



## THIS ISSUE:

# TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

- 3 Charlotte's total-experience development strategy**  
[How the City and CATS are working together to shape the future of TOD](#)

John M. Lewis, Jr.  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
*Charlotte Area Transit System*

Taiwo Jaiyeoba  
*Director of Planning, Design and Development*  
*City of Charlotte, North Carolina*

- 6 Transforming transit assets into Transit Villages**  
[NJ TRANSIT and NJDOT discuss their innovative program to capitalize on transit use – now in 33 municipalities statewide](#)

Vivian Baker  
*Director, Intermodal and Interagency Coordination*  
*NJ TRANSIT*

Andrew Swords, AICP/PP  
*Director of Statewide Planning*  
*New Jersey Department of Transportation*

Susan Weber  
*Supervising Transportation Analyst*  
*New Jersey Department of Transportation*

- 10 KC Streetcar fuels economic boom**  
[Partnerships, policies and local funding lead to \\$2 billion in development and counting](#)

Tom Gerend  
*Executive Director*  
*Kansas City Streetcar Authority*

**Americans increasingly support transit-oriented development.**

They are rethinking priorities when deciding where to live and how to travel for work and play. Of those surveyed, 65 percent reported continued or increased interest in living near public transportation.



*73 percent would support changing land use or zoning regulations in their communities to encourage transit-oriented development.*



*55 percent would be willing to pay a higher mortgage or rent to live in an area where they could get to places for work and play without using a vehicle.*



*86 percent believe government should help fund public transportation.*

\*Source: HNTB America THINKS "Transit-Oriented Development in America" Survey, May 2016

# Charlotte's total-experience development strategy

## How the City and CATS are working together to shape the future of TOD



**John M. Lewis, Jr.**  
Chief Executive Officer  
> Charlotte Area  
Transit System

Over the past two decades, transit has evolved from a buzzword in Charlotte to an important mode of transportation and an economic catalyst. When the Charlotte Area Transit System opened the City's first rail line, the LYNX Blue Line in 2007, there was trepidation and skepticism about transit's ability to spark residential and commercial growth. Since then, skeptics have been proven wrong to the tune of \$2.1 billion in new development and 8,000 residents along the corridor.

That momentum has continued with the LYNX Blue Line Extension, which opened in March 2018. By its six-month anniversary, the Blue Line Extension had generated more than \$400 million in new development. Some 5,000 apartments are in the works. Many new businesses, restaurants, breweries and others have oriented their front doors to the rail corridor rather than the street. And, the most recent data from August 2018 shows Blue Line ridership increased 62 percent over the previous year.

The LYNX Blue Line in the south corridor was a \$462 million investment in the community. It is generating \$12 million to \$15 million annually in new tax revenue for the City. We anticipate similar tax-revenue generation by the extension. Our goal is to recapture all or a portion of that new tax revenue and reinvest it in the system to support Charlotte's strong economy and quality of life.

### Creating a total experience

Part of the Blue Line's success is due to the groundwork the City laid before construction began. Charlotte invested \$50 million to improve sidewalks, intersections, pedestrian safety and connectivity. Now we are exploring how we can lay a similar foundation as we continue to implement Charlotte's 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan. The long-range plan consists of multiple rapid-transit improvements in five corridors, a series of Center City improvements and bus service, and facility improvements throughout the region. We believe the answer is with total-experience development.

If we invest \$1 billion in a rail corridor, we want to do more than simply move 30,000 people from point A to point B every day. It is critical that we strive for an economic return that equals the capital outlay. Total-experience development will help us do that. We want people who board a train or step out of a train station to have a complete experience, not just because of their transit ride but because of the businesses and amenities immediately around the station.

### Developing a Unified Development Ordinance

A few years ago, the City launched an effort to update and consolidate all of its zoning ordinances and land-use regulations into one Unified Development Ordinance. The ordinance will guide every aspect of growth and development in Charlotte.

As part of that process, we are evolving our current transit-oriented development guidelines to fit our definition of total-experience development. For example, are the required densities and height regulations sufficient? How can we make density bonuses more attractive to developers? Is a one-quarter to one-half mile TOD radius adequate? How can a new ordinance allow us to create a rider's full experience at a station?



**Taiwo Jaiyeoba**  
Director of Planning,  
Design and Development  
> City of Charlotte,  
North Carolina



To explore these questions, we created two focus groups:

1. A “builder” group of developers, designers and architects
2. A “user” group of businesses, residents and nonprofit group advocates

We presented them with our ideas and asked for input. Our goals are to have both builders and users agree on what is feasible, hear how they envision future TOD in Charlotte and understand their tolerance for development.

We began meeting separately with both groups in 2018. One of the first things we learned is they want us to expand the TOD radius to 1 mile. They also support increasing the density and height of developments around transit station platforms and decreasing those aspects as developments move away from stations and closer to existing neighborhoods and businesses.

We anticipate adoption of the ordinance by the Charlotte City Council in 2019. Afterward, it will become part of Charlotte’s new Unified Development Ordinance. We’ll map the new polices and regulations and begin attracting developers who align with our vision of total-experience development.

*“The LYNX Blue Line in the south corridor was a \$462 million investment in the community. It is generating \$12 million to \$15 million annually in new tax revenue for the City.”*

Some of the proposed rules include:

- **New design guidelines**

The ordinance would set design standards for nonresidential, mixed-use and multifamily developments within a transit-oriented district. It covers building facade articulation and massing, building entry, building materials, window design, standalone and integrated parking structure designs, design of open space, streetscapes and landscaping and screening. It also covers specific architectural features, such as balconies, awnings, canopies, galleries, ornamental features and colonnades, among other guidelines.

- **Building height bonuses**

Developers will earn points when they incorporate total-oriented development features such as affordable housing, public art, open space, adaptive reuse or enhanced pedestrian experiences. They can “redeem” those points for building height increases above ordinance limits.

- **Parking bonuses**

Developers also can earn and redeem points for additional parking spaces beyond the allowable maximums. For example, if the development incorporates residential, retail or additional public parking during off hours, the project may qualify for additional spaces.

The entire Unified Development Ordinance is anticipated to be adopted sometime in 2021. We are fast-tracking the TOD portion to identify where we can actually implement them. It will require tremendous community and developer engagement, but the result will help ensure the future of transit in Charlotte is secure and successful.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**John M. Lewis, Jr.** is the chief executive officer of the Charlotte Area Transit System. Most recently, he guided CATS through the successful completion of the LYNX Blue Line Extension. He also is directing the build-out of the remaining corridors of the 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan and the redesign of the current bus system. He is focused on advancing the long-term transit plan, enhancing customer service and ensuring a safe, reliable transit system for the region. Contact Lewis at (704) 336-7902.

**Taiwo Jaiyeoba** is director of planning, design and development for the City of Charlotte, North Carolina. For more than 26 years, Jaiyeoba has worked in the public and private sectors as a city planner and senior transit planner both in the United States and internationally. He is a board member of University City Partners, a member of the American Planning Association, Women’s Transportation Seminar and the American Public Transportation Association. Contact Jaiyeoba at (704) 336-2205.



# Transforming transit assets into Transit Villages

NJ TRANSIT and NJDOT discuss their innovative program to capitalize on transit use - now in 33 municipalities statewide

In 1999, New Jersey and five pilot communities launched the Transit Village Initiative to capitalize on transit assets and encourage transit use. The initiative challenged and incentivized municipalities to see existing public transportation facilities as more than modes of public transportation – as hubs to encourage development, walkability, bikeability and place making. Today, there are 33 Transit Villages in New Jersey.

The initiative's popularity is due, in part, to the program's track record of successful economic development. According to a 2017 progress report, Transit Villages have generated nearly 5,500 dwelling units – mostly apartments or condominiums – and a significant number of hotels and conference centers, grocery stores, health care facilities, banks, restaurants and office spaces.

Led by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Transit Village Initiative fits well with NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti's Commitment to Communities Initiative. Her goal is to ensure local governments succeed in delivering transportation projects that improve the quality of life for those traveling in and through New Jersey.

To learn more about the Transit Village Initiative and how it might be replicated in other states, *InTransit* interviewed:

- **Vivian Baker**, director, intermodal and interagency coordination, NJ TRANSIT
- **Andrew Swords**, AICP/PP, director, division of statewide planning, NJDOT
- **Susan Weber**, supervising transportation analyst, bureau of statewide strategies, NJDOT

Following are excerpts of those conversations.

## ***InTransit:* How does New Jersey define a Transit Village?**

**Weber:** Transit Villages are attractive, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, carefully planned within a half-mile radius of a train station or bus terminal.

**Swords:** Some communities may be interested in only modest development around their transit assets. Other communities already have full-blown business districts around their train stations and are thriving without our help. The Transit Village Initiative exists in the sweet spot in between.

For example, after Somerville, New Jersey, closed a block of its Division Street to vehicles, that block became a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly area that has attracted successful retail and has become a popular destination. City leaders attribute a big part of the community's turnaround to the Transit Village designation and the work the town put in to obtain it.

**Baker:** We are seeing an evolution in the type of community requesting designation. There aren't as many small towns with train stations. Instead, we are receiving interest from communities that have robust bus services and transfer capabilities in their downtowns or central areas.

## ***InTransit:* You make a point to differentiate Transit Villages from transit-oriented development. Can you explain?**

**Swords:** Transit Villages are a specific example of transit-oriented development.



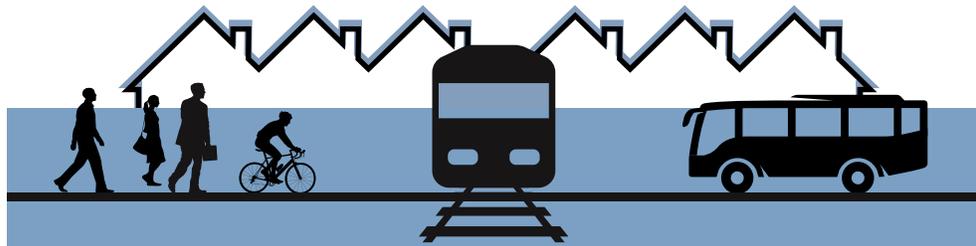
**Vivian Baker**  
Director, Intermodal And  
Interagency Coordination  
> NJ TRANSIT



**Andrew Swords, AICP/PP**  
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Statewide Planning  
> NJDOT



**Susan Weber**  
Supervising Transportation  
Analyst, Bureau Of Statewide  
Strategies  
> NJDOT



## Transit Village Initiative Benefits

- Attracts high-density, mixed-use development and redevelopment
- Increases connecting bus and shuttle service to stations
- Improves pedestrian and bicycle access to stations
- Promotes placemaking
- Enforces transit-friendly zoning
- Receives the state's commitment of support
- Benefits from Task Force expertise
- Receives priority funding and technical assistance from some state agencies
- Is eligible for NJDOT grants

*“The thought we have put into the brand is what makes a Transit Village a Transit Village and not transit-oriented development.”*

**Weber:** The thought we have put into the brand is what makes a Transit Village a Transit Village and not transit-oriented development.

**Baker:** The Transit Village Initiative is part of New Jersey’s Smart Growth program. I view it as being similar to Tree City USA or Main Street America. These are programs cities pursue and incorporate as part of their brands.

### **InTransit: Is every transit asset a potential Transit Village?**

**Swords:** No. We have 200 train stations and a number of communities with substantial bus terminals, but not all of them should or want to be a Transit Village. Others may not be ready. Also, there are numerous factors beyond our program that determine the success of a downtown district. For example, we designated Morristown, New Jersey, a Transit Village in 1999, but the city’s development paid off years later. Now, they have a number of very successful developments within a half-mile of the train station. It’s a sought-after residential area.

**Weber:** We don’t have a goal to create a specific number of Transit Villages in New Jersey. If one or two Transit Villages are designated per year, we consider that a success.

### **InTransit: Are Transit Villages regulated?**

**Swords:** There is no legislation or regulation mandating this program. Transit Villages were developed because visionary people in our department and at NJ TRANSIT thought it was a worthwhile initiative to pursue.

### **InTransit: Do Transit Villages receive state funding?**

**Swords:** Transit Villages are eligible for a \$1 million annual NJDOT grant program. Only designated Transit Villages are eligible for the program. So even though it’s not a large amount of funds, there’s a much smaller pool of applicants than many other Local Aid programs.

**Weber:** Local Aid programs, such as Bike-ways, Safe Streets to Transit, Transportation Alternatives and Municipal Aid, give an extra point to projects located in designated Transit Villages.

### **InTransit: What best practices would you recommend to other states considering a similar initiative?**

**Swords:** A pilot initiative tailored to their community makes sense. It can generate early wins and help prove the concept.



## Transit Village Task Force

1. New Jersey Department of Transportation
2. NJ TRANSIT
3. Main Street New Jersey
4. New Jersey Council on the Arts
5. New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
6. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
7. New Jersey Economic Development Authority
8. New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
9. New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy
10. New Jersey Redevelopment Authority

**Baker:** The phrase “transit village” has been co-opted and used hundreds of times since it was first coined by Peter Calthorpe, known for his innovative approaches to urban revitalization. Sometimes municipalities are wary of it. They want to celebrate their uniqueness. For that reason, it’s important for us to understand if a Transit Village is something that makes sense to both community leaders and residents. We need to know it’s something everyone would welcome prior to the community’s application.

**Swords:** We aren’t trying to tell a community what its vision should be, but we do want to make sure the community has buy-in from their residents on the concept they develop.

**Baker:** Regular communication with the communities that have achieved Transit Village designation also is important. Many communities are small and may not have the staff or expertise necessary to continue to push forward the agenda the community put in place when it became a Transit Village. They need to be prepared for the ebb and flow of the real estate market and the external forces that will have an impact.

NJ TRANSIT has partnered with the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University to establish a website, [njtod.org](http://njtod.org), that provides news and events about transit-oriented development best practices, model programs, legislation, local problem-solving experiences and a periodic newsletter. Our partnership is independent of the Transit Village program, but it’s complementary.

**Weber:** Another best practice is requiring as-of-right zoning, not overlay zoning, in Transit Villages. Overlay zoning is a good planning tool in many instances, but can be subject to legal challenge. Underlying as-of-right zoning can be upheld because it serves as the solid foundation of the intent of the zoning. The overlay provides an additional means of developing property as a supplement to that zoning, but case law in New Jersey exists to support a developer’s desire for the underlying zoning (e.g., *Weeden v. City Council of Trenton*). Plus, changing as-of-right zoning demonstrates the municipality’s commitment to embrace transit-oriented development and preserve community character outright. Developers also benefit from knowing with certainty what they may and may not do in the Transit Village.

We also ask applicants to prohibit new drive-through establishments (e.g., banks, fast-food places, car washes). Our goal is to steer Transit Villages away from auto use and toward more transit use.

### ***InTransit:* Can you describe the division of responsibilities between NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT under the Transit Village Initiative?**

**Swords:** NJDOT is the lead agency for the Transit Village Initiative itself. However, the program would not exist without NJ TRANSIT.

*“The program is about embracing a community’s willingness to become a Transit Village and helping them earn designation.”*

**Baker:** In addition to our two agencies, a task force of representatives from eight key state departments direct resources to designated Transit Villages to help each municipality achieve its redevelopment goals.

**Swords:** Task force members represent the different components of the application. They are invited to weigh in on their specific subject-matter expertise.

**Baker:** It was wise of the department of transportation to involve other state departments that have direct interaction with municipalities. You get a sense of what’s happening across all disciplines.

**InTransit: What is the process for designation?**

**Swords:** When a community is interested in becoming a Transit Village, they reach out to the DOT’s Transit Village coordinator.

If the community has an eligible transit facility, shows potential and believes they can meet the Transit Village criteria, we schedule an introductory meeting. Representatives from our department and NJ TRANSIT visit the community and meet with its leaders to learn more about the community’s vision and the area around the transit asset. After the on-site meeting, the community decides if it will pursue an application. It’s a challenging bar to reach.

The task force reviews the application to determine if the community has met the goals of the program. If the community makes a good-faith effort, the task force works hard to help the community obtain the designation. The community does the heavy lifting, but we support them.

At the end of the process, we hold a formal vote of all the task force members. As long as everyone is in general agreement, the designation is recommended.

We send our recommendation for final approval to the NJDOT Commissioner. If approved, the community is designated as a Transit Village and NJDOT issues a news release announcing the designation.

**Baker:** The program is about embracing a community’s willingness to become a Transit Village and helping them earn designation.

