

Local Government Handbook for Transit Along South Fulton Parkway



Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority



Presented To:

Fulton County

City of Union City

City of College Park

City of Chattahoochee Hills

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INTRODUCTION

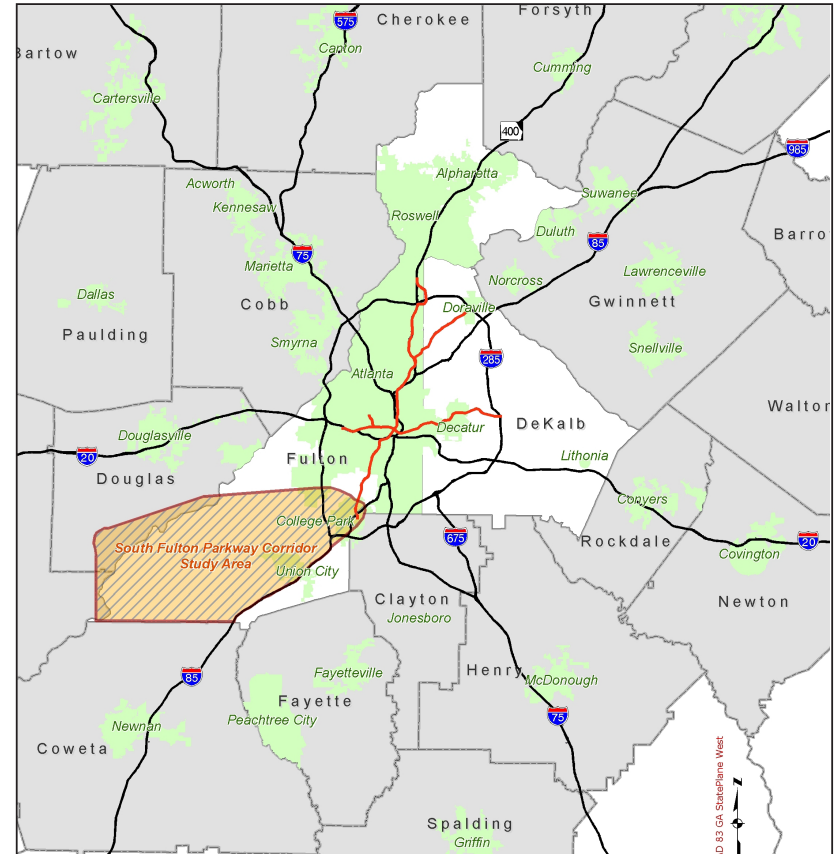
Purpose of Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to outline steps that can be taken by local governments to promote land use and zoning choices that are supportive of transit service. As a relatively undeveloped corridor in close proximity to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (H-JAIA) and Downtown Atlanta, South Fulton Parkway represents a corridor with enormous potential to develop in a sustainable manner. The Corridor currently exhibits some nodal development patterns that are conducive to transit services. In turn, there is an opportunity to develop in a manner that preserves South Fulton Parkway as an efficient regional transportation corridor that can accommodate increasing demand for automobile and freight travel as the area develops.

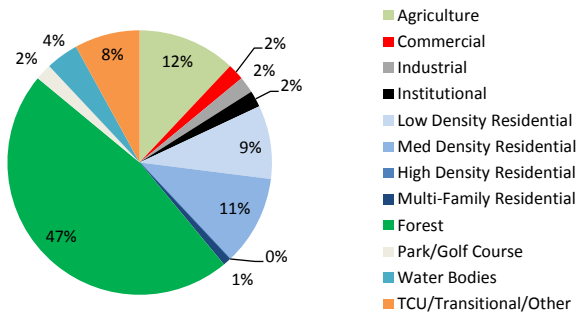
Current Characteristics

Probably the most relevant characteristic of the South Fulton Parkway Corridor is the nature of the development that surrounds the roadway. As shown below, the land use distribution along the roadway primarily consists of undeveloped and low-density land uses, which can be attributed in large part to the recent completion

