles. The platform station building was renovated, air conditioning was added, and the restrooms were refurbished. The parking lots were cleaned, repaved, and restriped; the

trees were thinned out between the platform and the parking lot to provide better visibility to the elevated platform from the street.

Clear directional signage was added at the exits to Pearl and Poillon Streets and a local artist created a station map showing transit, business, and cultural information. NJ Transit painted “Welcome to Woodbridge” on the trestle over Main Street to match the merchants association’s typeface and colors. This sign also directs people to the station and its parking lots.

Passenger safety was enhanced by improving access paths, parking lots, and lighting around the station, and by improving the Main Street crosswalk. Trees and vegetation were pruned throughout the station area to improve sightlines. A closed-circuit television (CCTV) system records activity at the station on video tape. New vendors will also contribute to passenger comfort and security.

While the township agreed to repave Poillon Street, NJ Transit strengthened linkages to the surrounding streets and parking lots. All paths and sidewalks were repaved, including those leading to Main Street, with the same brick pavers used downtown. Along the walkway running parallel to the elevated railroad viaduct, a landscaped strip was planted with climbing vines and lined with the same historic-style lamp-posts used on Main Street.

Parking Lots. Two NJ Transit lots were in disrepair and dimly lit. One was located some distance away on the other side of Main Street from the station. At the same time, township vehicles were parked in a township lot next to an historic park adjacent to the station and employees walked across Main Street to the Town Hall. This created friction between the township and civic groups who desired to use the park for events.

The solution was simple: swap the two lots. Convenience for transit customers and township employees was enhanced and 250 fewer pedestrians cross busy Main Street each day. This also freed the township lot for evening and weekend events when transit customers typically vacate the lot.

FUNDING

NJ Transit and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation each contributed \$50,000 toward the station renewal program, which covered all the costs of the planning studies, completed by Project for Public Spaces, for the five pilot station projects, and which helped to leverage project funds. To implement the Woodbridge project, NJ Transit applied for and received its first Transportation Enhancement Project grant under ISTEA, which provides funding for transportation

projects not previously targeted for federal support. ISTEA provided \$463,000 and NJ Transit added \$503,000 in New Jersey Transportation Trust Funds for the work at grade level. NJ Transit added an additional \$200,000 in state Transportation Trust Funds, which were used for the platform-level and parking lot improvements and for benches, trash receptacles, lighting, display cases, new restrooms, and repainting.

The township had the time to facilitate the project but lacked the funding. Empowering local officials with greater influence gained commitment to the project's success. In December 1993, NJ Transit executed an agreement with Woodbridge Township committing \$966,000 for the final design, engineering, and construction of the grade-level improvements. This included \$463,000 in FTA Enhancement funds and \$503,000 in New Jersey Transportation Trust Funds.

NJ Transit also used innovative ways to ensure a higher standard of maintenance at the station: parking fees collected by the Downtown Woodbridge Merchants Association from the commuter lots will be dedicated to station maintenance, with a small amount going to help the downtown. In addition, a local restaurateur, interested in converting an old freight house next to the parking lot into a micro-brewery, agreed to maintain a 180-ft-long strip of landscaping in return for use of a small number of the parking spaces for his customers in the evenings, after commuting hours, and on weekends.

By contracting with the NJDOT to perform the parking lot improvements, rather than by going through the usual procurement process, NJ Transit was able to reduce its cost for this part of the project by 70 percent and complete the parking lots in a fraction of the time, minimizing disruption to transit users.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Commuters and townspeople surveyed in 1995 about their newly renovated station were clearly pleased with the changes. They believe that their NJ Transit station is a much more handsome and comfortable facility: 87 percent of the passengers questioned rated their overall impression of the station as either good or excellent, whereas only 45 percent had described it as good before the renewal. Passengers no longer complain about the poor maintenance, graffiti, and vandalism in and around the station. They said that the station is cleaner, better managed, and much safer than it was before. The improvements and amenities that commuters said they would like to see, such as more seating, better lighting, more telephones, and improved signage and schedule information have been provided. A shortage of parking

continues to be an issue, despite the addition of more spaces. Now that the station's image has improved, more people from surrounding towns appear to be driving to Woodbridge to take the train. Many commuters may also be taking advantage of the free parking, since New Jersey Transit has not yet imposed parking fees.

NJ Transit is negotiating with potential retailers to rent the two kiosks flanking the entrance to the station. Most commuters expressed the desire to have a convenient place to buy coffee and newspapers in the morning. A retail presence will help provide a greater sense of security and activate Pearl Street, perhaps attracting customers for neighboring merchants while providing a needed service for commuters.

Despite the effort to make the station accessible from Main Street, and vice versa, downtown retailers have not seen an increase in customers on their way to or from the station. (Most businesses are not open early or late enough to accommodate commuters.) The overall impression of the station has improved, however, and it is clearly seen as an asset to the town. The station has gained some attention outside Woodbridge as well: the Woodbridge Renovation Project received a 1995 Excellence in Downtown Development award from Downtown New Jersey, Inc., and one of "America's 25 Best Enhancement Projects" at the 1996 National Transportation Enhancements Conference. The project was also a catalyst in shifting NJ Transit toward an organizational culture that produces more projects of this kind. A recent memo from the Chief Engineer of Engineering & Constructing emphasized how critical it is to understand how a facility works at all hours of the day and night, how people approach and leave the station, and how they behave while there. This directive, in effect, implements the vision embodied by ISTEA.

NJ Transit now views the transit ride as only part of the customer's total experience and has developed a new and broader vision for the improvement of its station facilities. As Mr. Mariani describes it, "The quality of the whole experience is made up of the sum of all transportation segments. If any one segment is bad enough, customers may abandon the whole experience, causing ridership to suffer on all the segments."

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

As part of the Station Renewal Program process, project planners had recommended community meetings for NJ Transit that would provide a better opportunity for both professionals and citizens to collaborate before design alternatives were developed. This approach was not incorporated into the planning

process for the Woodbridge improvements because of a lack of interest on the part of the Township at the time. Indeed, Mr. Mariani now believes that more community meetings would have helped to build trust and to show the community that NJ Transit was “on their side.” Obtaining more community support from the very beginning, he believes, would have helped streamline the implementation of the project and the approvals process, resulting in a better project.

CONCLUSIONS

To a community, a train station can be more than just a building or a place to wait before leaving town. If conceived in an appropriate manner, it can be as important to a community’s livability as a library, a city hall, or a town square. When this larger purpose is realized, people become proud of and care for these stations, and the beneficiaries are transit, passengers, community residents, and local businesses.

The Woodbridge Station Renewal project illustrates that in order to make long-lasting and effective improvements to a transit facility, a project must focus on more than a just the building and its amenities. Attention must be given to enhancing the facility’s connections to its surrounding area and to developing innovative ways to manage and maintain both the station and its environs. In Woodbridge, NJ Transit was able to form partnerships within the Township Merchants Association, which enabled the transit agency and its facility to play a larger role in the community while gaining needed assistance in the implementation of the project. Woodbridge Station now has a valued presence in the community.

Case Study 4-3
Shady Grove Metro Station, MD: KidStop Child
Care Center Helps Make a Community
“Family-Friendly”

SUMMARY

In an attempt to make mass transit commuting more convenient, attractive and “family-friendly,” transit agencies have begun partnerships with cities to develop a creative solution: locating child care centers at transit terminals. This allows working parents to drive straight to the station, park their cars at a park-and-ride lot, drop off their kids at the child care center and take the train to work. Picking up their kids at the end of the day is equally easy. One such center—KidStop Child

Care Center—opened in September 1993 at the Shady Grove Metrorail station in Montgomery County, Maryland. The day care center now serves both transit riders and community residents and is one of the most sought after facilities in the area.

PLANNING PROCESS

The establishment of the KidStop Child Care Center involved a unique public-private partnership involving the transit operator (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority [WMATA]), Montgomery County government, and a group of corporate sponsors. These interests formed the Foundation for Working Families, a nonprofit organization devoted to helping private employers fund facilities for child and elder care on behalf of their employees. Board members include representatives of local businesses and public agencies.

The concept of combining child care centers and public transportation began when a 1987 task force identified commuters’ side trips for child care as a major barrier to the use of public transit by working parents. In response to the task force recommendations, the county began to research a pilot location for a transit-related child care center. After identifying Shady Grove as an ideal location, the county approached the foundation to begin the process of raising funds for the facility.

In 1991, the Board of Directors of WMATA approved a demonstration program that encouraged the establishment of child care centers at other Metro facilities and extended invitations to each of the local governments in the Washington, DC, region to submit proposals for establishing child care centers at Metro facilities. Montgomery County was the first to take advantage of this opportunity. WMATA agreed to lease the land to the county government for a period of 30 years at a FTA, which had endorsed the program. (Land acquired with federal funds may ordinarily only be used “for transit purposes.”) Under an agreement with the county, the foundation assembled funds and supervised the development of the design and construction of the center. After the facility was completed, the foundation donated the building to the county government. Construction began in August 1994 and the center opened May 15, 1995.

STRATEGY

The center is a free-standing building of approximately 20,000 sq ft situated within a 3-min walking distance of the Shady Grove Metro-Rail station. It is a state-of-the-art facility, with an outdoor play area and

modern playground equipment. The center has capacity for 106 children, ranging in age from 6 weeks through school age, and provides care for mildly sick children. Children's Discovery Centers of America, Inc., was selected to operate the child care center. The company, founded in 1983, operates 215 centers around the country and is one of the nation's largest providers of child care services.

FUNDING

The cost of construction totaled approximately \$1.5 million. The state of Maryland agreed to match contributions up to \$750,000, including \$20,000 of in-kind contributions. The city of Gaithersburg and area businesses, led by IBM and L'Oreal, contributed \$438,000, and the county government granted \$288,700 toward the match. Forty-two spaces were sold in advance to corporate employers whose contributions were used to pay for the facility's construction, and priority enrollment period extends to 10 years. At least half of the center's spaces are available to the public. Parents pay market rate tuition fees established by the operator.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The center is currently operating at full capacity and has a waiting list that extends into summer 1996. While there are several other day care centers in the vicinity, KidStop, because of its physical facilities and excellent staff, remains one of the most sought-after centers in the area.

The child care center fulfills multiple objectives. The transit authority benefits because the center helps to attract new transit users. Approximately 25 percent of the Center's patrons commute by Metro daily and another 15 percent use the Metro occasionally. The remaining 60 percent work in the Shady Grove area.

The county benefits because each transit trip means one fewer car in the peak period on Rockville Pike, the most congested arterial corridor in lower Montgomery County. But the biggest beneficiaries are the commuters. Instead of having to drive their children to day care centers near their homes and then continue their trips to work by automobile, they now drop off their children at KidStop, park at the station parking lot and take the train to work.

CONCLUSIONS

For parents who rely on mass transit to get to work, dropping their children off at an out-of-the-way child care center and stopping on the way home to pick them up can make commuting seem like a full-time job. Child care is often cited as a major reason that commuters are unable to take transit to work. The KidStop Child Center addresses the livability of the Rockville area by combining two services needed by many families: child care and public transit. This results in a simpler and faster trip. KidStop's location at the transit station also means that children are never more than a 30-min train ride from the parents' downtown offices, a consideration that also weighs heavily in parents' choice of a day-care location.

CHAPTER 5

Transit as a Catalyst for Downtown and Neighborhood Renewal

What is it that makes people feel so strongly about [Main] street, and so exhilarated when it may come back to life? To be sure, it has something to do with its historic buildings or attractive public square or its general physical appearance. But Main Street was and is more than just bricks and mortar, more than just another shopping center. It is the traditional center of a community, a center not defined so much geographically or architecturally as it is socially . . . It is . . . a place for activities of all kinds, for all kinds of people.

—Project for Public Spaces, *What Do People Do Downtown*, 1981. [1]

INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, the impact of post-war suburban growth has wreaked havoc on once thriving downtowns and urban neighborhoods. Downtowns, which only a few decades ago acted as centers of community life, have become empty and devoid of activity as businesses closed or moved to the outskirts of towns and cities. Many inner city neighborhoods have likewise declined, losing local business.

The redevelopment programs of the 1960s and 1970s, in many cases, were the wrong approach, further undermining an urban infrastructure that took decades to develop. As development and investment shifted to suburban areas accessible primarily by the car, public transit lost its ability to provide convenient and low-cost travel. Transit and the renewal of downtowns and neighborhoods are inextricably related.

Overview of Community Strategies

Most successful renewal programs for downtowns and neighborhoods are holistic and go to the heart of the community's livability goals. These programs typically seek to restructure local economies so that area businesses can compete successfully with suburban chain retail centers and find their own special, prof-

itable niche. This often means developing special strategies for recruiting, leasing, and promoting retail just as the suburban competition does. Public spaces can be upgraded—not just made more attractive but functional and usable for pedestrians, vehicles, and transit riders. Older buildings can be reused creatively. Developments of appropriate scale can create a new focus for activities and be a catalyst for economic revitalization. Often, it is a community's cultural resources, which remain in the city center, that can act as an important draw. The visual arts, theater, music, museums, and libraries can directly contribute to a city's economy while enriching residents' lives and attracting visitors.

Moreover, most success stories have come through intense local community initiatives that have mobilized resources and leveraged all kinds of investments in a step-by-step process to revitalize local businesses, stabilize and enhance neighborhoods, and rebuild a sense of community.

Whether it be a downtown or neighborhood, bringing back the vitality of "Main Street" is often the first step—although in severely distressed neighborhoods, this also means bringing back the neighborhoods themselves. "Main Street" is the business center as well as the emotional heart of most communities. Therefore, focusing revitalization strategies in the



Figure 5-1. Downtown Portland, OR. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

center can help establish a base for the revitalization of the surrounding community.

Crime, litter, and deteriorated conditions in cities, or the perception of these problems, keep people away. Special strategies for managing public spaces, often with private sector support, can be developed to improve a downtown's image.

Finally, problems of traffic congestion, parking, pedestrian flow, and efficient mass transit are common concerns most cities share. Communities can work with the city to reduce vehicular traffic (ridesharing programs, reducing parking subsidies, managing parking for short-term retail shoppers, implementing flextime, and encouraging use of public transit).

Role of Transit

Much of transit's impact comes from its drawing pedestrians to an area, which helps enliven adjacent uses and support business. By alleviating traffic pressure on streets, transit can help make an area more attractive and pedestrian friendly—a major goal in most downtown revitalization programs. In many cases illustrated in this report, transit has acted as the primary catalyst for community participation in downtown and neighborhood renewal programs and for the coordination and cooperation among public and private sectors, city agencies, transit authorities, and the community.

Transit service is essential to the functioning of most urban neighborhoods and downtowns. As a result, a variety of specific strategies have been developed to support the livability of downtowns and neighborhoods, including design and planning strategies related to transit facilities as well as special services

designed to enhance mobility. (Note: as in the previous chapter, cities and projects in *italics* are featured in case studies in this report.)

Transit malls, that is, streets transformed to give priority access to buses and enhanced waiting areas for bus patrons, represent the most visible change over the past 20 years in the thinking about how best to integrate transit effectively into a major downtown area and in understanding the inherent problems and opportunities. For example, in Chicago, the transit mall is being removed, while in *Portland, Oregon*, it continues to be successful and will soon be augmented by a new light rail transit line. *Denver's Sixteenth Street Mall* is generally regarded as a success, although the streetscape design has not proved as functional as *Portland's*. While not technically a transit mall because it has no bus traffic, *Boston's Downtown Crossing* is of the same generation as most other transit malls and clearly facilitates access to subway stations for thousands of passengers.

One of the most important aspects of transit malls is the significant role played by the transit stop. Transit malls gave designers the opportunity to design shelters and amenities to make bus patrons a part of the life of the downtown. The *Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative* is using donated kiosks and bus shelters from an advertising company to make bus stops centers of community life and focal points for neighborhood commercial district renewal. *Tucson's Tohono Tadaí Transit Center*—although larger in scale—has elaborate amenities for users, including air-cooled benches.

On a large scale, transit rail stations (light rail, subway, and commuter) and bus transfer centers or terminals have also taken on new importance for communities. The case studies of *Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts*, and the *Green Line, Chicago*, illustrate the actual impact of new and renovated subway stations on the development of entire downtown revitalization programs. Other case studies discuss the design and integration of light rail into a downtown (*Pioneer Square, Portland*); the development of a new commuter rail station (*Woodbridge Station, New Jersey*); the creation of new pedestrian space around existing subway stations (*Downtown Crossing, Boston*); and the design of new bus transfer centers (*Tohono Tadaí, Tucson* and *Staples Street Station, Corpus Christi*).

Downtown circulators and shuttles are another strategy used to enable shoppers, visitors, and office workers to move more freely about the central business district, thereby contributing to downtown economic vitality and reducing traffic congestion. These circulators and shuttles are often sponsored by local chambers of commerce, downtown business organizations, and

merchants associations as a promotional program, because experience has shown ridership is generally low. *Denver's Sixteenth Street Mall* was the first large-scale demonstration of the use of free, electric bus shuttles, which connect passengers to two bus terminals at either end of the mall. As a transportation corridor, the mall achieves a much better balance between buses and people than if standard diesel buses were used. In *Aspen*, a downtown shuttle circulates along the main downtown street.

In a number of cities, trolley service—like *Tucson's Old Pueblo Trolley*—link redeveloping urban areas with tourist attractions such as sports stadiums, convention halls, restaurant districts, and shopping centers. In *Corpus Christi*, rubber wheeled-versions of trolleys are used to provide convenient travel around the downtown and to connect to the main bus terminal. These old-fashioned-style trolleys recall downtown historic architecture and often become a tourist attraction in their own right, while allowing cities to avoid building costly transportation systems for short-haul, intracity trips.

On a neighborhood scale, many communities have developed special shuttles, discussed in the case studies of *Boulder, Colorado*; *Aspen, Colorado*; and *Watts, Los Angeles*. These shuttles serve downtowns and neighborhood commercial areas as well as the broader community.

ENDNOTE

1. Project for Public Spaces, Inc., "What Do People Do Downtown: How to Look at Main Street Activity," National Trust for Historic Preservation (1991) p.3.

EXAMPLE

Transit Malls: Successes and Failures [1]

The mall took the excitement out of State Street.
—Elizabeth Hollander,
Chicago's former planning commissioner.

The buses would line up, one after another, like a herd, with their diesel fumes.
—Adrian Smith, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Since people don't drive on State, they forget it's here.
—Carmen Rocha, store sales manager

As Mayor, I have found it difficult to find out whose idea this was in the first place.
—Richard Daley, Mayor of Chicago

—As quoted in "Chicago Gives Pedestrian Mall the Boot" (*New York Times*, February 1, 1996.)

Minneapolis constructed the first transit mall in the United States in 1967, and it was soon hailed as a national example of urban public space. Considered a bold and innovative move in its day, Nicollet Mall successfully generated almost \$50 million in downtown development within 3 years. The mall was unique because it included not just amenities for pedestrians, but a serpentine roadway that allowed city buses to circulate along the street. Nicollet, a popular destination at the time, became a combination bus terminal and shopping street.

Nicollet Mall was copied in many other cities across the United States: Philadelphia, *Portland, Oregon*, *Denver*, and Chicago, to name the most well-known. Their construction was encouraged by federal funding from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now the FTA). As with pedestrian malls, the limitations of the approach became more apparent as the years went on. The basic problem was the size and the fumes of buses, which are not generally compatible with pedestrian strolling, sitting, and window shopping. Bus waiting areas become the major amenity focus on a transit mall. As a result, the transit functions of the street seem to dominate at the expense of other activities.

In nearly every city where they have been built, transit malls are being rethought or have been altered from their original concept. In Chicago, a total redesign of the State Street Mall is underway to return it to a mixed-traffic street without trucks. Sidewalks had been widened beyond what was needed and, as a result, were underused. Under the new proposal,



Figure 5-2. When Chicago's State Street was closed to automobiles to create a transit mall, users complained that the street had become little more than a bus loading and unloading zone. Vehicular traffic is now being reintroduced, along with transit and pedestrian improvements, which will create a better balance of activities on this major shopping street. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

sidewalks will be narrowed, although they will still contain extensive amenities. The idea is that buses mixed with traffic are less dominant than buses alone.

