Best Practices: Coordination of Transit, Land Use and Regional Planning

Conference Summary
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We have been here to Consider these Questions

- What set of factors and circumstances are behind the transformation of a region to become a transit region?
- What local conditions - level of congestion, growth rate, city-suburb relationships, tax structure, etc. are conducive to being a transit region?
- How does the planning process take place?
- Where does the leadership for such areas come from?
- How important was the role of a champion? How do such people emerge?
- What is the relative role of elected officials, the private sector, regional planning agencies and transit agencies?
- How important is the funding mechanism in the area?

More Questions

- How does an area remain persistent and deal with failure to meet its mission?
- How do transit agencies get involved, (at the table) in regional planning and land use?
- How does the area resolve conflicts and reach consensus?
- Is it critical that there be a rail transit system?
- How can a bus system be used to affect land use?
- What tools, models, etc. are needed to improve the planning and implementation process?
Some answers.

What set of factors and circumstances are behind the transformation of a region to become a transit region?

- A realization that the community cannot continue as it has in the past, or continue business as usual. Forecasts indicate a bleak future with loss of quality of life. Concerns about urban sprawl, finance, environmental loss, sustainability.
- If you are at this conference, you are already on the way.
How does the planning process take place?

- Strong Interagency cooperation, ongoing network of people who interact a lot (share staff, co-locate, regular lunches, etc.)
- Early involvement by affected groups
- Think about land use first as part of each project, make transit fit land use potential rather than try to fit the land use to the easy transit location.
- Talk to everyone, particularly the skeptics to find out what their concerns are, seek to accommodate them.

How important was the role of a champion? How do such people emerge?

- Very important, need a strong advocate and a clear lead agency. Political champions that will actively work to sell the project and remove barriers.
- From concern about impacts of future growth, vision of a better community.
How does an area remain persistent and deal with failure to meet its mission?

- Recognize that it is not easy and will take a long time. Have a clear vision and strong leadership. Be flexible and adaptive, identify and overcome barriers, think of how to make things work rather than why it won’t.

How important is the funding mechanism in the area?

- Very important. A stable, dedicated source of funding is essential, but may not occur until there is a clear consensus on the future plan, requires intense effort leading up to a referenda, several tries may be necessary.
How do transit agencies get involved, (at the table) in regional planning and land use?

- Use the FTA self assessment (FTA web site)
- Dedicated staff for land use decision making with development expertise.
- Seek transit agency review of new development projects
- Follow the money - TIP process.
- Have funds available for small, strategic site improvements

Is it critical that there be a rail transit system? How can a bus system be used to affect land use?

- No, but a rail system can energize a region and create momentum for land use interaction.
- A bus only system will have impacts on land use if it is highly visible, good frequent service and an impression of permanence. Requires a far greater effort to convince developers of the benefits.
- Corridor planning along major bus routes can be a strategy to maintain and enhance existing land use patterns already transit friendly. Traditional neighborhoods.
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