Preamble

TODs (Transit Oriented Development) will play an important role in promoting sustainable urban structure and form through urban infill and by accommodating growth within existing suburbs and townships, thereby relieving potential pressure on the urban growth boundary and reducing the need for fringe expansion. TODs are about offering housing choice within a mixed land use/activity environment which not only provides for some of the expected population growth in the State but also is strongly integrated with transport systems. First and foremost, though, TODs act as an agent to support the development of more ‘transit friendly’ urban structures.

TODs have the potential to play a strong role in place making where people live, work, shop, learn and play, and in driving economic and community development and key transport investment.

The South Australian Government has committed $2 billion in funds over the next decade for the upgrade and improvement of Adelaide’s public transport.

It has been highlighted that this Plan and the supportive infrastructure investment will stimulate and sustain the TOD initiative. TODs, however, are more than simply being ‘transit’ focussed as the integrated land use/transportation principles can and should be more broadly applied to capitalise upon other transport-related opportunities.

TODs will therefore form a key part in Adelaide’s future evolution as a city and it is essential we understand the implications they will have in determining a different approach for dealing with urban form, sustainability, housing diversity, transport choice and population growth.

Definition

Put simply, TODs are essentially activity centres containing a broad mixture of land uses; places that promote housing, employment, commercial and community opportunities supported by accessible, frequent, reliable and safe public transport services and other transport modes. They can range in scale from being major primary centres, for instance based on a Marion Westfield, to smaller more local centres focussed on strip shopping/mixed use centres along transport corridors. Ideally, they need to be more widely transportation oriented and not necessarily concentrated only on formalised transit stations.
Irrespective of scale, however, TODs must possess certain elements: the general perception is that TODs will offer medium to high density housing, established around a transport node, centres and/or along linear corridors, integrated with a mix of retail, employment, commercial and civic development opportunities with enhanced accessibility to services via walking and cycling links. Although there are other factors that may impact on the successful implementation and operation of a TOD, an appreciation of these elements is fundamental to understanding how a TOD is defined.

Rationale

There are many sound reasons for creating TODs. These include but are not limited to:

- Decreasing car dependency by providing transport choice
- Increasing residential densities and facilitating the regeneration of existing transport corridors
- Providing priorities for sustainability, such as energy and water conservation
- Improving pedestrianisation of urban areas
- Creating mixed use neighbourhoods with a residential focus and integrating services and the communities who access them
- Reducing the need for further greenfields development

All of these arguments have associated benefits. For example, the rationale to decrease car dependency by providing transport choice has the advantages of reducing greenhouse emissions, decreasing transport disadvantage, increasing pedestrianisation uptake (walking and cycling) whilst improving the health of those who live within a TOD. It makes sense to locate more housing near jobs since this reduces trip times and the number of trips. Another principle of TODs is to contain urban sprawl, which may have the corresponding attraction of reducing stress on the urban growth boundary and on the costs to Government and the private sector of providing infrastructure.

The ‘new start’ approach for developing TODs acts as a catalyst providing fresh opportunities for facilitating a more diverse housing choice and a greater accessibility to services and transport. The potential for social mix and interaction, an improved quality of life and lifestyle, being within easy distance of local shopping and recreation/social needs and serviced by reliable public transport can produce real benefits for Adelaide. Done well, TODs will lead to improved, more dynamic and vibrant communities that are highly desirable and sought after as places to get involved in and engage with.