Even Minneapolis has rebuilt the Nicollet Mall, although it has not changed its essential mix of functions. The problem with the mall was partly physical; it was in a state of disrepair as elements gradually wore out. Users in surveys complained about bus fumes and lack of bicycle access. Nicollet was no longer a major shopping street. The development it spurred removed activity on the street, because a second-level skywalk system was developed that essentially elevated retail activity above the street. The system, which does not connect directly to Nicollet Mall, now connects some 35 blocks.

The redesign of Nicollet Mall did not address its functional problems. Although the Nicollet Mall included plans by 1994 for smaller, electric-powered vehicles to reduce bus fumes, bicycle access has not been improved. Plans to connect the mall to the skywalks, which might have improved access, were scrapped. Kate Christianson, a Minneapolis writer on design issues, wrote that while some changes have made the mall "friendlier," it also "seems spiritless . . . The overall passivity of the redesign is all the more painful because the mall originally swirled in excitement." [2]

On a positive note for transit malls, Portland, Oregon's bus mall has successfully integrated transit, automobiles, and pedestrians. Although transit-oriented, the mall has always allowed one lane of vehicle traffic on it. The mall is attractively laid out with very well-designed bus waiting areas and simple street amenities (e.g., benches, information kiosks, and plantings) along it, as well as well-placed public art. The placement and design of amenities is often poorly understood by designers; in the case of Portland, however, amenities are usable and placed according to function. Because of the design of these street amenities, the mix of traffic, and the excellent maintenance and street management program, the Mall is the most successful of all those constructed. (See also Case Study 4-1.)

Learning from the experience in other cities, Rochester, New York, sought to create a mixed-use traffic street, with appropriate priority for buses. Originally conceived as a pure transit mall, the Main Street project was rethought to allow more diverse use and access. The street was reduced from six lanes to four, with the curb lanes given over to buses only. Parking and delivery were removed (the latter remains a problem), while sidewalks were widened to provide more space for pedestrian amenities and bus waiting facilities. While the street is well-used by pedestrians, it must compete with a skywalk system. In addition, retail activity has declined with the clos-

ing of a major department store, so it is difficult to assess the impact of the approach taken.

In Sacramento, California, and Memphis, Tennessee, light rail systems have been installed in the center of former pedestrian malls. While this can be seen as an improvement (because light rail, which is not diesel powered, is more pedestrian-friendly than buses), it does not usually operate with great frequency; and the center of the street still seems devoid of activity. Because of the tracks, having appropriately located crossings and well-designed access to light rail stations and platforms for people on wheeled conveyances, such as bicycles and wheelchairs, is very important.

In *Portland, Oregon*, a light rail transit system has continued to set records in terms of passenger use. This system, separate from Portland's bus mall but intersecting it, has been very effectively integrated into the downtown area. MAX is a 15-mile route that connects the downtown area to the suburbs, and, once it reaches downtown, becomes a part of the downtown street network. One of the strengths of the system is that the modal mix in which it operates changes according to the block. In general, it runs on mixed-traffic streets, but still discourages a great amount of private vehicle use. Where mixed traffic does occur, space for vehicles is limited, and on certain streets shared space is allocated to pedestrians only. Sidewalks have been widened slightly to accommodate small waiting areas. The trains, while long, are quiet and relatively unobtrusive, but clearly operate in street space rather than a pedestrian mall. Public spaces downtown, including *Pioneer Courthouse Square*, are enlivened by the system's presence, not dominated by it. It is an example in which transit, pedestrian, and vehicle uses are balanced.

ENDNOTES

1. Excerpted and updated from Project for Public Spaces, Inc., "The Effects of Environmental Design on the Amount and Type of Bicycling and Walking," National Bicycling and Walking Study, FHWA Case Study No. 20, Federal Highway Administration (April 1993) pp.10-12.
2. Christianson, Kate, "Nicollet Mall Redux," *Inland Architect* (March/April 1991).

CASE STUDIES

Case studies illustrate how transit is contributing to the renewal of downtowns and neighborhoods in three cities. While the projects are geographically diverse and involve different of modes of transit, they illustrate the importance of integrating transit facilities into downtowns and neighborhoods so that they can act as true catalysts for neighborhood renewal:

Case Study 5-1: Somerville, MA: Davis Square Transit Station

Subway Extension Spurs Neighborhood Rejuvenation

Case Study 5-2: Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative: Rebuilding Disinvested Neighborhood “Main Streets” from the Bus Stop Up

Case Study 5-3: Chicago, IL: The Green Line Using Transit Stations to Spur Reinvestment in Distressed Inner City Neighborhoods

**Case Study 5-1
Somerville, MA: Davis Square Transit Station
Subway Extension Spurs Neighborhood
Rejuvenation**

The subway was to be there for the community, not the community for the subway.
—Lee Auspitz, Member of Davis Square Task Force

SUMMARY

Davis Square, a principal commercial center in Somerville, Massachusetts, has experienced a remarkable renaissance with the extension of the Red Line subway from Cambridge in the early 1980s. This extension included construction of a new transit station in the center of the square. The city of Somerville capitalized on development of the new station, from its earliest planning stages, as a catalyst for revitalizing the square by promoting new commercial development and sponsoring other physical improvements, while working to maintain its traditional urban character. These public improvements have also catalyzed private reinvestment in the square’s adjoining residential areas. The success of the redevelopment efforts are largely attributed to close cooperation between the many stakeholders in the process. These stakeholders included the city, local businesspeople and residents, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), and numerous federal and commonwealth agencies.

PLANNING PROCESS

Davis Square, once a thriving commercial center, experienced a gradual decline in the post-World War II era. Between 1970 and 1980, the city of Somerville lost 2,000 jobs and the population dropped from 89,000 to 77,000, a 13 percent decline. Manufacturing, wholesale, and retail businesses left the area. According to a planning study completed in 1980, Davis Square suffered



Figure 5-3. Case Study 5-1. Davis Square, the business district in Somerville, MA, was revitalized with the introduction of subway service. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

from a lack of competitiveness among merchants, traffic congestion, inadequate parking, and an increasingly deteriorated physical environment.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, plans to expand the highway system in the Boston area met with stiff protest from community groups and local officials opposed to the massive land-takings required for highway construction. At the same time, Boston-area residents realized that public transportation was more practical than the automobile for commuting within Boston and from its outlying areas. Governor Sargent responded to this opposition in 1970, by signing a moratorium on highway construction within Route 128, a highway that encircles Boston, and setting up the Boston Transportation Planning Review to examine transportation plans for the Boston area.

In 1970, the Cambridge City Council urged the MBTA to seriously consider the extension of the Red Line, originally built in 1912, beyond Harvard Square as an alternative to a proposed highway. The route was to run from Harvard Square north through Cambridge to Arlington. However, in 1973, Somerville residents, businesspeople and public officials—realizing the economic benefits that a train and bus station would bring to their community—launched a petition and letter writing campaign to the MBTA requesting that the extension be routed through Davis Square. In addition, Somerville was providing 5 percent of the MBTA’s budget, and without any subway station within its borders, Somerville residents felt that their transit service was unequal to their contribution. In contrast, the town of Arlington, concerned about traffic congestion, opposed the extension of the Red Line into its boundaries and its termination at Arlington Heights. As a result, the Red Line now terminates at Alewife, in North Cambridge.

In 1977, while the Red Line extension was in the planning stage, the Somerville Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council put together the first Davis Square urban design and business study. That same year, the Davis Square Task Force was formed, composed of local business owners, residents and local officials, to act as a citizens' advisory committee regarding the revitalization plans and to address a major concern that was dividing the community on the type and extent of development. One faction was pushing for a major redevelopment project that would include the creation of an indoor shopping mall, while many local residents favored minimal change to the neighborhood. The OPCD commissioned outside consultants to study potential land use, including office and retail uses, traffic, parking and other issues. Along with input from the Task Force, the studies resulted in the Davis Square Action Plan, adopted in 1982. The primary goal of the Plan was to use the new Red Line station as a cornerstone for redevelopment, strengthening Davis Square as a viable shopping district while preserving the residential character of the neighborhood.

STRATEGY

The city of Somerville and the Davis Square Task Force initiated many projects to accompany the Red Line extension, using the redevelopment, especially of empty parcels, to build the type of community that they had envisioned:

- Streetscape improvements with funds from the Federal Highway Administration's Urban Systems Program, including street reconstruction, sidewalk widening, new lighting, fences, and planting.
- The renovation of Kenney Park at the corner of Grove Street and Highland Avenue.
- Storefront and facade improvements with a grant from the city's Community Development Block Grant entitlement. With the grant, the city paid for one-half of the facade work on eligible properties and provided design assistance through the OPCD landmark constitutional decision allowing the removal of all billboards from Davis Square, initially, and then from the city of Boston as a whole. In 1995, a local bank established its own Storefront Improvement Program, available to Davis Square businesses.
- Designation of Davis Square as a commercial area revitalization district (CARD), which allowed major commercial developments to use Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) financing through the Massachusetts Industrial Finance Administration

(MIFA). With IRB financing, the owners of the Errico building were able to renovate 6,000 sq ft of retail and office space and add 12,000 sq ft of new space.

- The construction of additional public parking, in small lots, throughout the Davis Square area.
- The construction of the Ciampa Manor Elderly Housing development on College Avenue. (Local residents favored residential over commercial development at this prime site, a gateway to Davis Square.)
- Planning and site development for the Buena Vista project, a \$10 million, 100,000-sq-ft office and retail complex, which includes a public parking structure. An Urban Development Action Grant provided \$1.7 million toward the initial development costs. This project was completed in 1991.

Private development efforts included the renovation of former manufacturing buildings and department stores in the Davis Square area to provide additional office and retail space. A locally owned, community-oriented bank was encouraged to construct a new building in the area and the old telephone building was converted into a drug and convenience store.

A bicycle path connects Davis Square to the towns of Arlington and Lexington, and bus stops, used by the MBTA and the Tufts University van service, connect local residents to the subway line. The subway station is also within walking distance of the large Alewife station parking garage. The streetscape improvements surrounding the Davis Square Station were designed to enhance the pedestrian access to the station and



Figure 5-4. Case Study 5-1. This plan of Davis Square shows the integration of the subway stations into the CBD, as well as the pedestrian improvements connecting the transit stations to the adjacent residential and commercial districts. (Credit: Carol R. Johnson Associates, Inc.)

local businesses, and to slow traffic, while giving the commercial area a more coherent appearance.

The MBTA developed the plaza linking the two station entrance buildings, built on an old railroad right of way, and continued a greenway along the right of way as far as Alewife. The plaza is designed to serve as the center of Davis Square, providing a gathering place and a center for activities and outdoor entertainment. The MBTA's Red Line extension qualified it to receive state percent-for-art funds. One percent of the cost of constructing the new headhouses was used to commission the figurative sculptures, some representing local citizens, that adorn the plaza. In addition, tiles designed by neighborhood children were installed in the station and a large sculpture was commissioned to hang over the tracks. The public art projects fit in with the city's goal of creating a community place; a place where residents could feel a sense of ownership.

At Mayor Capuano's recommendation in 1995, the city's Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), with input from the Task Force, engaged a consultant to improve Davis Square Plaza/Statue Park and make it more attractive as a gathering place. The city will provide new and upgraded amenities for the plaza, such as improved lighting, and new furniture, landscaping and flag poles, and the MBTA will replace the station's long skylight. The existing barrel-vaulted, plexiglass skylight extending across the plaza, obscures the view of adjacent stores and is out of scale with the neighboring buildings. A new, lower skylight of more durable materials is being planned to illuminate the station, while serving as a performance stage on the plaza level.

City agencies are also working with the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) to add a second bicycle path through the square, with new bike racks near the station, and to improve bike connections to neighboring communities. Other community groups such as the Somerville Bicycle Committee and the Friends of the Bikeway are involved in the process. In addition, a new substation for the city's community policing program, which includes police on bicycles, is being created within one of the station buildings. The continuing success of this project can be attributed both to the interagency cooperation between the MBTA, Mass Highway, and the city of Somerville and to the ongoing involvement of the Davis Square Task Force and other community groups.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

During the planning stages, the resident members of the Davis Square Task Force struggled to keep Davis Square from becoming overdeveloped. According to Lee Auspitz, a long-time member of the task force,

local residents (who at the time wielded more power than the business interests on the task force) had at first opposed the subway extension, fearing that it would "ruin the neighborhood." Preserving a stable, residential environment was their primary goal and they fought to prevent Davis Square from becoming just another regional shopping mall. If they had to have a subway then "the subway was to be there for the community, not the community for the subway."

While local businesses pushed for an increase in parking, residents thought more parking would lead to the disintegration of the urban fabric of the neighborhood. "Park and Ride" and even "kiss and ride" drop-offs were discouraged. As a result, no facilities for commuter parking are provided today in Davis Square. The task force fought long and hard to keep Davis Square pedestrian-oriented, even helping to defeat a mayor who favored large-scale commercial redevelopment of the area and the construction of large parking structures.

The task force also encouraged the MBTA to minimize its intervention in the neighborhood; while the MBTA had initially planned to demolish 64 houses and businesses, it ultimately removed only 4 houses. The Task Force and local citizens, through various tactics, were able to convince the MBTA to accommodate the needs of the community in the design and planning of the station and throughout the long and disruptive construction phase. Goody Clancy's project architect was a resident of Davis Square himself and worked closely with local citizens to integrate the station buildings into the existing fabric with as little disruption as possible.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The Davis Square MBTA Station and associated improvements have significantly transformed Davis Square. The new brick and granite paving, upgraded lighting, and facade improvements have given the plaza and surrounding streets a fresh, well-maintained appearance. The plaza is replete with such amenities as public art, seating, a new tree canopy, and granite bollards to prevent vehicular access and to delineate the plaza's edges. The plaza is principally used as a central square by residents who sit, watch, rest from shopping or exercise, or wait for the next bus. The plaza also functions as a meeting place and as a "front yard" for adjoining businesses. Annual community events such as ArtBeat, sponsored by the Somerville Arts Council, are staged there. Periodically, the plaza is used for public speaking.

Today, Davis Square flourishes and has recently experienced an influx of new restaurants, theaters, and entertainment-related businesses. The Somerville

Theater, a historic landmark in the square, is capitalizing on the square's improvements as well as its proximity to transit. Its monthly programs, which include live as well as film performances, attract a regional audience and enjoy renewed patronage. Its restoration and reconstruction, scheduled for 1996, reflects favorably on the square's recent improvements.

Davis Square is also host to new commercial office space. Since 1988, two substantial office buildings totaling approximately 170,000 sq ft have been completed and are at 100 percent occupancy. Building tenants include a major regional community health care provider, a medium-sized architectural firm, and headquarters for a local bank. Also, the square hosts a number of start-up businesses.

Taken together, these activities add vitality to the square, both during and after traditional business hours. Undoubtedly, the transit improvements have contributed significantly to the square's overall health. The transit station has made it possible for people to reach the square without bringing cars into the densely settled area. Rent control was abolished recently in the neighboring communities of Cambridge, Boston, and Brookline, and the affordable housing available in Somerville, combined with access to its good public transit, has made it an attractive place for people to live. Other factors that increased the square's attractiveness include changes in living preferences and increased private transportation costs, which bolster support for public transit use.

The *Red Line Extension, Land Use Study*, prepared in 1988 by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, analyzed the changes in land use and commercial and residential development 5 years after the completion of the extension. The report states, "Davis Square appears to have passed the turning point on its way to recovery. Businesses in the square, old and new alike, are generally thriving and public confidence is high. The Red Line clearly . . . helped to stimulate this revitalization, but it was clearly accomplished only by a cooperative effort of the municipality, local merchants, and the residents of Davis Square." [1] Specifically, the report states that businesses near the station show increased sales and office and retail uses rose by 10 percent.

CONCLUSIONS

Davis Square has been revitalized and is a thriving downtown area, not just because of the transit investment and improved access, but because of the energy and commitment of the city, businesses, the MBTA, and residents. Working together, the transit station served as a catalyst for a range of cooperative

programs that have breathed new life into the district and made the city of Somerville more livable. The tremendous community effort to preserve the neighborhood's character paid off: Davis Square is remarkable in its coherence and urban texture. As the residents had hoped, the area still has the narrow streets, the small scale and the densely built fabric that made it unique and that now contribute to its success.

SOURCE

Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Red Line Extension, Land Use Study* (1988).

ENDNOTE

1. Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Red Line Extension, Land Use Study* (1988) p.32.

Case Study 5-2

Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative: Rebuilding Disinvested Neighborhood "Main Streets" from the Bus Stop Up

LANI is a vision that touches everyone who encounters it. It is like a palette of paints allowing each neighborhood to design its colors, textures, and uses. Government is there to provide the paint, but only the community can compose the picture.

—Deputy Mayor Rae James

My dream for LANI is that it becomes a national model for revitalizing and sustaining neighborhoods through community empowerment.

—Richard J. Riordan, Mayor of Los Angeles

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI), sponsored by Mayor Richard Riordan, is undertaking a 30-month demonstration project that seeks to provide an economic stimulus to eight transit-dependent neighborhoods through community planned transportation improvements, housing, and commercial rehabilitation, and development. Incorporated in 1994, LANI has established community organizations in each neighborhood and provided technical support, training, and funding for demonstration projects around transit facilities.

In December 1994, local organizations completed work plans, describing programs and projects to be

implemented. In 1995, they hired design consultants and began construction of the initial demonstration projects. Projects vary greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood, but all share a common focus on bus stops as centers of community life. In addition, LANI has encouraged other ongoing efforts in neighborhoods and has served as a catalyst for community participation and action. At the end of the 2-year demonstration period, local organizations will have the capacity to become permanent vehicles for community revitalization.

PLANNING PROCESS

LANI has its roots in the Los Angeles riots of April 1992, when it was evident that rioters, in the words of the original LANI proposal, “had no feeling of ownership or caring about what happened to their neighborhoods. Residents felt disconnected, and in many cases they were.”

In addition to a lack of connection between people and their neighborhoods, the neighborhood main streets—even in stable, middle-class neighborhoods—looked abandoned. Transit service was inadequate for low-income areas in which more than 20 percent of households in auto-dependent Los Angeles have no car. Moreover, transit stops are virtually invisible. They are situated on narrow sidewalks with few amenities, just inches away from speeding traffic. The stops are, as one resident put it, “humiliating places to wait.”

Rather than simply take a city initiated “triage” approach to neighborhood renewal, the Mayor’s Office of the City of Los Angeles developed the concept for LANI, whereby with a minimum of financial support coupled with dedicated technical assistance, neighborhoods would be empowered to address their own economic opportunities. Moreover, it was important not merely to plan communities, but actually to implement projects that establish linkages between other programs in communities and build in the self-reliance necessary to continue these efforts.

After encouragement from the United States Secretary of Transportation, the Mayor’s Office prepared a proposal in January of 1994, which identified the overall scope of LANI and the eight neighborhoods to be included. City council members were solicited to nominate neighborhoods in their districts, and city staff and planning consultants evaluated projects to identify those with the greatest chance for success. Each of the project sites selected was situated along a significant bus or rail corridor (four adjacent to Metrorail light rail stations) with a substantial transit-dependent population and, while several of the area main streets were underused, there was a

demand for new affordable housing and neighborhood retail. Moreover, the projects all had existing community organizations and some level of planning work already in place; these were considered to be the main ingredients for short-term success. The city council representative for the district had to endorse LANI, identify the appropriate community groups, and provide continued leadership and cooperation with that local group.

Within 6 months of its conception, LANI became a reality. A board of directors with diverse backgrounds in real estate development, transportation, urban planning, finance, labor law, communications, and community organization was established and an executive director hired. Funding commitments were obtained from the FTA and local public and private sources. Eight “Recognized Community Organizations” (RCOs) were set up, composed of community members representing businesses, commercial property owners, residents, and institutions.

In another 6 months, each of the eight RCOs had completed a project work plan that defined specific physical improvements, such as transit and pedestrian amenities, to be implemented in 1995. They also developed longer-term programs to revitalize the neighborhood main streets, create jobs, and assist youth. The work plans identified goals and prioritized needs determined by community meetings, outreach, and previous planning work. Organization and decision-making structures were developed and the scope of work for designers of the initial projects outlined.

Throughout 1995, efforts focused on implementation: hiring consultants, developing specific plans, reviewing plans and proposals with city agencies for approval, bidding, and beginning construction. Meanwhile, RCOs pursued other nonconstruction activities, like holding special events and installing banners that gave tangible evidence of the LANI project.