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ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

**Vivian Baker** is director, intermodal and interagency coordination for NJ TRANSIT. She determines the strategic direction for intermodal and multimodal programmatic planning activities with input from other transportation providers and elected and appointed officials. Together, they develop state-of-the-art approaches to demonstrate the benefits of New Jersey’s multi-billion-dollar transportation capital investment program. She is a founding member of New Jersey’s Transit Village Task Force. Contact Baker at (973) 491-7822 or vebaker@njtransit.com.

**Andrew Swords** is the director of the Division of Statewide Planning at the New Jersey Department of Transportation. In that role, he leads a team responsible for the department’s core transportation planning functions, including long-range and performance-based planning, congestion management, air-quality planning, safety planning, the bicycle and pedestrian program and the department’s research program. Contact him at (609) 530-2866 or andrew.swords@dot.state.nj.us.

**Susan Weber** is supervising transportation analyst for the New Jersey Department of Transportation. She also leads the Transportation and Livable Communities section in the DOT’s Bureau of Statewide Strategies. Weber’s responsibilities include coordinating implementation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and Smart Growth Principles at NJDOT and serving as liaison to the state data center. Contact Weber at (609) 530-3658 or susan.weber@dot.nj.gov.

# KC Streetcar fuels economic boom

## Partnerships, policies and local funding lead to \$2 billion in development and counting

The Kansas City Streetcar proves it is possible to leverage strategic transportation investment to support focused growth and economic development strategies. The two-year-old system has served as a catalyst for the rebirth of downtown Kansas City, setting 50-year records in residential, retail and commercial investment, now totaling more than \$2 billion.

Kansas City's vision was to use the streetcar as a vehicle to enhance downtown mobility and to encourage place making and redevelopment through coordinated transportation and land-use policy. Based on our performance measures observed to date, the 2.2-mile KC Streetcar starter line has achieved these goals and more:

- **Doubling ridership projections**

The streetcar, which is free to users, has logged more than 5 million passenger trips in two-and-a-half years of service – doubling our original ridership forecasts and ranking Kansas City's system among the top performers in the country. As a result, we are attracting a new generation of riders to public transportation, and Kansas City residents using public transportation has grown from 26 percent to more than 50 percent in a few short years.

- **Increasing population downtown**

With increased mobility options, downtown has become a premier place to live. We've seen a 40 percent increase in residential density within three blocks of the streetcar line, bringing residents back downtown in record numbers. Developers have made significant investments to transform vacant downtown spaces into a variety of residential living options, attracting empty nesters, young professionals and families who are returning to the city's urban core for the first time in decades.

- **Improved market and development conditions**

Real estate that once sold for \$40 a square-foot and sat vacant and underutilized is now selling for \$100 a square-foot or more and being converted to active and vibrant uses. This growth in value also is leading to higher density developments and more sustainable and financially viable economic conditions for developments and buildings overall.

- **Promoting a fast-growing urban core**

Sales taxes within the streetcar's downtown Transportation Development District (TDD), a revenue-generation mechanism, have increased by 65 percent compared with approximately 16 percent growth citywide over the same period. That tells us downtown is growing at a faster rate than the city as a whole and is proving downtown to be a strong and growing economic engine.



**Tom Gerend**  
Executive Director  
> Kansas City Streetcar Authority

## How we launched a successful system

The streetcar route along Main Street has redefined our downtown, making it easy for residents and visitors to explore Kansas City. It connects downtown districts to some of the city's top attractions, such as the River Market, the Power & Light District, Crossroads and Union Station. However, a successful launch takes more than plotting the right route. Following are other strategies that have positioned our system for success:

*“We’ve seen a 40 percent increase in residential density within three blocks of the streetcar line, bringing residents back downtown in record numbers.”*

### **Public and private partnerships**

The Kansas City Streetcar Authority is a not-for-profit organization, separate from the City of Kansas City, Missouri. We manage, operate and maintain the streetcar, support all marketing efforts and community engagement and represent the rate payers in the downtown TDD through our board of directors. Our staff of three couldn't possibly accomplish those tasks without an active and supportive board and truly dedicated partners.

As the builder and owner of the system, the City of Kansas City, Missouri has a vested interest in ensuring that the streetcar is operated well, accomplishes its economic development and connectivity goals and is safe for

riders, motorists, pedestrians and cyclists alike. As such, the City actively supports safety coordination efforts, traffic and right-of-way management and has instituted a permitting process that allows us to have early, proactive conversations with private developers on the route.

