



PTIS DRAFT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

October 25, 2010

1. Increase the number of people and businesses in Downtown Fresno and in close proximity to designated high-capacity Transit Corridors.

Specific strategies and recommendations...

...for the City of Fresno to implement:

Overview. Focus as much growth downtown as possible, particularly employment uses. Maximizing growth downtown optimizes the use, viability and efficiency of public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle use, and shortens the average trip lengths made by car. Successful residential development will rely on the sense of security felt by prospective residents, as well as provision of fundamental services residents need. Therefore, development and growth strategies need to be augmented by a Clean & Safe program and incentives to attract and retain grocery and support retail. Consideration of a railroad quiet zone for the BNSF corridor would help attract residential development, as would the provision of a streetcar or circulator system.

The approval processes for downtown development and redevelopment should be simplified and expedited, and fees and improvement costs should show a clear nexus. Initially, consider using incentives such as fee exemptions to attract development. A high priority for the City of Fresno should be the renovation of downtown infrastructure such as water, sewer, and storm drain systems. This requires an infrastructure Master Plan and shared funding mechanism that maximizes public sources of funds to keep development costs low. Finally, a policy is needed to address vacant historic buildings that are in such a state of disrepair that they cannot be feasibly renovated. The PTIS recommends the following strategies to support the goal above.

- a. Make downtown Fresno the top priority for investment and redevelopment, allowing for the highest densities in this area. Target public investments in “place making” and infrastructure in Downtown Fresno to incent private development.
- b. The first “tier” of priority investment in high capacity Transit Corridors is the Blackstone and Ventura/Kings Canyon corridors for which FAX is anticipating Federal funds. The second tier corridors include Shaw Avenue



and the extension of the Shaw Avenue corridor along Highway 168 to Clovis. The third tier of corridors with potential for 15 minute bus service to downtown should also be considered for medium density development, (i.e., Cedar, Palm, First, and Fresno Streets) particularly TOD at key nodes and where transit routes intersect.

- c. Explore public/private partnerships to facilitate projects that could act as catalysts for Downtown and Transit Corridor revitalization. But any investment in development projects should be concentrated to contribute to “critical mass” in the downtown area.
- d. Monitor where development occurs in relation to target corridors and create performance indicators to track the growth in housing units, commercial/retail, etc. within walking distance of the priority Transit Corridors and Downtown. This “market information” can be used, if necessary, to shift or refine development related policy.
- e. (Cities of Fresno and Clovis) Create a Transit Overlay District and associated Form Based Code with density requirements, mix of building types and development guidelines that will support the transit investment in Downtown and Transit Corridors.
 - 1. Develop and adopt Form-Based Codes to illustrate and specify the density and quality of development required in Transit Corridors and Downtown.
 - 2. Specify building heights ranging from 3 to 6 stories maximum, with a pedestrian oriented residential and mixed use, at high densities (e.g., 70 to 80 du/ac) within ½ mile of the Transit Corridors. Allow taller heights at specified centers (high-density nodes at transit intersections). Gradually decrease density requirements beyond one-half mile from Transit Corridors.
 - 3. Prohibit or restrict auto-oriented uses such as big box retail, strip commercial and low intensity distributed office parks fronting and within ¼-mile of high capacity Transit Corridors and in the Downtown area (through the TOD overlay district policies) –and encourage the conversion of existing auto-oriented development in these corridors to residential and residential mixed use projects.
 - 4. Adopt reduced off street parking requirements for projects built in the Downtown and high capacity Transit Corridors – this should

reduce construction costs, provide better pedestrian environments and perhaps increase building FARs.

- f. Prepare a Master Plan and establish a funding mechanism to rebuild the infrastructure (water, sewer, storm drain) in the designated high capacity Transit Corridors and Downtown to add the capacity needed to accommodate higher density development (with Downtown as the highest priority).
- g. Streamline and expedite the approvals process for higher density mixed use development projects and major employment uses Downtown.
- h. Encourage additional growth as possible within ¼ mile of other current FAX bus routes – particularly Cedar (to support 15 to 20 minute headway service) and perhaps also First, Fresno and Palm bus lines.

