What Comes First: Transit or Transit-Oriented Development?

Georgia Planning Association Spring Session
March 27, 2019
Introductions

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BACK DROP – PERSPECTIVE FROM INSIDE DEKALB

DEKALB HAS A UNIQUE AND LONG HISTORY RELATED TO TRANSIT
Future Land Use Map

Future Land Use Activity Centers

- Neighborhood Center
- Town Center
- Regional Center
DeKalb County Perspective

• DeKalb County residents were one of three original supporters of Transit (1968 - City of Atlanta, Fulton County, DeKalb County)

• In 2012 – TSPLOST was an approach to fund transportation projects within a region based on a 1% sales tax to be used to improve regional transportation congestion issues.
  • Atlanta Regional voters rejected the 2012 T-SPLOST tax measure. The Atlanta Region voted 418,423 (62.43%) to 251,778 (37.57%) against the referendum.
  • DeKalb residents felt the project list focused too many dollars in the city of Atlanta and the streetcar without heavy rail along I-20 (south DeKalb)

• Two Views – Clifton Corridor vs. I-20 East Corridor

• FTA grant – and a TOD Strategic Plan co-sponsored by MARTA and DeKalb County

• Transit Master Plan
MISPERCEPTIONS OF THE PUBLIC

How to reverse the belief that new growth is the cause of the traffic congestion. There is a lack of understanding of mixed use activity centers:

- Can decrease traffic
- Can decrease the number of trips
- Can decrease the amount of time spent in cars/traffic
- Can create live, work and play environments

Current Issues:
- Too many residents are commuting to work or do not live near source of employment.
Work Commutes:

Commute In: 202,678
Live and Work in Dekalb: 78,679
Commute Out: 205,801
Distance Traveled to Work:

- 6% Travel 50+ Miles
- 6% Travel 25-50 Miles
- 43% Travel 10-24 Miles
- 45% Travel < 10 Miles
Mode of Transportation:

- Drive Alone: 72%
- Carpool: 11%
- Public Transit: 8%
- Work from Home: 6%
- Active Transportation: 3%
Challenges – These issues must be recognized and aggressively attacked to answer the question: Which comes first, Transit or TOD?

• Lack of community outreach and education
• Perception that increase density/intensity will increase traffic
• Perception that increased affordable housing or rental housing in general will lower property values
• Perception that commercial will bring crime to residential neighborhoods.
I-20 East Transit-Oriented Development Strategic Plan

- **Owner(s):** MARTA and DeKalb County
- **Partner(s):** DeKalb County Transit Master Plan (DeKalb County); I-20 E Transit Initiative (MARTA)
- **Consultant(s):** WSP, Planners for Environmental Quality, Sycamore Consulting, Nickel Works
- **End Date:** 12/31/2019
- **Website:** www.I20ETOD.com
- **Key Contact(s):**
  - Sylvia Smith, DeKalb County, sasmith@dekalbcountyga.gov
  - Greg Floyd, MARTA, gfloyd@itsmarta.com
  - Audra Rojek, WSP, Audra.Rojek@wsp.com
Goals

Goal 1:
Identify specific policies and incentives for context-sensitive development at proposed station locations

Goal 2:
Create partnerships to catalyze PRIVATE development around stations, anticipating a 10-20 year buildout

Goal 3:
Set the stage for TOD that can support an investment in high-capacity transit in the corridor

Timeline/Major Tasks

Project Kick-off – June 2017

Public Open House – November 2017
• TOD Land Use Program Survey

Existing Conditions & Site Analysis
• Issues and Opportunities
• Economic Market Conditions

TOD Public Workshop - April 2018
• Station Area Design Visioning

Refine Station Area TOD
• Finalize Station Area Plan and Implementation Strategies

TOD Open House – August 2018
• Review of the TOD Concept Plan

Final Public Meeting – Summer 2019
• Present Final Concepts, Implementation and Next steps
Major Opportunities and Challenges

- FTA grant funding to support TOD in project corridor received
- Uncertainty about transit project assumptions
- Coordination between MARTA, DeKalb County (project co-sponsors) and City of Stonecrest (formed after FTA grant received).
Outcomes

• Station Area Land Use Visions
Outcomes

- Funding and financing incentives for economic development
- Coordination with DeKalb County Transit Master Plan
DeKalb County Transit Master Plan

- **Owners:** Atlanta Regional Commission & DeKalb County
- **Partners:** MARTA & all DeKalb municipalities
- **Consultant(s):** VHB, WSP, The Collaborative Firm, Sycamore Consulting, Bleakly Advisory Group, Cincar Consulting Group, & Corporate Environmental Risk Management
- **End Date:** June 2019
- **Website:** [www.DeKalbTransitMasterPlan.com](http://www.DeKalbTransitMasterPlan.com)
- **Key Contacts:**
  - Lori Sand, ARC (The ATL), lsand@ATLtransit.ga.gov
  - Grady Smith, VHB, gsmith@vhb.com
Goals

Live, work, play and use transit

Make sure thriving and emerging areas have transit service

Ensure that the transit vision is affordable and effective

Make sure transit is available for everyone

Timeline/Major Tasks

MARCH 2019
- Quick, customer-oriented improvements

MARCH 2019
- Financial projections (cost and revenue)

APRIL 2019
- Transit Scenario Evaluation (mode/corridor)

APRIL 2019
- Continued coordination with MARTA, GDOT, CID, DMA, & other stakeholders

MAY 2019
- Constrained scenario & project list

APRIL/MAY 2019
- Final round of public open houses

JUNE 2019
- Final documentation
Major Opportunities and Challenges

• Belief that transit investment has been disparate between the northern and southern parts of the County
• Attitudinal differences regarding transit investment between the northern and southern parts of the County
• Education on modes/stigma related to bus use
• Historical context of I-20 corridor rail investment
• Lack of land use intensity/density to support transit modes
• Existing funding can not support transit expansion
• Balancing desire for transit investment versus limited funding
• Changing landscape of transit funding and governance
• Unknown impacts of Gwinnett County potentially joining MARTA
Major Outcomes

- Stakeholder trip to Minneapolis
- Understanding of DeKalb County sales tax revenue projections
- Understanding of impacts of HB 930 on MARTA Act and DeKalb County
- Development of a universe of transit improvement projects with cost projections
- Equity analysis of investment
- Deepening of understanding of historical decision making
- Education on different modes and contribution to regional definition of modes (BRT versus ART)
- Strengthening the collaboration between DeKalb County and its municipalities
Key Coordination Opportunities

• Bringing land use and economic development specialists together
  • Consultant team
  • Charrette

• Having stakeholders join the DeKalb County staff

• Aligning DeKalb County municipalities, stakeholders, and general public transit vision

• Understanding how to input projects into the ATL’s Regional Transit Plan

• Significant hands on involvement of elected officials and MARTA Board appointees

• Strengthening the collaboration between DeKalb County and MARTA

• Coordination with I-20 East TOD Strategic Plan
So...Which Comes First: Transit or TOD?

• Moderated Discussion