

LAND DEVELOPER PARTICIPATION IN PROVIDING FOR BUS TRANSIT FACILITIES/OPERATIONS

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Public transit systems nationwide struggle with chronic budget shortfalls in maintaining and expanding bus service. While local governments in Florida have ample taxing powers for use by public transit, the political reality is that government leaders generally impose increased local taxes as a last resort. State and federal grants and farebox revenues often do not cover the balance of the costs, especially for bus system expenses.

OBJECTIVES

Researchers investigated the mechanisms used for engaging private sector land developer participation in contributing toward public bus transit systems, as a supplement to government sources. Researchers targeted the private sector land developer because the development community is in a position to develop property in a way that encourages people to use transit. Further, researchers focused on public bus transit rather than on rail transit because far more transit systems across the nation and in Florida are exclusively bus systems, and those that run rail service usually operate bus service as well.

FINDINGS

Researchers found examples of both non-regulatory (incentives-based) approaches and regulatory approaches for engaging land developer participation. Case studies feature sixteen examples from eight Florida counties or municipalities and fifteen additional examples from nine other states. The findings were organized and described according to current approaches used, as well as other mechanisms that may have future potential. These include joint development, various types of zoning, level of service mechanisms, two types of special financing districts, impact fees, trip reduction ordinances and others. Some mechanisms can be used for off-site improvements as well as on-site improvements, and some of the mechanisms can be applied to operations costs.

CONCLUSIONS

The study provided recommendations for strengthening the potential use of various existing mechanisms, in addition to identifying recent transportation policy innovations that may be favorable to tapping private land developer sources for future bus transit funding. These include Florida's efforts to develop multi-modal level of service measures, the creation of the multi-modal transportation district option in transportation concurrency management, and Broward County's proposed transit-oriented concurrency system. Researchers identified where administrative procedures should be updated to reflect the intent of policy innovations.

Researchers found instances in which mechanisms that are ordinarily used to promote rail transit could be applied to bus transit also, such as overlay zoning. They further identified related land

development opportunities, such as low-income housing, which could better serve and be served by transit as a result of proposed amended application procedures. The report provides recommendations for improving the potential of local governments and transit agencies to more successfully engage private sector land developers to contribute toward bus transit capital facilities and operations. These include areas for future policy research.

BENEFITS

The information developed through this project has been incorporated into courses offered by the Department as well as at other presentations, such as the Florida Public Transportation Association Meeting held in Tampa in October 2002. Further, the information is a valuable resource for MPO, city, and county planners during negotiation efforts with developers to increase transit service on new, large-scale development. Cities and counties may also use the information for the advocacy of better transit service within their respective counties. By engaging in such partnerships, developers can increase their property values. Such investments in development can yield positive financial, social, and environmental returns.

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