



# Transit Alliance Citizens' Academy

## 2007 Summary

Academy 2007-01 (February 28—April 11, 2007)

Academy 2007-02 (August 8—September 19, 2007)

Academy 2007-03 (September 26—November 14, 2007)

## Thanks to our supporters

Regional Transportation District

Colorado Association of REALTORS

Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation

Denver Regional Council of Governments

Rocky Mountain Masonry Institute

National Alliance of Public Transportation Advocates

## BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, Transit Alliance has challenged leaders, stakeholders and citizens to understand lessons learned from other cities across the country and around the globe. Our mission has always been one of providing education that goes beyond the ballot box, helping citizens understand the community benefits inherent in a multi-modal metro-wide transit system.

In 2004 the region embraced FasTracks by 58%. FasTracks proposes adding about 60 new stations by 2016. In addition to the FasTracks stations the region currently has 23 stations and T-REX added 13 in November 2006 for a grand total of more than 90 stations once FasTracks is complete.

Passing FasTracks may have been the easy part as we look at the cultural shift taking shape in the Metro Region. There is an opportunity to begin a regional renaissance of sorts and create options for how people move in the region as well as address growth anticipated at 1 million people by 2025. Looking at the community development opportunities along FasTracks alone almost 50 stations have a chance to build transit oriented development (TOD).

One year ago, Transit Alliance gathered regional leaders for Metro Denver's New POP Culture and began to investigate the profound cultural and demographic shifts associated with metro Denver's FasTracks investment. This idea of orienting towards people as well as automobiles in a new People Oriented Place (POP) culture opened our eyes to the need for a community dialogue far beyond anything yet undertaken in Metro Denver.

## PROGRAM VISION

Metro Denver is emerging as THE learning laboratory for revitalizing our communities through the development of a multi-modal transportation infrastructure. NO ONE else in the nation is doing what is happening here in Denver. Thanks to voter support of FasTracks in 2004, Denver will have more than 90 transit stations in the metro region in just 10 short years.

The Transit Alliance Citizens' Academy is designed to host 20-30 participants over 7 weeks to discuss the complexities of combining transportation and community development to support the regional success of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the Metro Denver area.

Transit Alliance believes that there is no better tool for achieving understanding and disseminating information than person-to-person advocacy. The Citizens' Academy unites people at the cross sections of public health, public policy, and community development around the issue of "People Oriented Places". In essence, the program is about creating leaders who understand the relationship between the investments made today and communities' development, prosperity and quality of life for tomorrow.

The cornerstone of this unique program is that participants will take their new knowledge and put it in action. Each session will be designed to be very interactive and participants will be asked to follow-up each session with a homework assignment. In addition, participants will spend a portion of each class designing their individual action plan that they will implement upon completing the academy. Transit Alliance will measure success based not on the number of participants but rather on their action plans and involvement once they graduate. We believe this will help us further enhance future academy programs while also helping disseminate information that speaks to tangible *impacts* rather than pure numbers.

To help determine benchmarks for success, the Academy defined a set of objectives or behaviors for graduates. At the conclusion of the first Academy, participants were asked to determine their confidence in being able to deliver these objectives in their personal and professional lives. Results of this evaluation are included in the body of this report.

## PARTICIPANT SELECTION

The Transit Alliance Citizens' Academy is limited to a class of 30 from the Denver Metropolitan Region. Participants for the first Academy class were selected on the basis of demonstrated leadership ability and commitment to make future contributions to transportation and community development, with particular emphasis on development taking place around transit stations both existing and future.

To select a class of thirty individuals, a call for nominations was sent electronically to Transit Alliance Partners/Supporters, metro area cities and counties (both staff and elected officials), chambers of commerce, and strategic partners such as DRCOG, ULI, realtor organizations, environmental groups and others.

The search for nominees was a search for emerging leaders from every part of the metro region. The ideal pool of nominees was envisioned to include many different occupations and levels of involvement in their respective communities or neighborhoods. Ideally, they would also be somewhat knowledgeable about the subject of TOD.