STRATEGY

The LANI strategy has several important, interconnecting components:

Community Participation and Ownership. LANI is based on the substantial involvement of local residents, businesses, and property owners. The RCOs have substantial independence and are responsible for implementation of their own projects and programs, with financial support and guidance from the LANI board. Methods of participation have varied by project, but include diverse representation on the RCO Board, community workshops, and outreach to existing institutions and organizations.

Leveraging Public and Private Resources. LANI seeks to leverage its own limited resources with other local, state, and federal programs, both public and private. This strategy is critical in concentrating rather than diffusing scarce financial resources. LANI has been successful in obtaining in-kind donations as well. For example, bus shelters and information kiosks for all the neighborhoods were provided by Gannett Outdoor. This private company donated \$250,000 and agreed to maintain the shelters and kiosks for 3 years.

One advantage of pursuing eight projects concurrently is that LANI is able to help streamline approval processes through various city agencies. For instance, the Los Angeles city council contributed to the LANI program by waiving more than \$150,000 in permit fees.

Short-Term Catalytic Projects. Critical to the success of LANI is that it did not merely plan for long-term



Figure 5-7 and 5-8. Case Study 5-2. As part of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI), residents work together making transit stops centers for community (before—Figure 5-7). This bus stop in North Hollywood was transformed and integrated into an “art park,” which will be the site for a cafe, art displays, and community events (after—Figure 5-8). (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

visions, but produced concrete results during the first year of the program. Each community has determined for itself which of the best first projects will lead to other projects and programs in the future. Projects such as the installation of new bus stops and information kiosks help make the commercial streets more attractive and build a sense of cooperation within the neighborhoods. These are the short-term efforts underway in the eight neighborhoods:

- Tree plantings using volunteers from a conservation organization, with refreshments provided by local businesses.
- New historic light fixtures, installed on a trial basis.
- A training program for youth in gardening and landscape maintenance, operated by a local senior center.
- Installation of banners with a special banner-raising ceremony.
- A jazz festival to celebrate the importance of jazz in the African American community.
- Development of an “art park” next to a bus stop, with trees, sculpture displays, and a community mural.
- A community garden on a vacant lot run by at-risk youth, an important first step to creating a farmer’s market where the community can buy produce and at-risk youth can earn employment.

Building Long-Term Local Capacity. LANI’s strategy is to produce self-reliant programs that have the capacity—in terms of organization, finance, leadership and technical skills—to carry on the work in the future. It is anticipated that future programs will be sustained through special neighborhoods improvement districts, which can finance streetscape improvements, public space management activities, and business development efforts. Community development corporations can also help sustain programs by supporting affordable housing. It is hoped that local business associations will be developed as well.

FUNDING

The core of the funding for the Los Angeles LANI comes from the FTA Livable Communities program, which provides \$250,000 in support to each neighborhood through the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Contributions from the FTA/MTA have totaled \$2.3 million. MTA also provides free office space overhead for LANI.

Meanwhile, the city of Los Angeles has contributed \$800,000. This includes the \$115,000 that the city council approved for the program start-up and administra-

tive expenses. Since the initial contribution, the majority of the city's money has gone directly to the eight neighborhoods where LANI operates. (The county of Los Angeles helped fund LANI as well, \$200,000 was approved by the state ballot for county transit stores and 138 transit shelters.)

Local neighborhoods have also been successful in obtaining donations, such as meeting refreshments, flyer printings, and meeting spaces. Local businesses have donated trees and private companies have donated legal, accounting, and design services. Of course, much of the implementation of projects relies on community volunteers.

For example, Leimert Park, one LANI neighborhood, has leveraged more than \$1 million in local government money to fund various aspects of its demonstration project; \$600,000 was contributed by the City Department of Parks and Recreation to upgrade the local park; \$285,000 was donated by the Community Redevelopment Authority to pay for needed street work, including adding decorative paving and bump outs; and \$400,000 was granted by the local city council office for re-stripping and improving lighting in parking lots and adding landscaping. In addition, a mixed-use retail/office development project has been attracted to the area and has purchased land.

As noted above, each neighborhood group is preparing a plan for sustaining the program. LANI will also continue to seek federal, state, and local support for implementation of demonstration projects.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

LANI implemented a process to overcome obstacles before they arose. In May 1995, LANI arranged a 2-day forum during which each of the eight design engineers presented their plans to a panel composed of representatives from the City Department of Transportation, MTA, and the Departments of Public Works, Safety, Streets and Lighting, and others. This streamlined the planning process because each neighborhood did not have to seek separate approvals from each agency. During the two days of deliberation, concessions were made and compromises reached. For example, the NOHO (North Hollywood) community agreed to the widening of Magnolia Street as a trade-off for streetscaping and amenities.

The bureaucratic hurdles involved in leveraging funding tied to other city initiatives have been difficult to overcome, however. Currently, LANI has a second round of FTA funding and an ISTEA grant is still pending.

Local obstacles exist in each of the project areas as well. For example, the Highland Park site is within the overlay of a historic district that prohibited the

use of angle parking. Also, some design engineers have developed plans that are simply not feasible to build. People within the organizations themselves have been working hard, however, to overcome these obstacles as well as to gain consensus among divergent groups so that they can move forward with implementation.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

So far, a number of project areas have been successful in attracting additional funding for improvements. These design and planning efforts have also served to boost efforts to organize merchants into local merchants associations. In Leimert Park, community development block grant funds will be used to hire a consultant to develop a nonprofit organization to manage and administer the new merchant's association and to coordinate other efforts aimed at attracting further funding.

In addition, many communities have gone a step further in their design process and have created plans for the next stage of development, so that when funds are identified, communities have plans ready for implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

Although still in its early stages, LANI has combined many key ingredients: community involvement, a focus on creating places along corridors that are unappealing to pedestrians, and short-term, visible projects, all focused on transit. In the next year, the true test will be weighing the impact of the first phase of plans and seeing how neighborhoods take the next step toward making their communities more livable and transit-friendly.

Case Study 5-3

Chicago, IL: The Green Line

Using Transit Stations to Spur Reinvestment in Distressed Inner City Neighborhoods

We started with a pie in the sky notion and now there is a \$300 million investment . . .

—Doug Farr, Project Architect

The Green Line took neighborhoods and businesses, inner city and suburban residents, and city government and transit operators and made them realize that they had something in common.

—Jackie Leavy, Executive Director,
Neighborhood Capital Budget Group

We have given a terrific shot in the arm to the City and communities, but it will be a long time before the CTA reaps its rewards with increased ridership.

—Ken Domier, CTA Service Planning.

All that is happening in the area are dividends from investments that people have been making for a long time. The Green Line has created the synergy which is pulling it all together.

—Ken Govas, Industrial Council of Northwest Chicago

SUMMARY

One month after the Green Line was actually created by re-routing and re-connecting several legs of CTA's rapid transit system into a new configuration, newly installed President Robert Belcaster of the CTA announced that he was considering permanently closing the line, replacing it with express bus service, and redirecting passengers to two parallel commuter train lines. The community, seeing this as yet another potential disinvestment in already distressed neighborhoods, rallied forces and organized into a broad-based community coalition. This coalition developed the concept of using transit to create a series of redevelopment projects within easy walking distance of stations on the line. The idea was not just to reopen transit service, but to use the transit infrastructure as a community asset to create employment opportunities in neighborhoods where unemployment was among the highest in the city and to attract new residents, developing the vast tracks of open, vacant land into vital and safe new neighborhoods.

The campaign to save the Green Line was successful. The line was rebuilt during a 2-year, \$323 million rehabilitation project and is slated to resume operations in March or April 1996. Just as important, the citizens' campaign to save the Green Line has subsequently led to a renaissance of interest in the neighborhoods, which have also been designated a federal empowerment zone. While efforts are only starting, there is new interest and commitment to rebuilding neighborhoods from the bottom up—an investment that would not be taking place with such vigor and excitement had the Green Line not been saved.

PLANNING PROCESS

When the Green Line was constructed in the 1890s, it ran through the center of a vital urban district—with both industrial and residential neighborhoods—and served as an important link to downtown Chicago. However, the area declined after World War II in a classic pattern of flight to the suburbs, influx of poor minorities seeking housing, and 1950s style urban renewal. The riots in 1968 sent the district into



Figure 5-5. Case Study 5-3. A typical Green Line Station, Chicago, IL, before renovation. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

a downward spiral, decreasing the number of people and housing units in the area by 50 percent and more by the 1990s.

As the neighborhood declined, so did transit service. Twelve stations were closed until there were few access points for the community. Between the mid-1970s and 1993 there was a 60 percent decline in ridership (from 72,000 in 1976 to about 27,000 weekday riders in 1994) with the elevated structure and stations in dire need of repair. Travel time increased almost 100 percent as trains slowed on the deteriorated tracks.

The planning process for saving the Green Line began with the formation of the Lake Street El Coalition a community network representing business and residents, as well as citizen action groups. Spearheaded by the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group (NCBG), the coalition included West Side and South Side residents and communities, industry and business leaders and leaders of suburban Oak Park, with the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) providing technical assistance. These community groups collected nearly 20,000 petition signatures and lobbied elected officials. NCBG, a city-wide organization dedicated to increasing public investment in neighborhoods, staffed the coalition.

Recognizing the coalition's goal of using the Green Line as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization, the CNT encouraged the coalition to work with the architectural firm of Doug Farr and Associates to create a prototype plan for one station. The Pulaski stop on the west leg of the Green Line was selected to serve as an example of a strategy to be replicated all along the transit corridor because an active local development corporation existed to help drive the process. Farr and Associates working with CNT staff developed a "Sustainable Kit of Parts" through a series of six com-

munity meetings facilitated by NCBG. Community members identified specific local assets in their neighborhood (libraries, housing, shops and parks) and how these elements could be improved. Over the six meetings, a plan emerged for the neighborhood that reflected the concerns identified at the meeting. The plan included a new transit station flanked by a commercial strip with retail services; a 24-hour drug store; intensified housing development on vacant land; a day care center; and special programs to improve security and retain industry.

In July 1993, the Green Line Coalition and NCBG held a press conference to unveil the "Community Green Line Initiative" to demonstrate the economic potential of communities all along the Green Line and the value of rebuilding the transit corridor. This initiative provided a model for determining what the air quality benefits of transit-oriented development would be for the communities adjacent to the Lake/Pulaski and Washington Park Green Line stations.

One month later, in August 1993, the CTA announced that the line would be reconstructed at a cost then estimated at \$300 million. The CTA did not raise any new grants for this program, but reallocated capital improvement moneys from other projects. Practical considerations played a role as well, as the CTA might have had to repay the federal government almost as much money if it had closed the line before the expiration of the 40-year time limit, after receiving federal grants for infrastructure repairs. In addition, the CTA is required to reduce bus emissions to meet federal Clean Air Act requirements.

In December 1994, there was another momentous announcement: the CTA Green Line would be the spine of a new federal empowerment zone (EZ) for Chicago, one of six in the nation. The inclusion of the Green Line corridor in the designation was not a coincidence but was a direct reflection of the citizen activity in the area, plus the fact that the Green Line itself provided a strong geographic identity for the zone and that all the census tracts in the transit corridor met the federal poverty guidelines for EZ program eligibility. The federal EZ program will provide \$100 million in social service block grants in addition to tax incentives to encourage investment and job creation in the area. The state and city have added to this financial commitment, and the private sector has committed \$2 billion in investment.

As the Green Line reconstruction began, planning work continued in the neighborhoods. The NCBG conducted a year-long job planning effort for four additional neighborhoods (other than the Pulaski station area) and published "Putting Neighborhoods on the Right Track" in January 1995. In addition, the city of Chicago and the CTA asked the Urban Land Institute

(ULI), a nonprofit education and research organization that deals with land use development, to assemble a panel of experts to assess the market for a mix of uses around each station, develop underlying planning and design considerations, and identify the role of the city and the CTA in implementing the vision. The panel convened for one week in June 1995 and focused on two neighborhoods as examples. One of these stations, California/Lake Station, is presented below as a typical strategy that other stations will follow.

STRATEGY

The principal strategy of the program, and certainly the key goal of the CTA, is to reopen the transit line, provide access, and build new ridership although the transit agency expects that it will take years before any real gain in ridership can be measured. The community is leveraging this project to achieve many livability goals by involving and empowering the community to attract business and housing investment that serves current community residents. While each neighborhood along the line has its own particular

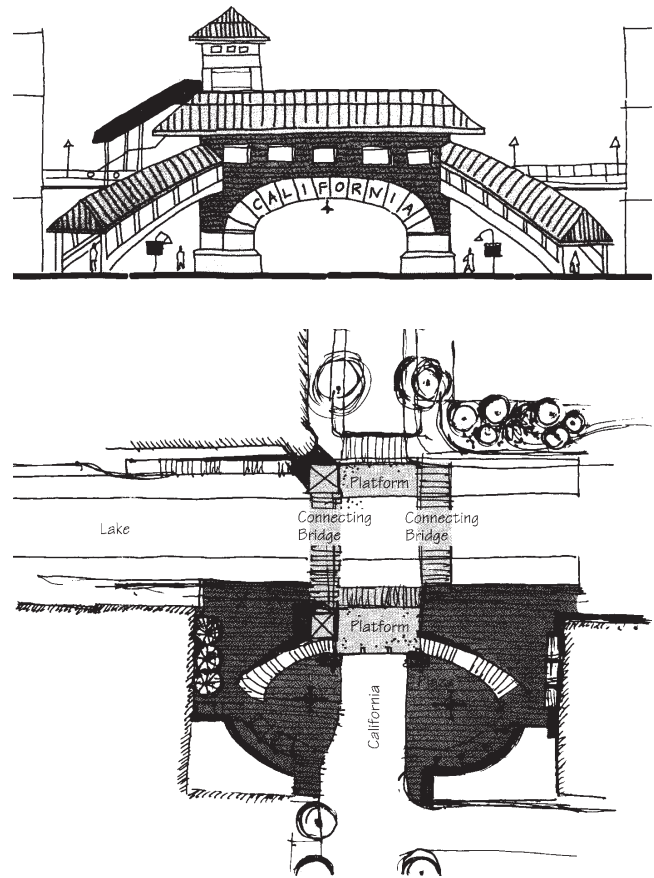


Figure 5-6. Case Study 5-3. Proposed design concepts for the renovated California/Lake Station and station area plan. (Credit: Urban Land Institute)

problems and objectives, the goals presented in the initial plans for the Pulaski Station give some idea of the range of livability issues the communities hope can be addressed by this transit project:

- Improve public safety;
- Increase pedestrian access to transit and community services;
- Rebuild neighborhood density through infill and new housing;
- Increase jobs and employment for community residents;
- Rebuild the neighborhood economy via retail and commercial revitalization;
- Revitalize open space; and
- Expand neighborhood capacity to implement the project in partnership with the CTA, city, and local organizations.

The result of all this activity along the Green Line is that many groups need to take responsibility for implementation. The CTA views its role as opening the line and the stations in 1996. It is taking an active role in station development at two larger stations that are being planned as retail/transit centers or “super stations,” and where they may also own more land. For the rest of the line, the CTA’s position is that community development groups, the city, and the private sector must take the lead, although the CTA is available to provide guidance and to conduct such activities as training workshops for community people. For example, the CTA has funded the African American Leadership Program to provide training on the development process. Both NCBG and CNT have continued to provide community-based organizations with planning assistance. The city of Chicago has been funded to carry out a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Demonstration Project on the Green Line, and Chicago’s Regional Transportation Authority has formed a transit-oriented development clearinghouse as well as funding roundtable discussions on these topics.

One example of a local project is presented below.

Example Strategy: The California/Lake Station

The California/Lake Station was one of two stations investigated in depth by the ULI panel and is further along in implementation than most of the other projects because there had already been several revitalization programs in place in the area. This station is an area that is both industrial and residential. The Kinzie Industrial Corridor is a 675-acre industrial district that abuts the station, with more than 13,000 workers (3,000 of whom are within ½ mi of the station).

Transit Service. The ULI panel suggested that the CTA establish short distances between stations on the Green Line, so as to provide complementary service without competing with the parallel Blue Line, which offers express service. Competing bus service could also be eliminated. Stations located roughly ½-mi apart reinforce transit-oriented development potentials and emphasize the community investment goals of the Green Line project.

Developing Communities. Because population has been declining and there is a vast amount of open land, the environment along the Green Line looks devastated. The troubled Henry Horner Homes Chicago Housing Authority public housing project discourages new residential development. Until the Green Line project, however, residents and industrial advocates did not work closely together. This transit program has united the two in pursuing the revitalization of the neighborhood.

Because the aggregate buying power of the neighborhood is currently so low, the ULI panel recommended that the neighborhoods focus on building owner-occupied homes (single- and two-family houses as well as townhouse units) and increasing residential density targeted to mixed-income groups. Neighborhood convenience stores and other commercial development around the station should follow once population and income are increased.

There are already projects in the works. The city of Chicago plans to demolish or radically reconfigure the Henry Horner Homes. About 40 privately built, single-family infill homes are under construction and another 50 are planned under a city-sponsored program, “New Homes for Chicago,” which reduces the purchase price of houses by providing low-cost land. The industrial district is one of the city’s “Model Industrial Corridors,” a program seeking to expand existing and recruit new industrial uses in the area. The Kinzie Industrial Development Corporation, which runs the oldest and largest “business incubator” in the country, will be greatly enhanced by the recent EZ designation, and its substantial tax incentives for business investment and expansion.

The ULI panel also recommended establishing special overlay zones to provide guidelines for the design of new development and streetscape improvements, which are also needed to reinforce neighborhood development goals and to upgrade the image of the area. As a small first step, banners announcing the EZ now line neighborhood streets.

Station Area. The ULI panel recommended creating a small “transit plaza” adjacent to the station lined with small retail establishments as they become feasible. Unfortunately, the CTA’s design for the new sta-

tion is not oriented in the right direction (because the CTA does not own the land ideal for the plaza); the station itself was criticized for its mundane appearance. The panel suggested a new station with a plaza and civic identity. "The station should celebrate the neighborhood. Perhaps it should honor . . . a neighborhood pastor . . . A standout station and station area plaza will encourage pedestrian traffic, one of the key elements of a transit-oriented development." [1] Unfortunately, this level of community input appears to have come too late in the process, and it is unlikely that such a station will be built.

Transit service, new development, and improved station areas are being addressed in other areas as well. However, the level of promise and commitment varies greatly, usually dependent on the extent of local initiative.

FUNDING

Funding for the initial pilot planning work to save the Green Line was done by nonprofit organizations through their general support funds, although some additional foundation grants were received by the CNT. Additional planning funds were obtained through federal ISTEA funds, with matching funds from the CTA and the city of Chicago community development block grants, but these have not yet been spent.

The Community Green Line Initiative's model for determining air quality benefit was used by the CTA to qualify for \$10.5 million in federal CMAQ funds to build and renovate the Lake Pulaski and Washington Park transit stations. The model enabled the city to prove that each of these two facilities would decrease the number of automobile trips in their respective areas by 10 percent.

Funding for the reconstruction of the Green Line and stations totaling now about \$350 million was provided by the CTA through its capital budget. The EZ is a project of the federal government and includes extensive investments, as described above.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The obstacles to this project have been and remain considerable. Initially, the CTA was seen as an obstacle and became the object of an intense political campaign. Jackie Leavy, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group, wrote in an op-ed piece in *The Chicago Tribune*, "We collected tens of thousands of petition signatures, held scores of community meetings and press conferences, analyzed the CTA and the city's capital budgets, pored over RTA documents, took CTA

President Robert Belcaster on a train ride and persuaded three powerful Illinois congress people to join him. Throughout the campaign, we involved local and state legislators and neighborhood manufacturers, and united city residents with suburban neighbors . . . In April, 1993, on the congressional tour of the Green Line that we organized, CTA said it had no money for the line. Four months later, we won." [2]

The Coalition for the project also faced financial problems in terms of supporting planning activities for the project. However, they were successful in obtaining ISTEA (CMAQ) funds and FTA Livable Communities Initiatives for one station with the city of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development acting as sponsor. Thus, the broad-based approach ultimately helped lead to more funding for the project.

