Promoting Transit Oriented Development in Maryland

The TOD Planning Strategy of Maryland Department of Transportation’s Maryland Transit Administration

by Pat Keller, AICP and Zachary Chissell, Maryland Transit Administration

Over the past two years, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)’s has been actively engaged in encouraging and marketing the State property located at transit stations for higher density, mixed use development. MDOT’s MTA has 41 MARC Stations, 14 Metro Subway Stations, 33 Light Rail Stations, 47 Park & Ride Lots, and 12 Major Bus Hubs in the inventory of stations and parking lots.

Real estate is the currency for economic development and maximizes the use of transit. The goal of maximizing transit access and ridership in and around the transit stations can only be achieved by working in partnership with local jurisdictions. Turning surface parking lots into viable mixed use development benefits the local community as well as transit. Successful projects also require that State agencies work together.

To this end, MTA works closely with the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Secretary’s Office (TSO) in the planning and development of transit oriented development (TOD) sites. MDOT collectively seeks to utilize the TOD as a tool to support economic development, promote transit ridership, and maximize the efficient use of transportation infrastructure. MTA’s primary goal regarding TOD is to match development that is designed to leverage transit with the provision of transit service that is safe, efficient, and reliable with a world-class customer service.

The MTA has developed a three-pronged TOD planning strategy that seeks to support and enhance TOD in Maryland. The three facets of the strategy address the process of TOD project development, including:

- Assessing the potential for TOD development
- Guiding the design of development around viable stations; and
- Measuring the ongoing relationship between transit service and development around stations.
Assess and Prioritize

The first step toward prioritizing investments and planning efforts is to assess and prioritize stations for their relative TOD potential. The assessment of MTA stations assists MTA in considering capital projects, pursuing competitive grants, and collaborating with local jurisdictions on planning efforts and land use decisions.

Station Development Metrics

In coordination with TSO, the MTA Office of Planning and Programming has created a set of metrics, Station Development Metrics, to measure and assess all stations for TOD potential at existing and potential stations. These metrics allow for consistent and quantifiable analysis across stations. This growing set of Station Development Metrics is currently organized into seven (7) different categories, including: transit activity; station facilities; parking provision and utilization; bicycle access; pedestrian access; local zoning; and real estate market strength.

Moving forward, these metrics will be continually refined and updated to reflect feedback from users, State’s continued experience with encouraging TOD, and agency priorities. MTA will use the Station Development Metrics to help prioritize both station area planning efforts and capital investments in and around stations.
TOD Dashboard
TOD Dashboard (<geodata.md.gov/tod>) is a web-based tool designed for use by developers, local jurisdictions, and the public to share detailed station information including transit performance measurements, zoning, land-use, and pedestrian access. MTA staff will use the TOD Dashboard to engage local jurisdictions in station area development planning. These conversations will further refine the metrics that are used in the TOD Dashboard and lay the foundation for future coordination of station area planning.

Guide Development
For TOD projects that are occurring or in planning stages, MTA aims to clearly communicate preferences and requirements concerning design and system connectivity with developers and local jurisdictions. *The TOD Design Guidelines, Station Area Concept Plans*, and Transit Impact Review process will help developers and local jurisdictions understand the MTA’s requirements and preferences from an early stage of development.

TOD Design Guidelines
MTA has developed a concise set of design guidelines, *Designing for Transit: Transit Oriented Development Guidelines*, which is appropriate for developers and local jurisdictions. Additionally, MDOT TSO-Office of Real Estate can utilize the Guidelines for projects that propose the redevelopment of MDOT-owned parcels. The Guidelines articulate how MTA requests the developers incorporating transit into various elements of the site design. Due to the variety of station locations around Maryland, TOD Place Types were created to help guide the design of a project depending on station location and existing transit service. TOD Place Types and design Elements include the following:

- **Place Types:** Downtown; Urban Neighborhood; Town, Suburban, or Employment Center; Village Center or Rural Town
- **Elements:** Station and Infrastructure; Network Connectivity; Parking for all Modes
Initial distribution of the Guidelines will be coordinated with an outreach effort to local jurisdictions across the State, where an MTA station is located. Through this initial distribution, the MTA will seek feedback on the Guidelines and promote the importance of considering transit during land development decisions. MTA has already met with a number of jurisdictions (for a copy of the Guidelines, contact Pat Keller at pkeller@mta.maryland.gov).

Station Area Concept Plans
Building on the design guidelines, MTA is producing station area concept plans to communicate preferences regarding development at specific MTA stations. Plans will be for use by MTA, TSO, local planners, government agencies, and developers with interest in proposing development at stations. Plans will focus on station access, intermodal connectivity, and include potential improvements in the station area that support transit service.

Based upon available resources and concurrence from TSO, MTA will initiate concept plans for stations that show high potential through the development metrics and are supported by local jurisdictions. The Station Area Concept Plans will be used to engage planners and stakeholders in any local comprehensive or small area planning efforts for an area which includes an MTA station.

