Railvolution is an annual event that allows transit project stakeholders, developers and representatives from government agencies to share their experiences and provide thoughtful insights on how to make transit projects and associative developments projects a success. The 2014 conference, held in Minneapolis, MN, provided those involved with mass-transit projects an opportunity to talk with experts in the various fields of mass transit and Transit Oriented Development (TOD). TOD, and its implementation into Honolulu's mass transit system, is within the jurisdiction of the City Council's Zoning and Planning Committee, which I chair.

As Honolulu continues to move forward with the construction of its rail project, planning efforts for the design of the various stations along the route are continuing and we continue to see proposals for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in those surrounding communities. While the City has previously adopted ordinances aimed at facilitating TOD, it is imperative that policymakers continue to to be informed of the efforts from other municipalities and developers in the planning, designing and constructing successful TODs. Community needs continue to evolve and do not remain static. Because of the continual evolution of communities, we need to ensure that the ordinances and other regulatory tools of Honolulu are flexible and regularly updated to meet those needs.

Most importantly, we need to understand what makes TOD projects successful and how that success can be quantified and evaluated. Applying this knowledge to future TOD-related legislation and policy initiatives will help to ensure that Honolulu's experiences with TOD projects are positive and successful.

TOD Planning and Community Involvement

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) not only provides an opportunity to rehabilitate and revitalize a community, it can help to create a paradigm shift in the way people view their community and how they travel. In order to achieve this, however, a critical component for the success of a TOD project requires the direct involvement and active participation of community stakeholders and members in the planning process.

Successful projects often rely on Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs) which help to identify the needs of the community and set those needs as key objectives that a TOD project should meet. In the example of California's Metro Gold Line's Eastside Access Project, the CAC identified several key objectives including:

- Accommodating bicycles to the greatest extent possible
- Creation of opportunities for community gardens and edible landscapes
- Involving youth in the planning process
- Encouraging social gathering through technology, where possible
- General improvements to streetscape (medians, pedestrian lighting etc.)

Using these identified objectives, specific projects were developed and identified for implementation to meet the needs of the community.

Those who have been involved with TOD projects and Honolulu's current planning process for TOD developments should already be familiar with these fundamental approaches. But what really stands out in many successful TOD projects is the willingness of the landowners; private or public, to open up their properties for public use and enjoyment. This openess goes beyond simply creating open spaces and allowing access to them during certain hours, it allows the general public to participate in helping to improve unused areas to meet and enhance the character of the neighborhood.

Examples of this openness include things like allowing credentialed or "street" artists, to use structures like the walls of a highway overpass as concrete canvases to showcase their art. Allowing underutilized and minimally developed earthen spaces for community gardens. Allowing for street-side architecture and roadway improvements that meet the wants of the community rather than the universally applied rigid standards of a government agency. Simply put: to achieve a successful TOD project, we must putt the goals, needs and vision of the community ahead of the regulatory concerns of the respective government agencies. This suggestion does not mean that all developmental and legal standards should simply be cast to the wind. However, in the case of Honolulu, if it is our desire to see successful TOD projects along the current and future transit routes, we need to ensure that our laws accommodate and encourage community investment and ownership.

As a policymaker, the notion of planning beyond the station box is something that must be considered in both the physical and social sense. While it is certainly easier to encourage uniform standards as our populations grow, we have to recognize that there needs to be a reasonable amount of flexibility in those standards to accommodate the unique characteristics of individuals and the communities they form. By providing community members with an active and meaningful role in both the planning and active development process of their community, we can help to foster a true sense of community ownership and pride; this is the essence of "planning beyond the station box".

Funding Alternatives Beyond GET

With construction on-going, tax receipts remaining relatively consistent with projections both the HART and City are beginning to look beyond construction financing and towards operational needs. One approach that has re-surfaced in recent discussions is Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Described as a powerful tool which helps to minimize the cost of developing an area by financing parts of the project through future increases in property tax revenue due to the increased property values resulting from the development. The structure of the financing agreement varies depending on the nature of the project but typically involves a public entity (redevelopment authority) and a private developer. A traditional TIF project involves the public entity identifying the area for redevelopment, securing funding for and constructing the necessary infrastructure improvements and repaying the debt on the improvements. In this traditional structure, the developer is simply responsible for the complete build-out of their project.