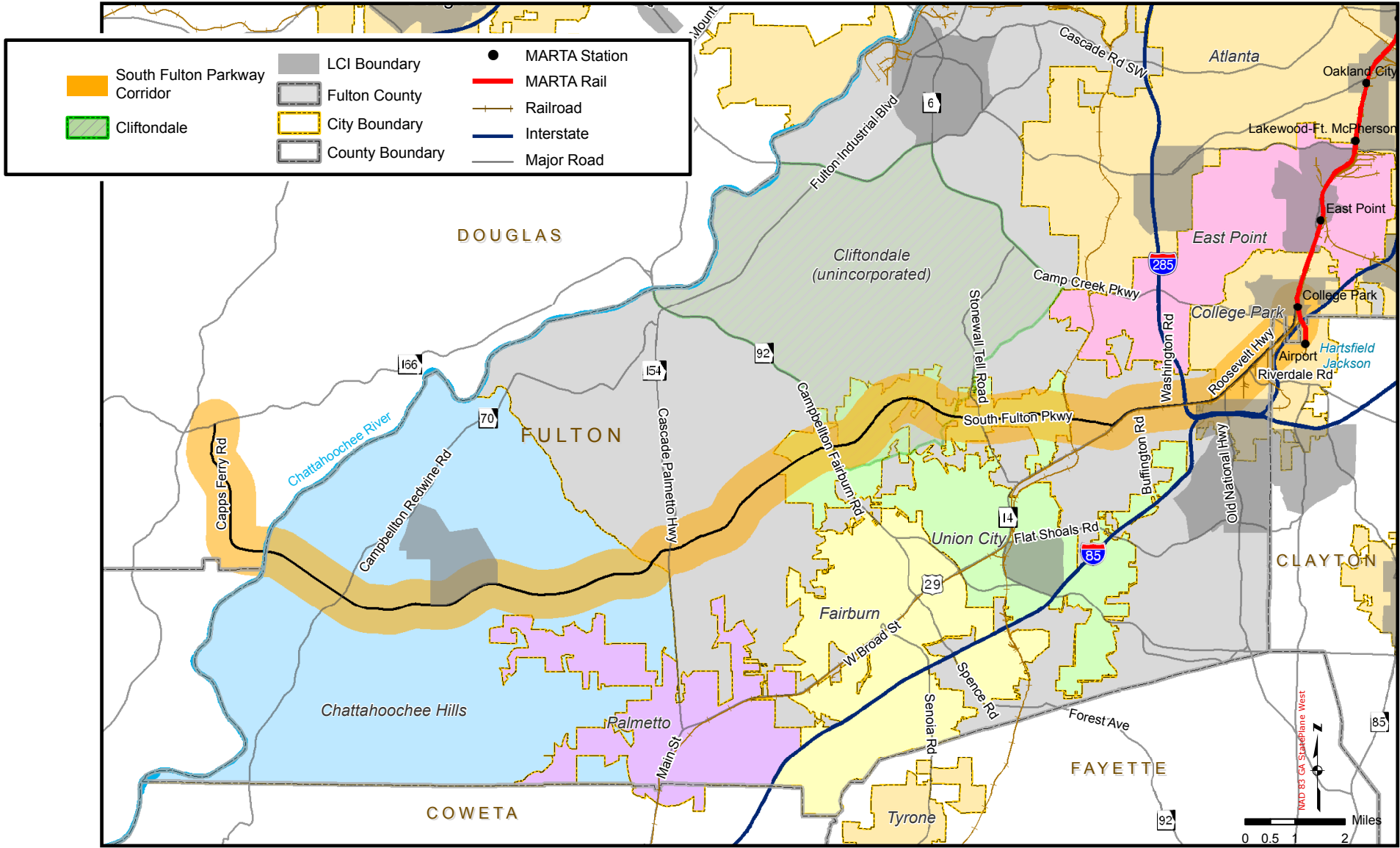
of South Fulton Parkway in 2005. Furthermore, the high-speed nature of South Fulton Parkway discourages pedestrian-friendly development. In fact, there is little pedestrian infrastructure in the Corridor.