Transit Impact Review
MTA staff participates in two local site plan review processes in order to assess accommodation for transit. For the MTA’s core service area around the Baltimore metropolitan region, this includes consistent review of site plans regardless of proximity to transit stations. For site plan reviews outside of station areas, an assessment of the impact on the local transit system considers orientation to adjacent bus service and connectivity to nearby stations. By participating in the site plan review process, MTA can help ensure that transit is being considered during development decisions.

Monitor Impact
In order to effectively promote TOD, the MTA will continually review the relationship between transit service and land development. Indicators must measure both the impact of development on Transit Performance and, conversely, the Development Benefit of transit service. Indicators will include ridership, on time performance, and arrival mode choice as well as land values, building permit activity, and vacancy rates. This ongoing analysis will help guide MTA on how to modify transit service in response to land development projects and also how to better advocate for provisions for transit when land is redeveloped and local planning efforts are undertaken.
Are You Thinking About Seeking Certification This Year?

by Jacquelyn Rouse, AICP, Planning Administrator, City of Annapolis Department of Planning and Zoning

The May exam testing window is set for May 10th through May 23rd, 2017, so you have a minimum of 15 weeks to get ready. In the past, the Maryland Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) tried to organize study groups, but this has proved challenging. I recommend trying to find a study buddy who either works or lives near you. It will be easier to arrange regular sessions with one person and having a study partner can make the whole process so much easier.

May 2017 marks the debut of the new updated exam. Some of you may be concerned about the differences from the old exam to the new exam. APA has a webinar that you can watch, *New AICP Certification Exam Demystified for Testers*, available at [https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8646774224569394434](https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8646774224569394434).

Although topics have been reorganized, there are actually only a few new topics: Sustainability Planning under Areas of Practice; Internal Organization Management and Technology related applications under Leadership, Administration and Management.

There are still 170 questions (of which 20 are practice questions) in an AICP exam. The exam is divided into five topic areas:

- Fundamental Planning Knowledge: 38 questions (25 percent)
- Plan Making and Implementation: 45 questions (30 percent)
- Areas of Practice: 45 questions (30 percent)
- Leadership, Administration and Management: 7 questions (5 percent)
- AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct: 15 questions (10 percent)

Detailed information about what these topic areas cover can be found at [https://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/subjectmatter.htm](https://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/subjectmatter.htm).

In fact, the APA’s AICP Certification web page is the place to begin to get yourself ready for the exam. There are five steps for preparing the exam. ([https://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/](https://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/))

APA has put together an *Exam Overview Crosswalk* which in detail goes through the new topic outline and compares it to the previous topic outline. ([https://www.planning.org/blog/blogpost/9117209/](https://www.planning.org/blog/blogpost/9117209/))

There is scholarship money available to take the exam — APA offers one scholarship and the Chapter offers another one. Scholarship recipients pay reduced fees to AICP as follows:

- First time AICP applicants: $145 (combined $70 application and $75 exam fee, if approved)
- Previously approved AICP applicants: $75 (exam fee only)

If you wish to apply, please send a request to me at jmr@annapolis.gov by February 15th. Please submit a written explanation of financial hardship (including financial hardship caused by a budget cutback in a firm or agency), which necessitates the request. The APA established criteria are: (continued on page 8)
How Analysis Drives Courthouse Design

by Trish Lomonosov, Fentress, Inc.

Anyone seeing the façade of just about any major courthouse in any U.S. city would recognize the significant impact of architectural inspiration in the design and construction of these buildings. Classic Jeffersonian, Romanesque, neoclassical, Italianate, Mediterranean, contemporary, art deco – the list of architectural styles that architects have used in courthouse design is impressive. But behind the striking designs is a lesser-known element of courthouse construction – the \textit{analytical planning} that fuels the creative architectural engine.

\textbf{“Make No Little Plans”}

At the turn of the 20th century, Daniel Burnham, widely regarded as the father of urban planning, famously said:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty.”}
\end{quote}

As courthouse planners we strive to aim high in our work, knowing that the results — courthouses will serve the public interest for generations. But it’s equally important to remember the other factor that often influences courthouse planning, which is the need for responsible fiscal awareness, especially when budgets are tight and to develop courthouse plans that are appropriately sized to adequately meet the current and future needs of the court. This can sometimes be a difficult balance to achieve, but this is where effective analytical planning really shines.
Courthouse Planning – It Takes a Team

This analysis really begins with data and an understanding of the information that impacts the workload of a court. This includes demographic and economic data, crime trends, and justice system initiatives. The data, paired with forecasts for future caseload and personnel, form the basis for a courthouse plan that accurately reflects the court’s current and projected needs. The data and projections can’t be developed and analyzed in a vacuum because there are other factors that affect the workload of a court and its future needs.

Collecting input from the people who work in the court each day is critical in the planning process. This step involves reviewing and validating, or revising, the data with stakeholders that include judges, clerk of court and clerk’s office staff, prosecuting attorneys, public defenders, probation and parole officers, and courthouse security representatives. These experts are really the key players on the planning team. Tapping into their knowledge and experience is essential. As Kenneth Blanchard, author and management expert said, “None of us is as smart of all of us.”

