

SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is about enhancing the neighborhoods around the rail stations and increasing the number of people who live and work within easy walking distance to transportation. Transit enhanced neighborhoods reduce the dependency on single-use vehicles and improve the efficiency of government services and infrastructure. Ultimately, TOD is about creating a more sustainable future for O‘ahu.

The benefits of a successful pedestrian wayfinding program clearly align with the overall goals of TOD. Pedestrian wayfinding information encourages walking as a mode choice and empowers residents to explore their neighborhoods. It can boost local economies by increasing foot traffic in front of local businesses. It leads to improved public health and reduces vehicular congestion and air pollution.

Why Wayfinding?

At the core of transit-oriented development is the understanding that all transit trips begin and end as walking trips. Making these walking trips safe and comfortable pedestrian experiences is not just about improving sidewalks and upgrading street fixtures. It also includes providing clear information to guide people from one destination to another. These destinations may be other modes of transportation, local businesses, recreational amenities, tourist attractions, etc. The information may be in the form of street signs with arrows, posted maps or maps on your mobile device, and real-time displays of train or bus arrivals — all of which help make journeys easier. All of these pieces of information working together create the system that is called “wayfinding.”

Research has shown that people, even residents and commuters, do not know places as well as they think. By increasing people’s real knowledge of Honolulu’s neighborhoods, wayfinding can encourage residents to explore their city—revealing hidden shopping streets, local attractions, parks, and walking routes. A well planned wayfinding system eases the process of navigating spaces and allows people to feel comfortable taking trips to areas with which they may not be entirely familiar. It provides clear and consistent information located when and where people need it, and is comprised of a variety of coordinated tools (e.g., maps and signage) that are designed to be easily maintained and updated. These tools give residents and tourists alike the confidence to explore further, without worry or stress of getting lost. As a result, they will be more likely to speak about their experience positively, make recommendations to friends or family, and make repeat trips to the neighborhood. This is the contribution that wayfinding makes to the success of TOD neighborhoods.

Twenty-one stations and TOD planning areas within the 20-mile rail corridor.



The Wayfinding Master Plan

The communities surrounding the rail stations will be transformed as rail becomes a major transportation mode. This burst of new development also brings challenges. Increased transit options, housing, jobs, and services will require reliable and easy to use access to information. What this information includes, how it is provided, updated, and maintained is the purpose of this TOD Wayfinding Master Plan. It proposes deploying a unified system of static and digital wayfinding support across all TOD neighborhoods for the benefit of transit riders, residents, and visitors alike.

This Wayfinding Master Plan is about providing information:

- Unified, clear, and well-maintained information will create a safe and enjoyable pedestrian experience
- Consistent information at each point in a journey contributes to seamless multi-modal mobility which encourages and welcomes ridership
- Ease of finding and using trustworthy wayfinding information encourages exploration, discovery, and repeat visitation

Scope for this Study

The greater vision for TOD is about shaping long-term growth in the communities surrounding the rail and creating a more sustainable future for Honolulu and O’ahu. Many of the ideas at the heart of TOD planning also intersect with the goals and recommendations of city-wide and island-wide planning studies. These efforts include the Complete Streets program and the O’ahu Bike Plan, as well as State led infrastructure improvement initiatives. It is important to make clear that this Wayfinding Master Plan is not initiating or replacing the recommendations of these other planning studies. Rather it seeks to provide for the information needs of a specific user group, defined as transit users, neighborhood residents, and visitors who are traveling through multi-modal means. Ideally they are transit-riders arriving into TOD neighborhoods by rail or bus and transitioning from “rider” to “pedestrian” and sometimes to “cyclist” or “rider” again.

Vehicular considerations are limited to supporting access to the rail, whereby drivers would leave their cars behind and enter into the transit/pedestrian network. Cyclist considerations focus on supporting bicyclists in making rail-to-bike or bike-to rail connections. While bicycles are a critical part of the multi-modal TOD vision, the planning and implementation of bike routes and the signage required for cyclist direction and safety is beyond the scope of this study.

KEY IDEAS OF THE PLAN

Prioritize Transit Information on all Wayfinding Tools

Transit locations are key moments in the wayfinding system user’s journey. They are the point of arrival or departure and become the natural point in a journey for orientation and deliberate route choices. The Wayfinding Master Plan proposes creating “Information

TOD WAYFINDING GOALS:

Make Transportation Mobility a Priority

Create seamless Transit-to-Neighborhood connections

Focus on making Neighborhood-to-Neighborhood connections easy and appealing through multi-modal means

Provide the resources for an enriching and vibrant Neighborhood Exploration experience

Hubs” at these moments. The Information Hub is not a single sign element or single type of information. Rather it is the concept of providing curated wayfinding information at consistent and specific high-traffic zones. For TOD this could be anything from several coordinated signs within the plaza and sidewalk area immediate to the entrance or exit of a rail station, a multi-sided pylon sign at a bus transit center, or a single directional or map sign adjacent to a bus shelter or bikeshare stop. The type of information provided would depend on the scale and placement of the signs, but availability of wayfinding adjacent to transportation locations becomes the expected norm. A person who needs direction knows they will likely find it at a bus stop.

Information Hubs should be curated to ensure people are able to find specific destinations within each neighborhood and find transportation options to extend their journeys beyond the TOD area. This enables existing transit riders to more easily connect to neighborhood resources on their way to their transit connections. For people who may not be frequent transit users, seeking information equates to increased exposure to transit locations, highlighting transit’s ready availability. Wayfinding tools at non-transit locations support this model by prioritizing direction to transportation within the information hierarchy.

