TRANSIT GREENWAYS
By
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Picture a cool, lushly planted pathway winding past shops and offices, residences and schools, parks and the waterfront. Arcades, awnings, fountains, street cafes and public space delight the senses and provide cover from the rain and summer heat.

The waterways shine, birds sing and the park squirrels nest and care for their young. People you know and recognize are in plain view tending to their personal and business affairs. Bicycle and pedestrian traffic mixes with small and quiet trolley cars that children and adults safely ride from one neighborhood to the next.

Centrally located bus and train stations provide timely and convenient transport between neighboring towns and regional events. At night and weekends, community events occur in well lighted public spaces located throughout the city and town. Car and truck traffic is unobtrusive and not congested as it moves around these community areas which, by design, invite visitors and residents to park and join the fun.

Imagine a town within a city, imagine a village within a town, imagine a transit greenway in your neighborhood. Give it some thought, give it some time and you can design, build and live in a transit greenway community.
COMMERCIAL OR MIXED-USE BUILDINGS AND WALKWAYS.

SHADE TREES

TROLLEY DEPOT

PARK AREA

BUILDING OVER WALKWAY

FOUNTAINS, KIOSKS, SCULPTURES, AND OTHER SPECIAL FEATURES.

UNIFIED PLANTSCAPE

ROAD OR RAILROAD TRACK.

TYPICAL ARTERIAL TRANSIT GREENWAY ELEMENTS

TYPICAL COLLECTOR TRANSIT GREENWAY ELEMENTS
Transportation is all about places and movement between those places. Whether traveling by land, sea or air, two features dominate the movement of people and goods: the desired destination and the safe, comfortable, convenient, timely and efficient means to get there. All other factors being equal, communities that are able to provide such transport services prosper compared to those that do not. The histories of modern and ancient times frequently describe how the fates of whole cities and states rose and fell under such circumstances.

Transit greenways are a continuation of this transportation and social evolutionary process. Transit greenways provide essential human-scale linkage between all other modes of transportation and important community destinations. As a unique form of transportation, transit greenway systems use familiar design elements in new and financially sustainable ways to significantly increase personal mobility within urban, suburban and environmentally sensitive communities. With transit greenways, communities will prosper and enhance the quality of life for each citizen, each family member and each visitor to a transit greenway oriented community.
ELEMENTS OF A TRANSIT GREENWAY SYSTEM OR NETWORK

A transit greenway system or network will include at least the following elements:

1) greenway transit corridors designed as landscaped roadways for pedestrians, bicyclists and greenway transit vehicles connecting traditional transit, parking and other community destinations;

2) greenway transit vehicles compatible with pedestrian and bicycle movements that extend the typical length and increase the frequency of pedestrian or bicycle trips;

3) design criteria that provide a desirable walking and bicycling experience by the use of trees and foliage materials, street furniture and fixtures, underground utilities and architectural design standards for surrounding structures;

4) parking facilities for automobiles and bicycles at predictable locations along the greenway transit corridor to facilitate modal transfers and joint development opportunities;

5) intermodal and freight transfer facilities to enhance greenway transit corridor connections to traditional transit bus or rail networks, airports, seaports, and employment, business and residential centers; and,

6) a plan of operation and revenue generation that establishes transit greenway systems as a fiscally self-sufficient part of the comprehensive transportation system.
II. DESCRIPTION OF TRANSIT GREENWAYS

Transit greenways are designed for the safe, comfortable, convenient, timely and efficient movement of pedestrian, bicycle and greenway transit vehicles. They provide tree-covered corridors and open space, separated from car and truck traffic, that guide people to community destinations, parking and transit access points. Transit greenways are immediately visual and intuitive. By design, greenway transit vehicles, corridor surfaces, landscape, street furniture, underground utilities, lighting and adjacent structures constitute an interactive complex that establishes a park-like attractive place and method of transport.

