



POLICY WEBINAR

# Transportation Drives Land Development

**WITH**  
Reconnecting America

Urban Land Institute

LOCUS - Responsible Real  
Estate Developers and  
Investors

Housing Preservation  
Project

**MODERATED BY**  
Transportation for  
America



**Transportation investments drive land development and have an enormous impact on the way we design our built environment.** The current federal transportation program's emphasis on increasing highway and road capacity has caused rapid expansion of land use patterns that require more driving and are hard to serve by transit.



**Urban sprawl and unplanned growth is costly financially, environmentally, and from a public health perspective.** It is associated with increased storm water runoff, flooding, and higher water treatment costs. Auto-oriented communities that don't provide safe active living opportunities are associated with increased levels of obesity. Air pollution resulting from increased driving in these communities threatens respiratory health, particularly for our seniors and children.



**Rather than limiting lifestyle choices, compact, walkable development served by multiple transportation choices provide a higher quality of life.** Developers also believe that market demand for walkable communities is strong and growing, but that greater investment in transit and non-motorized travel options is needed.

**There is a need for change.**

# Development + Transportation facts

## Development + Traffic Congestion

→ Across the U.S., land was consumed for development at three times the rate of population growth between 1982 and 2002<sup>1</sup>.

→ The nation's population is forecast to increase by 40 percent over the first half of the 21st Century to a total of 420 million, leading to significantly heightened demands on an already burdened transportation system<sup>2</sup>.

→ More than 60% of the growth in driving and associated energy consumption is due to land use patterns of single uses served by a disconnected road network<sup>3</sup>.

→ Land use characteristics are responsible for about 24 percent of the variation in household carbon dioxide emissions, the largest contributor to global climate change<sup>4</sup>.

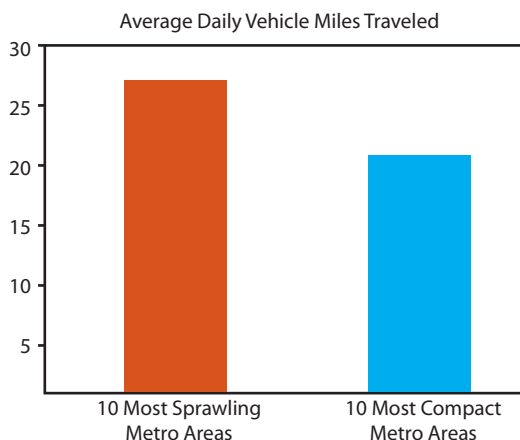
→ Studies that compare different neighborhood and regional development patterns find strong evidence that more compact development generates less overall driving, reducing trips by 20-50 percent<sup>5</sup>.

→ On average, transportation is the second highest household expenditure after housing. Many lower income households spend over 40% of their income on transportation particularly for those who live in outer suburbs with few travel options<sup>6</sup>.

→ Recent public opinion surveys indicate that 55% of Americans would choose to live in a compact community with easy transit access if selecting between a compact, walkable neighborhood and a conventional suburban neighborhood<sup>7</sup>.

Traffic congestion is a huge issue for many Americans. As a result of sprawl and increased driving, congestion in our nation's metropolitan areas is bad and will only worsen, wasting fuel, time, and impairing our nation's global economic competitiveness.

**The average America spends 52 hours a year sitting in traffic – that's the equivalent of more than one week of vacation!**



Source: Ewing, R, 'Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact'

For the past two decades transportation policy making and planning have been narrowly focused on traffic congestion. Previous surface transportation bills have called for "managing," "reducing," or "alleviating" congestion. Despite significant highway investment, congestion is worse than ever.

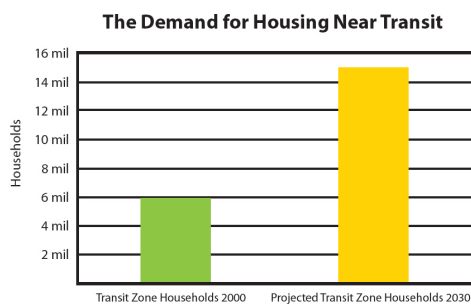
The expenditure of trillions of dollars in the U.S. over the life of the modern highway program has added thousands of miles of new roadway lanes without alleviating congestion. **The metropolitan regions with the most aggressive freeway construction programs – Los Angeles, Phoenix and Houston, among others – have not been able to reduce per capita annual delay.**

Today, these same regions are attempting to engage in aggressive plans to expand or break ground on new public transit systems that give citizens the choice to opt out of congestion.