PIA SA Policy Position

Because of the powerful arguments underpinning the rationale for TODs, PIA SA supports their planning and implementation in principle, but notes that TODs should adhere to the following principles:

- TODs are typically focused around public transport nodes, for instance train/tram stations and bus interchanges/services and along key transport routes such as main roads and traditional high streets. The Directions for creating a new Plan for Greater Adelaide has focused on 11 transit stations. Although supported in principle by PIA, these initiatives are just one part of an integrated metropolitan TOD system. The term ‘transit station’ is intended to include public transport interchanges, train stations, O-Bahn stops, tram stops and major Go-Zone bus stops. Although sound in itself and is a good start, focusing on just transit stations alone does not exhaust all the possibilities for TOD-related development, ie achieving a better integration of land use and transport planning, at other select centres and along existing road-based urban corridors.
- Connecting services, community and recreation activity centres, residential areas, schools, tertiary education institutions, hospitals and public transport infrastructure is an essential aspect of a successful TOD. But, accessibility by alternative methods of transport is not simply a result of higher residential densities or a particular urban form. Rather, the primacy of the pedestrian is fundamental in the design of a TOD. Careful consideration must be given to the planning and performance of pedestrian and cyclist connections throughout the TOD and linkages beyond.
- Housing choice will become an important factor as our demographics shift due to population growth, migration and an aging society. Achieving a social mix in TODs, ie people from different ages, incomes, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, is also important. It is therefore imperative that TODs account for a range of medium and high density dwelling opportunities beyond the traditional detached dwelling that has been so strongly associated with our conventional Australian neighbourhoods. Providing a range of housing choice, both style of housing and tenure types, directly addresses the need to match housing stock with people/families of
specific circumstance, whether they be families with dependent children or single occupant students, or retired pensioners. Increased urban densities around transport nodes are an essential component of an effective TOD by ensuring that resident threshold levels better support public transport patronage and help justify the infrastructure investment required. The implementation of ‘affordable housing’ must also be incorporated into transit oriented development so that housing choice is robust. Affordable housing targets must be met within the parameters of TODs and requirements set to ensure that, as a minimum, 15 per cent of dwellings are accessible to low to moderate income groups.

- TODs, though, are not just about housing; they are about encouraging a broad mix of land use activity to reduce the need to travel outside of the immediate area and to create distinctive, attractive and vibrant communities with a strong ‘sense of place’. TODs have to encourage a range of retail, commercial and community/civic services within close proximity to housing so that convenient access to day to day requirements such as shopping, recreation, entertainment or health services, as well as places of employment, can be supported. Cutting down on the need to travel has benefits not only by reducing the reliance on car travel but also in promoting walking and cycling activity.

- It is commonly stated that a TOD can be defined as an area 400 metres from a transit station\(^1\) as this is normally the distance that can be covered by foot in 5 minutes. However, defining a TOD with a spatial measurement can have associated problems. A prescriptive numeric boundary does not take into consideration the physical and cultural make-up, form or composition of the place, nor the need to genuinely assimilate the development with the surrounding communities, not segregate them due to an adherence to spatially fixed boundaries that may be quite unsuitable. ‘Boundaries’, such as they are, are therefore governed or influenced more by the site and locality characteristics specific to the individual TOD. Moreover, as such measurements are usually taken ‘as the crow flies’ they do not consider the actual length that a path takes from point A (the boundary) to point B (the transit stop). TODs should therefore not be measured by a prescribed distance or by the configuration of new developments, but rather by the level of accessibility to the transit stop via pathways and other linkages, taking into account current land use and development patterns.

Successful TODs also typically involve a number of complementary features, such as:

- **Optimal transit design and service:** the frequency, carrying capacity and travel time from transit nodes must be measured so as to match the demand and expectations of those utilising the transit system, which is typically the residents and visitors to the TODs themselves as well as ‘outsiders’ who take advantage of the improved transit facilities to commute. The frequency and carrying capacity of public transport along transit corridors and through TODs must also be continuously monitored so as to match public transport services with the expected increases in patronage. This may require investment to increase rolling stock to accommodate the greater demand generated by TODs, especially in the inner metropolitan areas where increases in outer metropolitan areas may place strain on carrying capacity. This will ensure equal levels of service for all metropolitan areas along transit corridors.

- **Community and private sector partnerships:** the aims and desires of the surrounding communities must be taken into consideration, along with market forces and a degree of understanding and acceptance of the mixed use role TODs are to play. Local perceptions are important since these have obvious ramifications on the market appeal and success of the TOD. Research suggests, however, that these types of developments are in high demand and do result in increased property values in comparison with other areas.