Gathering feedback from stakeholders involves in-person planning sessions with the people who are directly affected by the plan. We typically begin by discussing the quantitative data that have been developed and analyzed for the particular court, then ask for the professional experiences that reveal a less quantitative, more interpersonal image of the court. This helps us to hone the data and develop ideas that can be turned into action.

There are other benefits to involving the stakeholders of the plan as well. As planners, we learn important information about the court’s operations and gain an understanding of how they actually work, which varies from court to court, despite the similar nature of the work. For the court representatives, this is an opportunity to learn about the planning issues and the courthouse planning process.

Analysts call this process transactive planning, which is a group of people sitting around a table, gathering information and sharing ideas. It is a step that is an essential part of the planning process. I’ve learned over the years that plans that are developed without the consensus of the court tend to result in ineffectual solutions; while strategies that have the support of the key personnel during the planning process result in outcomes that are beneficial and successful.

The Process in Practice: Real-Life Examples

Demographic and Economic Data

Let’s take a look at a courthouse plan for a rural Virginia jurisdiction. Before our first visit to its city, we prepared a trends analysis and forecasts for demographics, economics, caseload, and personnel as the starting point for our discussion with the court personnel. In particular, we analyzed the U.S. Census data for the area and used a geographic information system to illustrate the trends we had identified. The data revealed only a moderate growth trend in one metropolitan statistical area where the court is located. It also showed that the overall jurisdiction was experiencing a decreasing population growth and even declines in some areas as the broader region was struggling to find industries to replace its historic economic base, including the coal mining and textile industries.

However, these census projections are based solely on historical growth and don’t take economic and other trends into account. During our on-site planning session, we presented these population projections that were based on sluggish census trends and that showed the need for only a modest increase in future personnel and caseload for the court. But in our discussions, we learned that although the region has been historically defined as a rural area, its sole centrally-located city has been experiencing an increase in the number of high-tech firms relocating to or starting up in the city, largely due to the expansion of local universities.

Strong increases in tourism, retail and commercial sector growth, as well as substantial industrial development growth had also added to the expansion impact of the high-tech firms. These discussions with the clerk of court and other court managers helped justify why population could likely grow beyond what was projected, and explain the rationale for a
larger court presence in response to the growth. If the population trends had been the only factor we considered, we would have painted a different and largely incorrect picture as the basis for projecting demand in the jurisdiction. Instead, this transactive planning practice allowed us to reassess and adjust the assumptions about projected caseload and staffing that ultimately resulted in a far more accurate plan for the court.

Crime Trends and Justice System Initiatives
In addition to demographic and economic data, crime trends can also have a tremendous impact on courthouse planning, especially the future caseload and the judgeships and personnel required to handle the work. Just as with the demographic and economic data, gaining feedback from court stakeholders on the crime trends is essential.

We recently conducted a needs assessment for a court jurisdiction on the southwest border of the U.S. The court was operating under a hiring freeze but the criminal caseload had soared to historical highs in the past four years. During the planning session, court managers provided important details about the factors behind the skyrocketing caseload – primarily increased border enforcement and resulting immigration and drug trafficking caseload.

While talking through these recent trends with the court and representatives from the related law enforcement agencies, it became clear that the caseload projections and resulting judgeship and personnel projections needed to reflect the aggressive growth, as immigration-related crime was clearly not going away in the jurisdiction. But we also needed to take into account the fact that enforcement initiatives and priorities could change at any time, which could slow the caseload growth and resulting need for more personnel over time. Without the perspective from the people who actually worked in the court and within the jurisdiction, our forecasts and resulting plans might have turned out to be far more excessive than what they really needed, or could afford.

Courthouse planning is the Real Foundation of the Courthouse Design. So, the next time you walk past a courthouse and admire the impressive architectural style and striking façade, take a minute to think about the other less visible aspect of the design. After all, it’s our quantitative data, bolstered and validated by the qualitative feedback from the on-the-ground experts – the people who actually work in the court and know its operations firsthand – that provide the real foundation for the architects and their stunning masterpieces.

• The applicant selected will be otherwise unlikely to take the exam without the reduced fee.
• The applicant’s employer will not subsidize the exam fee.
• Members of minorities should be given preference.

The Pennsylvania Chapter of APA is holding an all-day AICP exam preparation session on Saturday, March 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This will be held at the Community Room in Camp Hill Shopping Center at the 3307 E Trindle Rd, Camp Hill, PA 17011, (717) 737-6527. Although this is a two-hour drive from Baltimore, I highly recommend that you attend.

The session will review the content outline of the AICP exam, which APA recently updated, and provide details on the different content areas. The May 2017 exam has been updated to reflect the new content outline, and the session will take time to clarify understanding of the revised exam. Questions are encouraged throughout the day. The Pennsylvania chapter members can attend for free and non-members pay $35. Registration is required. Details and registration are available at https://planningpa.org/event/aicp-exam-prep-2017/. 