

The Diversity of Transit-Oriented Neighborhoods

In October, the Center for Transit Oriented Development, in conjunction with Reconnecting America and Strategic Economics, published the report "Preserving and Promoting

Diverse Transit-Oriented Neighborhoods." This report attempts to understand who lives near transit today and who is expected to live there in 25 years, with the desired outcome of creating dialogue between those who want to ensure high-quality transit service and those who want to ensure high-quality neighborhoods.

Since 1995, public transportation use has increased 25 percent. According to the American Public Transportation Association, riders in the U.S. took more than 9.7 billion trips on public transportation systems in 2005, and there are 3,349 mass transit stations in the U.S. today, with over 700 new stations currently under development. The renaissance of mass transit has coincided with a renaissance of communities and neighborhoods that are proximate to transit stations. What do those communities look like now and in the future?

A Summary of Key Findings

Economically and racially diverse: Eighty-six percent of transit zones are either more economically diverse, more racially diverse, or more diverse on both points than the average neighborhood. Diversity is found in both central city transit zones and suburban (non-central city) transit zones, but the diversity is different. A greater proportion of central city transit zones are more racially diverse than an average central city neighborhood, while a greater proportion of suburban transit zones are more economically diverse than an average suburban neighborhood.

Household make-up: Transit zones support diversity in housing tenure and household size. Households in transit zones are predominantly renters (compared to about 33 percent nationwide) One-person households account for 35 percent, the largest percentage, of households in transit zones (compared to 26 percent nationally), while four-plus person households account for 23 percent of households. However, compared to today's transit zones, transit zones in 2030 are expected to have a greater proportion of married-couple households (56 percent in 2030 versus 35 percent in 2000) and a lower proportion of single and non-family households (33 percent in 2030 versus 54 percent today).

Commuters and density: In 75 percent of transit zones, households have one car or less. This low rate of auto ownership is true for higher-income households in transit zones as well as lower-income ones. Households near transit commute by transit more than three times the rate of other households in the region. Their transit use is supported in part by higher densities, which are on average nearly twice that of the average densities for regions with transit, and in many places multiple times that of surrounding neighborhoods further from the transit station.

The Center for Neighborhood Technology researches, adapts and tests new community revitalization strategies relevant to urban communities. Reconnecting America is a national non-profit organization formed to link transportation networks and the communities they serve. Strategic Economics is a for-profit consulting and research firm specializing in urban and regional economics and planning. For more information, visit the Center for Neighborhood Technology at www.cnt.org, Reconnecting America at www.reconnectingamerica.org, or Strategic Economics at www.strategieconomics.com.

The entire, 65-page report, Preserving and Promoting Diverse Transit-Oriented Neighborhoods, can be downloaded at www.cnt.org/repository/diverseTOD_FullReport.pdf.