TIF projects are typically used to promote development in areas where development would not otherwise occur; blighted areas, brownfields, areas with high land acquisition costs where As noted above, the structure of the agreement between the public entity and the developer can vary to meet the needs of the project. Similarly, sources of funding are not limited to bond issuances but can also come in the form of a loan from the general funds of a local government or even from the developer via a "pay as you go" structure.

The TIF structure does help to encourage development while minimizing the impact of the public's share of project costs on the existing tax base. But it is important to note that the TIF structure does rely on projected returns which are not guaranteed. Further, most TIF programs restrict the increased tax revenue for a set period of years – rather than a set dollar amount. Most TIF programs are administered by a separate development authority and when the restrictions on the revenue are time-based any revenue received in excess of the outstanding debt remains with the authority.

Other funding mechanisms, such as developer user and impact fees are intended to defray costs of expanding and extending public services to developmental projects. Likewise, joint development coordination between public and private sectors can be utilized to develop sites that sit on public land near and around transit stations. To be successful, the desire to generate money must be balanced with attainable goals to achieve.

Most value capturing tools rely on new development, as new development maximizes the use of public transit. Most development is near or in downtown, public squares and employment centers. It is important to remember that upzoning of land does not always net positive results, and that municipalities must be realistic about the market and value of density.

A U.S. Government Accountability Office study issued several years ago discussed the impact, effectiveness and returns of various approaches to joint-development projects. One of the most important findings of this report is that virtually all join-development projects do not provide a high rate of return with respect to providing a revenue source to the transit system or respective agency. This report also illustrated some of the difficulties Honolulu will have in trying to determine the best approach to joint-development. Most agencies which engage in joint-development operate older and larger fixed-guideway systems and have developable land holdings. These two key characteristics are absent from Honolulu's system and when coupled with the high demand for developable land, it seems unlikely that Honolulu will be faced with having to entice development or re-development along the alignment of our transit project. However, we will have to work proactively to minimize the inevitable displacement of lower-income residents when re-development takes place.

As we draw nearer to the eventual opening and operation of the City's transit project our focus needs to now be on identifying the best funding option(s) and how these options will be put into place in a timely fashion to ensure a smooth financial transition from GET-funded construction to, as yet unknown, funding for operations and future expansion.

The mobile workshop tour of the Ford Center area, which was a mobile workshop tour offered as part of Railvolution, allowed conference attendees to experience a newly renovated TOD project.

The host of the workshop, HGA Architects, allowed conference attendees an opportunity to experience their new headquarters at Ford Center. Target Field, the home of Major League Baseball's Minnesota Twins, is directly across from Ford Center. This area is an outdoor community space/multimodal hub/gateway to Target Field in downtown Minneapolis. The Aloha Stadium transit stop on Honolulu's system will present a similar opportunity for Honolulu- mixing community space/retail and restaurant/sports complex uses into our mass transit system.

The Mississippi River mobile tour, which was also a mobile workshop offered as part of Railvolution, allowed conference attendees the opportunity to experience the vision of open space and TOD new development/redevelopment for 25 miles of riverfront. The tour started in St. Paul, and journeyed into downtown Minneapolis. The river paddle afforded conference attendees the opportunity to see existing infrastructure that incorporated TOD along the riverfront.

This trip also afforded me the opportunity to personally meet with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Acting Administrator Therese McMillan, FTA senior staff and the FTA Region 9 Administrator (the Region 9 Administrator participated in the meeting by phone).

This meeting took place in the United States Department of Transportation Building in Washington, DC. During this meeting, the project's Risk Refresh Report of July 2014, and media reports of the FTA's concern over the project meeting critical deadlines, were discussed. In general, FTA clarified that the report is a standard analysis for every New Starts project. Furthermore, the report is intended as a tool to aid in projecting/identifying challenges and measures to meet these challenges. Attached to this report is an FTA-approved summary of our meeting.