- **Co-ordination of policy, investment strategies and cross-governance embracing local, regional, and state organisations needs to take place in order to ensure the right mix of planning and financial incentives and resources is employed.**

- **Individual TODs must take into consideration the integration of land use and transport along the entire transport corridor.** Taking a narrow vision of the planning and implementation of a TOD in isolation of the overall transport corridor may fail to consider all the potential integration and community elements that may influence the success of the TOD. The PIA SA policy position paper on ‘Integrated Land Use and Transportation’ illustrates the rationale.
and benefits of integrating TODs into transport corridors.

- Education and promoting community understanding of TODs is a vital component in implementing the TOD ‘concept’. The ‘good intentions’ of TODs need to be explained so that a focus on changing urban form and a shift from traditional residential development is not seen in a negative light by communities or by the general public. Clearly and simply explaining the rewards TODs can produce may not be sufficient to generate community support if people cannot understand what it all means on an individual or personal scale. It is important to articulate how and where major development projects will occur, the relationship of various land uses associated with the model of sustainable development practices and the correlation with major development opportunities. Specific benefits such as the capacity for TODs to support environmental sustainability through the adoption of solar energy or water sensitive urban design need to be stressed.

- The inclusion of accessible and useable metropolitan open space should be an indispensable part of promoting higher residential densities within a TOD so that public support and co-operation is more assured, quite apart from the corresponding health and social benefits resulting from the recreational and leisure opportunities that open space in itself provides. Accordingly, targets for metropolitan open space must be included prior to the master planning stage to ensure the transition to higher urban densities is accepted by the public.

- Funding arrangements between local, State and Federal governments, as well as private investors and developers, will be different between individual TODs. Financing and economic planning for particular ventures must take account of the type, mix and level of key infrastructure, service and community investment that is required to kick-start the TOD development.

The implementation of TODs should also consider the following steps:

- A region-wide vision needs to be prepared that pinpoints areas that could be developed into TODs. This is being currently undertaken by the State Government in the 30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide. The sites illustrated in this Plan have been selected as the most suitable throughout the Adelaide metropolitan area. However, these sites do not represent an exhaustive list and broader consideration must be given to substantiate other future TOD locations. In any event, it is important that strategic decisions be made so that investment, both private and public, can be confidently mobilised and focussed on the full range of TOD opportunities identified in the vision.

- TODs must be supported by a ‘goal setting’ detailed master plan approach, applied within but subsidiary to a broad metropolitan-based structure plan framework, that enables the policy and design ‘concept’ to be included into Development Plans to help provide a comprehensible linkage between State and local government and the wider community as to intended planning outcomes.

- Being large-scale urban development projects, the planning exercise for identifying and designing TODs, including the selling of the merits of the TOD ‘philosophy’ itself, must allow for extensive and genuine public, stakeholder and allied government consultation.

- Business case development that includes delivery options, feasibility, potential partnerships and identification of demonstration sites must be addressed.

- It is also important to ensure that planning policy, financial, population, educational and statutory aspects of TODs are aligned through the relevant planning authorities and are supported by the community, all levels of government and the private sector.

- The successful early development of a TOD site (or more) as a ‘demonstration project’ will help create a template guiding future TOD development by revealing what worked well and what could have been done better. This ‘hindsight’ knowledge can be invaluable as a learning tool shaping the process of doing TODs well. As metropolitan Adelaide does not have a current TOD model or ‘blueprint’ to work from, we must initially learn from relevant interstate and even overseas practice to identify the successful elements and apply them here. The recently announced ‘Bowden Village’, which is to be developed on the former Clipsal site as Adelaide’s first TOD, is a significant first step along a path that has the potential to signal far-reaching change for Adelaide’s urban form and structure.

Sources:


- Directions for creating a new Plan for Greater Adelaide, published by the Minister for Urban Development and Planning, Government of South Australia (November 2008)