Land Use Distribution



The Corridor has a low jobs-to-housing ratio, meaning that it has far more residents than it has employees. Consequently more people commute from the Corridor to other Atlanta regional activity centers than commute into the Corridor. These attributes -- low-density land uses, the high-speed transportation corridor, minimal pedestrian facilities, and a low jobs-to-housing ratio -- are not supportive of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the Corridor. However, given the proximity to activity centers in the region and abundance of developable land, the demand for new development along South Fulton Parkway can be expected to increase significantly in the near future.



Another important characteristic of South Fulton Parkway is that it traverses multiple jurisdictions (as shown above). Therefore, in addition to land use initiatives, a key factor that will influence transit potential will be coordination activities to ensure that the Corridor develops in a relatively consistent and planned manner.

The Need for Coordination

There are four means of coordination that will be necessary from a local government perspective to facilitate transit service along South Fulton Parkway:

1. **Coordination Amongst Local Jurisdictions:** To establish an overall vision and address land use issues in a unified fashion in order to facilitate a well planned corridor effectively served by MARTA services.
2. **Coordination with Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT):** To ensure proper access to the station areas and the implementation of transit-related enhancements (queue jump lanes, signal preemption, etc.) and dedication of right-of-way, if necessary, for more premium transit service such as BRT and/or light rail.
3. **Coordination with MARTA:** To ensure the development of land use initiatives, such as station area plans, are consistent with MARTA TOD Guidelines, service options, and design standards.
4. **Coordination with Other Regional Agencies (Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), GDOT, et al.):** To facilitate the improvement of Roosevelt Highway, a critical connection to the existing MARTA heavy rail system from South Fulton Parkway, to better accommodate transit service options.

Participation in the upcoming GDOT Access Management Study is vital to ensure the potential for future transit service options is recognized and preserved.

The most important role of local governments in facilitating transit service is fostering land uses that are supportive of transit investment, or TOD.

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

The most important role of local governments in facilitating transit service is fostering land uses that are supportive of transit investment, or TOD. The remainder of this handbook provides an overview of TOD concepts and guidance on how to foster this development type.

MARTA is in the process of developing guidelines to foster TOD. For developing areas such as South Fulton, they also provide some principles that can be employed in areas that have been targeted for system expansion within TPB Concept 3. As shown on the following page, South Fulton Parkway has been identified within Concept 3 as an Arterial Bus Corridor and, therefore, the concepts within the MARTA guidelines should be considered when promoting TOD along the Corridor.

Principles of TOD

MARTA TOD guidelines have four fundamental development principles:

- **Compact and dense development relative to surroundings** – needs not be as dense as downtown area, but more dense than suburban development currently throughout corridor
- **Should include a mixture of land uses** – typical uses include coffee shops, eating establishments, dry cleaners, and other uses convenient to the transit rider
- **Pedestrian-friendly** – development should be pedestrian friendly both within the station area and to connecting neighborhoods
- **Integrated with transit resource** – must be oriented around transit boarding areas

