AMERICA WALKS Making America a Great Place to Walk

Responses to Attendee Questions from
The Transit-Walkability Collaborative – An Inter-Modal Strategy for Creating Strong Neighborhoods Webinar

Thank you to Jim Stone and Todd Litman for providing responses to these questions.

What are the best indicators for Walkable Places? Are there any best practices or experience from other cities?

There are various multi-modal level-of-service indicators (http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm129.htm and https://www.planetizen.com/node/46112 or http://www.circulatesd.org/walkability_checklist) which can be used to evaluate walkability in a neighborhood. A new generation of accessibility models are becoming available, such as the *Opportunity Score* and the *Urban Accessibility Explorer*, but they tend to reflect regional accessibility, and all of these are demanding to implement. Also, none consider all of the factors that affect overall accessibility and reduce the need to own an automobile:

- Regional access (located near the center of the urban region.
- Excellent walking and cycling conditions.
- Sufficient density and housing diversity.
- Mixed development so most homes are within an easy 10-mintue walk of commonly needed services (public transit, shops, schools, parks, etc.).
- Complete and connected streets.
- Adequate public transit, taxi & ridehailing services
- Carsharing (vehicle rental services)
- Delivery services

As a result, it may be best to use professional judgement and resident surveys to evaluate the accessibility and mobility options in a community, and to identify barriers and opportunities for improving overall neighborhood accessibility.

Are you familiar with Greenroads.org and how these ideas can add points to the Greenroads rating system?

Greenroads only reflects the environmental performance of road projects and maintenance. That is good, but since it does not reflect modal options, the total amount that people drive, or user affordability, has little to do with accessibility or overall transportation system sustainability, taking into account economic and social impacts. There are other performance indicators that better reflect community sustainability, such as LEED Neighborhood ratings, and GreenTRIP.

How have banks reacted to these policies? Are willing to finance developments that take advantage of these policies?
Developers will utilize density bonus programs if they "pencil out" and create profitable development projects. They will not have problems with financing if they have a sound business plan, and density bonus programs only serve to enhance their profit margins.

Some banks use Location Efficient Mortgage rating systems, although this has become less important as interest rates decline. There is now good research showing that households in more accessible, multi-modal communities have lower mortgage foreclosure rates and more money to invest in housing, so banks SHOULD favor such development (see Selling Smart Growth).

Please describe the Floor Area Ratios Policy.

See https://domz60.wordpress.com/2010/06/29/what-is-a-floor-area-ratio-far-and-why-is-far-important-to-urban-design/

Are TOD strategies primarily focused on rail or are more communities looking at high-frequency/high-use bus?

The concepts can apply to any high quality transit. I think it is more important to consider transit service quality (frequency, coverage, relative speed, traveler comfort, affordability, etc.) than mode (rail or bus).