

# **HST STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT: GENERAL PRINCIPALS AND GUIDELINES**

There would be great benefits to enhancing development patterns and increasing development densities near proposed high-speed train (HST) stations. To provide maximum opportunity for station area development in accordance with the purpose, need, and objectives for the HST system, the preferred HST station locations would be multi-modal transportation hubs and would typically be in traditional city centers. The State of California is leading the nation with legislation such as AB 32 to adapt state policy to global climate change and SB 375 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through coordinated land-use and transportation planning. HST Station area development should promote the implementation of SB 375 and sustainability principles with smart growth development. To further these objectives, when making decisions regarding both the final selection of station locations and the timing of station development, the Authority would consider the extent to which appropriate station area planning and development principles are supported by local authorities.

In addition to potential benefits from minimizing land consumption needs for new growth, dense development near HST stations would concentrate activity conveniently located to stations. This would increase the use of the HST system, generating additional HST ridership and revenue to benefit the entire state. It also would accommodate new growth on a smaller footprint. Reducing the land needed for new growth should reduce pressure for new development on nearby habitat areas, in environmentally fragile or hazardous areas, and on agricultural lands. Denser development allowances also would enhance joint development opportunities at and near stations, which in turn could increase the likelihood of private financial participation in construction and operations related to the HST system. A dense development pattern can better support a comprehensive and extensive local transit and shuttle system, bicycle<sup>1</sup> and pedestrian paths, and related amenities that can serve the local communities as well as provide access to and egress from HST stations. The Authority's adopted policies would ensure that implementation of the HST in California would maximize station area development that serves the local community and economy while increasing HST ridership. The Authority is committed to cooperating with local communities to develop HST stations appropriate to the scale and needs of each community.

## **General Principles for HST Station Area Development**

HST station area development principles draw on transit-oriented development (TOD) strategies that have been successfully applied to focus compact growth within walking distance of rail stations and other transportation facilities. Applying TOD measures around HST stations is a strategy that works for large, dense urban areas, as well as smaller central cities and suburban areas. TOD can produce a variety of other local and regional benefits by encouraging walkable, bikable compact and infill development. Local governments would play a significant role in implementing station area development by adopting plans, policies, zoning provisions, and incentives for higher densities, and by approving a mix of urban land uses. Almost all TOD measures adopted by public agencies involve some form of overlay zoning that designates a station area for development intensification, mixed land uses, and improvements to the pedestrian/bicycle environment. TOD measures for major facilities are generally applied to areas within one-half mile of stations, and this principal would be followed for HST stations.

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<sup>1</sup>HST will include facilities to accommodate bicycles.

Station area development principles that would be applied at the project level for each HST station and the areas around the stations would include the following features:

- Higher density development in relation to the existing pattern of development in the surrounding area, along with minimum requirements for density.
- A mix of land uses (e.g., retail, office, hotels, entertainment, residential) and a mix of housing types to meet the needs of the local community. Different styles of TOD may be appropriate for different HST station areas.
- A grid street pattern and compact pedestrian-oriented design that promotes walking, bicycle, and transit access with streetscapes that include landscaping, small parks, pedestrian spaces, bus shelters, lighting, wayfinding signs, bike lanes, and bike racks. New buildings should incorporate high energy efficiency and building performance standards.
- Context-sensitive building design that considers the continuity of the building sizes and that coordinates the street-level and upper-level architectural detailing, roof forms, and the rhythm of windows and doors should be provided. New buildings should be designed to complement and mutually support public spaces, such as streets, plazas, other open space areas, and public parking structures. The Authority will work cooperatively with each local community to assure the design process accommodates both the operating requirements of the HST system and local conditions and character.
- Limits on the amount of parking for new development and a preference that parking be placed in structures. TOD areas typically have reduced parking requirements for retail, office, and residential uses due to their transit access and walkability. Sufficient train passenger parking would be essential to the system viability, but this should, as appropriate, be offered at market rates (not free) to encourage the use of access by transit and other modes, where available. Shared parking would be planned when the mix of uses would support it.

## **Implementation of HST Station Area Development Guidelines**

The statewide HST system is likely to have more than 20 stations. The Authority has the powers necessary to oversee the construction and operation of a statewide high-speed rail system and to purchase the land required for the infrastructure and operations of the system. The responsibility and powers needed to focus growth and station area development guidelines in the areas around high-speed stations are likely to reside primarily with local government.

The primary ways in which the Authority can help ensure that the HST system becomes an instrument for encouraging maximizing implementation of station area development principles include:

- Select station locations that are multi-modal transportation hubs with a preference for traditional city centers.
- Adopt HST station area development policies and principles that require TOD, and promote value-capture at and around station areas as a condition for selecting a HST station site.
- Provide incentives for local governments where potential HST stations may be located to prepare and adopt Station Area Plans and to amend City and County General Plans that incorporate station area development principles in the vicinity of HST stations.

