

To:	Washington County, Sara Allen, Manager of FTA TOD Pilot Program Grant/Gold Line
From:	Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit
RE:	BRTOD - Summary of Two -Day Workshop
Date:	December 19, 2018

Overview

As part of an in-kind contribution to the FTA TOD Pilot Program Grant to fulfill Task 2: Moving the Market to BRTOD – the Metropolitan Council, in collaboration with the lead agency Washington County, provided two half-day workshops focused on highlighting project objectives, including: discussion of multi-modal corridor (walking, biking, transit, and auto), the potential for increased ridership (transit access and new development), market demand, development potential, quality of life improvement, infrastructure investment, policy changes, and ensuring funding priorities. The two half-day events took place June 21 and 22, 2018.

This memo illustrates workshop format, who attended, and key lessons learned.

Format

Day 1: Walking Tour – Successful Regional TOD Planning

This half-day walking tour provided an opportunity for local planning staff, Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Agencies, Council Members, and policy makers to visit two sites within the metro area that have had successful transit-oriented development (TOD) planning outcomes. Participants discussed in-depth challenges and opportunities with TOD planning, learned about ways to enhance their ability to form partnerships, gained further understanding of best practices, and lessons learned.

Day 2: Workshop –Gold Line: Crafting a New Corridor

This half-day workshop followed up discussion from the walking tour on Day 1, and participants discussed TOD planning with regional and national experts. The workshop focused on proven strategies moving from plan to implementation, national case studies, best practices, challenges and opportunities, fostering stakeholder engagement, tailored zoning ordinance and design standards, leveraging multi-modal investment, keys to improved ridership, station area development and community investment, effective methods of advancing priorities and policies to encourage and incentivize development, promote economic development, and provide tools for proactive for TOD planning. A national expert engaged attendees in a group-wide presentation, and then a break out into small group discussion about organizing local priorities in order to build a successful TOD market.

Outreach & Stakeholders

Planners for the event invited stakeholders from the public and private sectors. Stakeholders, policy makers, planners, consultants, and any other interested parties were envisioned as participants in the event. Partnering agencies were asked to help share the event with interested members of their community.

Policymakers, public works staff, engineering and city planners from the following communities attended: St. Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, and Woodbury. Also attending were technical staff from Washington County transportation planning, the Saint Paul Area Chamber of

Commerce, the Woodbury Chamber of Commerce, Metropolitan Council (Community Development, Transportation, and Regional Administration) and the Metro Transit TOD department.

Outcomes

Day 1: Walking Tour – Successful Regional TOD Planning

Stop #1 – Brooklyn Park, MN

Starlite mall is the site of a small transit hub and the various business and corporate owners have been conferring with public sector staff on redevelopment plans, concerns about pedestrian safety, and parking and stormwater design. An elected official from Brooklyn Park described the role of policy in the implementation of a pedestrian demonstration project at Starlite shopping Mall, and discussed local political challenges with other policy makers, the business community, and general population. City Staff in Brooklyn Park highlighted the work with the business and property owners, and the preparations and public engagement strategies they have employed in conjunction with the Blue Line LRT Extension.

Stop #2 – Minnetonka, MN

At Minnetonka City Hall, the city Community Development Director provided context and overview of an almost decade long planning process surrounding Southwest LRT. A City Councilmember attended and described long-term planning activities from the perspective of an elected official. The Councilmember urged those in attendance to have a “long” view and to learn as much as possible about design and incorporation of elements of station area design (i.e. shared parking, re-building commercial areas with a stronger focus on pedestrian needs).

The bus tour resumed and city staff briefly highlighted planning efforts at two stations before a stop at the future Opus station. Most of the Opus station is fully built out and presentation and interactive conversation were around the policy role in redevelopment of existing office/industrial park projects. Discussion covered concerns - including political, social and design. Further discussion centered on market increase of demand for higher FAR in office and industrial uses. Preliminary indication is that current residential concept plans exceed the City’s current density range, which was received by participants as a “good problem” to have.

Takeaways

Gold Line planners and policy makers in attendance were able to connect and hear from other suburban planners and policy makers from the other side of the Metro, who are approximately ten years ahead in the planning process than METRO Gold Line. Gold Line BRT counterparts benefited from descriptions of process, public engagement and implementation strategies, and lessons learned.

Day 2: Workshop –Gold Line: Crafting a New Corridor

Lecture

Presentation from Lyle Wray, Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) in Hartford, Connecticut. Mr. Wray has more than 40 years of experience in three different metro areas with bus rapid transit; including experience with station area planning, policy creation, and implementation. Mr. Wray also worked for over five years at the Citizen’s League (Minneapolis) on public policy issues. Because the Citizens League is locally based, Mr. Wray conveyed a deep understanding for the context and concerns of suburban planners and officials in the Twin Cities.

Small Group Discussion

A professional facilitator incorporated Mr. Wray's presentation with issues discussed during the previous day's tours of Brooklyn Park and Minnetonka.

Participant discussion centered around the need to identify a champion and develop a unified vision. Expectations need to be managed as station area planning is a mix of policy, planning, and communication. A stated understanding included the need to benefit all station areas, and that pedestrian connections are a key element to be addressed at all station areas – to ensure continuity. The small groups also identified a need to build collaboration efforts and to share Brooklyn Park and Minnetonka planning experiences and lessons learned with policy makers and planners over time. A final theme was the realization and interest in connecting employment and housing; particularly as there are concentrations of each element along the Gold Line, but currently without cohesive transit connections.

Summary

The workshops were geared toward policymakers, staff, and the development community, following the development forum style used by staff in the past. The two day event included national examples which mirrored Gold Line communities in community size, service level, etc. The site visits and presentation by Brooklyn Park and Minnetonka City Staff and policy makers helped participants to understand:

- Their respective community's overall approach to TOD planning
- Get a sense of planning accomplished to date, including challenges and lessons learned as communicated by Brooklyn Park and Minnetonka Staff.
- Facilitation staff were able to highlight specific development challenges and policy areas that may be most applicable to GOLD Line communities

The Day 1 field trip and the presentation with interactive discussion on Day 2 helped involve participants and invoked consideration about how to apply similar work in their communities. Participants provided feedback to one another, and began considering scoping and priorities for work to be completed as part of station area planning.

Overall, the event managed to strike a chord among participants that emphasized the importance/commitment to doing this work, helping to establish relationships and brainstorming among those who work and employ policy in METRO Gold Line communities.