**2013 Transforming Local Government Conference: Call for Sessions Application**

1. **Cover Sheet Information:**

*Case Study Title:*

**Creative Partnerships to Implement TOD in the Atlanta Region**

*Case Study Category:* Partnership

*Jurisdiction Name:* Atlanta Regional Commission

*City/County Manager/ Regional Council Division Chief Name:* Dan Reuter

*Would you like the application to be considered for our Rapid Fire Session?* Yes

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1. **Synopsis**

The Intent of this application is to showcase the innovative partnerships currently in place to support and implement Transit Oriented Development (TOD) throughout the Atlanta region. Our panel and presentation will demonstrate that Atlanta’s leaders in TOD have banded together to overcome many barriers to accomplish our region’s TOD vision.

The Atlanta Regional Commission has been involved with TOD planning since the 1970s with the Transit Station Area Development Studies (TSADS) program. ARC in cooperation with its local governments funded these TSADs which outlined development opportunities around the planned MARTA system and provided policy and infrastructure recommendations for integration of the MARTA stations into their communities. The TSADs had four objectives:

* To plan for development around station areas in such a way that the positive aspects of the station’s location can be maximized and the detrimental effects of placing a transit station in an area are minimized.
* To formulate specific methods for implementing the station area plan
* To provide for the complementary design and function of the transit system and the development of surrounding it.
* To assure that the transit system and the complementary surrounding development stimulates and reinforces community, city and regional goals.

While these four objectives may be from the 1970s, they still hold true today in guiding ARC’s work in TOD. For several years ARC has coordinated closely with the regions local governments, transit agencies, and non-profits to facilitate a broader understanding of TOD resources and actions needed in metro Atlanta. But, despite ongoing efforts to plan and provide incentives for sustainable TOD, sufficient political support and dedicated financial resources for mixed-use, mixed-income development adjacent to public transit are inadequate. Today, throughout the region there are a number of partnerships and activities working to change this fate.