## 1. Select Station Locations that Are Multi-Modal Transportation Hubs, Preferably in Traditional City Centers.

HST stations in California would be multi-modal transportation hubs. To meet the Authority's adopted objectives,<sup>2</sup> the locations that were selected as potential HST stations would provide linkage with local and regional transit, airports, and highways. In particular, convenient links to other rail services (urban rapid transit, heavy rail, commuter rail, light rail, and conventional intercity) would promote TOD at stations by increasing ridership and pedestrian activity at these *hub* stations. A high level of accessibility and activity at the stations can make the nearby area more attractive for additional economic activity.

Most of the potential stations identified for further evaluation are located in the heart of the downtown/central city area of California's major cities. By eliminating potential *greenfield* sites,<sup>3</sup> the Authority has described a proposed HST system that meets the objectives of minimizing potential impacts on the environment and maximizing connectivity with other modes of transportation. These locations also would have the most potential to support infill development and TOD.

## 2. Adopt HST Station Area Development Policies that Require TOD, and Promote Value-Capture at and around Stations as a Condition for Selecting a HST Station Site

Through subsequent CEQA and NEPA processes, the Authority would determine where stations would be located and how many HST stations there would be. The Authority has identified TOD and value-capture<sup>4</sup> at and around stations sites as essential for promoting HST ridership. The Authority would work with local governments to ensure these policies are adopted and implemented.<sup>5</sup>

Local government would be expected to promote TOD and to use value-capture techniques to help finance and maintain station amenities and the public spaces needed to create an attractive pedestrian environment. Because the HST stations would be public gathering places, value-capture techniques should be used to enhance station designs with additional transportation or public facilities. It is the Authority's policy that parking for HST services at HST stations should, as appropriate, be provided at market rates (no free parking) to encourage access by alternative means. The Authority would maximize application of TOD principles during the site-specific review of proposed station locations. In addition, for HST stations in the Central Valley, the Authority will undertake a comprehensive economic study of the kinds of businesses that would uniquely benefit from being located near HST station areas, including a thorough estimate of the kinds and numbers of jobs that such businesses would create.

The Authority has prescribed the following criteria for HST station locations:

- To be considered for a station, the proposed site must have the potential to promote higher density, mixed-use, pedestrian accessible development around the station. Transit accessibility and proximity to transit corridors are also important considerations.
- As the HST project proceeds to more detailed study, and before a final station location decision is made, the responsible local government(s) are expected to provide (through planning and zoning) for TOD around HST station locations.

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<sup>2</sup>See the final statewide program EIR/EIS (California High-Speed Rail Authority and Federal Railroad Administration 2005), Section 1.2.1, Purpose of High-Speed Train System.

<sup>3</sup>Sites in rural areas with very limited or no existing infrastructure.

<sup>4</sup>The Government Accounting Office defines value capture strategies as: "...joint development, special assessment districts, tax increment financing, and development impact fees [that] are designed to dedicate to transit either a portion of increased tax revenue or additional revenue through assessments, fees, or rents based on value expected to accrue as a result of transit investments."

<sup>5</sup>As part of the "Staff Recommendations" adopted at the January 26, 2005, Authority Board Meeting in Sacramento.

- Give priority to stations for which the city and/or county has adopted station area TOD plans and general plans that focus and prioritize development on the TOD areas rather than on auto-oriented outlying areas, and adopted trip-reduction and greenhouse gas-reduction strategies.
- As the project proceeds to more detailed study, local governments are expected to help finance (e.g., through value-capture or other financing techniques) the public spaces needed to support the pedestrian/bicycle traffic generated by hub stations, as well as identifying long-term maintenance of the spaces.

The imperative to link transportation investments with supportive land use was made clear in a study by the MTC. The study showed that people who both live and work within a half mile of a rail stop use transit for 42% of their work trips, more than 10 times as much as others in the region.<sup>6</sup> While HST service offers a different scale of travel, the fundamental principles of compact access and high mobility apply.

In California, regional agencies and transit providers are adopting policies that link funding for transit expansion with land use. These include:

- MTC – which has adopted a TOD policy for regional expansion projects to help improve the cost effectiveness of regional investments.
- BART – its Strategic Plan mandates that BART partner with communities to make investment choices that encourage and support TOD and increased transit use.
- SACOG – the Sacramento Blueprint process built a strong foundation of political and community support for the compact, mixed-use growth scenario adopted in the region's long-range transportation plan, and as a result, SACOG dedicated \$500 million for smart growth construction and \$250 million for smart growth planning, bike/pedestrian activities, public involvement, and support services.
- SCAG – SCAG manages the Compass Blueprint Demonstration Project program that funds local agencies to carry out innovative planning efforts that align with the Compass Blueprint principles. These efforts include TOD planning, parking systems management, and smart growth planning efforts.
- LA Metro – its Joint Development Program encourages comprehensive planning and development around station sites and along transit corridors.
- SANDAG – promotes smart growth and TOD to its member jurisdictions through funding and technical assistance.

The Authority will analyze these policies and others like it throughout the state and country in developing specific TOD guidelines.