The Selection Criteria included:

- Participants should live or work in the Denver Metropolitan Region.
- Participants should represent a diversity of interests related to transportation and community development and have an interest in development around transit stations
- Demonstrated leadership qualities
- Ability to participate in all sessions
- Employer consent, where appropriate
- Reasonable representation by geography and by cultural diversity.

## PARTICIPANT REALIZATIONS

As part of the final evaluation of the Academy, participants were asked to identify the three most important realizations taken away from the Citizens' Academy. Key words are in bold.

Class 2007-01

- The very **critical yet difficult role of the developer**; the complications of the economics of TOD; the **expanse of stakeholders** involved in TOD & the potentially affected interest groups
- TOD is WAY more involved than even I realized; TOD involves way **more stakeholders than I realized**; and despite this, **TOD is still worth it!**
- TOD vision; Denver plans at key stations; Planning
- I'm in the wrong business; the way that growth affects us; **TOD = options**
- Transit development is more difficult because we are overlaying an existing fabric; **TOD should consider the entire line**; The network of like-minded thinkers – amazing
- Overall design; planning importance; **community communication**
- The **involvement of the community** is important in the success of TOD; The **station by itself can not create a successful TOD**
- Different levels of understanding about TOD; different levels of understanding about the planning process; lots of **unexpected insightful observations that surprised me**.
- Experience broad and general information on TOD; the most valuable aspect of the class was having **participants from various backgrounds, professionally and individually**.
- TOD is a particularly **difficult type of development to achieve**; Municipalities must be directly involved; The **transit itself is a very minor part**; the **role of affordable housing in TOD**
- Government can't make TOD happen – will **need private developers and private money**; Need to figure out how to attract them/it.
- **Long term need for commitment to mass transit**; There is a quiet revolution, a welcome renaissance just beginning all along the trail both built and yet to be; The southeast line is not the center of the light rail world, the latest, even so, the macro system is just as vibrant.

- The need to **involve the community in TOD**; The importance for **long term thinking** about sustainability and affordability and environmentally sustainable; **great places rarely happen by accident**.
- Complications from the developers perspective; pedestrian oriented not necessarily transit oriented; **must be a great place**
- How important it is to **educate others about TODs and redevelopment**; how suburban communities are struggling to plan for TODs and that they do not have the resources to plan appropriately; how many passionate and interested individuals are in the metropolitan community.
- People are freaked about density; **TOD should reflect neighborhood character**.

#### Class 2007-02

- **Big convoluted process** working w/city and private and non-profit entities – **great people who care about this stuff – think long term**.
- **Congestion will always be with us**; need to plan accordingly – good design makes for good higher density – many folks/organizations working on transit; need coordinating body with authority
- **High cost of parking** – Lack of economic viability at TOD – **Affordability component of TOD**
- Transit planning is happening at a state level – **Many people in many professions excited about TOD** & currently advocating this type of development.
- **Takes a lot of time** – Takes a lot of collaboration – It can happen!
- Resources
- Being aware of all the TOD discussions – That we have been right on transit on I-70 – Be persistent; expand the group – More tools to work with TOD.
- **TOD's are a viable and necessary opportunities to create a livable environment to our citizens**.
- The importance of **creating strong urban center through density** – The vast amount of time and funds involved – The importance of involving visionaries.
- The variety of TOD categories – How **TOD is still in very early stages in Denver** – There seems to be **no consensus of what defines a "success" and "failure" of a TOD**.
- Perspective from experts – Access to new resources – Focus on my goals with TOD
- When you are around the right kind of people, information is easily shared and knowledge learned.
- The **complexity of TOD sites** – The **need to move forward instead of continued studying the issues** – find out how much the FastTracks will cost and plan accordingly.
- The **diverse concerns** of TOD stakeholders.
- **Number of zealots** – Contacts – Materials/links
- TOD is extremely **complicated, timely and frustrating**. – TOD is **essential to virtually all rail stops**.
- **TOD is illegal!** – We have a great opportunity for TOD it just needs a voice – There are several people that have the same interest.
- **Hard to educate neighbors due to fear of change**.

