



BACKGROUND

Why development matters: Transit & Parking

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is designed to maximize access by transit and non-motorized transportation, according to the Victoria Transport Policy Institute (VTPI). A typical TOD has a rail or bus station at its center, surrounded by relatively high-density development, with progressively lower-density spreading out for pedestrian distances. Design features include:

- A neighborhood designed for Cycling and Walking
- Streets with good Connectivity and Traffic Calming features to control vehicle traffic speeds
- Mixed-use development
- Parking Management to reduce the amount of land devoted to parking
- Transit Stops and Stations that are convenient, comfortable and secure

A 1995 study (quoted by the VTPI) found that commercial mixed-use development around transit centers reduced vehicle travel by 20%. The draft Downtown St. John's Parking Study from May 2009 noted that "a little over half of all the vehicles parked in the Downtown during the survey originated from a location served by Metrobus, meaning they had the choice of using transit and chose not to for reasons of their own."

The VTPI indicates that TOD generally requires at least 25 employees per acre in commercial centres. These densities create adequate transit ridership to justify frequent service, and help create active street life and commercial activities. Transit ridership is also affected by other factors, including employment density and clustering.

A particular density may be inadequate to support transit service by itself, but becomes adequate if implemented with transit encouragement and smart growth strategies. The assumption that transit cannot be effective except in large cities with high population densities can be a self-fulfilling prophecy, because it results in transport and land use decisions that favour automobile travel over transit. Sections 1.2.2, 1.2.3, and 1.2.7 of the St. John's Municipal Plan talk about development density, compact renewal of residential development and reduced automobile trips.

Transit Oriented Development increases accessibility and transportation options through land use clustering and mixing, and non-motorized transportation improvements. This reduces distances for car trips, allows a greater portion of trips to be made by walking and cycling, and allows some households to reduce their car ownership. Together, this can largely reduce vehicle travel, reduce total transportation costs and create a more livable community.

High-quality transit supports the development of high-density urban centers, which can provide accessibility and efficiencies that result when many activities are physically close together, while automobile-oriented transportation conflicts with urban density because it is space intensive, requiring large amounts of land for roads and parking facilities. True Transit-Oriented Development allows residents to own fewer cars, drive less, rely more on alternative modes (walking, cycling, public transit, carsharing and taxi), and have a high level of local accessibility.

Transit Oriented Development reduces transportation costs and externalities, increased travel choice, and reduced land paved per capita. TOD can increase transit service the efficiency, resulting in improved performance and cost effectiveness. It can help create more Livable Communities, meaning that neighborhoods are physically and socially more desirable places to live. TOD typically reduces parking requirements by 20%, and more if implemented with other Parking Management strategies. Estimates indicate that households in Transit-Oriented Developments drive 45% less than residents of automobile-dependent neighborhoods, saving an average of 512 gallons of fuel and \$1,400 in fuel expenses annually. Other studies indicate even larger total transportation cost savings.

Transit Oriented Development usually requires the coordinated support of local governments, private developers and transit agencies. Some measures, such as increased development density, may be opposed by some residents. Transit Oriented Development may require changes in zoning codes and development practices to allow and encourage higher density development and lower parking requirements around transit stations. It may also require additional funding for pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements. It is notable that the City of St. John's has completed a Cycling Master Plan, and according to its Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, the estimated cost for full development will be \$5.4 million with implementation to "start in 2010 with \$1,583,000 from the Province for Phase I."

Parking and transit are two key issues for St. John's at the moment and downtown development can contribute to transit issues by having a concentrated destination rather than urban sprawl, and development done with parking in mind can also help alleviate some of the existing pressures on the system. Having development concentrated in the downtown can actually encourage less car driving through more cycling and walking, and combat urban sprawl and environmentally costly use of green space.

Reference documents

VTPI Transit Oriented Development report <http://www.vtpi.org/tod/tod45.htm>

Draft Downtown Parking Study

http://www.stjohns.ca/csj/parking/Draft_DowntownParkingStudy.pdf

St. John's Municipal Plan

<http://www.stjohns.ca/cityservices/planning/pdfs/Municipal%20Plan.pdf>

City of St. John's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan

[http://www.stjohns.ca/pdfs/2%20-%20\(Draft\)%20Integrated%20Community%20Sustainability%20Plan%20\(ICSP\)%20dated%20Feb.%202010.pdf](http://www.stjohns.ca/pdfs/2%20-%20(Draft)%20Integrated%20Community%20Sustainability%20Plan%20(ICSP)%20dated%20Feb.%202010.pdf)

-30-

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