...for Fresno County, COG and Fax to implement:

- i. (FAX) Adopt a transit service expansion policy that FAX will not subsidize or expand transit service to new areas without minimum transit supportive densities (8 du/ac for local bus, up to 12 to 18 du/ac for BRT/LRT).
- j. (COG) Study the feasibility of reprogramming available flexible transportation funds to make infrastructure and place-making investments that promote TOD and infill development.
- k. Only locate low density residential in areas not already served by transit with no expectation that transit services will be extended to these areas in the future. Require that developers communicate this fact to the potential property buyers.
- l. Do not allow location of new employment centers outside of the Downtown or high capacity Transit Corridors.

2. Plan for and build TOD housing developments for a mix of middle and lower incomes, and families.

Specific strategies and recommendations...

...for the City of Fresno to implement:

- a. Create a development code that will allow more flexibility in how residential density is designed or redeveloped. For example, allow for the creation of common living and dining areas for communal or group-style family housing to accommodate extended families; allow for in-law units (or accessory units) to be added on to existing homes to increase density in place; allow for home-based businesses in TOD areas, etc.
- b. Reduce the parking requirements for new and modified residential developments to allow for a higher percentage of units to be set aside for people who would choose to live car-light in new TOD developments.
- c. Reduce the parking requirements for commercial development in the TOD corridors and Downtown and provide eco-passes (transit passes) to employees.
- d. Build medium density housing for a mix of income groups along the second tier of bus corridors as infill development.
- e. Work with the Housing Authority to subsidize a percentage of new development for lower income residents along all transit corridors.
- f. Explore the use of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program to develop mixed-income housing Downtown and along Transit Corridors.
- g. Set up a series of instructional workshops for developers to teach them (and learn from them) about how to fund, market and build flexible TOD products for the Fresno market.

3. Grow the transit, bicycle and pedestrian mode shares by making it more attractive to use alternate modes.

Specific strategies and recommendations...

For the City of Fresno to implement...

- a. Develop and adopt Complete Streets Design Guidelines and designate priority streets in the General Plan circulation element for transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- b. Use CDBG funds for bike/ped projects in Transit Corridors.

- c. Set up a series of instructional workshops for developers to teach them (and learn from them) about creating bicycle and pedestrian connectivity for their projects.
- d. Prioritize projects in the CIP, and Measure “C” to match the identified priority corridors and Downtown.
- e. Traffic signals should be timed for people as well as cars. Allocation Green time allocation and max cycle lengths should reflect transit routings and pedestrian flows.

For Fresno County, COG and Fax to implement...

- f. Create a new source of funds for bicycle and pedestrian projects similar to Safe Routes To Transit (SR2T) <http://transformca.org/sr2t/history>
- g. Create a Travel Demand Management program office in Fresno staffed with Trip Reduction Coordinators who actively promote and market carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling and walking to work.
- h. Consider requiring employers with 50 or more employees to survey and measure their employees’ mode of travel for commuting annually and establish targets to reduce the single occupant vehicle mode.
- i. Prioritize projects in the RTP and Measure “C” to match the identified priority Transit Corridors and Downtown.

4. Decrease the drive alone mode share and reduce VMT by making it less attractive to drive a car in Fresno.

Specific strategies and recommendations...

...for the City of Fresno to implement:

- a. Review the parking policy in the development code. Consider amending it to replace the current minimums with maximums and to encourage shared parking.
- b. Invite owners of privately owned parking lots Downtown to talk about collective parking pricing approaches instead of undercutting each other. Parking collective meetings could also discuss items of common interest like priority spaces for carpoolers, signage, and crime prevention.

- c. After a review of the supply and demand for parking Downtown, consider eliminating excess capacity by pulling up asphalt and installing landscaped pathways, planter boxes, community gardens, and trees. This will also help reduce the heat island effect of so much asphalt and improve the pedestrian friendliness of Downtown.
- d. Consider implementing a public awareness campaign to educate the public of the impacts and consequences of driving for every trip and to promote ridesharing, transit, bicycling and walking.
- e. The recommended Transit Overlay District could include language for:
 - i. Reduced parking standards
 - ii. No parking allowed between building and street
 - iii. No new drive-through windows
 - iv. Street access from side street – no new driveways
 - v. Non-conforming uses for auto uses such as
 - 1. drive-through windows
 - 2. gas/service stations
 - 3. driveways on key pedestrian streets

5. Increase the number of residents in Fresno who would be willing to live in market priced TOD-style development, including young urban professionals, seniors, and future high speed rail commuters.