Examples of TOD Applications



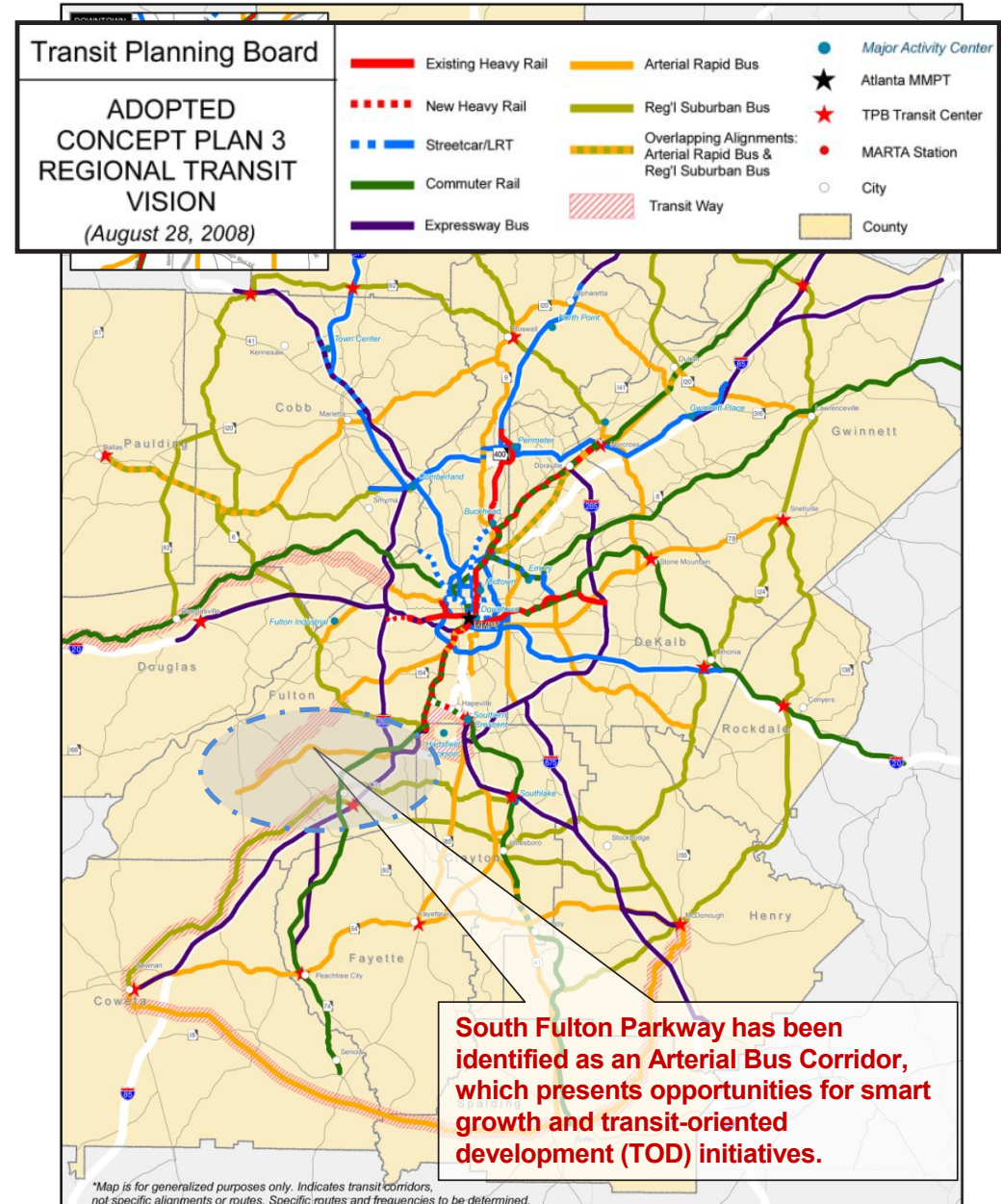
Townhomes respect a neighborhood scale while offering a higher density than typical single family homes



Wrapping a parking deck with development is an effective way of making TOD more attractive



TOD can accommodate retail fits in mixed-use developments



PLANNING FOR TRANSIT IN SOUTH FULTON

Projected Ability to Support Transit

Presented to the right are typical density ranges for land uses that support different service types. As shown, these density ranges are well above those densities within the corridor that currently exist and/or are projected in 2030 based on current future land use plans. Therefore, this indicates that changes in land use policy will be needed to foster transit supportive development.

Transit Supportive Densities		
Service Type	Residential (units/acre)	Employment (employees/acre)
Local/ Express Bus	4-15	50-200
BRT	9-12	80-500
Light Rail	15-50	500+
Heavy Rail	35-50	500+
South Fulton (2005)	1-3	1-5
South Fulton (2030)	1-14	1-20

Station Area Characteristics Based on Concept 3

As noted previously, South Fulton Parkway has been identified as an Arterial Bus Corridor in Concept 3. To this end, the MARTA TOD guidelines have identified characteristics for stations along such corridors that should serve as a guide for needed station area development along South Fulton Parkway. These are listed to the right.