Now the obstacles are more practical: how to implement this ambitious, costly project, which will take years. The ULI panel focused on this problem and made seven basic recommendations:

1. Public sector subsidies must leverage private, market-driven investments.
2. Public sector resources must be made early and targeted to produce visible results—not spread evenly over the entire line.
3. Master plans for each project must be developed and adopted.
4. The operation of the Green Line should emphasize short- and middle-haul trips and not compete with the Blue and Red Line longer haul services. Local competing bus service should be dropped. The whole line should be renamed to give it a new image.
5. Station designs should be modified so they support local economic development goals.
6. Transit should see itself as a tool in the revitalization process.
7. Successful station revitalization will be driven by increasing the number of people who live in the area, not by commercial development alone.

One obstacle has arisen as a result of the project's success in changing the perception of the area: vacant land that has been long dormant is now being purchased and held for speculative reasons and owners of land slated for inclusion in these development projects have either refused to sell or demanded many times the fair market value for the land. To put an end to the delays caused by property owners—at the Lake/Pulaski site in particular—the city stepped in and designated the site as a "redevelopment area," which enabled it to take control of the property through "eminent domain."

The CTA was criticized in the ULI report, which stated that “the perception, if not the reality, seems to be that the decisions about station closings and improvements have been unilateral, with little notice given to those affected by the decisions.” [3] Moreover, ULI recommended that “the CTA has a responsibility to be an active partner with DPD (City Department of Planning and Development) in incorporating transit service in a coordinated planning approach . . . The panel believes there presently are degrees of fragmentation in the development decision process that occasionally leave the community behind; this situation should be changed through the establishment of an inclusive planning process that serves as a basis for resource allocation, priorities, and ultimate investment decisions.” [4]

According to David Chandler, of the CNT, the CTA has made progress in developing a more inclusive public participation process and in understanding its role in the economic development of the neighborhoods it serves; these changes in the organization’s “culture” have permeated the hierarchy of the CTA.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The most visible impact of this program—the reopening of the Green Line—occurred in May 1996. (CTA President Robert Belcaster resigned 2 days before the line reopened, citing reasons unrelated to his tenure as president.) The impact of the Green Line has gone beyond the physical reconstruction of the transit line to include a reassessment of the future of the neighborhood itself.

The tangible results today include a massive infusion of funds and programs, mainly through the federal EZ, which grew directly out of the movement to save the transit line. Another visible result is the activity, commitment, and new resolve of many existing and recently formed community organizations and business groups, working with the city. The Green Line seems to be providing a focus for joint action and cooperation that has, in many respects, left the transit agency itself in almost a secondary role. Oddly enough, people interviewed for this study commented that had the CTA *not* considered closing the line, very little of what has happened over the past 2 years could or would have taken place. As is so often the case, a crisis mobilizes the community into realizing that they must take the future of their community into their own hands.

Currently, the CNT is working with several community development corporations to develop comprehensive and feasible development plans for a

two-block area around the Washington Park and Lake/Pulaski stations. In addition, the NCBG, CNT, and several West Garfield Park community organizations (Bethel New Life, most notably) have formed a joint venture to implement the plan for their area using the Lake/Pulaski station as a commercial anchor for the development. This joint venture also is assembling land for commercial and housing developments and is constructing housing units on an incremental basis.

CONCLUSIONS

The “coalition” for the Green Line is not a monolithic entity. It is diverse geographically as well as in terms of business and residents. Its success will depend on the energy of local organizations to maintain the momentum and to attract resources from the city and others to solve its own problems. Still, people remark that, just a few years ago, organizations that were active tended to work in isolation. Now, there is a more holistic approach to addressing the livability needs of this very needy district. The Green Line project is a model for combining community development and transit-oriented development strategies to achieve revitalization goals where the key to success is the improvement of public transit access.

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ENDNOTES

1. Urban Land Institute, *The New Green Line, Chicago, Illinois* (1995) p.32.
2. *Chicago Tribune* (February 6, 1994).
3. Urban Land Institute, *The New Green Line, Chicago, Illinois* (1995) p. 42.
4. *Ibid.*, p.47.

CHAPTER 6

Creating Opportunity for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

I urge you to consider three very important goals: First, we must recognize the importance of linking economic, physical, and human development to successfully build viable communities and create new opportunities for the disadvantaged. Second, we should encourage the widest citizen participation possible, since no plan is successful that does not have the full support of local citizens and community leaders. And third, we must work to enhance the environment and culture for urban residents in order to create a revived sense of community spirit that will lead to a more prosperous and livable community.

—Henry Cisneros, former Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

INTRODUCTION

Jobs are a prime livability issue, evidenced by their prominent ranking in most livability surveys and by the fact that employment was mentioned by participants at almost every focus group session. While individuals are concerned with finding stable employment at fair wages and municipalities with keeping employers from moving and closing plants and offices, finding opportunities for inner city, lower-skilled and minority workers is especially critical. Often the opportunities in metropolitan regions are in the suburbs, many of which are experiencing unprecedented growth, but one needs a car to take full advantage of them.

There is also growing awareness that small businesses are responsible for most job growth in this country and that communities can achieve substantial economic growth by nurturing local entrepreneurs, that is, people who produce and/or sell needed products and services on a small scale. Although local entrepreneurs start small, with the proper incentives, work environment, and management, they can grow to become major contributors to a community's economic development.

Overview of Community Strategies

More and more, communities are developing programs to support and encourage the development and expansion of small local businesses, ranging from small manufacturing operations to high-tech firms. Local governments, economic development organizations, and national leaders alike have developed innovative strategies to search for entrepreneurs and to provide them with the support they need to get started, such as subsidizing work space, offering technical assistance and business training, and relaxing ordinances that ban certain types of enterprises, such as open-air selling. Often assistance is provided in a specific facility, such as a vacant factory building, where so-called "business incubators" offer newly formed businesses or retailers space in designated facilities where they can receive on-site technical assistance, favorable financing and management support services that they otherwise could not afford. These facilities frequently offer job-training programs as well.

In many inner cities, these programs are initiated or augmented by the establishment and designation of state and federal government "enterprise community" and "empowerment zones," which

strive to address a broad range of community needs—jobs, safety, affordable housing, schools, transportation—through community-based, comprehensive, strategic planning. Part of the package includes technical planning and design assistance to communities, the provision of tax and other financial incentives to encourage businesses to relocate to these needy areas, funding to increase public transit service and access to communities, and funding to implement these strategic plans.

Local private-public partnerships also use many creative financial strategies to assist promising businesses that may not yet be able to obtain conventional financing or to make it attractive for an established business to locate in a specific area. Many also sponsor a wide variety of job-training programs.

Strategies for building local economies also include supporting retail businesses in neighborhood and downtown commercial districts. Public-private partnerships and downtown associations have many types of programs to assist businesses with financing, design, merchandising and promotion. The concept of “retail management” applies techniques developed at suburban malls to strengthen downtown business activities, such as creating merchants’ and property owners’ associations, and establishing master lease agreements to coordinate leasing, store hours, merchandising practices, recruitment, and expansion.

At the smallest scale of retail enterprise, there has also been a resurgence in vendors who operate independently or in public markets. Public and open-air farm and craft markets, for example, provide affordable space and on-site management assistance for

producers of local food products and non-food items, while stimulating local community development. PPS’s recent book, *Public Markets and Community Revitalization*, documents the variety of opportunities for and impacts of markets. [1]

Role of Transit

Transit facilities attract people every day, and no one should underestimate the value of foot traffic for businesses. Transit brings customers to support and promote local businesses of all sizes. Moreover, transit supports business development by providing access for employees, especially transit dependent populations who can take advantage of job-training and educational opportunities if they are made accessible.

By taking advantage of foot traffic, transit facilities can become mixed-use developments, which provide a variety of retail and shopping opportunities. The larger transit facilities, like Washington and Chicago’s *Union Station*, and Boston *South Station*, attract tens of thousands of people annually—many of whom come to dine and shop and do not even take the train. In Chicago, most of the food businesses are locally owned and operated. The design and merchandising standards are state-of-the-art and an overall appearance of quality is maintained, in dramatic contrast to the condition of these stations before redevelopment.

Even for smaller transit facilities, there is potential for small business development. *New Jersey Transit’s Station Renewal Program* is developing passenger service centers, with satellite operations of businesses like bakeries, dry cleaners, delicatessens, florists, and shoe repair, which operate satellite stores and vending carts at transit stops during the busiest times of day. They are also developing “concierge” programs where one or more people contract with local businesses to act as an intermediary between transit customers and their shops. In the mornings, a concierge collects from passengers their dry cleaning, undeveloped film, shoes to be repaired, keys to be made, and so forth, and distributes these items to the appropriate merchants. Before the evening rush, the concierge retrieves these items and distributes them to passengers when they return to the transit facility.

Other forms of small business development include vending programs, like *Downtown Crossing Marketplace* in Boston, the *Columbus Circle Market* in New York City, and *Pioneer Square* in Portland, which features a cafe, flower and food vendors, and a branch of a local bookstore. Vending areas can also be indoors. One of the successful retail areas in Union Station in Washington, DC, is a vending area (which actually looks more like the ground floor of a department store) with local businesses selling quality



Figure 6-1. St. Louis’s Wellston Metrolink Station has not only become a new transit hub for the community, but also has stimulated the development of a job training and business incubation center in the abandoned Wagner Electric Factory Building. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

crafts. *The Port Authority Bus Terminal's* renovation program began with an experimental vending cart program operated by a minority entrepreneur.

Transit has also been a catalyst for renewal of downtown and neighborhood commercial districts, as presented in Chapter 5. Transit agencies have taken specific steps to support local businesses. In *Woodbridge, NJ*, New Jersey Transit hired an artist to design maps and guides to the town's businesses and services, which are displayed on train platforms. NJ Transit also works with local retailers, especially those located in or next to a facility, to provide schedule and fare information to their commuter customers and even to sell parking permits (Netherwood Station, Plainfield, NJ). The entire *Denver Partnership* program is built around the joint support for transit and for downtown businesses, creating a successful environment for both. While all retail merchants do not necessarily believe a transit station or facility near their stores helps bring them business (see the example on transit malls in Chapter 5, for example), those whom we surveyed in Portland and Corpus Christi did believe that transit service had benefited the area overall and made it a very good place to do business because transit was effectively integrated into the downtown environment.

Finally, in Chicago, one of the original partners in the *Green Line Initiative*, was one of the largest industrial incubators in the country—recognizing that business incubators and job-training programs require effective transit access. This area has also been designated a federal EZ as a direct result of the community's action to save and revitalize the *Green Line*. In St. Louis, a partnership has been established to create a job-training center and business incubator in an abandoned factory complex, adjacent to *Wellston Station*, a new light rail station. Another jobs strategy takes the opposite approach: Jobs Link in Chicago shuttles workers from the inner city to the suburbs where jobs are more prevalent but for which transit access is inadequate.

ENDNOTE

1. Spitzer, Theodore Morrow et al., *Public Markets and Community Revitalization*, Project for Public Spaces, Inc., and the Urban Land Institute (1995).

EXAMPLES

Washington, DC: Union Station Local Business Opportunities at Revitalized Intermodal Station

Union Station in Washington, DC, is a bustling facility serving 50,000 daily Amtrak travelers,

Maryland Area Railway Commuter (MARC) riders, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metro riders, tourist bus passengers, taxicabs, office workers, and area residents. With trains and subways infusing the station with people in regular intervals, Union Station pulsates with life. Indeed, the transit function is essential to the success of the station. The Metro (i.e., subway) stop is the second busiest in the city, serving office workers at lunch (the station has its own lunchtime rush hour), Amtrak passengers, visitors and tourists going to the Capitol Building and nearby museums, as well as employees of the area (including Capitol Hill and other federal offices). Like *South Station in Boston*, Union Station has become a neighborhood central square where people feel safe shopping, eating, and meeting friends; indeed, the station is the second largest tourist attraction in Washington.

Union Station, which is owned by the U.S. Department of Transportation, was redeveloped by the nonprofit Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRDC) and is managed by LaSalle Partners, a private management firm that holds a 99-year lease on the station and is the leaseholder for the station's many retail tenants. While the USRDC was responsible for bringing in private developers, restoring the train station and all of its historic elements, LaSalle replaced the government in handling day-to-day operations of the station, including maintenance (24 hours/day cleaning) and security. In addition, the management firm sponsors seasonal events and activities such as "Taste of the Nation," an annual culinary festival that help to finance other community events. LaSalle also runs an innovative social service referral program for the homeless with free transport to area shelters and food donation service between station restaurants and local homeless facilities.

Retail sales at Union Station reached \$70 million in 1995 and, at the current growth rate of 5 percent per year, are projected to top \$101 million in 1996—\$70 million more than the \$35 million projected when the station reopened in 1988. The 600,000 sq ft of retail space is 95 percent leased and 99 percent occupied by stores that are or will reflect the retail specialty. There currently are 140 retail tenants at the station renting an average of 1,000 sq ft each. Retailers must conform to strict design criteria: 85 percent of each storefront must be transparent; fluorescent and neon lighting are not permitted; signage is controlled; and building materials must be in keeping with the historic style of the architecture.

Union Station also provides opportunities for start-up businesses. The station's East Hall has been completely given over to movable, mahogany counter-height retail kiosks where vendors hold leases for as



Figure 6-2. Interior of Union Station, Washington, DC, Grand Concourse. Nearly all 600,000 sq ft of retail space is currently leased. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

few as 60 days and up to 12 months. The East Hall kiosk program allows vendors to try out new merchandise, experiment with new marketing ideas, and focus on seasonal products while incurring very little financial risk or having to make a long-term commitment. Some businesses that were incubated in the East Hall and have moved into permanent retail space in the main station area. Vendors in the East Hall include artists, craftspeople, and mom-and-pop-type businesses, several of which are minority enterprises. Between 1,200 and 1,500 new jobs have been created within the station itself.

New York, NY: Columbus Circle Market Subway Station Plaza as Place for Economic Opportunity

The Columbus Circle site is a boon to business and not only has sustained the Market and its vendors but has allowed it to grow. The new covered entrance to the station made that entrance more attractive to people and has helped to draw more people to the Market.

—Alan Boss, Market Manager

The Columbus Circle Market is located at the plaza entrance to the Columbus Circle subway station, one of the busiest in New York City, and in front of the New York Coliseum (the city's old convention center) and one of the offices of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The subway station is a major hub, serving as a transfer between four lines and as a major station for Manhattan's west side.

The market, which opened in May 1995, was conceived by the MTA Real Estate Division to take

advantage of the tens of thousands of commuters, office workers, tourists, and area residents who frequent the station. When the city's new convention center opened, usage of the Coliseum dropped and much of the plaza was underutilized despite the heavy usage of the subway station. Homeless people camping in plaza nooks and crannies became more and more of a problem. The market was introduced to add positive activity and to make the homeless activity less prevalent.

The contract to operate the market for the MTA was awarded to a group that also operates antique and flea markets throughout Manhattan and that organizes the Central Park South craft market for the Department of Parks and Recreation each year. The Columbus Circle Market functions 10 months per year (closing after Christmas and reopening in mid-March) and accommodates 55 vendors: 16 at tables in a large tent, 30 around the tent (weather permitting) and 9 in permanent kiosks that have been retrofitted with electricity and running water. While the kiosks are leased annually to vendors of food and merchandise, such as clothing, flowers, jewelry and rugs, the majority of vendors rent space in or around the tent on a day-to-day basis, particularly if they are transient or can't afford to pay in advance. On Tuesdays and Thursdays during the summer, the daily spaces are rented to farmers.

The Columbus Circle Market has been successful both as an economic and retail incubator and as a method for replacing negative activity with a positive use.

Chicago, IL: A Public/Private Joint Venture to Create Local Retail Opportunities at Transit Stations

Taking advantage of blighted retail space at transit stations can benefit transit operators, improve the livability of the neighborhood around the station and provide local jobs. In 1993, the nonprofit Edgewater Development Corporation and Combined Properties Management, a for-profit leasing and management company, joined together to create the Edgewater Redevelopment Group (ERG) which undertook to rehabilitate and re-lease the commercial properties owned by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) that were under or adjacent to four intermodal elevated (El) transit stations along the Red Line. ERG's goals for the project were to introduce transit-oriented retail at the Red Line



Figure 6-3. A lively depiction of New York City's Columbus Circle Market by artist K. Jacobsen adorns the interiors of subway cars and invites transit passengers to stop and shop.

stations and to encourage private commercial investment in the area, in hopes of turning the community around.

The ERG was able to secure an interest-free loan of \$500,000 from the CTA to accomplish the work, which has included the rehabilitation of the facades and lighting of 21 stores in the area. The ERG oversaw the private-sector rehabilitation work, encouraged the CTA to maintain other parts of their property (station entrances, etc.), and developed a transit/commuter-oriented tenant mix. The businesses, 70 percent of which are minority business enterprises, are located next to station entrances and at staircase entrances.

The retail mix was designed to provide many goods and services to commuters, including newsstands, coffee carts, dry cleaners, ATMs, and a foreign currency exchange.

The majority of original tenants have remained, the properties are nearly 100 percent leased and the program has begun to provide a revenue stream for the ERG. The project represents significant commercial reinvestment in the area which, according to project manager Marty Goldsmith, usually lags far behind residential reinvestment, making it more difficult to revitalize a neighborhood and create a more livable place.

Chicago, IL: Suburban Job-Link Connects Jobs and People

We are consciously trying to open up the suburbs as a place of work for the inner-city poor, instead of granting them access only to job opportunities around the corner.

—Mark Hughes, Director, Bridges to Work

Access to jobs is a major challenge for low-income inner-city residents. In cities like Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, and Milwaukee, two-thirds of the new jobs created between 1980 and 1990 were located outside city cores. The city of Denver alone lost 13,000 jobs during this time while its suburbs gained 184,000 jobs. The amount of office space now located in exurban areas has more than doubled, to 57 percent in the past 20 years. This includes manufacturing, retail, service firms, and offices.

While an increasing number of entry-level jobs are available that pay a living wage and offer full benefits, they are located in distant suburbs. The rising unemployed inner-city work forces remain cut off from these opportunities simply because of a lack of time-saving and cost-efficient transportation. Bridging this gap is the goal of nonprofit groups like Suburban Job-Link, a 4-year, \$25 million program. It is funded jointly by private foundations and the public sector to promote reverse commuting in cities across the United States. Job-Link minivans collect workers in downtown locations and transport them, free of charge, to jobs as far away as adjacent counties. Job-Link also operates training centers where people are tested, trained, and matched with particular jobs. Chicago Job Oasis, a service of Suburban Job-Link, has chosen to concentrate on a targeted cluster of distressed communities in the West Side where it has successfully trained and placed more than 200 residents in \$6.00 to \$8.00/hour jobs in DuPage County.

While the program has been successful thus far, according to Job Oasis Director David Boyd, “long commutes, unfamiliar job cultures and difficulty adjusting to ethnically diverse workplaces lead some to drop out.”

CASE STUDIES

Clearly, many opportunities exist for transit facilities and agencies to support local businesses and transit-related enterprises and to provide quality service to their customers, increasing transit’s positive impact on its passenger communities. Case studies show where transit, working in partnership with local communities and businesses, has achieved just this.



Figure 6-4. Suburban Job-Link. David Boyd, Vice President in charge of training (left), greets a job seeker from Chicago as he arrives at Suburban Job-Link’s Job Oasis in Bensenville, IL. (Credit: Suburban Job-Link)

*Case Study 6-1: Boston, MA: Downtown Crossing
Transit and Pedestrian Improvements Create Setting for
Urban Marketplace*

*Case Study 6-2: Chicago, IL: Union Station
Local Businesses Thrive in Redeveloped Historic Station*

*Case Study 6-3: St. Louis, MO: The Wellston
MetroLink/Cornerstone Partnership
Light Rail Service Linking Mobility with Opportunity*

Case Study 6-1 Boston, MA: Downtown Crossing Transit and Pedestrian Improvements Create Setting for Urban Marketplace

The vending marketplace has become so essential downtown. It has done a lot to increase the draw of the area, and is an important stream of income for the Downtown Crossing Association. We turn this income into programs which improve and enhance the district as a whole.

—Bethany Kendall, President,
Downtown Crossing Association

SUMMARY

Boston’s Downtown Crossing is both a retail and a transit center for downtown Boston. Home to Filene’s, Filene’s Basement and Macy’s department stores as well as hundreds of smaller, thriving businesses, Downtown Crossing is a major shopping destination. Transit improvements constructed in the late 1970s, combined with a major expansion of the subway lines

and an increase in ridership, have helped to create the Downtown Crossing Marketplace, a vending program which enlivens the area, creates jobs, and supports the ongoing activities of a management organization working to improve the downtown.