Specific strategies and recommendations...

...for the City of Fresno to implement include:

- a. Increase the number of people who are responsible for marketing the City of Fresno as a desirable place to live and to relocate or start a business in.
- b. Partner with the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Alliance to create an effective marketing campaign for Downtown Fresno.
- c. Work with the community colleges and CSU Fresno to retain graduates and place them in local businesses. Develop incubator businesses to grow the kind of employment desired in Fresno. (Keep young people from leaving Fresno.)



- d. Clean up the decay, homeless encampments and crime areas Downtown. Safe streets will be as important as complete streets in attracting seniors to the Downtown.

6. Cross jurisdictional and departmental boundaries with processes to link transportation and land use planning decisions together.

Specific strategies and recommendations...

...for the City of Fresno, Fresno County, COG and Fax to implement together include:

- a. Create an inter-jurisdictional “compact” to support and implement the Blueprint principles and achieve SB 375 targets.
- b. COG should consider creating flexible sources of funding (similar to TLC funding in the San Francisco Bay Area) to incentivize TOD development projects in the City of Fresno. Also see description of the Pedestrian Connectivity Program in Portland, Oregon, in the section on interagency coordination.
- c. COG should consider creating a performance monitoring system (like the new Federal Sustainability Benchmarks concept) to track development performance over time on key indicators (from the COG travel model). For example, measure the number of new (housing units, residents, square feet of development by type) permitted or built in the priority Transit Corridors and Downtown.
- d. Measure VMT per capita and compare the Transit Corridors against the outlying areas to illustrate the impact of living on the fringes. Large developments like SEGA should be monitored as they build out to ensure that they do not exceed smart growth VMT levels.

Discussion on Interagency Coordination

Developing and implementing strategies to award transportation funds for projects consistent with Fresno’s Blueprint and Public Transportation Infrastructure Study recommendations.

Benefits of coordination



It is important not just to plan for smarter growth, but to take the steps to implement it. The coordination would forge a stronger connection between regional transportation planning and local land use planning and decision-making.

Land use influences travel behavior and can be a powerful tool to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional transportation system. If it is convenient for people to travel to common destinations by public transit, walking, or biking, the County can reap air quality and congestion-relief benefits at the local and regional scale.

Many aspects of the relationship between land use and transportation are well understood. We know, for example, about the effect that population and employment density have on travel behavior, and what happens to land use when a transportation investment is made.

The use of transportation funds

A coordination program would use transportation funds to provide financial incentives to encourage transit supportive development near transit centers and/or capital grants to local jurisdictions for small-scale transportation improvements.

Proposals would be submitted by public agencies, and evaluated for how well they promote the Blueprint and PTIS Principles, and the level of project maturity and commitment to actual physical construction.

Other regions in California are using transportation funds to link land use and transportation

Programs are underway in the Bay Area, Sacramento and San Diego that use federal and state transportation funds as well as sales tax measure proceeds for the purpose of linking land use and transportation.

In California, the San Francisco Bay Area- Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) has used this approach since 1996. Other noteworthy programs outside of California include:

- Atlanta, Georgia - Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)'s Livable Centers Initiative (LCI); and
- Chicago, Illinois - Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)'s Regional Technical Assistance Program (RTAP).



While it is still an emerging field, there are three types of approaches from around the United States where transportation investments decisions have been linked to land use.

The most basic approaches are those where transportation dollars are being invested in land use planning to realize long-term changes in land use that are supportive of the desired transportation system.

Generally, programs provide a set of incentives and financial support to communities wishing to integrate transportation and land use planning for the purposes of place-making and reducing automobile trips. In these programs, public agencies have invested in funding for local land use planning to help create a framework where transportation improvements and land use plans are better integrated.

Use of the funds

The program would fund both planning activities and construction of improvements consistent with those planning activities. It would place an emphasis on involving the public in decision-making and taking steps to create places that have the physical attributes that supports walking trips, compact development and civic vitality.

Capital grants will direct transportation dollars to support smaller-scale capital projects that can help promote transportation choices as well as support land use changes in the form of infill housing and transit-oriented development.

Examples of programs that use this targeted approach

The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Starts Land Use Criteria is the most notable example at the national level of linking transportation investment decisions to land use conditions, plans and policies.

Land use is one of three factors FTA uses in rating projects. The other two factors are the User Benefit calculation (essentially travel time savings for new and future riders divided by capital cost) and the strength of the local financial commitment. For a project to advance, it needs at least a combined rating of "medium."

The federal government estimates there are over \$48 billion in New Starts projects in the "funnel" competing for \$22 billion in funding with another 120+ projects considering pursuing New Starts funding. At current funding levels, it



has been estimated that it would take 50 years to fund all the projects in the New Starts pipeline.

Federal policy gives special consideration to land use in funding decisions for New Starts. In today's environment, where over a hundred projects are chasing a limited amount of federal dollars, the implications of a "low-medium" rating on FTA's land use criteria can be significant.

Other examples of a targeted approach of linking transportation investment decisions to land use

An emerging example of linking transportation investment decisions to land use is the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) "Policy Framework for System Expansion." The policy was adopted by the BART Board in 1999 and is unique among transit agencies in the United States.

Perhaps the most significant element of the System Expansion Policy is how it has begun to change the dynamics of the conversation between BART and local jurisdictions. The policy has been an effective tool in helping local governments to see the transportation implications of their land use actions and how they are an important partner in the success of a new transit project.

The BART policy provides a clearly defined two stage "project advancement process" for how projects are screened and can advance through the process. At the first stage, BART staff relies on an initial planning assessment of a transit expansion project and evaluates the proposed project against their criteria and decides whether to recommend a project to the BART Board for advancement to the next stage.

Once the project advances to stage two, BART staff will work in partnership with local jurisdictions to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) laying out coordinated timelines for the environmental review of the proposed project and the "Ridership Development Plan" process.

The Ridership Development Plan process appears to constitute the essential element of the system expansion project advancement process. At this stage BART would enter into a partnership with local jurisdictions to achieve transit ridership thresholds by balancing TOD with community desires.

In the MOU, BART would be seeking local jurisdictional commitments to adopt transit-friendly General Plans and/or Specific Plans with sufficient levels of density to make the project cost-effective.

More direct approaches being used to link land use and transportation

The most direct approaches are those where an anticipatory decision was made to condition a specific transportation investment on binding commitments to change land use in a manner supportive of the transportation investment.

This approach ties the allocation of funding for specific transportation infrastructure to the delivery of projects that are expected to provide substantial ridership to the new system and/or financial support for the cost of delivering the transit infrastructure.

The Valley Transportation Authority in Santa Clara County is a good example of this approach. In 2002 the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) adopted the Community Design and Transportation (CDT) Program as its primary program to integrate transportation and land use. The CDT program set out to aid the implementation of transit-supportive development that would broaden and strengthen the range of viable transportation choices in the region while making the most efficient use of transportation and other resources in the county.

VTA collaborated with its member agencies, the cities and county of Santa Clara, to develop the goals, and later asked each municipality to formally adopt the principles and best practices identified in the CDT program into planning, public works, and redevelopment projects, and in project development, review, and approval processes. VTA drafted a model resolution for cities establishing a minimum level of commitment to the CDT program and its principles.

While thus far the agency has not enforced the arrangement, the program and the best practices manual that was designed to support it has helped to make the requirements for access, pedestrian-friendly urban design, and transit-supportive land use programming explicitly clear to developers and to the cities that partner with developers. During its use several cities have amended their zoning codes and regulations.

Another Example

Portland's regional government, Metro, operates an innovative TOD Implementation Program using federal transportation funds that was designed to help stimulate the construction of "transit villages".

