

New Jersey Department of Transportation  
Bureau of Research

## Technical Brief



## Eliminating Barriers to Transit-Oriented Development

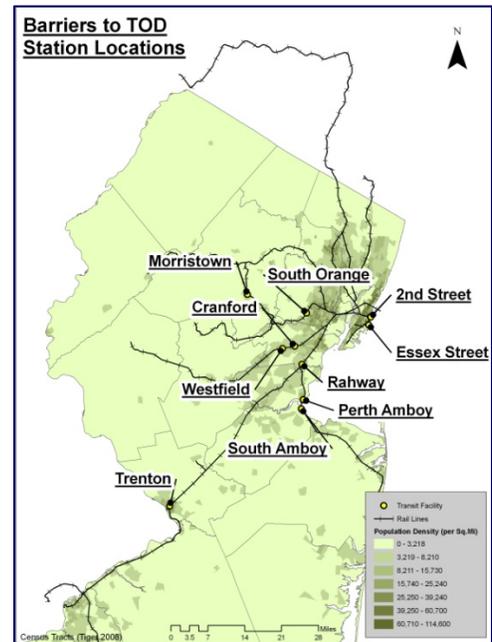
*This report looked at three conditions that could be barriers to transit-oriented development: impacts on schools; impacts to local auto traffic; and, impacts on local parking. Ten transit stations in distinct communities were investigated, comparing households living near rail stations as well as farther away in both old and new housing.*

### Background

“Transit-oriented development” refers to dense, mixed-use development near transit facilities, particularly denser housing development. Achieving such density is a politically difficult goal. In New Jersey, the main barriers are community concerns about the potential of new development to cause parking problems, increased traffic, and negative fiscal impacts because of increased school enrollments. Many residents fear increased auto traffic, parking problems, and an influx of additional school-age children which may increase property tax. The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether these perceptions were accurate.

### Research Objectives and Approach

To observe differences between households located close to transit stations and those further away, we conducted a survey of households located within two miles of ten NJTRANSIT rail stations. We compared responses from households living within a half mile of stations with those living more distant. In order to assure representation of those residents living closest to stations, we oversampled households within a quarter mile of the stations and we oversampled households living in newly constructed housing. Our investigation also considered the effect of supply factors, particularly the availability of on-street and off-street parking, and school quality.



### Findings

We found that the impacts of transit-oriented development on schools, local auto traffic, and parking were not nearly as significant as the public thinks.

We found robust evidence that the per-household impacts of new development on local school districts are much lower in developments near rail stations. This provides the strongest evidence that we are aware of to debunk the myth that new housing near transit will increase property tax.

This study also highlights that the size of home/apartment/condominium and the availability of parking directly affects commuting mode and auto ownership. Smaller households seek smaller housing and also drive less.

The policy implications of this study are:

- Local land use policies near rail stations should take into account lower school enrollment impacts of housing there. A reasonable estimate would be half the number of school children as found in new development elsewhere.
- Local land use policies for high density development, whether in urbanized areas or elsewhere, should take into account substantially reduced auto ownership and use in high density housing and rental housing. Auto ownership is a third lower in apartment/condominium settings and 25 percent lower in rowhouse/townhouse settings, compared to single family homes. Auto ownership is also 22 percent lower in rental units regardless of housing type. Based on these results we estimate that a household living in a rented apartment will have about half the number of vehicles of a household in an owner-occupied single family home.
- Parking policies should be reformed to maximize the potential of transit-oriented development. Lower on-street parking is highly correlated with less driving to work. Smaller amounts of on-street parking require managing on-street parking with permits and metering. This enables higher density development. The results strongly imply that parking availability should be taken into account when estimating the traffic impacts of new development near transit.

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A final report is available online at: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/research/>. If you would like a copy of the full report, send an e-mail to: [Research.Bureau@dot.state.nj.us](mailto:Research.Bureau@dot.state.nj.us).

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