Real-Time Information and Digital Tools

Since this project is focused around *transit-oriented development areas*, any discussion about the wayfinding experience must consider the *transit user experience*. In 2016, TransitCenter, a foundation for advocacy, research, and leadership in transit, conducted a survey of 3,000 transit riders from 17 regions across the country. The survey confirmed that people want frequency and ease of ridership more than anything else. When New York City made real-time information about bus arrivals available in 2011, they saw a 2% rise in the number of trips. In Honolulu, TheBus already has excellent ridership — one of the highest per-capita in the country. With the arrival of rail, it becomes increasingly important to support bus riders in making rail use a natural and easy addition to their routine. A focus on disseminating real-time information for bus and rail arrivals will increase confidence in the newly expanded transit system, priming the existing bus-riders to also become advocates for rail. When rail usage thrives, so do the neighborhoods surrounding stations.

Real-time information by definition requires digital delivery tools. These tools can take many forms, such as mobile apps for trip planning and fare purchase or real-time displays of transit information in public locations. Compared to static signage, digital tools have the added benefit of being quicker to update and manage for content that changes regularly, particularly when it needs to be timely and accurate, as is the case for transit information. They also allow content to be drawn from multiple sources, making it easier to provide route options using all modes of transportation. Providing consolidated real-time information for all modes of travel at a glance gives people information about additional options, regardless of which mode they plan to take for that particular journey. Travelers now have the idea of other options in their mind and are more likely to consider these alternatives for future trips.

A Unified System

TOD planning has taken into consideration that each neighborhood along the corridor is unique, with its own character and sense of place. A primary goal of TOD planning is that each neighborhood should “create a sense of place by celebrating its historic and cultural assets.” Since 2007, the City has engaged with community organizations, landowners, and businesses to create neighborhood TOD plans to guide projects. Each plan addresses the same basic building blocks of land use, mobility, urban form, and open space, but the outcomes are varied depending on the individual needs of each community. As the proposals in these plans become reality, the streetscape, architecture, types of destinations, and amenities will all work together to create a distinct neighborhood.

The Wayfinding Master Plan works within this context by laying the foundations for the development of a consistent information system with a single wayfinding graphic aesthetic that is unified across all neighborhoods. Maintaining standards and consistency allows people to move from one neighborhood to another, using one or multiple modes of travel, and intuitively know where to find directions to destinations or make transit choices. This is especially important in the denser urban neighborhoods where station area boundaries overlap and the system reads more as a single stream than individual station neighborhoods.

The entire set of wayfinding tools must have a format that is easy to read and digest. The content style and nomenclature should be consistent between both static and digital components of the wayfinding system, reassuring users as they transition from riders to pedestrians. With unified wayfinding tools, people transitioning from one neighborhood to the next, through any mode of travel, can easily follow the thread of information taking them to their destinations.

REALIZING THE PLAN

This report is not a final design document. The City and the Design Team must still design the various wayfinding tools, but the wayfinding recommendations described here will be the foundation for developing the graphics, colors, form-factor, materials, and content used for the system. The biggest hurdle to be crossed in realizing the plan is in answering **how** a cohesive system can be implemented. TOD Development is not instantaneous. It will be many years before some of the station areas are in need of extensive wayfinding information. TOD Neighborhoods cross over multiple jurisdictions with complex land-ownerships that require careful coordination. Additionally, any wayfinding program comes with both capital and maintenance costs. To help manage these processes, the Wayfinding Master Plan’s implementation strategy proposes:

Strategic Scaled Roll-Outs

Users of the system need to be confident in the information provided, especially when following directional signs, and should not experience a drop-off of information within a journey. Implementing the wayfinding system in complete paths from arrival to destination will be necessary. This can be strategically scaled to fit within available funding.

Dedicated Wayfinding Coordinator

As the system grows, information needs will evolve beyond those identified in this report. The City can ensure future success and consistency in design and messaging by employing or assigning dedicated wayfinding staff within various City agencies.

Commitment to Management and Maintenance

A well maintained system is more likely to be utilized, as it becomes the trusted source of information. The City must plan beyond implementation and consider the means and methods for system upkeep.

In an ideal scenario, all of the rail stations would open at once and all of the tools would roll-out simultaneously in support of that event. However, this is not practical given the reality of constructing the rail project in phases, the timing and ownership of new development projects, and numerous coordination requirements with outside agencies and private land owners. The Wayfinding Master Plan proposes a strategic roll-out of wayfinding tools in tandem with the phased opening of rail stations.

The initial implementation should include items that are critical to the information needs of rail users from East Kapolei to Aloha Stadium. At a minimum, this would be static signage for Information Hubs at each station and vehicular trailblazing to Park & Ride / Kiss & Ride facilities. The incorporation of real-time digital information through apps or installed signs is highly recommended, though requires more agency coordination and funding.

The initial roll-out could also include neighborhood wayfinding signs in the urban core where there is already established pedestrian pathways, a high concentration of destinations, and high foot traffic from both residents and tourists. While the rail is still several years away from opening in these neighborhoods, the roll-out would support the other transportation modes and serve as proof-of-concept for additional sign types.

CONSIDERING FUTURE BENEFITS

In order to be successful, any digital tools that provide route-change options would have to include and function for island-wide destinations. Over time, pedestrian wayfinding signs that support transit use could also be applied to neighborhoods outside of TOD areas. Pedestrian wayfinding information encourages walking as a mode choice and empowers residents to explore their neighborhoods. It can boost local economies by increasing foot traffic in front of local businesses. It leads to improved public health and reduces vehicular congestion and air pollution. While this Wayfinding Master Plan has been initiated for TOD and the surrounding corridor, the concepts are rooted in best practices and could easily be adapted for and benefit all of O'ahu.