Building Linear Communities
The promise of Enhanced Bus Transit

John Owen: Overview of BRT: What it is, how it can be used, potential benefits.

Thera Black: Getting started: Preliminary urban corridor planning in Thurston County.

Allan Giffen: Implementation: Linear community planning in Snohomish County

Joe Tovar: The results: Recent work in Shoreline WA.

October 2011 Washington Oregon APA Conference

The reality is that our land use systems are primarily linear

Challenge 1: Urban corridor redevelopment

Challenge 2: More flexible, lower cost transit

We understand fixed rail transit oriented development, but what about BRT oriented redevelopment?

Older models

Ciudad Lineal

Streetcar suburbs
But this is often a tougher context

Enhanced Transit + Corridor Redevelopment
Linear Community
(With livability, efficiency and ridership)

Vision: A Linear Community

What is Bus Rapid Transit - BRT?
High quality rapid transit system with the appeal of rail, but with a number of potential advantages:
- Flexibility
- Connect activity centers quickly, and cost effectively
- Provide multiple services on a single running way
- Does not require special tracks, electrical systems, etc.
- Can eliminate the need for many transfers

Hence, the term "enhanced transit" is appropriate
Some Lessons

- BRT is not a one-size-fits-all solution
- Successful systems generally require extensive planning and public consultation
- Major challenges tend to be political, not technical
  - BRT often viewed as "just a bus" or a second-class solution
  - Image critical (design elements, landscaping, branding, etc.)
- Capital costs often not as challenging as operating costs

Source: Breakthrough Technologies Institute

An Example: Cleveland’s Health Line

Redevelopment along Cleveland’s Health Line

Source: Greater Cleveland RTA

Revitalizing Urban Transit Corridors

A Cornerstone of Sustainable Regional Development

Aligning Vision and Reality – Phase 1
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1993 RTP Defined Corridor Concept for Local Plans
Where is the change that was envisioned?

Evolution of a Suburban Arterial

Existing conditions

Evolution of a Suburban Arterial, Phase 1

Private Investment: For example, mixed-use buildings on one block that triggers start of a transformation.

Evolution of a Suburban Arterial, Phase 2

Public investment supports private investment: Street improvements transform the public realm and help establish a sense of place.

Evolution of a Suburban Arterial, Phase 3

Public investment stimulates more private investment: In walkable, transit-oriented places, growth is an asset. More development leads to better communities.
Urban Corridors Task Force

Task Force = Elected officials from Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Intercity Transit, North Thurston school district, plus citizen and business representatives

Fundamental question:
What will it take for this region's urban corridors and activity centers to better support urban transit services, and how will we get there?

Stimulate the evolution of select auto-oriented suburban corridors to people-oriented urban corridors.

1. Define Priority Corridor

Identify significant metro corridors
Evaluate priority corridor characteristics
- Transit headways
- Jobs & housing
- Mixed-use capacity
- Future growth
- Redevelopment potential
Consensus on regional priority corridor

2. Identify Priority Districts

Key activity centers
Redevelopment considerations
- Objectives
- Opportunities
- Realities
- Efforts currently underway to ID one or two for regional focus
Identify priority districts

Consensus on Priority Regional Corridor
Capitol Blvd / Capitol Way / 4th / State / Martin Way

Translating Vision into Reality

Define priority corridor
Identify priority districts
Explore the toolbox
Reach across the counter
Understand the market
Identify local and regional action steps

Redevelopment Considerations – Realities

Focus efforts:
- Some areas are more attractive for redevelopment than others. Start there.
- Economics matter.
  - If it doesn’t pencil out, it won’t be built. Know the market and work with it.
- Change takes time.
  - Transformation occurs in baby steps. Develop a strategy and stick to it.

Growth is a finite resource. Use it wisely.
10/27/2011

Identify Priority Districts

Explore the Toolbox

Know the Development Players

Cities, County

Transit Agency

State Capitol

School Districts

Port of Olympia

Finance

Real Estate

Builders

Investors

Consumers

Explore the Toolbox

Know the Development Tools

Regulatory Tools

Zoning

Standards

Codes

Fees

Process

Financial Tools

Incentives

Investments

Land Aggregation

Public Private Partnership

Explore the Toolbox

Zoning

Standards

Codes

Fees

Process

5. Understand the Market

Commercial and Housing Market Analyses

- Demographic changes
- Consumer preferences
- Absorption capacity
- Financial markets
- Puget Sound influences

4. Reach Across the Counter

What drives community investment decisions?

