

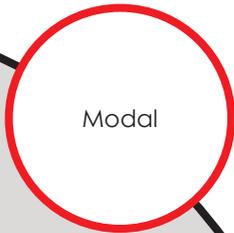


Caltrans Division of Research,
Innovation and System Information

Research



Results



Modal

DECEMBER 2021

Project Title:

Increasing Access, Mobility,
and Shelter Opportunities for
Disadvantaged Populations:
Affordable Housing in Transit-Oriented
Developments

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Increasing Access, Mobility, and Shelter Opportunities for Disadvantaged Populations: Affordable Housing in Transit- Oriented Developments

Explore policy tools to improve accessibility as well as the mobility of minority and disadvantaged population by increasing the supply of affordable housing around existing and proposed transit stations and corridors in Southern California.

WHAT WAS THE NEED?

The Southern California region has a considerable shortage of all types of housing and a severe shortage of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income housing. The mobility of minority and disadvantaged population is restricted, in part, due to a lack of access to affordable housing near public transit. The accessibility and mobility of disadvantaged population can be increased by promoting affordable housing in Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs); however, TODs frequently face regulatory and non-regulatory barriers. Given this, the project aims primarily to identify barriers and challenges to affordable housing as part of TODs to achieve regional land use and mobility goals at the local level. Secondly, it will address concerns of gentrification and displacement that often drive community opposition to infill projects. In addition, the study will explore partnership opportunities between the public, private, and non-profit sectors, in particular the local community development corporations and housing intermediaries who have created the bulk of affordable housing in Southern California in recent decades. The study also will examine the complexity of institutional responses at the local and regional level and the role of the civil society in achieving desired outcomes.



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WHAT WAS OUR GOAL?

Based on the analysis and findings, the research expects to identify and recommend effective institutional responses at the local level including appropriate land use policy measures to reduce barriers to facilitating affordable housing in TODs with the intent to improve the accessibility and mobility of minority and disadvantaged populations.

WHAT DID WE DO?

The project scope is conceived as an empirical, multiple-case study research to systematically investigate regulatory and non-regulatory barriers to infill development, especially in low-income and disadvantaged communities that have access to transit, but still have not been able to leverage the transit infrastructure to pursue large-scale infill developments and the promise of reduced GHG emissions, and of improved air quality.

The study focuses on ten Southern California communities that have adopted new specific plans to facilitate TODs. Of these, three TODs are around stations in Orange County (Anaheim, Fullerton, and Santa Ana) and seven in Los Angeles County (Azusa, Crenshaw, Baldwin Park Vermont-Western, Willowbrook, West Carson, East Los Angeles). We selected these ten specific plans for the research primarily because these TODs are generally located around low-income and disadvantaged communities and also because infill developments are most likely to succeed in transit rich areas, where public incentives have already been put in place to encourage investments, compared to non-transit rich areas (California Air Resources Board, n.d.).

We will complement the land-use analysis by conducting interviews with developers (for-profit and nonprofit), community groups and affordable housing intermediaries to better understand barriers and risks to investment and development when pursuing infill development.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

The findings are summarized under the following three categories: (a) TOD and the Affordable Housing Landscape; (b) Planning and Policy Tools – Housing Elements, Specific Plans, and the Planners' Perspectives; and (c) The Production Experience: Developers' Perspectives. Specific conclusions under the first category include such topics as the nature and extent of the overwhelming housing crisis in California, historically weak nexus of transit and development given the low-density urban sprawl, concerns and risks of gentrification, and spatial mismatch in investments.

Topics under the second category include such issues as the lack of funding for affordable housing at the state and local levels, differences in affordable housing production resulting from the degree of local civil society activism and advocacy, state housing policies like Regional Housing Needs Allocation not always grounded in reality, ineffective Specific Plans and Housing Elements in pursuing affordable housing production, and community opposition and Not in My Backyard continuing to act as a barrier to development. Finally, conclusions under the third category include such items as financing, patchwork of subsidy, intense competition for funding especially among the non-profit developers, sluggish finance and permit process, associated financial risks, and other land-use planning barriers.

The report concludes with some concrete recommendation for improving affordable housing production in the TOD areas.

The following are the recommendations:

1. Emulate abridged versions of City of Los Angeles' Transit Oriented Communities Guidelines;
2. Adopt Inclusionary Housing Policies Advancing Equitable-Development Goals in Transit Station Areas;

3. Improve Planning Tools to Better Steward Affordable Housing Opportunities;
4. Streamline Commercial Use Conversion to Residential, By-Right, as is done in the City of Los Angeles;
5. Reinstate Tax Increment Financing to promote affordable housing in Transit Station Areas;
6. Strengthen Institutional Capacity for Regional Collaboration & Implementation;
7. Convert Park and Ride lots in the TOD areas to Affordable Housing and other Community Oriented Uses;
8. Minimize Time-Consuming Permit Process for Housing Development in the TOD areas; and
9. Urban Design Principles for Specific Plans.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The focal topic of this inquiry is the future development of integrated land use, especially around transit stations and corridors that would create affordable housing and mixed-use developments while improving the access and mobility of transit dependent population. In other words, the study would explore the application of the 3-D principles – density, design, and diversity – in selected TODs in the Southern California region. In particular, the proposal will examine the possibilities of in-fill development within the palimpsest of institutional responses at the local and regional level. The aim is to identify the barriers and challenges to achieve the integrated land use goals at the local level, and specifically the concerns for gentrification and displacement that often drive community opposition at the local level. The aim is to identify replicable infill “best practices” that can offer acceptable alternatives within a particular transect of urban growth where a station might be located. The findings, in turn, would help catalyze successful implementation of transit-oriented developments.

IMAGES

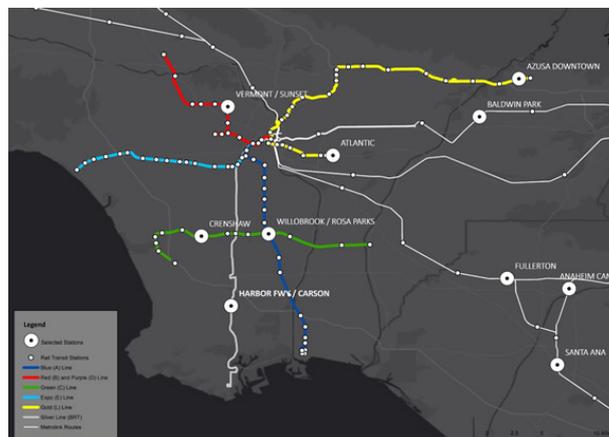


Image 1: Case Study Area