Ideal Land Use Mix and Scale of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-family residential and/or mixed-use replacing auto-oriented strip pattern on a major arterial. Maintain lower-density development between stations. Scale varies; mixed-rise typical.
Transit Station Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be a transit origin and destination. Stations may have park-and-ride.
Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced stations are at-grade, either on sidewalk or in dedicated median. Pedestrian environment is critical.
Keys to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a transformative, pedestrian environment from scratch. Market the TOD/BRT concept.
Density Ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floor Area Ratios: 1.0-6.0 Residential Units/acre: 15-50 Height (in floors): 2-10

Needed Actions from Local Jurisdictions

As previously noted, one of the critical needs of the local jurisdictions within the corridor will be to coordinate with GDOT in the upcoming access management study to ensure adequate provisions are made for future transit expansion along the corridor in areas identified for future TOD activities. More specific activities needed for each of the local jurisdictions along the Corridor are provided below.

Jurisdiction	Land Use/Zoning Policy for Corridor	Needed Actions to Facilitate Transit Service
Fulton County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current land use plan calls for Community Live Work district at SR 154, SR 92, and Stonewall Tell Road Much of this property still zoned Agricultural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas appropriate for TOD and/or park-and-ride stops Develop station area plans for areas targeted for park-and-ride stops Create a TOD-specific zoning district based on the MARTA TOD Guidelines and ARC Toolkit that includes site plan regulations to accommodate for park-and-ride facilities and transit vehicles Amend current zoning code to reflect land use plan
College Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roosevelt Highway mostly zoned Airport Commercial/ Convention to accommodate H-JAIA related uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop transit area plan and implement Mixed Use Town Center zoning – which allows for a mix of uses, including a range of housing units and commercial uses with a unified site design Coordinate with GDOT to increase pedestrian access along Roosevelt Highway Coordinate with GDOT and ARC to ensure improvements are made to Roosevelt Highway to better accommodate future transit service
Union City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Fulton Parkway Corridor Study calls for intense development patterns Current mixed use zoning allows up to 300 units per acre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas appropriate for TOD and/or park-and-ride stops Develop station area development plans for locations targeted for park-and-ride stops Working off of the mixed use zoning district currently in place along South Fulton Parkway, develop a TOD-specific zoning district based on the MARTA TOD Guidelines and ARC Toolkit that includes site plan regulations to accommodate for park-and-ride facilities and transit vehicles Continue to work with the private sector to develop the live-work-play environment called out in the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Study
Chattahoochee Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Comprehensive Plan adopted Nodal development of up to 14 units per acre permitted within LCI area (Fulton County LU Plan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with MARTA on viability of expansion of commuter services to Chattahoochee Hill Country Villages as development along the corridor matures and transit service comes online

Arterial Bus Corridor Stop Site Selection Factors

As the South Fulton Parkway Corridor is a designated Arterial Bus Corridor, the MARTA TOD Guidelines identify the need to provide parking facilities for commuters. The abundance of developable land creates an opportunity to consider multiple sites. Therefore, a set of criteria should be established for use in evaluating each site. Given the intent to foster TOD around these transit stops, the criteria should also consider factors that influence the attractiveness of developers to a particular site. Based on the characteristics of the Corridor, the following factors could be considered:

Right-of-Way and/or Availability. Right-of-way costs can often be more than construction costs. As a result, this may be the most important factor for determining feasibility. Local governments should coordinate with GDOT along South Fulton Parkway for the necessary right-of-way for accessing potential stop locations.

Access. A site must be easily and directly accessible by automobiles and transit vehicles where transit service is planned. As a general rule, lots should not divert commuters more than two miles out of their normal travel path. Given the undeveloped nature of the Corridor, providing station proximity to the roadway should not be problematic. Access should be safe, with signal control if warranted. Local governments should coordinate with GDOT for signalization and location of ingress and egress points for station access.

Site Size for Parking. Sites that are too large result in an over-expenditure of funds and inefficient use of space. In order to plan accordingly, local governments should coordinate with MARTA on the potential demand for transit services and take into account the parking needed to serve land uses within adjacent station area plans.