## Demand + Population Growth

After decades of outmigration to the suburbs many people are returning to the city to live. Part of the reason is that traffic is so bad that people don't want the hassle of a long commute. But the changing housing market has much to do with demographics: **While the vast majority of households in the U.S. used to be families with two parents and more than one child living in the same household, this demographic group now comprises just 25 percent of all households and it's shrinking.**

As the market changes, **the demand for walkable, mixed-use development has increased faster than new transit investments have occurred**, driving up housing prices in many neighborhoods that are within easy walking distance to transit. The price premium for walkable urban housing in select metropolitan areas is 40% to 200% higher than comparable drivable suburban housing on a price per square foot basis. This has resulted in an affordable housing problem for most households in spite of the housing price declines on the urban fringe. Current federal transportation policy has made it difficult for the real estate industry to meet the pent-up demand for this type of development.



Source: Center for Transit-Oriented Development

At the same time, related demographic trends – aging and retirement of the Baby Boomers, rise of small and non-traditional households – will significantly increase demand for new housing located in compact mixed use areas in our cities, suburbs and towns – already a large and underserved market. A recent AARP study found that **71% of respondents would like to live in walking distance of transit.** Many communities have been built without provisions for older people to age in place and go to the store, healthcare facilities, or visit family and friends without being required to drive or rely on someone else



# We can make a difference... here's how.

## Steps to Connecting Land Use + Transportation

- Foster **land use patterns** that can be served efficiently and sustainably by well-planned national, regional and local transportation networks that include a variety of transportation choices.
- Establish as a national policy priority that land use and transportation must be planned in a **coordinated and integrated** manner at the state, regional and local levels of government.
- End the federal subsidization of sprawl and replace it with a commitment to transportation investments that support compact, **walkable mixed use, mixed-income development patterns** that provide a variety of travel options.
- Invest in **transportation choices for rural America** that improve economic opportunity, quality-of-life, help prevent the conversion of rural lands to low-density suburban development, and connect communities.

## Policy Recommendations:

### Give regions and localities the planning and financial tools to create sustainable, livable communities

- Support locally-appropriate decision-making and development strategies by empowering regional transportation planning entities. Increase their capacity, decision-making authority and allow for direct allocation of federal funds to support their programs.
- Increase local flexibility and self-determination by removing barriers to use of federal transportation funds for investments in land use and local infrastructure that reduce VMT.
- Develop technical assistance and guidelines for the routine forecasting and evaluation of the impacts of transportation investments on development patterns, including infill, redevelopment, compact urban development and sprawl.
- Establish national minimum guidelines for coordinating state and metropolitan transportation planning with other planning processes to ensure integration of land use and transportation activities.
- Require regions to undertake land-use based scenario planning prior to adoption of long range transportation plans. This “regional blueprint” should then guide and inform transportation investment choices.

### Support region-wide multimodal transportation options that meet nationally directed outcomes like economic development and sustainability, energy usage, greenhouse gas emissions, environmental resource protection/sustainability, and equity of access to jobs from affordable housing.

- Establish Metropolitan Access Program (MAP) to accelerate construction of a multimodal transportation network that is necessary to provide access to opportunity for all workers, support reinvestments in existing communities, help our regions grow jobs and stabilize economies and put us on a path toward addressing our contribution to climate change.
- Create transit-oriented development incentives to support and accelerate the development of compact, mixed use, mixed income development around rail and other high capacity transit stations.
- Use federal funds to leverage and invest directly in projects that bring destination land uses, (schools, groceries, health care services, etc.) to transit centers and neighborhoods as part of a comprehensive local accessibility strategy.
- Encourage the use of federal funds for the redesign and retrofitting of a new generation of “great streets” benefiting and adding value to the neighborhoods and communities they serve.



We envision a U.S. transportation system that supports a wide array of accessible, affordable and interconnected transportation choices that are both healthy for the environment and for people.



Transportation For America is a growing and diverse coalition focused on creating a national transportation program that will take America into the 21st century by building a modernized infrastructure and healthy communities where people can live, work and play.

We have formed a broad coalition of real estate, housing, environmental, public health, equity, urban planning, transportation and other organizations that seek to align our national, state, and local transportation policies with an array of issues: economic opportunity, climate change, energy security, health, housing and community development. We believe a new national vision will play a key role in strengthening the foundation of our nation.

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