PLANNING PROCESS

In 1966, the MBTA published its visionary “Program for Mass Transit,” which set the stage for a major expansion of the rail transit system and a moratorium on highway construction within the Route 128 “Beltway” that surrounds Boston. In 1973, to meet federal air-quality standards, the city instituted a freeze on public parking spaces. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of route miles on the subway system was doubled with the construction of the new Orange Line and the Red Line extension (see Case Study 5-1).

The hub of the transit system is Downtown Crossing, the site where all the subway lines converge. A major retail center, the area was very congested in the 1970s as buses, cars, and pedestrians—including some 60,000 daily riders of the “T” subway stations—competed for the same space along Washington Street. Recognizing that the environment for shoppers and transit riders was clearly overcrowded, the city of Boston initiated a program in 1977 to develop Downtown Crossing as an “auto-restricted zone.” With funding from the federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now FTA), a series of proposals were studied to eliminate auto traffic on main downtown streets in favor of improved access for pedestrians, buses, and subway transit riders.

While previous attempts to restrict auto access downtown had failed because of merchant opposition, this proposal succeeded in part because business people had seen the success of the new Faneuil Hall Marketplace with its ample and lively pedestrian-friendly design. Through a complex 3-year planning process consisting of meetings, hearings, and behind-the-scenes negotiations, the Mayor’s office was able to orchestrate consensus on a plan that provided for a pedestrian mall on Washington Street and a rerouting of car and bus traffic around this largely pedestrian center.

Downtown Crossing opened in fall 1979 with a new look: wide brick sidewalks and pedestrian amenities. An evaluation conducted by PPS in 1980 found that the area, in general, was vital and popular. However, not all of the public spaces were working as well as they could; in fact, by removing cars and creating more pedestrian space than ever before, there were many places that were underused. PPS then made suggestions for rearranging amenities and developing

a management program to sponsor activities to enliven the area. A 1982 report included additional ideas for specific programs, such as a vending program, to help further activate the downtown and raise revenues for the management of the district.

STRATEGY

The Downtown Crossing Association, which was established to implement these programs, opened its Downtown Crossing Marketplace in 1983. Today, the marketplace features 75 “on-street retailers” with, as their brochure describes, “an international display of quality merchandise and a variety of delicious snacks and treats. You’ll find ethnic wares, flowers and balloons, Boston souvenirs, men’s, women’s, and children’s accessories and cheerful, friendly pushcart vendors.” Vendors are spread throughout the Downtown Crossing area, which generally extends between the major “T” stations. Over the years, the vendor spots next to the “T” stations have become valued locations for vendors selling impulse items, produce, and flowers to subway travelers.

While the marketplace is managed on a day-to-day basis by a private financial partner, the Downtown Crossing Association oversees quality control, troubleshoots problems, and assists with various city approvals. The association also retains the rights to the program.

Over the past decade, the vending program has continued to evolve. Regulations have been modified, the private operator has been changed, and merchant



Figure 6-5. Case Study 6-1. Vendors liven up the sidewalks and T-station entrances throughout downtown Boston. The Downtown Crossing program acts as both a retail and transit center and supports the ongoing activities of a downtown management organization. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

outreach continues to ensure that a balance between vendor requirements, street ambiance, and retailer needs are met. The association has used the proceeds from the marketplace to conduct activities that draw shoppers to the area and make the area safer and more attractive for all visitors, including transit riders. Activities have included a summer concert series, holiday lights, new trash barrels, a marketing program, and banners.

FUNDING

In 1979, funding for the construction of Downtown Crossing came largely from federal transportation funds from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now FTA).

As noted above, the marketplace is not just self-sustaining; it generates income for the Downtown Crossing Association. While the exact figures are proprietary, vendors pay from \$200 to \$1000 per month, depending on their location. About 40 to 50 vendors operating 75 carts participate in the program. Start-up funding (including purchasing push carts, etc.) was provided by the private financial partner.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The vending marketplace was not easy to establish. Merchants were concerned about the visual appearance of the vendors as well as potential competition. The association itself did not want to manage the daily operation of the marketplace, nor could it afford the start-up costs of purchasing push carts. A management partnership with a private operator was set up, with the association sharing revenues and providing quality control oversight. Strict regulations were set up governing merchandise type and quality, cart design, vendor dress, and even a “returns” policy. To prevent direct competition, merchants have absolute control over vendors in front of their stores. Only 25 percent of the vendors can sell food, and then it must be hand-held food that doesn’t compete with area restaurants.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Boston’s Downtown Crossing is a place where the positive impacts of transit can be seen first hand. The extensive investment in new subway lines in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a dramatic increase in ridership—up 20 percent over the past 20 years. About 50 percent of all commuter trips to the center of Boston today are by transit, and the subway lines themselves are operating at near peak capacity.

This investment in the transit system has continued to feed the economic vitality of Downtown Crossing.



Figure 6-6. Case Study 6-1. Downtown Crossing promotional brochure. (Credit: Downtown Crossing Association)

Moreover, by taking advantage of the new space created by transit improvements and the flow of transit riders, the Downtown Crossing Association has created a program so successful that it is the main source of financial support for the association itself. The city’s Parks Department has even copied the program around other transit stops, including the downtown station in Boston Common. Despite its successes, the

program requires constant attention to maintain quality control.

The marketplace has created hundreds of jobs and created the opportunity for people to start businesses at low costs. There is a core of 20–30 vendors who have more or less established permanent businesses “a la carte.” While the association has not kept detailed statistical information about the program, vendors range from recent immigrants to frustrated corporate executives. One cart was started by a refugee from Cambodia who sold intricate carvings. The profits put the vendor through MIT, and today the family still operates the cart. Another vendor started with a cart and then moved into permanent space in the newly renovated South Station (see Case Study 10-4).

CONCLUSIONS

The Downtown Crossing Marketplace, which began as a transit and pedestrian improvement project, has helped maintain Downtown Crossing as a premier shopping destination in Boston. The marketplace has contributed to the livability of the city by creating hundreds of jobs, enlivening the downtown, and supplying a creative financing method, which supports programs to improve attractiveness, vitality, and overall business climate in the district.

SOURCES

- Cambridge Systematics, *Boston Auto-Restricted Zone Demonstration Project*, U.S. Department of Transportation (1979).
 Cambridge Systematics, *Downtown Boston Transportation Plan*, U.S. Department of Transportation (1995).

Case Study 6-2
Chicago, IL: Union Station
Local Businesses Thrive
in Redeveloped Historic Station

SUMMARY

From 1989 through 1991, Chicago’s historic Union Station underwent a \$37 million renovation that transformed it into one of the most modern and attractive rail passenger facilities in the country. Chicago Union Station, on the west side of Chicago’s Loop, is the city’s busiest commuter rail station, handling 23 million commuters and 2.3 million Amtrak customers annually.

Prior to the renovation, Amtrak, which owns the station through a subsidiary company (Chicago Union Station Company), believed that the poor condition of the station impacted its business by making part of the rail passengers’ travel experience a negative one. Amtrak saw an opportunity to use the remodeled station as a way to promote train travel and make the station the activity center of the West Loop area once again.

Amtrak worked with a local developer to redevelop the station. One of the key components of this program was a complex of restaurants and food retailers to serve the 25 million train customers and 65,000 office workers within walking distance of the station. The food service retailers, who generally were selected from among the best of Chicago, were skeptical about being able to sell to an audience whom they had little experience serving. However, the results in terms of sales have exceeded even optimistic projections and the station is praised by passengers and public alike—a new center for the West Loop.

PLANNING PROCESS

Historically, Chicago Union Station was the national train hub for all transcontinental trips and all train passengers traveling coast-to-coast changed trains there. It became famous for its Great Hall waiting lounge and Fred Harvey’s Red Lion restaurant.

Union Station is located at the western edge of Chicago’s downtown area. The area had been a transition zone between the downtown high-rise office buildings and mid-rise warehouses and factories that surrounded the Loop. As warehouses and factories have left, this area has been transformed into residential and office space. Since the 1980s, the West Loop has become the “hot” real estate market for new high-rise office buildings as more tenants wanted to be closer to the commuter train stations and cheaper parking.

Within a 10-min walk of Union Station are almost 20 million sq ft of office space with an estimated daytime population of close to 65,000. Above the station is the 222 South Riverside office building with 1.1 million sq ft of office space and a daytime office population of more than 3,000 workers.

Chicago Union Station is the second busiest railway station in the United States with 23 million commuters annually. On an average workday, some 85,000 Metra commuters—which represent almost 10 percent of all downtown workers—use the station. Chicago is the central hub for the country where about 1,000 of the more than 6,000 daily Amtrak train riders change trains going from coast-to-coast. The scheduling of these trains provides for a minimum

layover of 3 hours between trains, providing time for travelers to buy food and goods outside the commuter rush hours.

In 1970, the passenger concourse building was demolished to construct the 35-story 222 Riverside Plaza Building. The new building was part of a 3.4-million-sq-ft Gateway complex of offices built on railroad air rights overlooking the Chicago River. The new station under 222 Riverside Plaza was strictly utilitarian and had unpainted concrete block walls and exposed concrete flooring finishes. The Great Hall of the station, which is on the National Registry of Historic Places, was left untouched.

When Daniel Burnham designed the station in 1914, he anticipated a 16-story office building around the Great Hall. However, because of various delays, the station was not finished until the Great Depression and only nine floors of the office portion were built.

In the later part of the 1980s, Chicago Union Station issued a request for proposals to developers for the redevelopment of the station and the adjacent Great Hall building. Chicago Union Station awarded U.S. Equities Realty, Inc., of Chicago the right to develop 1.2 million sq ft of office space cantilevered in twin towers over the Great Hall along with the restoration of the Great Hall and the passenger service facilities beneath 222 Riverside. Ironically, the plans for constructing the office building along with adding 180,000 sq ft of retail space in the Great Hall area again fell through because of the recession in 1989 when developers could no longer obtain financing for new office buildings.

When the office portion of the development did not proceed, Chicago Union Station did not abandon the project. Rather, it pursued a new strategy with U.S. Equities Realty to redevelop the portion of the station



Figure 6-7. Case Study 6-2. Chicago's historic Union Station is at the center of a revitalizing office district. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)



Figure 6-8. Case Study 6-2. Union Station in Chicago is a hustling commercial center which features locally owned and operated businesses, serving 23 million commuters annually. (Credit: Larry Lund)

constructed in 1970. Lund & Associates, from Chicago, served as the retail planning consultant on the project.

The extensive retail space originally proposed for the new office building was scaled back to the mezzanine area of the 1970 annex, to be divided into many independently operated food businesses. When national food chains proved disinterested, the focus shifted to existing, independently owned food businesses from the city of Chicago. Union Station found this option especially appealing because it would allow the station to be marketed as a unique destination, rather than a generic airport-like retail mall.

STRATEGY

The strategy of this project was to bring new life to the historic station, building on its extraordinary architecture and developing services, amenities, retail, and food service that appeal to today's customers: Amtrak passengers, suburban commuters, and the nearby office population.

Retail and Food Service. The mezzanine level of the 1970 wing was completely reconfigured to take advantage of the flow of commuters for which it is the primary entrance. New escalators were added to connect the mezzanine to the main floor where Amtrak passengers wait during their layover.

Approximately 21,000 sq ft of food service was created. Although there is a small 2,400-sq-ft McDonald's and newsstands that are chain operations, all the other food businesses are locally owned and operated—most with well-known, local reputations for quality and value. Many are minority or woman owned. (McDonald's, which is Chicago-based, was a

kind of insurance policy and was selected because it was so popular.) Businesses include Connie's Pizza, Biff's Headhouse Diner & Tap, Clark Street Deli, Dock's Great Fish, and others.

Businesses have tailored their services and product to the station. Even McDonald's provides special attention to Amtrak customers: games for the children and televisions that show cartoons on Saturday mornings and sporting events later in the day. McDonald's is designed in the rail motif with the same color scheme as the station. McDonald's also sells railroad and Amtrak souvenirs, helping to achieve a special ambiance for customers.

Passenger Amenities. The main or concourse level was also completely reconfigured for Amtrak passengers. Attractive new restrooms and comfortable passenger lounges were built on the concourse level. An airline-club like facility was constructed for first class passengers, a children's play area, and two "ziosks," small rooms for rent for rest, respite, and retreat.

Design. The historic section of the station was restored. The adjacent Great Hall waiting area was painted and the ceiling illuminated. The brass light fixtures were restored and the wooden benches refinished. The limestone exterior of the building was cleaned and illuminated.

The 1970 wing, a desolate design at best, was completely redone using a subtle art deco style reminiscent of the grand railway stations of the past. Concrete block walls were covered in honed northern bluff dolomite with verde tinos marble trim; and the bare tile floors were done in a polychrome terrazzo with brass and stainless accent strips.

Marketing. Union Station has undertaken an extensive program to market the station as a unique local attraction. For example, it began showcasing its food establishments through the "Taste of Chicago" program, which provides area workers, train customers and visitors alike with a chance to experience Chicago's finest culinary treats. It has served to further establish Chicago Union Station as a special place in the West Loop area.

FUNDING

Of the \$37 million for the renovation, \$7 million came from Metra, the commuter rail service, and \$30 million was financed through the operating funds of the Chicago Union Station Company. While businesses at the station are successful and contribute to operating income, the retail is viewed more as an "amenity that pays for itself," something that makes a

substantial contribution to the overall environment of the station. In addition, operating costs have increased since the renovation: marble being more costly to maintain than bare concrete.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

In 1990, the Chicago Union Station Company issued requests for qualifications for food service and restaurant operators looking for a single operator for the entire mezzanine level. While discussions continued with several national and local food operators, none delivered a proposal with food programming and economic structuring that would deliver the quality of service the Chicago Union Station Company wanted for this facility.

When the plan then shifted from seeking a single operator to finding several food service operators to take individual spaces on the mezzanine level, many "site selectors" for national restaurant operators were contacted about the opportunities for opening an operation at Union Station. The problem was that many of these site selectors had no experience with and a generally negative image of train stations. Even annual pedestrian traffic counts of 25 million did not seem to impress site selectors who were more interested in whether or not stores could be seen from passing automobiles. The value of foot traffic was not considered primarily because their site-selection criteria did not address it. It was this attitude that moved Union Station into an approach with local businesses.

Even this option was not without problems. American retailers, too, have lost the tradition of leasing at train stations and have few notions on how to service train customers. Many of those contacted about the opportunities at Union Station were unconvinced that they could operate a successful business at the station, despite the high foot traffic on the mezzanine level, proximity to the train waiting lounges, and large nearby office population.

To successfully lease the space, Chicago Union Station had to provide very low base rents for businesses and take a percentage of sales after a certain threshold was achieved. To lower the base rents even further, they increased the percentage as sales increased: the more sales, the higher the percentage. In return for lower base rent, Chicago Union Station now receives from some tenants as much as 24 percent of sales when sales volumes reach certain thresholds. This rent is in addition to common area charges to cover maintenance and promotion of retail.

In the beginning, Union Station also allowed some businesses to try the space as an experiment. One of Chicago's premier restaurateurs was skeptical about how successful the station would be for his new

Corner Bakery concept. U.S. Equities convinced him to open a small temporary 110-sq-ft stall. After reportedly generating sales of \$5,000 a day in bread, he signed a lease for 2,000 sq ft of retail space.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The facility clearly appeals to all of the intended customers. By 1994, the station's food retailers were generating more than \$12.5 million in sales annually, which is about \$600 per sq ft of rentable area. These sales figures rank the station as one of the better retail locations in the country. Because of the percentage rental structure, Union Station has also benefited from this success.

For example, McDonald's is now generating more than \$2 million in sales in 2,400 sq ft. It had negotiated clauses that permitted closing the store if sales were below \$300,000 annually and thought, at best, it would do \$1.2 million. McDonald's is now paying substantial percentage rent and regrets that it does not have more space.

Retail is so successful that there is now a lack of adequate seating at the station, which is limiting food sales. Chicago Union Station has responded by adding more tables and one retailer, the Corner Bakery, now provides seating outside the store front. A lack of space in the eating areas for people carrying luggage remains a problem.

Finally, the station has had a very positive impact on the West Loop area. Leasing in office towers in the vicinity of the station is reported to be easier than before. While rental rates are not higher than elsewhere, the station is considered to be a positive feature for the area—not just because it provides convenient commuter access, but because it is an important amenity for the district.

CONCLUSIONS

Chicago Union Station now provides a clean, bright, and safe environment where people at all hours can come for meals and entertainment, as well as to catch the train. Because of the redevelopment, Chicago Union Station has again become the center of activity for the West Loop area. Both Amtrak and Metra commuter rail customers now experience the comfort of a well-designed station, while the city of Chicago benefits from a new public amenity.

Union Station, once a faded shadow of its former glory, is again a center of vitality in downtown Chicago. While providing increased services for millions of transit passengers, the station provides significant opportunity for local businesses—a refreshing alternative to the standard chains so pervasive across America today.

Case Study 6-3

St. Louis, Missouri: The Wellston MetroLink/Cornerstone Partnership Light Rail Service Linking Mobility with Opportunity

MetroLink will not just make St. Louis a more livable community and not just clean up the environment. It will fulfill our most important national goal—to provide a higher standard of living for our citizens

—Congressman Richard Gephardt

What this project seeks to accomplish is truly amazing. It is our hope and belief that this facility will become a model for the region and nation of how to help disadvantaged youth find long-term, productive jobs through quality training and education programs.

—Buzz Westfall, St. Louis County Executive

Transit is the catalyst for development—it can help make things happen.

—Frank Sparicio, chairman of Urban Land Institute panel commissioned to make recommendations for the new MetroLink stations.

[This initiative] is creating an aura of economic promise not felt in Wellston in years . . . MetroLink's success and ridership numbers have exceeded even the most optimistic expectations.

—Buzz Westfall, as quoted in St. Louis Post-Dispatch editorial.

SUMMARY

In 1993, St. Louis opened its new light rail line, which connects downtown St. Louis, East St. Louis, and Lambert International Airport. One of the system's stations is located in the inner-city community of Wellston, a distressed area with a 500,000 sq ft, vacant industrial building near the station. To increase ridership at the Wellston station, improve transit access, generate activity at the station and revitalize Wellston economically, the Economic Council of St. Louis County, the Bi-State Development Agency (BSDA, a transit agency), Arts in Transit and the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council are partnering to transform the area around the Wellston station into a vibrant mobility center that will include the Cornerstone Partnership's state-of-the-art manufacturing training center under development by the county. This initiative is being implemented through a collaboration among government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community residents, and businesses to bring mobility and economic opportunity together. It is hoped that this effort will foster economic revitalization in this mixed-use industrial, commercial, and residential neighborhood.

The education and business incubation center will be located in a vacant industrial complex. A child care center is also planned. In addition, a range of site improvements and streetscape enhancements surrounding the station area have also been planned to connect the station with the development activities around it.

PLANNING PROCESS

The tragic 1992 slaying of an 11-year-old boy playing near the remains of the Wagner Electric manufacturing site focused community attention on the need to revitalize this desolate, unsafe area of Wellston. Deeded to St. Louis County in 1983, Wagner Electric had been reduced to a series of crumbling buildings—very visible from the new light rail line and station—in anticipation of redevelopment plans that never materialized. The site is composed of five industrial buildings and over 500,000 sq ft of vacant space spread out over 24 acres contiguous to Wellston station.

The Wellston neighborhood has an unemployment rate 2.5 times the regional average, as jobs have steadily moved from the city center to the suburbs. In addition, violence in the area has worsened. To address these problems, the Economic Council of St. Louis County created the Cornerstone Partnership to provide job-training for young adults and new skills for laid-off workers. The Wagner Electric complex will be the site for all of the programs. The initiative is modeled after Detroit's highly successful "FOCUS: Hope" project whose students work as subcontractors to the auto industry.

The Wellston MetroLink station provides access to the light rail line, to two bus routes (the Page and the Page Express) and to an adjacent commuter park and ride. When the station opened, ridership exceeded all projections, and it became clear that the station could better serve the community by connecting the Cornerstone Partnership complex and adjacent areas with the Wellston MetroLink Station. BSDA/Arts in Transit received a Livable Communities grant from FTA to begin addressing these issues.