Greenway transit vehicles operating on or adjacent to a greenway transit corridor are a type of public conveyance that is pedestrian/bicycle compatible by virtue of size, speed, scheduled frequency, fuel, climatic control attributes, configuration and close operational proximity and frequent accessibility to pedestrians and bicyclists. Greenway transit vehicles are distinguishable from traditional transit vehicles: they are smaller in size and slower in speed; they utilize a clean fuel with no or minimum emissions consistent with both environmental concerns and pedestrian/bicyclist proximate operating conditions; they may be open air or air conditioned vehicles; they operate on a frequency consistent with pedestrian/bicyclist movement desires; they have package storage areas and bike racks or sufficient space within the vehicles for bicycle storage; and, along with lighting and other corridor furniture and improvements, they significantly reduce pedestrian/bicyclist apprehensions as to personal security, safety and immediate availability to shelter and transit during inclement weather conditions.

Mixed use and overlay zoning district design criteria within a transit greenway network help to create a sense of place and a capacity to accommodate and hold the attention of individuals while in or traveling along the transit greenway so as to measurably increase the utilization of pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities with a concomitant reduction of automobile trips and traffic congestion. Greenway transit corridors extend to and along transit routes to provide connections to a significant percentage of publicly desired and recognized destinations between transit stops. By providing convenient pedestrian, bicycle and parking facilities that provide access to greenway transit vehicles and the station elements of the traditional transit system, transit greenways enhance transit choice as part of a more comprehensive transportation system.

A transit greenway system uses parking, intermodal and freight transfer opportunities to redirect automobile and truck traffic away from congested areas where road widening is neither desired nor physically possible. At frequent intervals along a greenway transit corridor, there are larger open spaces to facilitate recreational, shopping or other community and child oriented activities that help to establish a sense of place. These "village square" areas predictably have parking, employment, business and residential components with mixed use and overlay zoning district standards that reinforce the pedestrian and bicycle utilization of the greenway corridors and modal transfer from automobile and truck use to transit greenway and traditional transit systems. In addition, a fiscally self-sufficient operations plan expands revenue opportunities from limited transit fare box receipts to an integrated revenue stream derived from transit, parking, intermodal and freight transfer, joint development and other transit greenway activities and services.
Communities large and small that understand the value of pedestrian friendly infrastructure planning and its relationship to enhanced transit use and intermodal transfer activity can utilize transit greenways to complete their transportation system. Transit greenways specifically planned for each community provide the capillary network to effectively draw people from their homes, businesses and vehicles to community destinations and transit access points within a transit greenway network from one to four miles in diameter. Overlapping transit greenway networks and connections to traditional transit can further extend trip distances beyond typical pedestrian, bicycle and greenway transit excursions.

Transit greenways can be effective in either high density or low density areas. Higher density communities provide the critical mass of people and ridership in an area likely to have limited or inconsistently available rights-of-way. Lower density communities with available rights-of-way can link multiple community destinations with transit greenways, so as to create the horizontally arrayed “virtual density” needed to provide enhanced ridership for traditional transit systems.

Transit greenway system development is well positioned to justify and obtain surface transportation program and other flexible federal transportation funding. Transit greenways are structurally light duty roads for pedestrian, bicycle and greenway transit vehicles designed and built to be fiscally self-sufficient with enhanced revenue opportunities and low operation and maintenance costs. Moreover, through their ability to divert large numbers of pedestrians and bicyclists to traditional transit, transit greenways will enhance the ridership and therefore the funding justification for greenway connected traditional transit systems.

At this time, even the road building advocates recognize a fundamental 20-year transportation planning horizon problem: that right-of-way for road building in urbanized America is cost prohibitive; that expanding the highway system in metropolitan areas is inappropriate given the air quality concerns of the larger urban areas; that road building in environmentally sensitive areas is becoming more and more inconceivable due to regulatory and citizen reaction; that some suburban communities desire a quality of life that the automobile/road system cannot deliver; and, that rural road building fundamentally encourages sprawl and the elimination of economically and historically significant agricultural use and open space. Planning transit greenways helps to resolve these problems by establishing a new type of roadway alternative whenever traditional vehicular roads are not desired, economically justified or environmentally prudent, and where available right-of-way is inconsistent in width, discontinuous or non-linear.

In addition, when comprehensively developed within a metropolitan community, transit greenways respond to a growing constituency that demands transportation trust funds be used for socially desirable needs by developing an infrastructure product that responds to the broad spectrum of social and environmental concerns - crime prevention, environmental protection, air quality, wildlife habitat preservation, personal fitness, neighborhood schools, pedestrian and bicycle safety, community redevelopment, and tax equity. Without community supported transit greenways and citizens committed to the use of such a system of transport, the transportation trust fund will more likely be successfully challenged by an urban-oriented majority who want a fair return for their gas tax
contribution and who would prefer to spend such funds on programs more relevant to their immediate needs.

In the public debate about urban needs and tax equity, the opportunity to use infrastructure funds to solve long-term social, economic, and environmental issues will be lost without a transit greenway alternative. The community leaders who assume that road building will be the only major part of their infrastructure expenditures will be unprepared to defend road-dominated budgets. If even one community, however, understands the value of walkability in its city, town, or village centers and undertakes the effort to extend its vision to transit greenways, other communities will follow. This transit greenway community planning process will allow a more regionally defensible transportation work plan to be produced that will fund transit greenways and provide the transportation infrastructure to redevelop sustainable communities. The economic, social, and environmental success stories from communities which choose to pursue a greenway transit strategy will provide a clear path for other communities around the nation to follow.

III. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Transit greenways, as described herein and referenced in the attached Executive Summary, are within the funding parameters of federal and state transportation law. In Florida, transit greenways have been endorsed by the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council, the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council, and the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida. In addition, the Florida Department of Transportation has recognized transit greenway planning as responsive to the guidance directives established by the Federal Transit Administration for environmental and community impacts. Transit greenways have been the subject of conceptual planning efforts in the City of Fort Lauderdale, Hillsborough, Polk and Monroe Counties, as well as legal and
policy analysis regarding improved commuter rail and transit service in South Florida. The efforts to develop transit greenway materials have been supported by and developed with input from the Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

What is now required is governmental leadership willing to organize the efforts to render community supported depictions of a transit greenway system within the context of community redevelopment efforts and to enter into agreements with the transportation agencies to propose conceptual master plans for community-wide transit greenway networks. These planning efforts must clearly describe and project the significant transit and community benefits in order to obtain support from the local, state or regional governments and planning agencies where the proposal is located and to justify available funding from the Federal Transit Administration and other appropriate state and federal agencies.

In developing the conceptual master plan, care must be taken to analyze and address how each of the six (6) elements that define a transit greenway system or network will be implemented and to use experts who specialize in the transportation and land use issues that will govern the initial financing, planning, joint development, right-of-way acquisition, construction, operations and contract relationships that support the plan of operation and revenue generation. The individual professionals retained must carefully weigh the impact of each decision on the cost of operation, utilization and ridership estimates and projected revenues to verify that once constructed, the transit greenway system will be fiscally self-sufficient, supportive of the traditional transit systems to which it is linked and, when compared to other transportation improvements, the most cost effective means to reduce congestion.

IV. CONCLUSION

Transit greenways will be a significant mode of transportation in the years to come as highways expand to their justifiable limits. Communities which take time to plan transit greenways today will be better prepared economically, socially and environmentally to provide their citizens with the mobility they need within the context of sustainable community redevelopment efforts.

Should you wish to pursue a transit greenway initiative, please contact me so that we can review the specific opportunities that exist. I can be reached at my office located at 4901 North Federal Highway, Suite 440, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33308, by phone (954/492-0071), facsimile (954/492-0074) or email: tom@transitgreenwaylaw.com.

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