

**Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Formation along Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Lines:
Database Development, Analysis, and Identification of High-Impact Policy, Design, and
Service Characteristics**

Recipient/Grant (Contract) Number: University of New Orleans; University of
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Center Name: Center for Equitable Transit Oriented Communities (CETOC)

Research Priority: Preserving the Environment

Principal Investigator(s):

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Project Partners: New Orleans Regional Transit Authority; Capital Area Transit System

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Project Start and End Date: 10/1/2024 – 9/30/2025

Project Description: Transit agencies across the U.S. are currently investing in the development of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as an alternative to light rail that promises many of the same benefits of long-term investment in high-quality transit service but can be implemented more quickly and at lower cost. While most scholarship and research surrounding Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and its benefits has focused on TODs around subway and light rail stations, the increased prevalence and success of BRT calls for further exploration of the current state of and future potential for TOD along these lines. Moreover, projects identified as BRT can vary widely in terms of design, service quality, and associated land use policy and regulations, resulting in inconsistent outcomes which may fail to fulfill expectations of local officials and communities. This study aims to investigate how these variables impact project “success,” in terms of both ridership and development impacts, as well as to compare differences between bus- and rail-based initiatives to promote transit-oriented development and communities. The production of a peer-reviewed analysis and study (in addition to a policy brief and report) will be supported by the development of a comprehensive database of BRT-based TOD in the U.S. Previous work has been undertaken by Reid Ewing and others in developing a database of TOD at rail-based transit stations in the U.S. but has not yet incorporated BRT-based developments. The development of a similar database for BRT based TOD, including collection of sociodemographic and land use data for adjacent and surrounding areas, will be crucial in facilitating future analysis of these site’s potentials, successes, and challenges in terms of affecting meaningful change in land use, equity, community health and livability. The proposed project will present initial quantitative analyses of these data in conjunction with case studies and other forms of qualitative analysis to provide scholars and planners with a necessary assessment of the current state of and future potential for TOD along the nation’s growing networks of BRT. As part of the project the team will identify all income-restricted housing units in the identified

BRT-TODs and will compile a list of mechanisms that were used to build these units (i.e. inclusionary housing zoning/policies, LIHTC, density bonuses, tax incentives). The project also aims to apply the findings of this analysis to practice. Local officials, planners, and developers in LA and beyond report perceptions of BRT as a less effective driver of land use change and economic development or are unsure how to capture its potential benefits to achieve local policy goals such as expansion of affordable housing, capturing and reinvesting increased property values, and encouraging modal shift. Managing expectations in the context of an unstable real estate market – and implementing regulatory tools and incentives to encourage specific outcomes desired by communities – is identified as a challenge with important implications for smaller, low-growth, high-need cities and regions. Through a national review of practice, projects, and outcomes related to BRT, as well as active collaboration with local government and transit agencies in LA, we will seek to identify specific policy, design, and service variables that are associated with positive impacts to transit ridership, economic development, and other local goals and which can be expected to facilitate successful BRT implementation.

USDOT Priorities: This project supports: *Economic Strength and Global Competitiveness*: by promoting an inclusive and sustainable economy through development of location efficient housing and land use policy. *Equity* and *Climate & Sustainability*: by identifying areas of opportunity and supporting the implementation of high-impact policies and incentives that support emissions reduction and improved access to jobs and opportunity provided by high-quality transit. *Transformation*: by linking advanced research to policy, and providing flexible, adaptable support for local decision-making to meet the needs of evolving urban areas and emerging transportation priorities and constraints.

Outputs: 1) the BRT TOD database 2) final summary/technical report 3) a webinar summarizing research findings 4) 2 stakeholder presentations 5) stakeholder guide to BRT TOD success 6) 2 local BRT TOD/TOC implementation plans 7) one or more academic journal articles 8) the first formal collaboration between CETOC and LA's largest transit agencies (RTA and CATS), expected to provide expanded access to data and decision-makers, providing a living lab for future research while developing data-driven, practical resources for implementation.

Outcomes/Impacts: This project responds to questions and concerns raised by practitioners involved with BRT implementation in New Orleans and Baton Rouge and will be used to support development and adoption of best practices that are likely to improve project outcomes. We will work directly with RTA and CATS, as well as local coalitions (e.g. New Orleans TOC Working Group; Baton Rouge Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council, Ride New Orleans Policy Committee) to transfer research results and translate recommendations into actionable policy, design, and service strategies in support of locally identified goals. It will also provide direct opportunities for student researchers, as well as indirect opportunities for involvement through technology transfer activities and integration of research methods, datasets, and findings into curricula. The results are expected to directly influence and support local decision-making about transportation investment, land use planning, and community outreach. The underlying data will be used to support local governments in making high-impact investments that catalyze sustainable growth, reduce carbon footprints, and support community resilience.

Final Research Report: (Link to be provided after project completion).