Project partners have organized a series of focus group sessions to facilitate community visioning. Community involvement has also included a town meeting and public participation using a Visual Preference Survey (VPS) to provide a better understanding of community concerns related to station-area improvements. In addition, the Urban Land Institute convened a panel in September 1995 to examine specific development opportunities in three stations, including Wellston.

Objectives of the overall project include the following:

- Increasing use of the park and ride,
- Beautification of the surrounding area,
- Enhancing station safety and security,
- Providing better access to job-training and educational opportunities,
- Increasing employment opportunities in the immediate area,
- Encouraging community pride, and
- Providing a child care/community services facility.

Planning, rehabilitation, and transformation of station-area enhancements and the Wagner Electric complex have involved intragovernmental coopera-



Figures 6-9 and 6-10. Case Study 6-3. The recently completed Wellston Station with the Wagner Electric Factory in the background (Figure 6-9). Members of the community participated in a planning process to identify the features to be included at the station (Figure 6-10) and a plan to link the station to the Wagner factory, which will be redeveloped as a job training and business incubator center. (Credit: Bi-State Development Agency)

tion and public and private agency support. Project partners include the following:

- U.S. Department of Commerce,
- Department of Transportation-FTA,
- Economic Council of St. Louis County,
- Bi-State Development Agency/ Arts in Transit,
- East-West Gateway Coordinating Council,
- City of Wellston, and
- Community residents.

STRATEGY

The strategy for the project has two main components.

Cornerstone Job-Training Facility at the Wagner Electric Site (the Partnership). The focal point of this project is renovation of the former Wagner Electric manufacturing site and its transformation by the Economic Council of St. Louis County into a state-of-the-art regional educational and manufacturing training facility. The first phase of development is slated for completion in fall 1996. At that time, a remedial education program and a manufacturing training program will begin. Forty leaders from the business, labor, manufacturing, governmental, and educational communities were selected by the County Economic Council to develop the curriculum, with Ranken Technical and the St. Louis Community College providing initial training. In addition to housing the above institutions, the first building to be renovated will also include an enterprise center and a manufacturing incubator. The latter will target minority start-up firms and focus on job outreach to link minority businesses to jobs on site.

Wellston Station Site Improvements. Proposed site improvements to the Wellston station and its surroundings include improved sidewalks and lighting, landscaping, public art installation, resurfacing of roads serving the park-and-ride lot, new signage, bicycle racks, and information on services offered at the Cornerstone Partnership complex. The station area will not only be a transportation center; the plans also include a child care center. In addition, the project partners are considering developing a police substation and a small retail/convenience store. Shuttle vans, which will provide MetroLink riders with access to local Wellston businesses, will also be purchased through the FTA Livable Communities grant.

FUNDING

In August 1994, the Economic Council of St. Louis County secured a \$4.5 million renovation grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce to fund the first

phase of the facility's construction. The National Center for Manufacturing Sciences is contributing an additional \$1.5 million in training equipment. The project site was donated to St. Louis County by Wagner Electrical in 1983.

Design improvements to the Wellston Metrolink station area are being funded by the FTA. The estimated total cost is \$956,000. Financial commitments by FTA total \$764,800, and those by BSDA and the county total \$191,200.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Synergy of this transit-based community revitalization effort has been slowed somewhat by the physical attributes of the surrounding area: vacant lots and buildings in disrepair abound in the area. Also, initiative organizers are challenged to find additional public resources to attract private investment to the area. Aside from these problems, no major obstacles have been encountered thus far.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

Because the buildings have not yet been renovated, no new tenants or businesses have moved in. The anticipated benefits, however, include improved access and expanded activity at the station and increased transit ridership due to increased economic activity. Landscaping, better access, and improved transmission of information will all enhance the overall atmosphere and appearance of the station for riders and nearby residents and retailers. Thus far, the feedback and involvement of local organizations, merchants, and residents has been enthusiastic and positive.

CONCLUSIONS

This project demonstrates the successful partnering of a transit agency with a county economic development organization, a metropolitan planning organization and community residents. The partnership enabled the creation of a transit facility, which will act as a catalyst for the economic development and improved livability of a very distressed inner city community. Understanding that such an effort requires the participation of many players, BSDA, the Economic Council of St. Louis County, and the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council have obtained funding from local, county and federal government sources and secured the commitment of a range of local and national partners. The project's multidisciplinary focus—which involves job creation, vocational training, mobility, intermodality, adaptive reuse, and the economic revitalization of a depressed area—is a laudable model of a transit-based community development initiative.

CHAPTER 7

Improving Safety and Amenity

The central question in the debate about how to decrease crime should not be: how many more police are needed?—instead, it should be: how do we create communities where people feel safe, comfortable, and empowered to get involved . . . ?

—Kathleen Madden, “A Cry for Community” [1]

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, people’s fear for their personal safety has become an overriding issue in communities of nearly all sizes and types across the country. In focus groups conducted for this study, it was almost always the first issue mentioned. Indeed, fear of crime is not an isolated problem but impacts all aspects of public life. People’s fears can affect where they choose to shop, work, or locate a business. This can lead to the more serious urban problems of physical deterioration, disinvestment, and population loss.

The issue of security goes beyond dealing with actual crime, however. “Crime is a barometer of social disorganization,” says Lawrence M. Friedman, an historian of criminal justice. He and other criminologists argue that the civil rights progress of the 1960s allowed the black middle class to move from the inner-city thereby removing an important force for social control. Combined with the flight of manufacturing jobs and increased drug use in communities, the result was an unprecedented crime wave. [2]

Safety is also a perceptual problem: in fact, people often report feeling unsafe in areas where the actual crime rate is low. Factors such as uncollected litter, graffiti, people loitering, and dark streets with little nighttime activity can translate very quickly into the perception that an area is unsafe. A less obvious factor is the destruction of places in communities, as discussed in Chapter 4. When people frequent public spaces less often, avoid walking down streets because of traffic, and begin to retreat into privately run shop-

ping malls and their own homes; all of this affects the perception of security.

Because of these interconnections, the issue of security needs to be addressed with other livability issues, like downtown and neighborhood renewal, job creation, and other social problems, for example, which help treat some of the underlying causes of crime, not just the symptoms. In addition, how comfort and amenity are connected with the issue of security is emphasized. The design and use of spaces and buildings have substantial impact on security, affecting both crime rates and the perception of crime. For instance, a parking lot located in a secluded area or the rear of a park may be a staging area for crime, because there are no surrounding commercial establishments to generate other activity. Many strategies can be used to reduce the opportunities for crime that are inherent in the structure of the buildings and the layout of the public spaces of a locality as well as to reduce perceptions of danger. The underlying philosophy of this approach is that when spaces are usable with amenities and activities that attract a range of people, they also will become safer places.

Overview of Community Strategies

Traditionally, improving security has meant increasing the number of police or construction of buildings that looked and functioned like fortresses: with interior spaces that could be monitored and access that could be controlled. These methods, however, failed to stem the surge of crime throughout the



Figure 7-1. Downtown Crossing, Boston, MA. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

1970s and 1980s. Because of this failure, new strategic approaches were developed and tried—the benefits of which are now being felt across the country. As a rule, however, there is no one strategy that works. A comprehensive approach that addresses all aspects of a security problem seems to have the most impact.

The most important new strategy (although some would say it is actually an old one) is community policing. With this approach, police no longer just patrol neighborhoods in their cars and respond to reports of crime. Police become actively involved in solving specific crime problems in a community and seek to establish a sense of order and control. This involves the return of foot patrols, which help to make people feel more secure and help to deal with those seemingly petty crimes (like graffiti or loud radios) that contribute to people's sense of disorder—so called “quality-of-life” crimes. Police in diverse cities like New York, St. Louis, and Seattle also work closely with community organizations and constantly evaluate crime data to understand where crime is occurring and why. Programs are then developed to stop crime: these programs can address a variety of small and large issues, from removing a telephone that is used by drug dealers to a raid on a “crack house.”

The results have surprised even hardened police in these cities. In New York City, there has been a 40 percent decline in homicides in 2 years; in Seattle, the rate dropped 32 percent last year and 18 percent in St. Louis. *The New York Times* reports that New Yorkers are now saying that the city is safer, showing perceptions are catching up with reality. [3] Studies have shown that the police are also reporting that they have higher morale, greater job satisfaction, and a more favorable attitude toward citizens; citizens also indicate more favorable opinion of the police. [4]

Police foot patrols are not the only way to achieve a sense of order. Depending on the context, a food vendor, a maintenance worker, a nearby store owner, and an information kiosk attendant can all provide informal surveillance of a space and be able to respond to security problems. PPS has found that public spaces that have a designated manager in charge of them also become safer and less prone to anti-social activities.

So-called “environmental design security” involves strategies to create new spaces and buildings, or retrofit existing ones, so that they become naturally self-policing. One goal is to make existing spaces visible for surveillance by police and other users who establish a management presence. For example, design strategies for improving perceptions of security might involve trimming shrubbery for greater visibility, relocating parking from remote places, or reorienting buildings from an inward focus to the street by adding visible ground level activities, such as retail.

With environmental design security, it is important to make a space or place not just more visible: it needs to be an attraction as well. Activities and amenities that attract people help keep it busier and safer. Improvements need not include physical design changes, but can be limited to programming activities. For example, noontime classical music or jazz concerts in a downtown park can attract office workers and displace loitering, drug dealing, or the presence of anti-social activities.

One of the better examples of successful activity programming and environmental design security is a small vest-pocket park in Rockefeller Center in New York City. This park was not actively used by downtown workers and had become a center for drug dealing. A redesign and management plan for the park recommended adding new seating, a cafe, and vendors and increasing the visibility of the park from the street, while also instituting a regular program of events and entertainment. The use of the park has increased three-fold, with more elderly and women users, and the drug dealing was completely eliminated.

Cumulatively, this range of security strategies has proven to be effective in reducing crime in a step-by-step process of reclaiming and reinvigorating space. However, the sign of true success, which will take years of effort, will not be just one or two buildings or spaces that are safe havens, but an entire neighborhood that is both safe from actual crime and a safe-feeling place for its community.

Role of Transit

Security is a major concern of transit operators, reflecting concerns of transit passengers while they wait at stops or stations and on the transit vehicle itself. Efforts to improve security can benefit the

broad community around the stops or stations as well as along the routes on which the transit mode proceeds. Efforts to bring activity to stations and to make transit facilities more comfortable and attractive also have security benefits for communities.

Transit agencies have developed security approaches for different situations, which improve security for both the transit facility and the area around it. Many of the strategies have been developed in places which have had chronic, severe problems, such as New York City.

Since most transit agencies do not have their own extensive security forces, most have relied on environmental design strategies and a management presence to reduce crime and increase the perception of safety. One of the reasons for creating bus transfer facilities, such as *Tohono Tadaí Transit Center in Tucson* and *Staples Street Station in Corpus Christi*, is to bring people together in a comfortable, attractive, informally superviseable area. For example, in Tucson there is a staffed information center. These projects contrast with bus transfer centers in other cities that have been placed in isolated locations with little if any on-site management and that often are closed evenings and weekends. In such cases, ironically, transit agencies did not want to provide amenities for passengers because of security and maintenance reasons. However, the introduction of these amenities has not been a problem in Corpus Christi and Tucson, in fact they have served as a positive influence.

On a larger scale, *South Station in Boston*, once an unpleasant terminal with security problems, has been transformed through its renovation, which includes retail activities and movable tables and chairs in the main waiting area. These and other strategies help reduce undesirable activities in that station. In New York City, surveys of passengers showed that just improving the overall environment of the subway station (which included special off peak waiting areas and better views from token booth to the platform) increased perception of security dramatically (although actual crime was always quite low.)

Clearly, one of the goals of *The Green Line in Chicago* and *Wellston Station in St. Louis*, both located in distressed areas, is to bring activity to the stations to help improve perceptions of security. Indeed, the Wellston project was initiated in part because of a specific crime. In *Woodbridge Station, Woodbridge, New Jersey*, surveys conducted after a new station improvement showed that passengers do feel more secure.

Community policing approaches have also been used in transit facilities. *Baltimore's* new "koban," a free-standing police booth/kiosk near the light rail and bus stops in downtown, has already served as a deterrent to crime. On an informal basis, vendors at *Downtown Crossing in Boston* also provide "eyes on the

street" to augment conventional police. *Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland* has its own private security force to oversee the square, which includes the most used stop on the MAX light rail line; in this case, the transit agency is able to provide security by cooperating with the management of the square. In *New York City*, the *Station Managers Program* establishes one manager in charge of a station who is able to handle all concerns and coordinate with police, providing better services and improving cooperation with surrounding communities.

One of the innovative programs to provide security on buses has been the *Rider Advocate Program in Portland*. This program addresses problem behavior and security problems by having paid workers ride the buses, help customers, and assist the bus drivers with maintaining control. A related program, called *Night Stop*, allows passengers to request a stop closer to their destination, even if it is not an official stop. In *Watts*, security problems related to gangs occurred on the shuttle buses. The problem has ceased as a result of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation working with parents and local community groups.

The concept of comprehensive security is best illustrated by the *Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City*. This program combines community policing, environmental design security, and the establishment of a management presence to reverse a long history of security problems in this facility. The management of the bus terminal also works closely with surrounding community organizations, resulting in a dramatic decrease in crime inside and outside the terminal.

ENDNOTES

1. Kathleen Madden, "A Cry for Community," *Planning Commissions Journal* (Fall 1994) p.16.
2. Clifford Krauss, "Now, How Low Can Crime Go?," *The New York Times* (January 28, 1996) Week in Review, p.5.
3. Clifford Krauss, "City Is Safer, Rising Number of People Say," *New York Times* (January 14, 1996) p.27.
4. PPS, *Managing Downtown Public Spaces*, p.8.

EXAMPLES

Baltimore, MD: Howard Street Mall Koban Police Booth Improves Community and Transit Security

What Officer Dwight Thomas likes best about his new assignment at the Howard Street Koban is that now he has the opportunity to meet people other than suspected criminals. He has also become a visible symbol of community policing, where police work closely with communities to improve livability and

quality of life. Officer Thomas is the first police officer in that city to be assigned to the 10-ft by 10-ft air-conditioned koban, which was purchased from the City of Kyoto, Japan, at a cost of \$150,000 and installed in May 1995. The koban is equipped with bulletproof glass and a restroom and soon will have a refrigerator and closed-circuit television cameras, which will make it possible for on-duty officers to monitor a large area.

The booth is located mid-way along the Howard Street light rail transit mall at the corner of East Lexington Street, one block south of a booming public market in what was once the city's premier downtown shopping center. Today, only the empty art deco department stores, like the one opened by the Hutzler brothers in the late 1800s, provide visitors with a clue as to what the area once was and, as many hope, will become again.

Providing an on-site security presence 7 days a week, 24 hours per day is one way of making the area safer for transit riders and attracting new shoppers and visitors. Modeled and named after similar structures used by police in Japan, the koban functions as a police substation and home base for bicycle patrol officers. It also places officers among the people they serve and protect and encourages a broader role for police in neighborhoods and in community redevelopment. It was the Eisenhower Foundation that introduced U.S. city police chiefs to the idea of koban and other community policing techniques during a 1988 trip to Japan. The idea was quickly adopted in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, where it appears

to be as popular with police officers as it is with the public.

Since the koban opened in Baltimore, officers say crimes that were previously quite common, such as purse snatching and shoplifting, have decreased dramatically. There are similar findings in two other cities with kobans: Philadelphia and San Juan. These cities have experienced, respectively, a 24 percent and 35 percent drop in crime in areas where the koban was introduced. Officer Thomas says that he now has time to chat with people, give directions, and answer questions about local retail and transit services and the koban itself. Asked how he liked the koban system, Thomas replied, "I told the (Baltimore City) Police Commissioner that if it got any better, I would pay him!"

SOURCE

Janofsky, Michael. "Police are Stationed at Center of Action in Japan-Style Booths," *The New York Times* and a personal interview with Officer Thomas.

New York, NY: Improved Subway Stations Enhance Perception of Security

The perception that New York was "unsafe" and "unlivable" was symbolized in the late 1970s by the decay of the city's subway system. As part of a massive reinvestment in the system beginning in the 1980s, however, many stations have been rehabilitated with new finishes, lights, amenities, and entrance treatments. In 1991, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) New York City Transit began to survey transit customers along the 1/9 line, which services South Ferry and the Statue of Liberty ferry docks in lower Manhattan and stretches to upper Manhattan, terminating in the Bronx. The purpose of the survey was three-fold:

- To evaluate the effect that this station rehabilitation and modernization program has had on overall customer satisfaction and perceptions of personal safety when using the system;
- To determine whether customer ratings of station improvements are affected only by actual use of an upgraded station or also by seeing improvements at stations they are not specifically using;
- To measure the effectiveness of line-specific rehabilitation efforts on customer perceptions in



Figure 7-2. Officer Dwight Thomas stands outside of his Koban on Baltimore's Howard Street Mall. Officer Thomas said that what he likes most about his post is the chance to meet and interact with visitors to the area. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

order to determine the relationship between concentrated improvement efforts, investment, and customer satisfaction ratings.

Starting in November 1991, Gallup, Inc., interviewed more than 1300 riders of the 38 stations along the 1/9 line by telephone as to their sense of personal safety and security in these rehabilitated and modernized stations and in the system overall. Respondents rated the 1/9 line higher than the subway system generally: 6.8 out of 10 for the 1/9 line and 5.4 for the entire system. In other words, the survey showed that a substantial number of station improvements concentrated along one line can raise customer approval ratings significantly. The survey results also indicated that the more extensive the improvements at a particular station, the higher customers rated it in terms of their sense of personal safety. In addition, the higher the rating of a particular station overall, the higher its rating for personal safety. For every point the overall station rating improved, the personal security rating increased by half a point. While the entire system received a personal security rating of 4.2, the rating for 1/9 service was 6.7.

Another significant finding was that the MTA New York City Transit's station rehabilitation program has had a significantly greater impact on customer approval and satisfaction than the Authority's more modest repainting and upgrade programs. The upgrading of stations did not affect passenger perceptions noticeably.



Figure 7-3. This image of the recently renovated Broad Street subway station in New York City illustrates the success of the MTA's decade-long station rehabilitation efforts. (Credit: MTA New York City Transit and John Tarantino, architect)

California Bus Transfer Centers: A Study of Safety, Security, and Community Context

In 1992, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) of *Corpus Christi, Texas* began to redesign its system to create a series of bus transfer centers. The RTA wanted to create operationally functional transfer centers that were user-friendly and contributed to improving the community around them. A special concern of the RTA was safety and security.

To find out more about bus transfer centers and other passenger facilities that were considered to be "state of the art," the RTA's Project Manager visited and evaluated recently constructed bus transfer centers throughout California, where such centers are common. At present, there exist very few design criteria that can be used to develop these facilities in such a way that they become public spaces that attract riders to public transportation and are integrated into their communities. The kind of research that has been conducted on this subject is generally of a technical nature. It does not tend to look at users' needs as the basis for creating positive transit environments or evaluate how such facilities can act as catalysts for enhancing rather than detracting from the areas in which they are located.

The RTA, working with PPS, set up a special rating system to evaluate these facilities according to such features as architectural sensitivity to neighboring buildings, connection to the surrounding community (both physical and visual), amenities, availability of information regarding bus service, sense of safety and security, circulation and passenger flow, passenger comfort, existence of complementary on-site uses, maintenance, management of the facility, and bus operations. Of more than 20 facilities reviewed in this research, all functioned at a high level operationally. However, only one had amenities and other attributes sufficient to creating a user-friendly environment for passengers. Most of the state-of-the art transportation facilities lacked even the most basic amenities, such as adequate seating, lighting, and restrooms, usually because of concerns about operations, maintenance, security, and abuse.

Often, there was no attendant or security provider on the premises, particularly on weekends. In some cases, there was not even a structure that people could identify as a specific place to wait or rest. There was usually no place to buy food, enjoy a cup of coffee, or learn about scheduled community events and activities. Many of these bus transfer centers were inaccessible, located away from areas of community



Figure 7-4. Bus transfer centers like this one in Laguna Hills, CA, do little to make transit comfortable or appealing to passengers. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

activity, either at isolated suburban sites or in urban locales removed from town centers.

In some communities, bus transfer centers had a negative reputation because of the perception that they fostered drug dealing, vandalism, and vagrancy. As a result, many of the transfer centers had been cut off from surrounding areas by walls or wide streets, or had been built outside of city centers. In an attempt to make them vandal-proof, many were built without the amenities that passengers needed.

