BUILDING A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

Transit-Oriented Development

northeastern illinois planning commission

Over the next 20 years, northeastern Illinois will grow by more than 1 million residents. The number of new jobs will increase to keep pace with this enormous rise. The question is, what will this growth do to our transportation systems, housing needs, desire to protect our natural environment? Will this growth lead to greater congestion and a less appealing quality of life, or can we manage the growth so that our region is competitive in a global market place and a desirable place to live and work?

Fundamentally, the goal of planning is to provide an environment for people to earn a decent living, live in desirable housing, and spend satisfying leisure time. In a region as large and diverse as ours, communities must work together so that individuals throughout have equal access to these opportunities.

To help ensure this, the Northereastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) has developed a Regional Growth Strategy with three objectives:

- To promote renewed growth and investment in areas which have experienced population and/or employment losses
- To promote growth and investment in built-up areas where growth is leveling off
- To strive for cost-effective and environmentally sensitive new growth or redevelopment

As part of the Regional Growth Strategy, NIPC is engaged in an initiative to increase public understanding of and involvement in the regional planning process. This publication, *Transit-Oriented Development,* is the first in our *Building a Regional Framework* series. Each publication is designed to educate the public about a particular issue and spark greater public input into the process.

As a vital component of the Regional Growth Strategy, transit-oriented development can help rebuild older, struggling areas, reinvigorate stable areas, and create a sense of community in developing areas. We hope that this publication will generate discussion in your community so that transit-oriented development can be considered as a viable way to create, maintain, or enhance its vitality.

The *Building a Regional Framework* series is just the first step in NIPC's effort to spur public participation. In the coming months, we will be sponsoring public forums and workshops to provide greater public involvement in determining a vision for our shared future. We look forward to your reaction to these publications and your participation in our new, community-based planning process.

Ronald L. Thomas
Executive Director

Herbert T. Schumann Jr.
President

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ABOUT THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION

NIPC was created by the state legislature in 1957 to lead comprehensive planning for the northeastern part of Illinois. NIPC is committed to finding regional consensus on policies and plans that promote the sound and orderly development of northeastern Illinois. It serves the local governments of the region by providing information, fosters regional cooperation in the comprehensive planning process, develops policies on evolving areawide issues, and seeks maximum local participation in its deliberations.

January 2001

This report was funded in part by the U.S. Department of Transportation through a grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation, by the State of Illinois through a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs; and by voluntary contributions from local governments in northeastern Illinois.

Transit-Oriented Development

You're taking public transit. You can read or think on the way to your destination. Air quality is better. Travel times are more predictable. Doing errands is easier. You talk to more people. You feel safer. You're happy. Transit-oriented development brings you this and more.

Transit-oriented development is the design and development of land around transit stations that encourage people to use mass transit within a neighborhood, between neighborhoods, and throughout a region. Transit-oriented development brings more people and more businesses to a station area, increasing the sense of community and promoting a thriving market place.

Transit-oriented development is not a new concept in northeastern Illinois. In the early 20th century, elevated and surface rail systems, streetcars, and commuter rail influenced development in Chicago and many suburbs. