



POLICY WHITE PAPER

Planning for commuter rail and transit oriented development

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Overview

US Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration (FTA) administrator announced on August 18, 2010 that the FTA has authorized RIDOT nearly \$2M for preliminary engineering for an MBTA commuter rail stop at the site located along Barton Street between Dexter and Conant Streets. With a future commuter rail stop, the half-mile radius around the train station will become a targeted area for economic development and sustainable growth.

Through extensive public meetings facilitated through KeepSpace, Broad Street Initiative, Commuter Rail planning meetings and various planning charrettes including a technical assistance panel hosted by the Urban Land Institute, the community as well as Pawtucket/Central Falls governments are in consensus that a commuter rail station and associated transit oriented development will benefit the local community and region.

Within the proposed targeted project area, The KeepSpace process has included an extensive public participatory process by which the KeepSpace team has identified a vision, local concerns and objectives for sustainable urban development.

RITPA and RIDOT are willing to partner on land use initiatives that result in better access to the extent they have \$200 million (combined) in ongoing multi-modal transportation infrastructure projects including the Conant Street Bridge Replacement, streetscape improvements (Pawtucket Downtown Design Plan & Roosevelt Avenue streetscape enhancements), circulation pattern changes, RITPA rapid bus, I-95 Bridge replacement, RIPTA bus turn-around at South Attleboro and high-density TOD building redevelopment projects.

To leverage these investments, developing a land use strategy that promotes economic development is a prime justification for the construction of a \$53M MBTA commuter rail stop in Downtown Pawtucket. Once preliminary engineering determines that an MBTA commuter rail stop is feasible and can work operationally at the new site, a compelling economic development strategy will be the prime justification to secure necessary federal appropriations to construct the project. Following preliminary engineering and initial design, adjacent land use decisions, property acquisition and public/private partnerships will be the basis for a multi-million dollar economic development plan that could generate as much as an additional \$7.5 million in new annual tax revenues by 2020 and create hundreds of jobs and housing opportunities.

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Intended Outcomes of TOD planning:

- Analyze local economy and make decisions about the types of industries and businesses Pawtucket and Central Falls can attract with the current investment in a state-of-the-art multi-modal transportation network
- Define economic development goals for multi-jurisdictional area encompassing an industrial complex (76 privately held properties spanning 116 acres of commercial and industrial properties adjacent to the proposed Pawtucket Commuter Rail stop) and a 502-acre walkable downtown core identified by a 10-minute walking radius from the rapid bus terminal and proposed commuter rail stop.
- Determine project opportunities to include infrastructure enhancements, industrial development, neighborhood retail enhancement, transit oriented development and new, mixed income housing options
- Formulate and implement an economic development program that includes efforts to reduce unemployment and increase wage incomes
- Develop transit oriented development land use guidelines and regulatory framework that implements economic development strategy for industrial, commercial mixed use and residential properties in the primary and secondary pedestrian sheds surrounding the planned commuter rail stop.

Recommendations:

PHASE 1 Existing Conditions Analysis (Research and Collation Component)

Partially in progress by KeepSpace consultants and Pawtucket Downtown Design Plan

Collate and assess material beginning with the KeepSpace work, including Horsley Whitten Group's report, working group meeting minutes, local knowledge report and other peripheral material

Collate and assess information from the City of Pawtucket including the most recent commuter rail feasibility study and transit oriented development study, existing zoning maps, mill overlay district information and an update on most recent initiatives related to the MBTA commuter rail stop, transportation infrastructure planning and development initiatives

Outline most recent development proposal from Urban Smart Growth for the Thread Factory Complex as well as determine necessary infrastructure deficiencies as described in 2010 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy application to the state of Rhode Island.

Listing and description of Community Development Corporation housing (single and multi-family) and commercial facility projects (including BVCAP and PCDC) within the project area as well as other development initiatives in progress. Include metrics on the amount and ratio of affordable housing to market-rate housing by unit typology.

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Diagram RIPTA bus lines and bus stops serving the area; including pertinent ridership and demographic data. Describe and identify major vehicular industrial/commercial vehicular corridors and arterials serving the area

Perform GIS data-driven building and parcel analysis indicating property information, tax assessor data, ownership status, building condition, environmental condition, tenant mix, and description of all businesses operating in the area by NAICS nomenclature

Provide description, analysis and condition of publicly owned right-of-ways and parcels in the project area

PHASE 2 Market Driven Business Development Plan (Economic and Legal component)

Estimated Cost for Economic Consultant: \$75,000 to \$100,000

Estimated Cost for Legal Consultant to establish revenue allocation district: \$25,000 to \$50,000

Using information related to existing commercial and industrial occupancy within the project area; develop a phased 10-year business development plan to properly utilize available inventory of industrial/commercial facilities as well as capitalize on the potential for new infill transit oriented development.

Categorize inventory of land and buildings distinguished by the amount of rehabilitation/redevelopment necessary to achieve positive economic and sustainability outcomes.

Identify economic development potential for the area based on regional market considerations, projected business growth patterns and opportunities for small and medium-sized business development.

Identify targeted industry sectors which are most suitable for transit oriented development districts. Ensure targeted growth sectors are consistent with data, objectives and performance metrics of strategic business and economic development plans developed by Statewide Planning and the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

Identify mixed-income multi-family housing development strategies that are appropriate for transit oriented development within or adjacent to the project area. Develop 10-year demand projection by unit typology. Identify development and funding partners/sources for phased housing development.

Develop a pro forma for the large footprint mill buildings that have the most potential for redevelopment within the project area. Identify costs associated with redevelopment, remediation and public infrastructure improvements.

Develop a public/private finance implementation strategy and legal framework to devise a revenue allocation district through municipal bonds, ARRA bonds, tax increment financing and/or phased multi-year tax abatement treaties. Coordinate with local and regional economic development agencies to

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establish regional policy for TOD investments, location efficient loan programs and targeted redevelopment activities.

Identify environmental and economic sustainability performance metrics for business development in the project area (i.e. walkability, housing + transportation index, green building standards, LEED neighborhood parameter, etc.)

PHASE 3 Transit Oriented Development District Plan (Urban Design and Code Component) **Estimated Cost for Urban Design and Code Consultant to implement: \$30,000 to \$50,000**

Intent: Develop a market-based land development plan based on transit oriented development design principles. Develop a legal framework to codify the desired outcomes in the pedestrian shed(s) within the project area based on the vision, character and density for the district that will :

- ensure the proper utilization of parcels and buildings in the area
- integrate land use development and transportation infrastructure investments of proposed commuter rail stop, RIPTA bus infrastructure, Conant Street Bridge replacement, Downtown Circulation Plan, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes
- provide for a mix of land uses to include an appropriate distribution of housing, industrial, commercial, civic and open space utilizing the most appropriate sustainable building and street typologies
- create new jobs, create more housing choice, and create multi-modal transportation opportunities
- Prepare a Transit Oriented Development District Plan with the following elements:

Regulating Plan. A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply, based on clear community intentions regarding the physical character of the area being coded. This could also identify the locations for open space, public art, signature buildings (that would not be subject generic building form standards) and major infrastructure elements that shape the character of the built environment.

Public Space Standards. Material and design specifications for the elements within the public realm (e.g., sidewalks, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street furniture, etc.).

Building Form Standards. Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm. This section would include sample building typologies (illustrated with section and plan diagrams) that are appropriate per the regulating plan. Building form standards would describe lot setback and massing strategies as well as basic features and configurations appropriate for specific land uses at the desired level of intensity and density to support transit oriented development.

Landscaping Standards. Regulations controlling landscape design and plant materials on private property as they impact public spaces (e.g. regulations about parking lot screening and shading, maintaining sight lines, insuring unobstructed pedestrian movements, etc.).

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Signage Standards. Regulations controlling allowable signage sizes, materials, illumination, and placement.

Environmental Resource Standards. Regulations controlling issues such as storm water drainage and infiltration, development on slopes, tree protection, solar access, etc.

Annotation. Text and illustrations explaining the intentions of specific code provisions.

Architectural Recommendations. Provide examples, specifications and images of recommended external architectural materials and quality that illustrate the desired character of the area as defined from public input, visioning and KeepSpace objectives

Administration. A clearly defined application and project review process.

Definitions. A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