Other transit authorities use a “timed transfer” mechanism to minimize transfer waiting time and, in theory, improve ridership. With this system, almost no time is spent waiting for buses at a given facility. Many operations people have focused on reducing trip time through timed transfer operation which, by definition, compromises the ability of the bus transfer center to act as a catalyst for neighborhood activity. Timed transfer conflicts with attempts to create an active, bustling “people place” where security is enhanced with efforts to address the real amenity needs of passengers at bus transfer facilities. Timed transfer also may not adequately provide for passenger safety during emergency situations, such as extreme weather conditions, and traffic problems during which passengers could find themselves stranded until bus service resumes. Generally, this important issue is not being addressed by the transit industry.

Using the California research as a guide primarily for what not to do, the Corpus Christi RTA undertook the process of transforming bus waiting areas in *Corpus Christi* into places of community pride and activity. The challenge was to take existing waiting areas and, by transforming them into community



Figures 7-5 and 7-6. Transit Centers in Tucson, AZ (Figure 7-5) and San Rafael, CA (Figure 7-6) feature user-friendly amenities: Tucson’s Ronstadt Center includes cooling towers and creates a landscaped oasis in the middle of downtown; the cafe at San Rafael provides seating and refreshments to waiting passengers. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

assets, enhance surrounding businesses and boost ridership. This project is presented in Case Study 9-3.

CASE STUDIES

Projects and programs illustrate how both environmental design security and community policing can increase perceptions of safety and reduce actual crime. In this way, transit facilities can contribute to the improvement of safety and security in a surrounding neighborhood or district:

*Case Study 7-1: Tucson, AZ: Tohono Tadaí
Transit Center
New Environment Transforms Transit
Experience in Area Suburban Sprawl*

Case Study 7-2: New York, NY: Station Manager Program

A Place-Oriented Approach to Subway Station Management

Case Study 7-3: New York, NY: Port Authority Bus Terminal

A Comprehensive Approach Yields Security Benefits for Terminal and Times Square Neighborhood

Case Study 7-4: Portland, OR: Tri-Met's Rider Advocate Program

On-Board Services Improve Transit and Community Security

Case Study 7-1

**Tucson, AZ: Tohono Tadaí Transit Center
New Environment Transforms Transit Experience
in Area of Suburban Sprawl**

As the system develops, you begin to expand and create [transit centers] with art and with the community.

*—Jill Merrick, Project Manager,
Tohono Tadaí Transit Center*

SUMMARY

The Tohono Tadaí Bus Transit Center is the third and latest such facility built by the City of Tucson and Sun Tran in Tucson, Arizona. This center, like the Roy Laos and Ronstadt Centers that preceded it, were designed to consolidate many individual bus stops to make it safer and more convenient for passengers to ride and transfer. Tohono Tadaí is a very attractive, comfortable bus transit center that has successfully and creatively used good design and artwork to create a transit facility that is comfortable for all users—adults as well as children, people who have disabilities as well as people who do not.

Tohono Tadaí means “desert roadrunner” in the language of the Tohono O’odham nation, the area’s early inhabitants. Located in suburban northwest Tucson, in the center of an expanding retail corridor, Tohono Tadaí covers 3.5 acres adjacent to an amusement center and the Tucson Mall, a destination with offices, shopping, and restaurants. Opened in December 1994, Tohono Tadaí is the first bus transit center in the State of Arizona built to fully meet ADA specifications.

PLANNING PROCESS

Before Sun Tran built its transit centers, bus riders had to wait at isolated, poorly designed, badly lit bus

shelters situated next to wide, heavily trafficked streets. Crossing streets to transfer buses was dangerous, even at intersections. In addition, large numbers of bus shelters strung along the city’s major roadways added to the visual clutter and sense of sprawl, and large numbers of people waiting for buses along major roads increased the public’s negative perception that transit was not working and that bus service was not reliable. This was particularly true in the downtown, where all bus routes passed. The large numbers of buses circulating through the central business district and the large numbers of passengers waiting on sidewalks throughout the area actually reduced bus efficiency and increased travel time.

Sun Tran’s goals for this project were as follows:

- Increase passenger safety by consolidating bus stops and reduce the numbers of people crossing busy streets to board buses;
- Improve operating efficiency of the buses;
- Enhance transit’s image in the community;
- Link public transportation to all modes such as bicycle, pedestrian and automobile (140 buses carry bicycle racks on the front);
- Provide coordinated transfers and route synchronization for passenger convenience;
- Provide a central information area for passengers that includes route maps and schedules, personal trip planning and information;
- Design transit centers accessible to persons with disabilities with amenities such as covered waiting areas, public telephones, and rest rooms; and
- Create attractive, convenient, comfortable, and safe waiting and transfer areas.

The Tohono Tadaí site was selected to support growth to the northern and northwestern parts of the city, reduce operation ‘dead head’ miles, and support the number of buses already traveling along Stone and Wetmore Streets. Sun Tran has sited its new bus transit centers in each of the city’s four sections: Ronstadt downtown, Roy Laos in the south, Tohono Tadaí in the north, and a future facility will be located in the east. Sites are selected based on feasibility studies and federal environmental guidelines including operational characteristics, land costs, and adjacent uses. For each new center, the city and Sun Tran look at and rate a multitude of sites based on system location, environmental history, air quality issues, traffic flows, and so on and then narrow the selection down to three to five priority sites. Then, an in-depth analysis is performed followed by appropriate environmental work. After a site is selected, the land is acquired and a preliminary design is developed. The final design process for the Tohono Tadaí Center included a simulation by bus operators at the Pima County Fairgrounds.



Figures 7-7 and 7-8. Case Study 7-1. Tohono Tadaí, the first completely ADA accessible transit facility in Arizona, is replete with artworks, children's play areas, a fully manned information booth and air-cooled benches. (Credit: Sun Tran)

The Tohono Tadaí site was preferred because of its proximity to a family amusement center and the Tucson Mall—a major shopping destination—and because it acts as the gateway to the new northwest communities. The owners of the Tohono Tadaí property were the developers of the Tucson Mall. Sun Tran

and the city worked in close coordination with them. In addition, focus groups composed of persons with disabilities provided input and suggestions for amenities that would meet ADA requirements and features that would help riders with visual, hearing, and ambulatory disabilities using the facility. Ideas from architects, artists, traffic consultants, bus drivers, and people with disabilities were incorporated into the project's design, and artists were included on the design team from the beginning. Community groups were involved as advisors on the project throughout the design stages. Tohono Tadaí was designed and built by city architects who had an understanding of transit operations and the needs of the transit users.

Management of the facility is a cooperative effort: Tucson Mall provides a presence, the city handles maintenance, and Sun Tran takes care of landscaping and maintenance through outside contracts.

STRATEGY

The center operates from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays. There are 6,000 boardings per day through 12 bus bays for seven bus routes.

The city's 3-mile linear park system, which was designed for use by cyclists, pedestrians, and horseback riders, runs along the transit corridor and adjacent to the center. Tohono Tadaí also features shaded, cooled waiting areas, public rest rooms, Westminster Chimes in the clock tower, two play areas, drinking fountains, public art, vending machines, bike racks and lockers, and CCTV for security. A cooling tower situated under the center sends cooled evaporated air into the pipes installed behind the benches. Attention also has been paid to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. There is a textured platform around the facility, signage, benches constructed with round edges and a 2 percent pavement grade. All signage is in Grade #2 Braille and speakers are in place at each bus bay to announce information updates and schedule changes. A two-way amplified speaker system at the central information booth and a flashing red light at each bus stop direct attention to digital sign boards for passengers who are hearing impaired. For patrons in wheelchairs, there is a 34-in. counter at the central information booth, accessible public phones and vending machines, and restrooms equipped with motion-sensored toilets and sinks.

The design of Tohono Tadaí is striking and provides an appealing oasis in an area where there is moderate pedestrian activity. The center's theme is "urban grid meets river and mountain," which is illustrated in the use of blue-colored concrete to

symbolize the river, tan concrete for the mountains, and the urban grid represented in purple. The interplay of the natural and built environments is symbolized by the sculptural elements into two 200-sq-ft play areas and the 16 banners displayed on light poles around the perimeter that depict both ancient/natural icons and their modern/manmade parallels. The play areas were designed and constructed by artists to entertain and educate children and adults about the Sonoran desert environment. Sculptures, which are set in soft, rubberized ground covering to allow for safe climbing, include a giant horny toad about to roll over or be rolled over by a giant bulldozer in mosaic tile, a large desert tortoise, and a set of enlarged ceramic-tile alphabet building blocks in both English and Spanish.

FUNDING

The total cost of the project was \$4.2 million; 80 percent was funded by the FTA.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Few if any obstacles to the transit center arose from the community or other city agencies. This may be due in part to the fact that Sun Tran is managed through a contract with the city. As a result, partnerships between Sun Tran and the city transportation planning office are strong. Furthermore, this level of cooperation has been cited by Sun Tran and city planners as the reason they have been able to design and build such attractive and innovative bus transit centers.

However, Sun Tran has acknowledged the need to establish partnerships with private sector groups in order to fully integrate their centers into the communities they serve and provide much needed retail services. The challenge facing Sun Tran is to establish these partnerships with the private sector to encourage the development of retail, commercial, and community uses around its new and existing facilities.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The center has transformed a parking lot into an attractive bus waiting environment that is an extraordinary improvement for passengers. However, because the center closes early, it is difficult for riders to reach destinations (like the Tucson Mall) after 6 p.m. by transit.

Although the center serves the Tucson Mall, 70 percent of passengers arriving at the Tohono Tadaí trans-

fer to other buses. Therefore, while better serving its transit-dependent riders, it would appear that Sun Tran has been less successful in luring mall patrons out of their cars. However, it is a new facility and this is estimated to improve use in the future. Finally, Tucson's bus transit centers have no passenger-related retail; this represents an untapped opportunity for the development of these kinds of services.

CONCLUSIONS

With the completion of its three transit centers, Sun Tran has been able to provide riders with safe, comfortable, and convenient places to wait and transfer and to enhance the transit experience for riders. The innovative elements and features included at Tohono Tadaí are worthy of consideration by other transit authorities as models for the design of future transit centers that act as focal points in suburban areas. Through such facilities, transit agencies can improve the livability of communities by making them more accessible and convenient, as well as safe and comfortable.

Case Study 7-2

New York, NY: Station Manager Program A Place-Oriented Approach to Subway Station Management

For the first time . . . I feel as though some government-related agency is conveying a message to the public that . . . you are trying to serve your customers.

—New York City subway rider

SUMMARY

The New York City subway system, one of the largest in the world, has undergone a transformation in the past decade. With the investment of billions of dollars, subway cars have been purchased, stations renovated, and visible signs of decay—such as graffiti—have been removed.

The Station Manager Program was established in June 1990 to address a nagging and common complaint of subway customers that “no one was in charge” at the stations. Under previous management practices, MTA New York City Transit, which runs the system, had separate divisions responsible for specific tasks in each station: maintenance, crime prevention and response, repairs, and so on were handled by different divisions. While efficient in some regards, there was little coordination between

divisions and some difficulty responding to specific problems.

The Station Manager Program takes a more “place-oriented” as well as more personal approach to meeting customer needs by putting a single, visible, front-line individual in charge of a station, who is responsible for coordinating all station activities and providing a safe, clean, customer-friendly station environment. The station manager also serves as a point person for the community and participates in community organizations. Modeled after a similar program in the London Underground, the station managers work directly with support divisions to improve station conditions. They respond quickly to customer concerns and are flexible problem solvers.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Station Manager Program—the brainchild of then MTA New York City Transit President, Alan Kiepper—started with five station managers supervising 19 stations throughout the system, but has expanded every year since 1990. In setting up the program, the MTA New York City Transit held events and meetings to reach out to local community organizations, such as community boards and business improvement districts, to find out what their concerns were.

Based on this outreach, the goals of the Station Manager Program were established as follows:

- Better customer service through personal interaction;
- More control of the station environment through the coordination and monitoring of operations concerning cleaning, security, repair of defects, passenger flow, revenue activities, and other station quality issues;
- The use of the team approach to coordinate the activities of all the operating divisions concerned with stations;
- Improved staff supervision at the station level; and
- Improved community relations through participation at community board and other public meetings.

Station managers are encouraged to develop their own programs in response to the needs of their communities. For example, Maria Branch, the Station Manager at the Broadway East New York station in Brooklyn, participated with the New York City Police in a national “night out.” This program encourages members of a community to spend a

“night out” participating in local events to show community solidarity in the fight against crime. Ms. Branch provided tours of her facility and refreshments for young people in order to show them that the subway station was an important part of their community and that vandalism and crime in the station ultimately affects them.

Stations are selected for inclusion in the program based on a number of criteria, including passenger volume, complexity of service, transfer locations, physical conditions, community locations, and special features. Recently renovated stations are often included to ensure the continued high quality of maintenance. Grand Central Station and Times Square were two of the first stations to enter the program.

STRATEGY

Ultimately, the Station Manager Program is planned to reach all 3.5 million daily subway customers using the transit system’s 468 stations. The MTA New York City Transit currently has 58 station managers in charge of 252 stations, which impact at least 80 percent of customers systemwide.

Each station manager handles as many as seven stations, although a few handle only one large station complex. Managers in turn answer to district station managers, each responsible for about 50 stations. (Before the program was initiated, behind-the-scene station superintendents were in charge, but not on site.)

By using a team approach to management, the station managers coordinate all station activities to achieve a sense of order, improved maintenance, cleanliness, turnstile availability, and public address systems, and a decrease in fare evasions. They closely supervise the staff at their stations, including token clerks and cleaners. A recent reorganization has given the station managers more direct control of maintenance and repair personnel.

Managers have a clear presence in their stations. They frequently stand where they can be seen by customers, particularly during rush hours, and they wear bright orange vests. A photo of the station manager is prominently displayed near the token booth. Other nearby signs indicate when the manager has office hours in the station. During office hours, they stand in fare control areas, interact with customers, provide information, and listen to problems.

Station managers work closely with community organizations, public officials, and private developers on an ongoing basis. For example, Gerald Lane, previously the station manager for the Herald Square Station, developed a task force with local businesses,

such as Macy's and A&S, and with the Port Authority Police and Transit Police to increase security during the holiday season. The station managers also work closely with the New York City Police precinct in their communities. Managers will notify the local precinct captains if they have special security needs at their stations.

Other station managers, in conjunction with their communities, have held exhibits or sponsored activities at their stations. For example, local schools have displayed student artwork in conjunction with programs that stations sponsor to increase children's respect for their stations. In another case, a Brooklyn district station manager and the station manager of the Borough Hall Station arranged with Project Help to hold an exhibit and event at the station aimed at helping single mothers obtain counseling, job training, and jobs.

Station managers also deal directly with retail tenants in their stations. The real estate department of the MTA leases the spaces, but the station managers deal with tenant problems and requests and issue violations when necessary.

FUNDING

Funding for the program comes from the overall MTA New York City Transit budget, made up of transit fares and state and municipal funds. The budget includes the cost of the station managers themselves, their supervisors, and maintenance support activities and personnel under the direct supervision of the station managers. The program budgets were \$22 million, \$22.6 million, and \$19.8 million, in 1994, 1995, and 1996, respectively. In 1994, the program was extended to include 252 stations and 62 station managers. Recent budget cuts have expanded the number of stations per manager so that 58 managers are now responsible for 252 stations.

The Division of Stations received a \$20,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to help publicize the Station Manager Program. With this grant, a video about the program was produced and station managers made public appearances.

Because of recent budget cuts, the program cannot be expanded to more stations, but the efficiency of the program will continue to be improved and the station managers' role will be re-evaluated to make them even more effective. The managers' direct control of maintenance work is proving to be very cost-effective: the MTA New York City Transit has recently seen a significant increase in productivity among maintenance and cleaning personnel and a decrease in maintenance costs.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Carol Meltzer, the Chief Station Officer, mentioned that one of the most significant obstacles in establishing and implementing the program in the early years was the Transit Police. They were initially reluctant to work with the managers to solve problems in and around the stations or grant any authority to the station managers, whom they viewed as "civilians" in dealing with security issues. This problem has been largely overcome as the local precincts have learned to interact with the station managers, and the managers have learned to work with the police. The support of the top commanders in the Transit Police was essential in breaking down conflicts and establishing good relationships. Positive relationships continued as the Transit Police merged with the New York Police Department.

Cost is another obstacle that continues to threaten the existing program and future plans for its expansion. The program will not be extended to more stations in 1996, as originally planned.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the Station Manager Program, including many letters of praise. Also, customer comment and feedback about the Station Manager Program, as collected through surveys conducted by MTA New York City Transit's department of customer service, have been positive. Graffiti at managed stations has decreased, and fare collection and refuse collection is more successfully accomplished at these stations.

The following data indicate the program's success.

Station Cleanliness. A sample number of stations are surveyed monthly on a 1 (dirty) to 4 (clean) scale. The 3-year average of stations in the program (1991–1993) was 3.33, while the average for stations outside the program was 3.09. The MTA New York City Transit's infrastructure department has created dedicated teams that work solely at stations with station managers. The response time to infrastructure and maintenance problems, therefore, is much faster at managed stations because they have, in effect, their own staff—within a manager's purview—to service the stations.

Fare Evasion. From 1992 to 1993, the percentage of fare evasions per day measured at stations in the program was 1.98 percent, while the percentage at stations not in the program was 4.19 percent.

The MTA New York City Transit has received commendations for some of their customer service initiatives and favorable mention in the *New York Times*



Make the
connection, say
hello to your
Station Manager
**Jacqueline
Kalokoh**



Say hello to your...

Station Manager

Say hello to **Jacqueline Kalokoh**, your personal connection to NYC Transit. When you have questions, your Station Manager has the answers.

"What is MetroCard?"

"Can't you make my station cleaner?"

"Why was my train delayed?"

During the last two years, the popular, award-winning Station Manager program has expanded to 200 stations. And it's still growing. Twenty-five stations were added this summer. Ultimately, every one of our 469 stations will have a Station Manager.

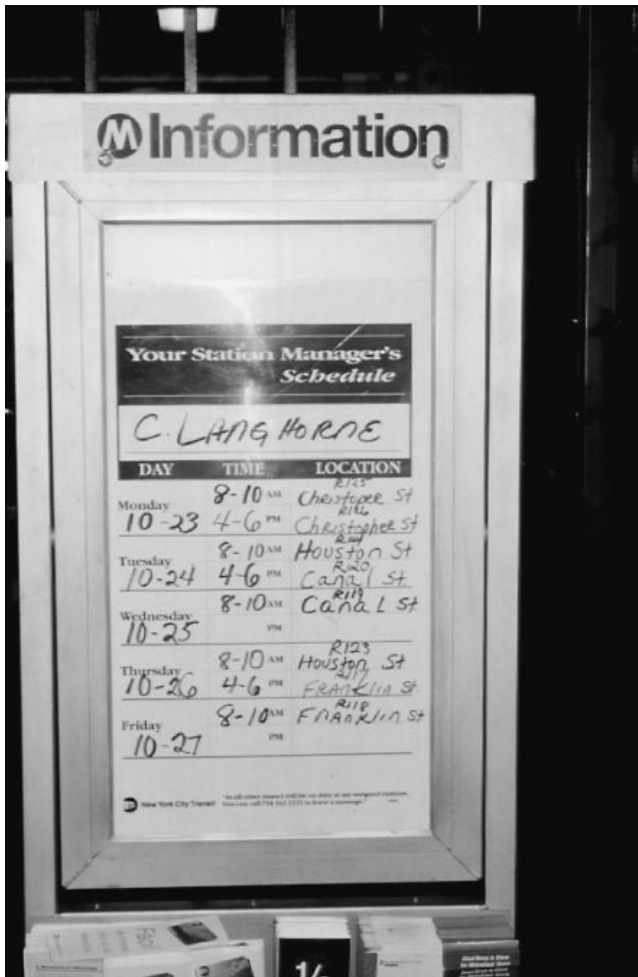
Station Managers are easy to spot by their blue blazers, white carnations and ready smiles. Their names and photographs are prominently displayed near the token booth in each of their stations.

If you can't speak with your Station Manager in person, please call **(718) 330-3222** any time of day or night and leave a message.

Now you know who to ask!