The TOD Program operates through a series of cooperative agreements between Metro and local jurisdictions, and utilizes Development Agreements with private developers. Metro has funding by which they purchase and entitle land, and then using these agreements they sell the property to the private sector.

Another Metro program is the CMAQ TOD Program run by the Portland Development Commission. The program was funded with \$3.5 million in CMAQ funds to acquire land, and design and construct transit amenities as part of TODs. A total of nine projects have received this funding.

Transportation system benefits from Metro's program

Metro's TOD Program pushes the development envelope by using public-private partnership techniques to secure more TOD-like projects than would otherwise be developed on a given site. For example, on a site where the market would likely produce three-story apartments with surface parking and no retail, the TOD Program would push for five-stories with podium parking and ground floor retail that may have four to five times more dwelling units and induce significantly more transit ridership. Property is acquired, re-parceled and planned, then sold with conditions to private developers for constructing TOD and/or dedicated to local governments for streets, plazas, and other public facilities where appropriate. In many cases, the land value is reduced to cover the high development costs required to construct a specific TOD project. In such cases, a "highest and best transit use" appraisal is used to establish the sale price.

According past Metro employee Marc Guichard, "real estate development economics often make the dense mixed-use TODs sought in local plans infeasible in much of the region. A development rule of thumb is buildings should be constructed over parking, and uses should be stacked when land is more expensive than a parking structure. In the Portland region, this rarely occurs if market dynamics are generating land values less than \$50 to \$60 per square foot. In fact, parcels near most of the transit stations in the region, outside downtown Portland, generate land values of only \$6 to \$10 per square foot.

7. Restrict the growth of new development on the urban fringes and into farmlands with incentives, disincentives, and growth boundaries.

Specific strategies and recommendations....

...for Fresno County and COG to implement include:

- a. Require development to fully fund the cost of expanding infrastructure to serve development in the outer ring of the sphere of influence of any incorporated city. This can either be achieved by requiring new development to fund construction and operations of the infrastructure and services necessary (e.g., streets and transportation, water, sewer, sewer

treatment, schools, fire stations, police etc.) or through implement a multi-faceted infrastructure impact fee to be imposed on any new development. A benefit assessment district could be used to fully assign costs to fringe developments.

Discussion on Urban Growth Boundaries

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) can act an instrument to help preserve farm and forest uses in rural areas and promote efficient job and housing growth in urban areas. The intended effect is to limit urban sprawl for the purpose of:

- Reducing costs of public infrastructure
- Preserving rural lands (farm, forest and scenic)
- Coupled with general plans, concentrating job and housing density toward central areas, nodes and corridors to enhance urban places

Urban growth boundaries help signal that growth is expected within existing cities, where amenities such as transit, parks, schools, and utilities already exist. As a result, more public and private investment is focused into existing nodes and corridor for infill development. This investment can help improve and build on the County's downtowns, corridors, and main streets. These urban places offer unique opportunities. For some residents, the townhouses and condos mean more options for buying a home. Other residents move to these areas to be closer to urban amenities.

Urban places are able to provide more options for people's daily lives, be they housing, transportation of even access to cultural amenities and the arts. Development in these areas often also allows residents to drive less and walk more, leading to cleaner air and healthier lives.

UGBs, by various names are used in numerous places around the country and within the State of California. San Jose, Contra Costa County and Ventura County all employ UGBs to limit urban sprawl and concentrate development. Some of the most well known UGBs include the Portland Metro area of Oregon and Boulder, CO.

Example from Ventura County: Fiscal Impacts of Sprawl
Low density urban expansion usually contributes to fiscal losses and city deficits – e.g. Ventura County agriculture requires about \$0.65 in services for every \$1.00 it generates in revenue – low density urban development requires about \$1.25 in services for every \$1.00 it generates in revenues. Annual revenue statistics for the six cities adjacent farmland (Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Oxnard, Santa Paula and Ventura) – low density urban development produces a negative cash flow of \$5.2 million vs. a

compact growth scenario that results in a positive cash flow of \$4.9 million – difference of \$10.1 million annually.

Growth boundaries can take multiple forms, and can be implemented both locally and regionally. For various reasons, regional boundaries (typically comprising at least one full county) are the most successful.