Visibility. Sites should be visible from adjacent travel routes. Visibility contributes to recognition of an available park-and-ride lot, and is a deterrent to crime. Landscaping should not obscure visibility.



Park-n-ride stops areas should:

Serve commuters and offer more convenient connections to MARTA feeder services, or carpooling/vanpool options.

Be well-lighted, secure, and offer areas for future transfer facilities.

Provide opportunities for vending, convenience, and amenities to commuters.

Be designed as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible.

Potential Community Concerns

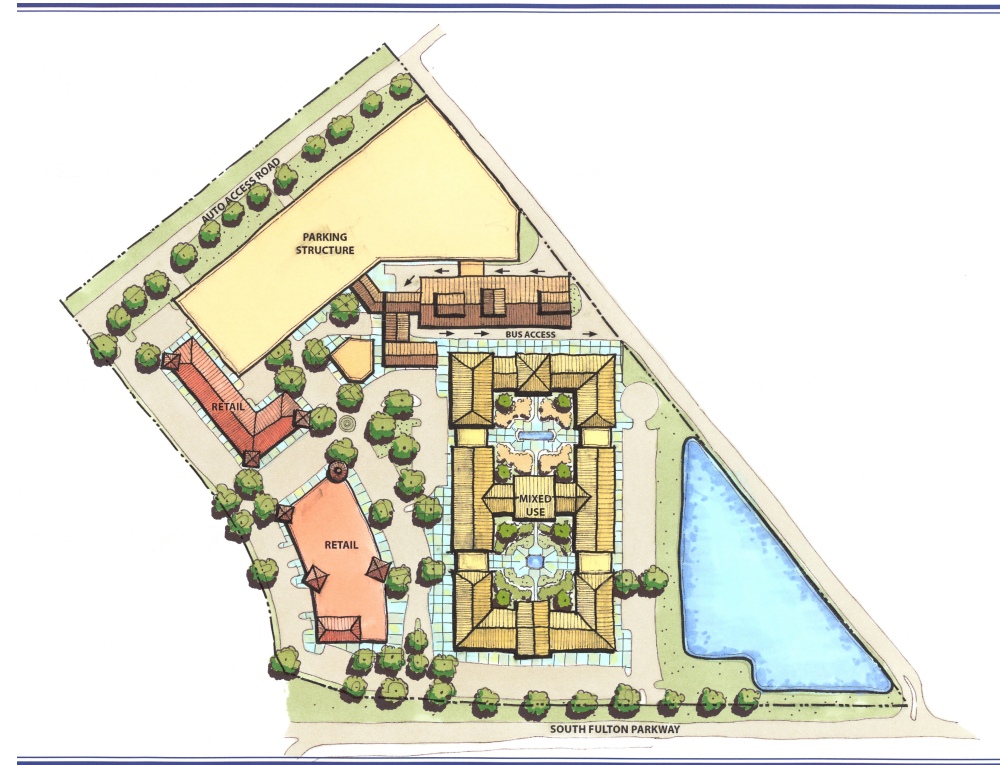
While promoting sustainable growth is integral to sound public policy, local officials should be aware that certain issues can arise when TOD is proposed in and around their communities. This is particularly true in areas with the suburban and rural character of the South Fulton Parkway Corridor. These concerns include:

Citizen Concerns – Citizens' primary concerns are typically related to density and potential traffic impacts. TOD initiatives could create fear that denser development patterns will change the character of the area, introduce a different income level into the communities, and possibly represent a threat to property values. There is also a concern that additional, high-density development will create traffic issues. The best way to appease community concerns is to educate the public early and often in the process of beginning to plan for TOD, and to coordinate with agencies to ensure that proper roadway enhancements are made to accommodate additional auto travel generated by TOD.

Developer Concerns – Developers' concerns generally include developer segmentation and financing. TOD can require a sophisticated approach that is beyond the capabilities of many developers. The development industry is highly segmented by land use (single-family, retail, etc.) and each category has unique practices, markets, trade associations and financing sources. Also, securing financing can be difficult because rigid underwriting requirements make the potential to resale the loan in the secondary market more problematic. Much like the development community, the secondary loan market tends to be fragmented much like the development industry as a whole.