1. **ARC’s Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program:** The program is a key region plan implementation activity. LCI has been a catalyst program for local governments to undertake planning and build transportation projects that support livable communities. Since 1999, over $100 million of federal transportation funds have been dedicated to planning and construction of transportation supportive projects 111 centers throughout the region. These funds help to implement local government plans as well as change zoning codes or implement other supportive actions. Many communities in the region have an excellent record of implementation. To date, the LCI program has provided over $47 million to build transportation projects that support implementation of local plans around MARTA stations. LCI studies contain 34 of 38 MARTA stations.
2. **TOD Policy Working Group:** The Ford Foundation has funded an effort to develop a unified TOD vision and work program. A group of advocates, led by the five members of the Atlanta Ford Collaborative, initiated a TOD Policy Working Group. 30 organizations, including public agencies, private developers, community organizations, finance institutions, etc. have come together to engage in collective and targeted efforts to shape programs and policies that implement equitable TOD. The group seeks to coordinate advocacy and technical assistance and increase the number and quality of developments near MARTA and future transit, with an emphasis on job training services and commercial development. Many of the members have been focused on these issues for years, but have never worked together in a coordinated fashion before. The members of the group are able to leverage their resources and accelerate the policy and system changes they all hope to achieve.
3. **Atlanta BeltLine**: The Atlanta BeltLine is providing a network of public parks, multi-use trails and transit by re-using 22-miles of historic railroad corridors circling downtown and connecting 45 neighborhoods directly to each other. Under the leadership of the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, the Atlanta Housing Association of Neighborhood-based Developers (AHAND) and the Annie E. Casey Foundation – Atlanta Civic Site, a group of more than 30 public, private, nonprofit and community organizations created the Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative (ALTC) to maintain affordability in neighborhoods at risk of gentrification and displacement due to the Atlanta BeltLine and throughout the City of Atlanta.
4. **Transportation Referendum:** The 10-county Atlanta region will vote on a transportation sales tax on July 31, 2012 that would result in over $3.1 billion in new transit services or 51.5% of the funding available. For TOD efforts, this will be a significant opportunity. The referendum, also known as the Transportation Investment Act (TIA), will provide bus and fixed-transit services which will make new TOD areas available. Three new fixed transit lines will be undertaken as well as substantial major light-rail along the Atlanta Beltline corridors.
5. **MARTA Transit Agency:** The MARTA Board of Directors adopted TOD Guidelines in 2010 that are intended to guide joint development on MARTA owned property. The TOD guidelines revise previous MARTA policy related to parking ratios and otherwise provide direction to MARTA staff to move forward with TOD efforts as directed by the MARTA Board of Directors. MARTA and ARC are working together to provide technical assistance to local governments regarding incorporation of TOD policies in their own governments procedures. MARTA is also working to educate all partners regarding the processes, role of MARTA staff in the planning process, and the decision making role of the Board of Directors in the implementation of TOD on MARTA owned property.
6. **Local Charrettes:** A key component of ARC TOD Program is assisting local governments and MARTA with station area issues through charrettes. The charrette process, led and funded by Southface, allows ARC , MARTA, the local government and the community surrounding an agreed upon station to develop a detailed development plan for the station that meets the needs of all of the participants. One TOD charrette has been held and the partners are exploring conducting more over the next few years. ARC and Southface provide all required support and most of the data to undertake the charrette. A wide range of partners are invited to participate in the charrette to provide number of unique perspectives in order to create a realistic, comprehensive potential development plan.
7. **Innovative Financing:** During August 2010, ARC hosted a peer exchange titled “Best Practices in Livability Planning at Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)”. The event was sponsored by the Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) program funded by FHWA and FTA, and brought six peer agencies to Atlanta to share their experiences. The peer MPOs included: DRCOG – Denver, CO; MTC – Oakland, CA; NCTCOG – Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Metro – Portland, OR; CDTC – Albany, NY; and DVRPC – Philadelphia, PA. A primary take-a-way from the peer exchange was that a formally adopted “Livability Program” at MPOs can provide funding for community plans and capital projects as well as support financing of development that promotes transportation-land use integration. Following the peer exchange, ARC began to investigate the strategies underway at the MTC specifically to enable fund swaps for project construction as well as financing and land acquisition for TOD.
8. **Knowing the Market:** A consultant will advise ARC on the current real estate and financial market at the existing thirty-eight (38) MARTA stations. In cooperation with MARTA, the consultant will provide a detailed review of at least (10) operating MARTA stations, identifying redevelopment sites, including underutilized MARTA property and the potential for new development, local financial incentives such as tax credits or Tax Allocation Districts, additional transit riders and local tax revenue. Providing information to ARC about the current development market at each MARTA station will assist ARC, MARTA and local governments to prioritize their respective TOD implementation actions.

Although, political will for implementing TOD in the past has not been strong, with the help of our region’s innovative partnerships the local jurisdictions and officials are beginning to understand the economic and equity benefits of these types of developments. Our innovative partnerships fostered through LCI, the Ford Collaborative, Charrettes, and ect. will continue to push our region’s TOD vision forward. The partnerships our region has fostered can be applied throughout the Country to encourage the implementation of a vision.

1. **Presentation Style**

Our innovative partnership will be demonstrated through tools such as prezi and other visual tools. We would also like to learn from our audience. We would like to spend some time gathering from the audience great examples of regional partnerships used to move TOD forward. Questions asked could include: 1) Identifying short, medium, and long-term partnerships; 2) barriers anticipated; and 3) solutions and partners to address barriers.

**Interview Notes**

Problem: dealing with the impediments of transportation in Atlanta Regional. Recognized that all agencies had independent parts, but to look at holistically and from a regional basis convened key partners of regional coalition. Equity is a huge issue in creating a transit oriented development.

Innovation: Taking best practices from different areas and organizations and applying them to region. Getting local governments involved in the process. Creates a basis for a holistic approach rather than a pieces to the puzzle mentality. In a vast ecosystem of agencies, having a forum where there is not one leader.

Scalability: very diverse region. Focusing on the diversity of the partnership can be applied to others. Create a hub mentality for TOD to put strengths to be a loose coalition or a formal agency.

Presentation: identify who is in the audience. Make it relatable to the audience participants. Possibly apply it to other areas of collaboration. Learning as a region on how we are going to focus resources and larger funders.