#### Class 2007-03

- The **depth of people's understanding** of the issue is surprising, enlightening.
- TOD is **critical to the future health of the city** – TOD is a means for designing the **future environment we want to live in** – TOD will **help neighborhoods and small businesses flourish**.
- **Transit is now key to Denver** – Many people are interested – **we have a network**
- The necessity of **strategic thinking** in TOD's – The **misconceptions** of most people on how transit can affect their lives. – The barriers to strategic TOD's are very challenging.
- There are multiple strategies & approaches to guiding the development of large civic projects. – **TOD will change the civic structure of Denver**. – There is some confusion between city planners and the city leadership over the future of Denver's TOD's.
- The **importance of TOD**.
- **TODs take multi-layered funding partners and public/private partnerships to work effectively** – RTD doesn't necessarily concern itself with community design when constructing stations – Little systematic commitment or "tool kit" building has been done for affordable housing

- **Wide variety of individuals interested** in TOD - good opportunities for promoting TOD in Denver – close alliance of TOD and sustainable development.
- That **change is inevitable but it doesn't have to be bad change**; the City and its citizens are forward thinking; the connectedness with the planners, developers, etc
- An understanding of the **complexity of TOD** – the vast knowledge of this group – **networking opportunity** and partners for collaboration
- One that **TOD is multifaceted**, two, that it is **essential for the sustainability of communities**. Three, that **we need more of it!**
- Jim Mercado gave me hope that low income residents could be welcome and accepted. **The stations should complement each other.**
- **Need more info on funding/financing** – need for education/public awareness of benefits of TOD – common themes emerged from varied backgrounds.
- **People care – Denver is the place to be** – long range benefit of transit
- There is a **wide range of people interested in TOD** – There is a wide range of personal interests surrounding TOD – **TOD is more than a development** – it is bringing together the wide range of people and interests.
- The participants delivered valuable insight – they each have very compelling connections to the transit movement – you, the organizers, are very informed of the topic and are more than facilitators
- The **average citizen has no idea how transit/transportation impacts our economy**; parking can be a deal breaker; TOD is not at the top of the food chain in the planning process
- **Greater density is a good thing in general**, but Denver must strive to meet the goals and aspirations of all residents and future residents.
- **Big impact across the Denver area**, affecting lots of interest groups. Hopefully, 20 years from now, Denver will be praised for vision and planning versus mistakes. (SK)

## NEW DEFINITIONS FOR TOD

A long term goal of the Transit Alliance is to help identify a common language for the community dialogue surrounding transit oriented development (TOD). As a central goal or objective, Academy participants were expected to bring shared meaning to the vocabulary associated with TOD. At the conclusion of the first Academy, participants were asked how they would define TOD to a neighbor or a friend. Key words are in bold.

Class 2007-01

- A **high-density, mixed-use community** that is **mixed-income**, located on a transit line and gives priority to **pedestrians first** and automobiles second
- It offers **transportation options**.
- TOD is a lot of different things – but typically it means a **higher density development** – with **mixed use** and **mixed income** housing oriented around transit in a **pedestrian friendly** way
- Design around transit that incorporates **people first**. Where they live, work, play and go and why they make those **choices**
- I can define TOD as an environment with **less traffic** and **more access to all of residents needs**.
- **High quality, sustainable development** that anchors a community and stimulates residential and economic development activities in a thriving, **user-friendly environment**.
- TOD is a **place of mixed community members**.
- A **pedestrian-oriented, dense urban type of development** with land uses specifically **oriented toward the captive audience created by transit**.
- **Walkable area w/amenities** that attract people near transit (rail or bus) stop.
- The **neighborhood, the village you need not leave to relax, communities with a core**
- Transit oriented development encompasses **how people live, work and move around in their world**. It involves the place that are created around **high density transit corridors** and how the private and public sectors work together to facilitate the development of those **places to draw people to them**.
- Compact development offering residents, workers and visitors a **variety of transportation choices**.