Costs Concerns – As noted throughout, TOD will likely need to be implemented on undeveloped sites that have little infrastructure in place. As such, there will be additional costs to both the local jurisdiction and/or the prospective developer for the provision of additional design and construction for streets and other public

spaces. TOD also requires more detailed site design and building layout than conventional suburban development, which also drives up costs. Therefore, public-private partnerships could likely be a vital component to the successful implementation of TOD along South Fulton Parkway.



ELEMENTS OF DESIGN FOR TRANSIT SERVICES

This section of the handbook provides an overview of design elements associated with park-and-ride lots and bus rapid transit in order to provide preliminary information on the features that must be accommodated during TOD site planning activities.

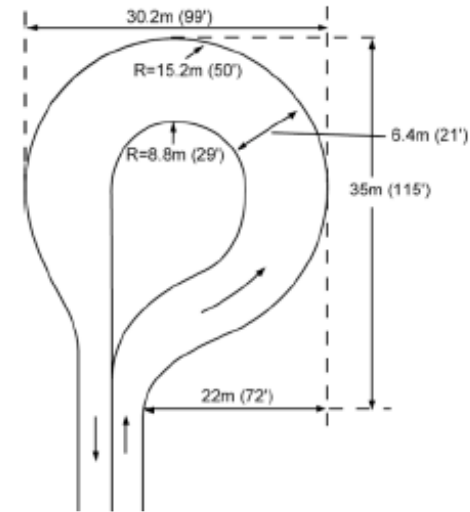
The design of transit-supportive rights-of-way and stop facilities is an important element required to support transit service. The following provides examples of the following features:

- Sight Distance (between Curb Cuts)
- Sample Design Criteria for Turning Radii
- Typical Platform Layouts
- Sample Bus Loop Design

Sight Distance

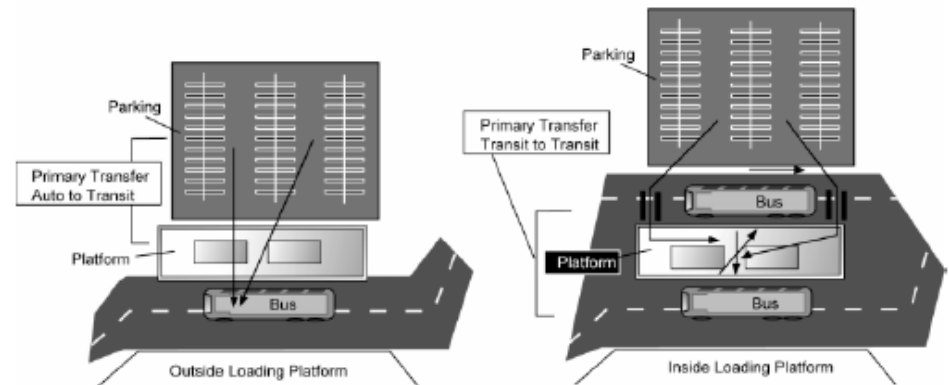
For driveways used primarily by transit, the transit vehicle should be held as the critical design vehicle because of its slower acceleration capabilities. Minimum safe sight distances of approximately 200 feet should be maintained, assuming a 30 mph average travel speed on the intersection arterial. At 30 mph, a 200-foot clear sight standard allows for a minimum vehicle gap acceptance of approximately 4.5 seconds.