Following are some optional techniques for growth boundaries in Fresno County.

Management by Voter Approval

This approach may require voting at the City level and then forming a compact (or other form of intergovernmental agreement) for coordinating the boundaries. After each city set its boundary any expansion would need to be thoroughly examined by the voting public. Ideally this should result in both slower expansion of public services (and therefore the ability to better invest in the more focused service provision, especially transit and transportation in general), and the development community putting forth high quality projects for consideration. Places that have voter control of urban expansion often see a slower rate of land development than other similarly situated places. However, in these places development that does happen occurs as smaller projects designated for only one type of housing or employment. From the standpoint of encouraging development closer to established transit, these future developments, while minimized, would not support the expansion of ridership.

General Plan Density Adjustments

This description assumes that boundaries are formed either countywide, by vote or government action. The more permanent a UGB is the more important it will be to examine planning practices within developed areas. One technique has been to re-evaluate density patterns within existing cities, especially in downtowns or along significant transportation corridors. Planning for increases in density in the right places help to minimize the pressure on the boundary while simultaneously providing a means for community revitalization, and for the purpose of this project, increases in potential transit users. This approach has been shown to decrease the distance that people drive and increase alternate mode transportation. Infill development would likely result in the type of housing provided to future residents to shift away from single-family homes at the edge to more townhouses, apartments and condominiums closer to goods and services, and better served by transit.

Concurrency Requirements

Some communities with UGBs use them to control the rate of urban expansion so that growth does not get ahead of local governments ability to build infrastructure (i.e. roads, transit, schools, pipes). With a concurrency based system boundaries can be expanded whenever desired so long as plans and funding are in place to handle the needs of the people that will live and work in the expansion areas. Local or regional officials usually act as decision makers to ensure that projects are evaluated based on their ability to provide services rather than on other aspects of the project such as aesthetics or future land uses. Montgomery County Maryland is the most well known example of a concurrency based boundary. The effect there has been to primarily to limit suburban expansion, with minimal focus on building higher density places.

Land Capacity Monitoring

One potential boundary management strategy is to monitor growth trends and land capacity to ensure that there is enough land available for housing and job growth over time while also keeping infill and other urban development commonplace. A capacity threshold could be created, such as a certain percentage growth or even room for a number of years of development. Ensuring a certain amount of vacant land at any given time can help to avoid causing a spike in land values that can reduce affordability or choke off development.

Using past growth rates and current land use designations it is relatively straightforward to calculate the amount of housing and job capacity within a given UGB area. Combining the capacity information with a forecast of future growth enables a city to estimate of the number of years of capacity remaining within a UGB. A capacity based management program would include a periodic evaluation of capacity, ideally in coordination with neighboring jurisdictions.

The Fresno PTIS research has shown that the region's current zoned or planned capacity is primarily at the edges of the urban areas where transit and other public services are minimal. A targeted approach for Fresno would likely include an adoption of performance targets for infill development. Under a system like this, boundaries would not be expanded significantly unless jurisdictions, through capacity analysis determined that there would be insufficient opportunities through increased zoning densities in existing urban areas.

Expanding UGBs



One of the key functions of a UGB is to establish a greater degree of certainty about the possible uses of land, and thus its value. Overly speculative real estate investment cannot be eliminated by a UGB, but it can serve to moderate the practice. Sale prices of agricultural land in the County are often higher than they should be if viewed only through the land's ability to generate income through farming. This suggests that some are buying land outside of cities with the hope and intention of eventual development. One option is for government to identify long in advance, the location of future UGB expansions. If, for example, all of the land that will be added to the UGBs during the next 30 years were mapped and readily available, speculation on the lands outside of the identified growth areas would likely cease. The added benefit is that the responsible agencies can do their infrastructure and land use planning far in advance of development. Having this time to do the planning will help to ensure that the land is used efficiently and that transit and other infrastructure can be provided efficiently. Another factor to consider, small incremental urban expansions, (whether or not there are UGBs), often provide just one type of development, such as subdivisions or office parks. Successful communities need a full range of housing and job options. Identifying future expansion areas and planning them based on the County's needs can help build better, more successful places.