- Development and **neighborhoods surrounding transit** stations that **promote connections** and offer an **alternate lifestyle giving residents more choices**.

#### Class 2007-02

- Planning for **increased population and traffic with smart investment in sustainable, developed areas**.
- An **exciting place** to catch transit/potential to live there/ability to work in many areas that otherwise might be difficult to access or take more commuting time.
- **Higher density** development centered around transit.
- Development around a transit station that incorporates a **mix of use at a pedestrian friendly scale**.
- **Way for people to live, shop and work** (or get to those places) without dependence on the auto.
- **“People and community oriented development”** – should almost be called POTD (People Oriented Transit Development)
- A focus on **livability for citizens to honor their community** and appreciate the opportunities for growth and fellowship.
- An introduction to the implementation and importance of the TOD and how it impacts the community and how the community impacts the TOD.
- The variety of TOD concepts can be used to develop sites for optimal use.
- An advocacy group for TOD that educates you in the real world.
- **A place where you don’t necessarily need your car** and it can get you many other places quickly and economically.
- To learn more about a TOD and ask questions to understand how it works.
- **Development that integrates transit into its infrastructure**, allowing people to walk more and drive less.
- Bringing home, home through public use.
- The creation of a **modern day community, non homogeneous, oriented around mass transit station**, emphasizing non-auto means of transportation, **mixed use housing and small business retail**.
- TOD is development around a transportation hub that incorporates **mixed use, high density and creates a sense of place**.
- A **“People Oriented Place”** near the rail stop.

#### Class 2007-03

- A **holistic approach** to community building, catalyzed by transit infrastructure.
- As a huge **opportunity to improve quality of life and the environment in Denver**. A means for creating **new neighborhoods that actively brings neighbors together through their design**.
- **The future**.
- A **strategic way of thinking** of incorporating development with transit into the overall fabric of life to improve its quality.
- TOD is the incorporation of **people-oriented urban environments around newly developing transit centers** in the metropolitan area.
- TOD is **everything related to the development of the areas surrounding transit**.
- A **mixed use, high density development** that provides a **variety of housing types, retail, commercial and other services in a pedestrian friendly environment**. It focuses less on use of vehicles and allows convenient travel for people of all abilities/ages by all modes of travel.
- **Mixed use, sustainable communities, providing equitable social and economic opportunities** where reliance on automobiles is minimized in favor of multimodal transportation.
- Development around transit that **allows people to work and live near transit** and reduce reliance on the automobile.
- TODs are **socially, environmentally and economically conscious/sustainable developments** focused on multimodal transportation.
- TOD is development within a half mile circle around the station that is **friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists**. It is **mixed use (residential, retail, office, school, public space) mixed income, complex funding, and highly valuable**.
- Creating **vital urban center neighborhoods** that can **build community**.

- **Community connection.**
- **Bringing together public and private interests to invest** in infrastructure and public spaces that create walk able mixed use and intense development.
- As something we're **trying to rediscover in our neighborhoods.**
- Transit Oriented Development is a **progressive, forward thinking plan that places quality of life at the forefront of its vision.**
- Development that **maximizes and encourages dense land use** with multi-modal access to transit stations.
- TOD is development of **higher density properties around mass transit** – primarily fixed rail.
- From a more informed point of view (SK)

## INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLAN SUMMARIES

### Class 2007-01

- A plan seeking to educate a diverse audience on the transportation challenges in this region and the tools in place (TOD, social marketing) to help mitigate those challenges(Sara O)
- Some kind of increased RTD presence, TOD, etc. in SW Metro Denver (e.g. Wadsworth and Hampden) and even turn entire US 285/Hampden into one for true multi-modal transit (Phil VH)
- Please see previously provided material (Joel N.)
- Deliver PPT presentation to RNO's and other interested parties
- Gauge(?) knowledge of my co-workers
- Educate decision makers and co-workers
- Work to implement high quality TOD surrounding the Commerce City station on the north metro corridor.
- To share educational experience with educators, planners, designers, community citizens and focus on the next generation – youths.
- Short tem involvement in TOD planning in my neighborhood. Long-term professional leadership in TOD development.
- Make Denver one of the nations most walkable cities. Create walkable nodes around TOD. Extend nodes w/bikes. Connect nodes with transit/rail lines.
- Realtor/light rail promotional programs, property amenities featuring transit & agent/client use featuring 10 – Ride Ticketbooks.
- Advocate for quality/smart development along the west line through Lakewood to Golden – educate realtors about TOD – Educate people in my community about TOD
- Educate and energize environmentalists and citizen activists on the environmental benefits of TOD.
- Create a transit service plan/framework plan for the neighborhoods north of down town including Curtis Park, Five Points, Ballpark, Upper Larimer. This plan will include recommendations for peds, bicycle, streetcar, light rail and commuter rail service.
- Professional – spread the word. Personal – West Corridor !0<sup>th</sup> & Sheridan

### Class 2007-02

- Increased bike infrastructure surrounding university of Denver
- Increase affordable housing at/around light rail stops and build within the next 5 years.
- How light rail will regionally impact growth in DRCOG.
- Improving connectivity between stations and existing neighborhoods on a more regional level.
- Second commuter rail station in Broomfield.
- "Connect transit dots" – provide multimodal seamless transportation statewide, national etc. – educate and get all stakeholders working together
- Freight service TOD program to provide freight to merchants/businesses via low impact method.
- Actively be a part of and be involved in the planning of the 40<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> station and Rock Drill to enhance the growth needed to have a vibrant and successful urban center.
- Interact with other members of the group; survey members and present results; take results to legislators for action in next session; However results that education and health were preferred by this "transit oriented" group will provide me with a challenge.

- At this point we need to make sure that we stay at the table and partner/ally with the right entities to get the development.
- Spread the TOD word through communities by word of mouth and development.
- Do a survey that will have an impact on marketing TOD sites.
- Liff bridge - acceptance of need and benefit
- The this point there are more questions to be answered than anticipated, Key among these are response/allowance from building owner, Greenwood Village and RTD.
- Develop a TOD guidance handbook to help guide communities and development and provide a starting point that can be later adapted or modified to fit local context.
- Residential redevelopment.

#### Class 2007-03

- Increase awareness of TOD planning approaches by other transit agencies. Facilitate cross-fertilization.
- Engage my colleagues in discussions about how our organization can collaborate with transit-oriented development. Also, talk with as many people as I can about TOD and its benefits.
- Participate in the Keystone Project – contact sensitive Solution Process
- TOD financing opportunities.
- My plan speaks to the necessity of TOD design incorporation at all surrounding areas during the planning process no matter what physical barriers appear to block that process.
- Create awareness in the Hispanic community of the long term implications of the development that occurs around transit stations.
- Identify health promoting elements of TODs – support TOD maximizing health benefits of TODs – work to integrate health promoting features into Station area Plan, Corridor study and ultimately TOD in Commerce City N. Metro rail station area
- Inject myself into the Denver Planning process to promote TOD.
- Bike Language for Greens print Denver – Bike station in DUS redevelopment
- I provided an overview of the west corridor as well as an update on its current status.
- Work to ensure that the Eastlake station is a premier transit oriented development that is a pedestrian friendly mixed use development. I will continue to develop my network to see that this is accomplished.
- Build consensus on Louisiana Pearl SAP recommended zoning. Educate area residents and business operations about TOD in general.
- Go deep in my neighborhood – build
- To encourage other transportation planners and engineers in my firm and clients to continually look for opportunities to enhance projects with TOD best practices – to encourage my neighborhood association to embrace aspects of TOD
- To inform co-workers with video presentation – participate with CNU host committee
- To actively engage and encourage my friends and co-workers to try another form of transportation – biking.
- Impact/influence TOD parking solutions on the FasTracks I-225 corridor.
- To advocate TOD in a diverse community along with advocating transit itself.
- Promote transit use by tourists, travelers, conventioners.