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<sup>6</sup>Characteristics of Rail and Ferry Station Area Residents in the San Francisco Bay Area: Evidence from the 2000 Bay Area Travel Survey. Volume 1. MTC, September 2006.

### **3. Provide Incentives for Local Governments in which Potential HST Stations Would Be Located to Prepare and Adopt Station Area Plans, Amend City and County General Plans, and Encourage TOD in the Vicinity of HST Stations**

Throughout future environmental processes and the implementation of the HST, the Authority would continue to work cooperatively with the communities being considered for HST stations. It is important to understand HST as a system that will have regional as well as statewide ridership. It will provide an opportunity to improve and expand local and regional transit systems leading to the HST stations and to have additional job and housing growth along those transit corridors. The Authority is committed to working with host cities and other local agencies throughout the process, in a cooperative manner, sharing data and information to enable each station area to benefit from the efforts and successes at other stations.

Local governments can use a number of mechanisms to encourage higher density HST-oriented development in and around potential HST station locations and to minimize undesirable growth effects. These include developing plans (such as specific plans, transit village plans, regional plans, and greenbelts), development agreements, zoning overlays, and, in some cases, use of redevelopment authority.

Increased density of development in and around HST stations would provide public benefits beyond the benefits of access to the HST system itself. Such benefits could include relief from traffic congestion, improved air quality, promotion of infill development, preservation of natural resources, more affordable housing, promotion of job opportunities, reduction in energy consumption, and better use of public infrastructure. The Authority and local government working together would determine which mechanisms best suit each community and could be implemented to enhance the benefits possible from potential HST station development.

Most successful contemporary examples of urban development are the product of long-term strategic planning. For example, in France and Japan, where there has been considerable success guiding new development around HST stations, local governments typically prepare long-term plans that focus growth at each HST station area. Regional plans are also typically used to coordinate station area development with existing urban areas and reserves for parks, agriculture, and natural habitat.

Over the last 5 years, four of the major regions of California—Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento, and the Bay Area—have developed regional blueprints. Eight counties in the Central Valley are now conducting their own blueprint process. All of these blueprints focus on supporting the existing downtowns and increasing transit ridership as critical ways for future growth to be environmentally and economically sustainable. The HST could provide a major boost to these blueprints by greatly increasing access to the downtowns, directly supporting local and regional rail systems, and indirectly supporting bus and light rail systems with an infusion of additional riders. The importance of local and regional transit service to provide feeder and distributor functions for the HST service should be emphasized.

A useful starting point for station area development is to work with members of the community to identify needs and missing assets they would like to see as part of any new development, such as parks, libraries, and food stores, and to assess the market sizes needed to attract and retain such uses. Early, regular, and ongoing public involvement in the planning process will assure local character and preferences are incorporated into the project, and enable the local community to influence its interface with the statewide project. Local government also can review the availability of land around potential station sites to achieve development that is of sufficient size to be economically viable. Then an illustrative site and phasing plan for a station area that is realistic from a market perspective can be developed and shared with the community. Finally, a station area plan can be prepared, which would ensure the community and potential developers of a public commitment to promote compact, efficient, TOD around station areas. Infrastructure improvements for station area development should be included in the station area plan.

Significant growth is expected in large areas of California with or without an HST system. The proposed HST system, however, would be consistent with and promote the state's adopted smart growth principles<sup>7</sup> and could be a catalyst for wider adoption of smart growth principles in communities near HST stations. Well sited stations that are integrated into their communities and connected by local and regional transit will help the state realize some of the principles of AB 32 and SB 375. With strong companion policies and good planning, HST stations should encourage infill development, help protect environmental and agricultural resources by encouraging more efficient land use, and minimize ongoing cost to taxpayers by making better use of our existing infrastructure.

The Authority's selection of station locations and the timing of station development would consider adherence to the principles in the section, as well as the findings of the associated environmental documentation. In pursuing its objective of providing a profitable and successful HST, the Authority will use its resources, both financial and otherwise, to encourage the local government authority with development jurisdiction at and around potential HST stations to take the following steps:

- In partnership with the Authority, develop a station area plan<sup>8</sup> for all land within a half mile of the HST pedestrian entrance that adheres to the station area development principles (described above).
- Use a community planning process to plan the street, pedestrian, bicycle environment, transit facilities, parks and open spaces, and other amenities.
- Incorporate the station area plan through amendment of the city or county general plan and zoning.
- Use community planning processes to develop regional plans and draft conformance amendments to general plans, which would focus development in existing communities and would provide for long-term protection of farmland, habitat, and open space.
- Identify opportunities to preserve local culture, character, and sense-of-place while still meeting other policy principles.

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<sup>7</sup>As expressed in the Wiggins Bill (AB857, 2003), and in government code 65041.1.

<sup>8</sup>Such a plan could take the form of a specific plan pursuant to California Government Code sections 65450–65457 or a Transit Village Development Plan pursuant to California Government Code sections 65460–65460.10, which specify the content for such a plan, or another form as determined appropriate by local government.