Figures 7-9 and 7-10. Case Study 7-2. New York City transit customers know when and where they can find their Station Managers by consulting the weekly calendar posted in each of the stations they manage. The program's philosophy is shared with customers through a brochure as well. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)



Figures 7-9 and 7-10. (continued)

and other newspapers. In 1992, the program won an American Public Transit Association (APTA) award and in 1993, the program was among the top twenty finalists for the Ford Foundation Management Innovation Awards program. This prompted Vice President Al Gore to recognize the achievements of the program in a letter to the MTA New York City Transit.

CONCLUSIONS

The Station Manager Program represents a new approach to subway station management and to the way the stations relate to their surrounding community. While the start-up costs of the program were significant, the MTA New York City Transit believes the program is already paying off in terms of (a) savings in maintenance costs and (b) increases in ridership at the stations with managers. But the primary goal of the program has always been to better serve

customers, and by all indications the customers and the surrounding communities are indeed pleased. The program has changed the nature of the subway from a faceless bureaucracy to stations run by real people who can solve problems—both inside and around a station. As a result, surrounding communities have found new partners in addressing security and other livability issues in their neighborhoods.

SOURCE

Carol Meltzer, "The Station Manager Program: A Study in Management Innovation," (1994).

Case Study 7-3

New York, NY: Port Authority Bus Terminal A Comprehensive Approach Yields Security Benefits for Terminal and Times Square Neighborhood

We wanted to have customers feel that the Port Authority was in charge of the building, not that the building was in charge of us.

—Ken Philmus, Manager, Port Authority Bus Terminal

Finally we have a safe, convenient place where people can drop in and spend a little money.

—George Marlin, Executive Director,
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey [1]

SUMMARY

The Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT) is the largest commuter bus terminal in the country, connecting major subway lines as well as housing more than 225 intercity bus platforms serving 185,000 passengers per day. The Bus Terminal, located on 42nd Street near Times Square, was reconstructed in the late 1970s, in part to reverse a perceived decline in the terminal and the area around it. This effort largely failed to achieve its goal. By the mid-1980s, the terminal was plagued with significant criminal activity and homelessness, with people actually living in the terminal. In addition, the interior of the terminal was confusing and unattractive, with insufficient services and amenities for passengers.

In 1991, the Port Authority created an in-house task force to completely revamp the terminal from both a design and a management perspective. A comprehensive improvement program was initiated, including Operation Alternative, a social service outreach and

referral program; a community policing program within the terminal; modifications to public spaces to minimize nooks and crannies; new amenities for users including upgraded restrooms, a public address system, and information booths; and improved retail.

In addition, the terminal management has become a more active participant in redevelopment and neighborhood activities in the area around the terminal. The manager of the facility is on the board of directors of nine community-based organizations and works closely with their community development projects.

The impact of these changes has been significant, and patrons have noticed the difference, as demonstrated by increasing positive perceptions during recent customer surveys. Also, in 3½ years, 33,000 referrals for homeless people were made. Sales per square foot of retail space have doubled. Crime in the terminal and surrounding area has been greatly reduced as well.

PLANNING PROCESS

The security problems at the Port Authority Bus Terminal did not emerge overnight, but began in the late 1950s—reflecting, in part, the decline of the Times Square area in general. By the mid-1980s, however, the terminal was in a near-crisis situation. The “crack” epidemic hit hard and the terminal provided a place for dealers and users to use drugs, hide, make deals, and use the public facilities. This problem was exacerbated by other concurrent trends: the overall recession in the economy; the closing of psychiatric hospitals and the release of patients with nowhere to go; and court decisions making it illegal to remove a person from a facility simply for loitering.

In many ways, the terminal was an ideal place for these illegal activities. It was an immense facility operating on six levels with two separate wings, with more than 225 bus gates serving 7,000 buses a day, multiple entrances, and a generally dismal environment. A major renovation and expansion of the facility in the early 1980s worsened the situation by making it even more difficult to control public space. Other seemingly small elements—like the number, location, and billing procedures for public telephones—were major contributors to security problems.

Officials of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, operators of the terminal, realized that they had to respond to increasing public demands to improve the terminal. Not only were patron perceptions poor, but retail revenue from the scores of shops and restaurants in the terminal was decreasing. An effort to reclaim public spaces—using pushcart vendors to fill empty or misused spaces on the

main floor of the terminal—proved successful. However, Port Authority Officials realized that it was necessary to take a comprehensive approach to security, looking at all aspects of the design and management of the facility.

Project goals were as follows:

- To reduce fear of crime and actual crime and improve perception of security;
- To minimize niches and corners that accommodate the homeless and develop an effective social service program that would offer people alternatives and allow police to enforce rules;
- To improve the atmosphere of the bus terminal; and
- To increase marketability of retail spaces and improve the retail services provided in the station.



Figures 7-11 and 7-12. Case Study 7-3. The vending program introduced by the Port Authority at its 42nd Street bus terminal was one of the first steps taken to improve security at the facility; in combination with other efforts, there has been a 50% drop in crime at the terminal. (Credit: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.)

A task force, consisting of Port Authority staff from different divisions and consultants like PPS, was assembled to evaluate the use of public areas. This task force took the first intensive look at all aspects of the terminal, including design, management, security, social services, retail, circulation, amenities, ticketing—in short, all aspects of the terminal that affected public use. By looking at the terminal from this perspective the task force was able to understand how the different features and management practices at the terminal contributed to security problems and how to address them concurrently.

A report was prepared outlining the 100 recommendations of the task force. The recommendations included both short- and long-term recommendations and lower cost as well as higher cost items.

STRATEGY

The comprehensive scope of the strategy that has been implemented over the past 4 years makes it difficult to summarize. Many small changes together have had a big impact. The highlights of the program are as follows.

Operation Alternative. Operation Alternative involved strict enforcement of PABT rules while providing social service alternatives to needy individuals. While there had been social service providers in the terminal before, they tended not to work closely with the police. Under this program, terminal rules are clearly posted throughout the station. If a Port Authority Police officer sees someone in violation of the rules (under police union rules, the police must make the first contact) and appears to need or asks for help, he or she is referred to an on-site assessment center to be sent to the appropriate treatment facility. If someone refuses to comply with stated Port Authority rules, officers have three alternatives: remove the person from the building, issue a summons, or arrest the individual.

PABT also has partnerships with outside social service agencies, which provide referrals through the assessment center from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. seven days per week. They provide access to a range of services, including drug and alcohol treatment, employment training, medical assistance, and permanent and temporary housing. Individuals referred by police are interviewed, assessed, and assigned a counselor. Operation Alternative then transports people to appropriate services with a van provided by the PABT.

Community Policing. Operation Alternative has allowed the police to revamp the way they had previously provided services in the terminal. Based on the community policing model, police patrols are more evident within the terminal and different police become familiar with specific areas of the terminal—a kind of indoor “beat cop.” Police are even posted in high visibility areas during rush hour as a means of reassuring patrons and establishing a high-profile presence. Restroom attendants have continued to provide a security presence, an effort that began before the comprehensive plan was developed.

Design Improvements. Unused and misused space was redesigned in an attempt to eliminate so-called “criminogenic areas”: dark corners, poorly lit corridors, and other problematic areas that contributed to the unsafe atmosphere of the bus terminal. The design changes included renovating public restrooms, using smaller pillars (because pillars obstruct view) and brighter lighting, painting, and repairing floors. Attic spaces where homeless people had been living were sealed. Also, the Port Authority now plays classical music on its interior sound systems. This has yielded much positive public comment and seems to contribute to the overall ambiance of the terminal.

Retail Improvements. In addition, design changes were made to change poorly used areas into mixed-use, revenue-generating retail locations and make spaces more naturally self-policing. Efforts have been concentrated on making retail much more inviting and approachable and on expanding retail use into underutilized public spaces.

As part of the comprehensive plan, a phased retail development strategy with a space-by-space retail plan was prepared to allow retail changes to be made as leases end. Ideas ranged from small kiosks to a golf driving range, a sports bar, pro shop, and learning center. Recommendations were also made to improve storefront design and merchandising.

A vending cart operation, previously noted, was started on the main level of the terminal. This program made the terminal more attractive by providing a service for patrons and reducing nooks and corners where security problems occurred, especially at the entrances to the terminal from the street and the subway.

One of the terminal’s success stories was the leasing of two vacant spaces near the central staircase to Au Bon Pain, a light food retailer, and Timothy’s coffee, an upscale coffee shop. These locations have become their respective chains’ highest grossing retail spaces and have actually helped improve the sales of businesses around them.

Late Hours Management. The terminal is far too large for the number of people using it late at night. To reduce the potential for undesired activity during these hours, bus service is consolidated during non-peak hours so that commuters wait together. Many restrooms are closed in off-peak hours as well. All individual gates are closed at 10 p.m. and bus operations move to gates with common concourses. At 1 a.m. daily, all gates are closed except for the lower level of the north wing, which stays open all night.

Telephone Fraud Prevention. One of the more curious security problems in the terminal was rampant illegal international telephoning. Long lines of people waiting to purchase cheap illegal international calls (from dealers using stolen credit cards) clogged the station with illegitimate activity. Numerous telephones were removed and the remaining phones were replaced with so-called "smart phones," which make international and incoming calls impossible. This produced perhaps the most visible, quickest change in the terminal: overnight, the street phone call vendors disappeared.

Community Outreach and Participation. Because the health of the neighborhood and the terminal are so closely interrelated, the manager of the terminal has become actively involved in community activities, serving on the board of organizations such as the Mayor's Midtown Committee, the 42nd Street Redevelopment Corporation (in charge of the Times Square redevelopment project), and the 9th Avenue Association, a business group. The Port Authority works on various problems with these organizations opening up lines of communication and benefiting the terminal and the neighborhood as a whole.

Efforts of these and other groups, especially the redevelopment of 42nd Street, have complemented the efforts by the Port Authority to improve the terminal. With the help of the business improvement district (BID), which sponsors private security guards to patrol streets and sanitation staff to supplement city forces, crime has dropped 41 percent in the area between 1993 and 1995. The cleanliness rating improved from 54 percent to 96 percent, according to the Mayor's monthly cleanliness survey of the area, as reported by Gover Howell, Director of Public Safety for the Times Square BID. In addition, illegal peddling and low-level drug dealing have dramatically decreased in the neighborhood.

The number of PABT customers rating the area around the bus terminal as "good or very good" grew from 7 percent in 1991 to 12 percent in 1993 and to 15 percent in 1994.

FUNDING

The economics of the bus terminal may seem daunting, but many of the program components can be tailored to smaller facilities. Some of the programs implemented did not increase costs at the Port Authority, but simply involved a different deployment of existing resources. In addition, investment in capital improvements and retail have resulted in increased revenues to the terminal.

The operating budget for the Port Authority Bus Terminal is about \$45 million per year, plus about \$10 million in capital improvements. Approximately 25 percent of the operating budget is spent on security. Some of the maintenance costs of the facility also have security benefits: staffing the restrooms, for example, costs about \$3 million annually. The contract for social service referrals is approximately \$750,000.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The comprehensive approach to security meant a new way of operating the terminal, along with a substantial investment of funds for new programs. Both were obstacles in their own way. The cooperation of police staff was crucial to the success of the changes and Operation Alternative represented a significant departure from generally accepted policing methods.

Furthermore, the task force, in working to develop the initial recommendations, attempted to be conciliatory and collaborative, but the very nature of its work involved organizational changes that many resisted.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The Port Authority regularly collects information about patron perceptions, retail data, and use of the facility by the homeless. The following data indicate that the project has been successful:

- Operation Alternative has been successful in referring and relocating the homeless to the proper facilities and agencies and had a tremendous effect on safety levels at the terminal. The homeless population has been dramatically reduced. In 3½ years, Operation Alternative made 33,000 referrals. However, a few problematic individuals remain. In 1991, 43 percent of customers surveyed complained about these people, but by 1994 they were a problem to only 15 percent of terminal users.

- Criminal activity throughout the terminal has decreased by half, with serious crime down even more. The dramatic reductions of specific crimes are listed below.

Type of Crime	Number in 1988	Number in 1994
Robbery	502	148
Assault	292	191
Rape	18	3
Pickpocket	416	136
Loitering	227	61
Drug-Related	1216	651

Sales per square foot have increased from \$388 to \$659 between 1990 and 1994. Revenue per square foot also increased, from \$50 in 1990 to \$67 in 1994. Gross sales from the Port Authority rose from \$27.14 million in 1992 to \$37.13 million in 1994.

Annual commuter surveys show that public perceptions of the bus terminal have become very favorable. The 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1994 surveys showed significant improvements in perceptions about security and social issues. Specifically, customer rating of “safety inside the terminal” as “good to very good” more than doubled from 20 percent in 1991 to 52 percent in 1994; “safety in restroom facilities” increased from 12 percent in 1991 to 26 percent in 1994; “the police effectiveness” rating jumped from 28 percent in 1991 to 51 percent for both 1993 and 1994. The overall experience of using the bus terminal was rated “good to very good” by 67 percent of customers in 1993 (the first time the question was asked) and by 76 percent in 1994.

The surrounding district is clearly being revitalized. The Walt Disney Company has committed to the 42nd Street redevelopment project and will be renovating a historic theater and participating in opening a new hotel. Other entertainment companies are following. The Times Square BID is upgrading the cleanliness and security in the neighborhood from West 40th to West 53rd Streets and from 6th to 8th Avenues.

CONCLUSIONS

The Port Authority Bus Terminal has been transformed from a transit terminal plagued by security problems to one which is becoming an anchor for the revitalizing Times Square district. There is general public acknowledgment that the terminal and the neighborhood are more livable.

The most important lesson learned in this multiyear process of revitalizing a transportation facility is that addressing all problematic situations was necessary to

clean up the terminal. Efforts by the Port Authority have addressed all aspects of problems in the terminal, both perceived and actual. Working with the surrounding neighborhood has contributed to upgrading a troubled area.

ENDNOTE

1. Claudia H. Deutsch, “A Former Haven of Sleaze Is Now a Refuge of Retail,” *New York Times* (March 17, 1996) p.11.

Case Study 7-4

Portland, OR: Tri-Met’s Rider Advocate Program On-Board Services Improve Transit and Community Security

The Rider Advocate [program] is one of the first attempts of Tri-Met to address collaborative relationships that improve transit. We see it as an innovative partnership: customer service on wheels. These are people who are hired from within their own community and who have a commitment to their own neighborhood.

—Peg Caliendo, Marketing
and Community Safety, Tri-Met

We commend Robert and David for their quick thinking and rapid response that helped save a life. This effort illustrates Rider Advocates’ important role on Tri-Met and in the community.

—Ben Priestly, Executive Director,
Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods

SUMMARY

The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (Tri-Met) “Rider Advocate” program was established in 1994 in response to an expressed need by communities in northeast Portland for an ongoing security presence on Tri-Met buses. The Rider Advocate program is a community-based partnership between Tri-Met and the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods that enlists members of the community to serve as extensions of Tri-Met’s customer-relations efforts.

A major goal of the program is to reduce anti-social behavior on the buses in order to encourage ridership. Rider advocates talk with patrons, distribute brochures, and give out transit as well as social-service information. Rider advocates assist both new and regular riders and help Tri-Met personnel maintain a pleasant environment for passengers. The program has helped solve problems on this specific line

while providing personalized service to customers. With the approval of funds from Americorps, the program will be expanded in 1996 to include additional bus lines serving other neighborhoods.

PLANNING PROCESS

Tri-Met created the Rider Advocate program in the aftermath of two shootings in October 1993 on board the #4 Fessenden bus line in northeast Portland. Immediately after the incidents, Tri-Met posted armed guards on the buses in this neighborhood. The community complained that this solution was not acceptable, stating that "it wasn't how they saw themselves" and that people from the community should be hired to do the job instead.

Through a series of meetings with Tri-Met, the community proposed the idea of having individuals from the surrounding community riding the eight bus lines that service northeastern Portland to be trouble-shooters and provide a security presence. Tri-Met contracted with the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods (NCN), one of Portland's 90 volunteer-run neighborhood associations, to implement the project, which also is responsible for the hiring, training, and deployment of nine full-time rider advocates and a coordinator, all of whom receive full health and other employee benefits. Rider advocates comprise part of Tri-Met's customer service division and live in the 13 northeast coalition neighborhoods.

When the program began in 1994, Tri-Met's goals included the following:

- Enhancing customer relations, including boosting customer confidence in using transit;
- Reducing the occurrence of criminal and anti-social behavior on buses; and
- Enhancing customer knowledge of the Tri-Met system.

STRATEGY

The NCN offers technical services to 13 neighborhood associations and is funded by the city's Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA), a bureau created to act as a liaison between the citizens of Portland and their elected officials. The ONA, in turn, oversees the work of seven neighborhood program offices, which help neighborhoods with community development, crime prevention, land-use assistance, and neighborhood organizing. When Portland's communities face specific problems, a structure of grass roots community organizations already exists. No groups had to be



Figure 7-13. Case Study 7-4. Americorps Transit Safety Advocate Jason Earl talks with passengers aboard Tri-Met's MAX light rail train in Portland, OR. Americorps volunteers have augmented the ranks of Portland's Rider Advocates. (Credit: Tri-MET)

mobilized to address the problem because they were already officially recognized and, as such, it was easy for Tri-Met to work with them.

Rider advocates were originally assigned to the northeast in response to specific criminal incidents. The northeast business and retail center, however, is also Tri-Met's second highest ridership area, on both light rail and bus. Advocates alight and board many times each day in order to cover a variety of buses along all eight bus lines and four connecting lines within the coalition's neighborhood boundaries. They are equipped with radios, which allow them to reach both 911 and Tri-Met in case of emergency. Rider advocates travel in pairs and board buses (and some light rail trains) weekdays beginning at 1:30 p.m., the time of daily school dismissals. At this time of day, the advocates ride the lines that service the area's schools, ensuring that students are well-behaved on buses and at bus stops. They are also given free bus and movie passes with which they reward those youngsters displaying appropriate behavior when others around them are "acting up."

The advocates themselves are between the ages of 30 and 55; most are African American and two are women. They are charged with talking to and developing relationships with passengers, and giving out information on NCN social services, job training, and neighborhood-watch groups in the area. Rider advocates are trained to deal with difficult people. Passengers are encouraged to ask their rider advocate for help or for information about local points of interest, community programs, or Tri-Met services.

FUNDING

The ONA funds seven neighborhood coalitions, which oversee the work of 90 volunteer-run neighborhood associations such as the NCN. The Rider Advocate program is funded by Tri-Met on a yearly contract and costs about \$284,000 to administer and operate. The advocates themselves are paid \$8.50/hour through funds transferred to the NCN.

The County District Attorney proposed and received an Americorps grant to hire 10 transit advocates in a companion to the Rider Advocate program. The transit advocates will ride other bus and light rail lines in the city and on the downtown transit mall.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The primary obstacle facing the program is that it is both labor-intensive and expensive to operate; approximately two-thirds of program money funds labor and about one-third is used for administrative expenses.

Also, bus drivers have expressed concern that rider advocates may be monitoring them and reporting their mistakes.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

No major incidents have occurred on routes served by rider advocates since the advent of the program. In addition, in the past year, rider advocates saved the life of a woman who was suffering a stroke while waiting at a bus stop and returned a lost 3-year-old, alone at a stop, to his home.

On-board surveys of passengers on the #4 bus line were conducted specifically to see how perceptions of safety and comfort have improved. Passenger knowl-

edge of the Rider Advocate program as well as their experience with advocates caused people to rate Tri-Met higher across the board. Passengers who had seen advocates gave Tri-Met more "excellent" ratings than respondents who had not; passengers commented that the Rider Advocate program was a "great idea" and stated that advocates gave out bus information and directions, assisted passengers with disabilities and helped maintain order on the buses.

In early 1996, a process to evaluate the success of the program began, which includes interviews with the following people in order to determine whether or not the program goals are being adequately met, how effectively the program is operating, and what changes might be needed to increase the program's effectiveness:

- Bus operators on all lines that the rider advocates frequent;
- Administrators of the advocate program;
- Tri-Met Dispatch and Road Operations;
- Representatives from the Portland Police Bureau Tri-Met Transit Unit; and
- Representatives from the rider advocates themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

The Rider Advocate program began as a safety and security program. It has evolved, however, into a community effort to encourage appropriate behavior aboard transit. In addition, rider advocates see what problems and issues are facing drivers and passengers and can share this information with Tri-Met, thereby making transit safer and more comfortable for passengers, while improving community security.