To ensure a seamless, quality experience for our customers, we work

closely with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, under the umbrella of the RideKC brand, to coordinate service and ensure the streetcar works as one part of an integrated, regional transportation system. The downtown streetcar line was designed to complement the KCATA network and is the next step in developing a more comprehensive transit system for the Kansas City region.

The KCATA, a bi-state agency serving the transportation and development needs of the Kansas City region, contributed its expertise in regional transportation, scheduling, software, technical aspects and Federal Transit Administration coordination. They also provide complementary para-transit and bus-bridging service when there is an issue on the streetcar route, as well as a host of other services that are key to helping our system run well.

#### **• Revamped zoning and development policies**

As a proactive measure, the City of Kansas City, Missouri, in coordination with downtown neighborhoods and corridor stakeholders, conducted an aggressive land-use policy evaluation and made significant changes to position the corridor to maximize the development opportunity:

##### **» Eliminated parking requirements**

Developers along the streetcar route are no longer required to have a minimum number of parking spaces. Removing this stipulation promoted transit ridership, reduced the risk and cost to investors and made new-build construction on existing parking lots more viable.

##### **» Up-zoned adjacent property**

Land-use policy allows developers along the streetcar route to build dense and tall structures. This is downtown Kansas City, and if we're going to have density anywhere, it should be here.

##### **» Assessed parking lots**

The city assesses a special tax on surface pay parking lots within the downtown TDD boundary (excluding garages and free parking lots). The maximum rate is \$54.75 per space per year. The assessment sends a message: The city wants to promote higher and better uses of those spaces that will bring more people, increased ridership, more jobs and a larger tax base downtown.



Photo courtesy of KC Streetcar Authority



Photo courtesy of KC Streetcar Authority

- **Innovative funding mechanism**

We believed by removing fares, we would increase use of the system. Riders would, in turn, spend more money downtown. If that proved to be true, which it has, the streetcar should be able to benefit from the economic activity it helped generate. Property owners agreed and voted to create the downtown TDD, taxing themselves for transportation improvements.

The end result is a complete win-win. Riders benefit, downtown businesses benefit and revenues grow to more than cover streetcar operations and maintenance expenses. Revenues, generated by a 1-cent sales tax and a special assessment on real estate within the TDD's boundaries, cover 100 percent of the debt-service payments on the capital bonds issued to build the \$102 million streetcar system. Revenues also pay for the system's \$5 million in annual costs for operations and maintenance. In addition, we've used the revenue to pad our operating reserves and purchase two more streetcars to accommodate demand, increasing our fleet to six vehicles.

## A smart investment

Our streetcar line was intended to be a long-term investment, meaning we would impact and shape a new and better downtown over decades. However, thanks to great partnerships, coordinated land-use policies and innovative local funding models, the system's impacts have accelerated and already made our city a better place for generations to come.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Tom Gerend** is executive director of the Kansas City Streetcar Authority, a nonprofit organization established to oversee operations and maintenance of the KC Streetcar. Under Gerend's leadership, the streetcar tallied 2 million passenger trips in 2016 – the most of any startup streetcar in the country. Contact Gerend at [tgerend@kcstreetcar.org](mailto:tgerend@kcstreetcar.org) or (816) 627-2525.

# Resource Center

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## Other helpful websites:

### **American Public Transportation Association**

[apta.com](http://apta.com)

APTA is a leading organization in advancing public transportation.

### **Federal Railroad Administration**

[fra.dot.gov](http://fra.dot.gov)

The FRA promulgates and enforces rail safety regulations; administers railroad assistance programs; conducts research and development in support of improved railroad safety and national rail transportation policy; provides for the rehabilitation of Northeast Corridor rail passenger service; and consolidates government support of rail transportation activities.

### **Federal Transit Administration**

[transit.dot.gov](http://transit.dot.gov)

The FTA is an agency within the United States Department of Transportation that provides financial and technical assistance to local public transit systems.

### **Transit Oriented Development Institute**

[tod.org](http://tod.org)

The Transit Oriented Development Institute is the leading national planning organization working to promote and accelerate the roll-out of walkable, mixed-use, sustainable communities around rail stations. Working to increase the supply of new TODs and rail systems, the TOD Institute brings together business and political leaders with experts to advance knowledge sharing and TOD best practices.

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