Sample Bus Loop Design



Source: Transit Facilities Standards Manual, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, Oakland, CA, March 1983

Typical Platform Layouts



Sample Design Criteria for Turning Radii

Minimum Speed	Movement Operation	Typical Location	Applicable Template
5 MPH	Turning after stop or turning to stop	At bus stop or bus bay	Figure 1
7 MPH	Turning after slowing down to 10 MPH or turning during acceleration	At bus loop at park-and-ride or transit center	Figure 2
10 MPH	Turning after slowing down to 15 MPH or turning during acceleration	At bus loop at park-and-ride or transit center	Figure 3
15 MPH	Turning after slowing down to 30 MPH or turning during acceleration	Entering or exiting HOV or freeway ramp	Figure 4

Source: Design Criteria for Metro Park-and-Ride and Transit Center Facilities, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas, Houston, TX, November 1992

Figure 1

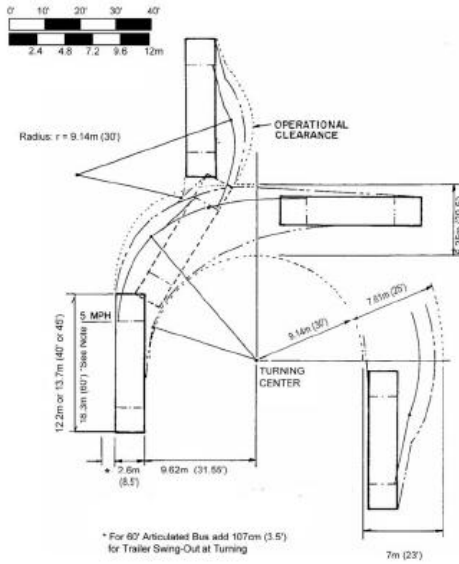


Figure 2

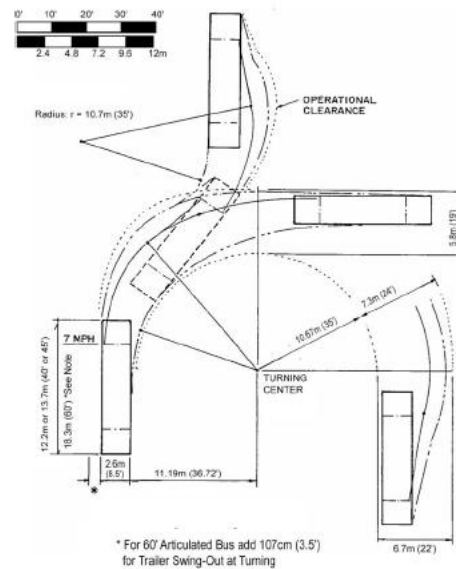


Figure 3

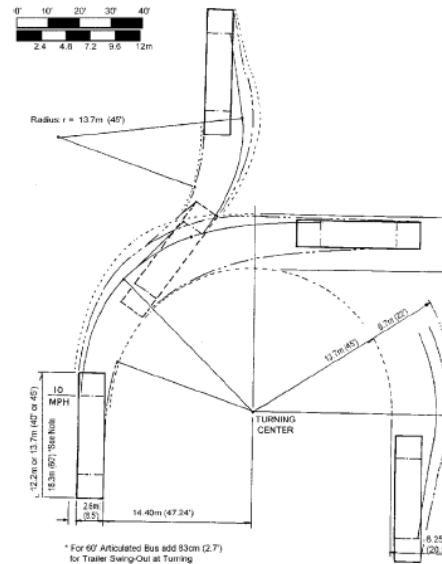
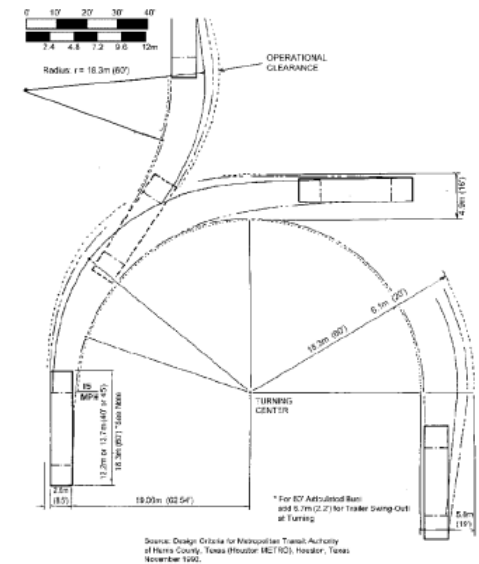


Figure 4



Source: Design Criteria for Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas (Houston METRO), Houston, Texas, November 1992.