6. Identify Local & Regional Action Steps

Modest Measures

Augment the status quo

- Property Inventory
- Education Process

Moderate Measures

Work within existing the framework

- Infrastructure Investments
- Planned Action EIS
- Revamp Impact Fees
- Land Acquisition Strategy

Mighty Measures

Redefine the framework

- Legislative Agenda
- Community Lending Pool
- Corridor Development Commission
**Linear Community Planning in Snohomish County WA**

*Evergreen Way – Highway 99*
*A work in Progress*

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**Swift BRT Line**

- 17 miles – 15 stops
- Bus every 10 minutes at peak
- Fast ticketing & boarding
- Bicyclists walk their bikes onto the bus
- 45 min travel time vs. 71 min regular transit
- $28.5 M & 4 years to build
- Ridership exceeds projections and rising

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**Multi-Jurisdiction Corridor Plan**

- Did not start as a coordinated effort
- BRT line located in or near 6 jurisdictions
- BRT forced us to look at our own land use plans
- Lynnwood adopted plan this year
- Everett will adopt plan in early 2012

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**Everett’s 1978 Evergreen Way Plan**

- Widen from 5 to 7 lanes
- 6.5 foot wide sidewalks each side
- New traffic signals
- Did not address land use or streetscape
- Built in 1980–90’s

*Before After*

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**Everett’s Existing Policies**

- Designated “Mixed-Use Commercial-Multi-Family”
- Redevelop - mix of commercial and multi-family residential
- Provide high level of transit service to support land uses
- Promote high density around transit stations
- Adopt pedestrian oriented design standards
- Improve overall aesthetic character of corridor

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**Redevelopment Strategy = Linear Community**

1. Pedestrian friendly mixed-use nodes around BRT stations
2. Plan the station areas to accommodate local services
3. Easy ped access to shops and services
4. Convenient transit access to services within the corridor
Pedestrian & bicycle access

Remove Impediments and Improve Connections to Neighborhoods

Public improvements: Local streets

Streetscape Standards

Site and Building Design Standards

Attractions and amenities

New Standards - Rezone of Entire Corridor within Everett

- 2 new zone districts
- Underlying E-1 zone
- Mixed Use Overlay around BRT stations for Transit Oriented Development
- Improved design standards (site, building, signs, landscaping)
Economic Feasibility Analysis on Opportunity Sites

Multi-Family Development Incentives
- Density increases
- Parking reductions
- Impact fee reductions
- Multi-family property tax exemption

Example: 4th Ave Node from Concept to Implementation

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Portland, Oregon  October 21, 2011

Building a Linear Community – the Shoreline Town Center Experience

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Aurora Avenue Corridor Project Goals
- Improve safety for traffic and pedestrians
- Provide efficient movement of people and goods
- Support increased use of transit
- Balance local and regional movements
- Support economic development along the corridor
- Improve aesthetics in the corridor

City of Shoreline – focusing growth in regional transportation corridors
Interurban Trail System

- 3.25 miles, part of a 25 mile regional trail system
- Mostly within Seattle City Light right of way
- Signs and minor structures evoke old Interurban Electric Railway
- Iconic bike/pedestrian bridge crosses Aurora Avenue

To a new reality of multi-modal, mixed use “centers” and nodes

BEFORE: Mile 2 of Aurora through the “Town Center” area
AFTER: Mile 2 of the Aurora project through Town Center: undergrounded utilities, new light standards, landscaped medians, BRT lanes

Aurora project’s green infrastructure

The Business Access/Transit lanes in Aurora will accommodate Bus Rapid Transit service with 10 minute headways at peak hour

Town Center Organizing concepts: four sub-districts and three street types

Retro-fitting suburbia – growing a land use pattern of mixed use, mid-rise urban form served by multiple modes of transportation
LEED Gold City Hall

Will it work?

It has worked where...
Public improvements have changed the area’s character

Before

After

It has worked where ....
There is an amenity
Lessons

• Think regionally
• Collaboration between local governments, stakeholders and transit agencies
• Transit options that fit the context and that can grow
• Special regulations and guidelines are necessary
• Try for at least 1,000 du in ¼ mi around key nodes

Lessons

• Focus on cross streets and address corridor edge conditions
• If possible, transform the context through street and open space improvements.
• Making it happen will take time
• Though examples are still emerging, the notion of a “linear community” holds a lot of promise

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