I also met with Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project Communications Manager Marcia S. McAllister, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority James Van Zee, Aaron Georgelas of The Georgelas Group, and Senior Planner Heidi Merkel of the County of Fairfax Planning Division to discuss TOD within the new Sliver Line of the Washington Metro rail system. The Silver Line, when fully operational, will provide service to Dulles International Airport via a 23-mile extension of the existing Metrorail system. This project will be built in two phases and include 11 new stations- 5 stations in Phase 1, and 6 stations in Phase 2. Phase 2 runs from East Falls Church to Wiehle Avenue in Reston, and opened in July of this year. Phase 2 will run from Wiehle Avenue through Dulles Airport to Ashburn. (See Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project handout, and http://www.dullesmetro.com/stations/index.html)

A key component of the Silver Line's TOD involves Spring Hill Station. This station will feature up to 7.6 million square feet of office, retail, hotel and residential development across three neighborhoods. The average foot travel time upon the development's completion to a transit station is six minutes in this area.
(Click on Demonstration Project upon visiting this link
http://georgelasgroup.com/portfolio_commercial.php, and other background here
http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/2013/board-approves-springhill-development-tysons.htm)

New York City is a stellar example of TOD, and a shining example of how much more efficient grade-separated systems are versus their at-grade counterparts. The city of Minneapolis-Saint Paul, where Railvolution 2014 was held, operates an at-grade public transit rail system- because the system ran at-grade with pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic, the systems travel times are not nearly as efficient as a grade-separated system. Oftentimes, one could arrive at their destination faster by cab or even by bicycle than by taking rail in Minneapolis- however, during cold winter months, outdoor bicycle travel becomes challenging.
Throughout its five boroughs, NYC offers an abundance of housing, employment, recreation, culture and public transit in pedestrian-friendly communities- that is, one can walk a relatively short distance between their point of interest and public transit.

While Honolulu's rail system will be far smaller than the NYC system, we will likewise require the same amenities above- housing, employment, recreation, culture and convenient walkability of the area- if we are to achieve a strong ridership base. The 34th Street-Penn Station subway stop is a stellar example of effective TOD. Situated directly under Madison Square Garden, this station provides convenient access from public transportation to events held at the Garden. There is also a great variety of retail and eatery selections located inside the underground area of the station, and within a 5-minute walk from the station. Our stadium stop, with careful planning and redevelopment design, could implement a smaller scale transit area utilizing close proximity existing commercial space.

There have also been concerns with the impacts of gentrification along some segments of Honolulu's transit project, particularly in the Waipahu area. Which is why Honolulu's policy-makers and project planners need to consider alternatives to traditional TOD such as equitable TOD (ETOD). Systems, such as those in New York, are beginning to embrace the concept of ETOD and serve as both a way for Honolulu's project to evaluate the effectiveness of such models as well as provide experience to draw upon. An example of ETOD planning can be found here: http://www.empirestatefuture.org/equitable-transit-oriented-development-etod-opportunities-in-new-york-state/

Form CCLTRVL03(06/07)
(revised 11/10)

City Council
City and County of Honolulu

CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: 10-13-2014

Traveler: Ikaika Anderson

Event: 2014 RailVolution, FTA meeting, evaluate Metro Silver Line,

Location: Minneapolis St. Paul, Washington D.C., New York

Dates: From ~~9-19-2014~~ 21 To ~~9-27-2014~~ 24

Description	Amount	Notes:
1. Registration Fee	~~$495.00~~	~~online receipt attached ACA~~
2. Airfare	~~1104.70~~	~~" " "~~
3. Hotel	~~1799.53~~ 1780.48	Receipt hotel attached
4. Meals	~~260.82~~ 241.80	Receipts attached
5. Ground Transportation	~~267.40~~ 207.40	" "
6. Tips	~~175.99~~ 183.99	See receipts for meal/cab/no rec't for porterage,sky,maid
7. Other	~~40.00~~ 45.36	Receipt attached laundry
Other	~~7.83~~ 13.69	~~Receipt for 2 boxes candy Rep. Tulsi Gabbard~~
Other	~~75.00~~ 100.00	Receipts for baggage handling airline attached
8. Adjustment	(30.00)	Baseball + Holidays + Local Brews
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT	~~4226.27~~ 2542.72	

This is to certify that the above data, based upon receipts submitted to Council Administrative Support Services via a CCLTRVL02 form, is accurate. Further, I am claiming reimbursement for expenses associated with a trip in which City business was conducted and personal funds were used to advance payment:

Signature of Traveler

10-15-14
Date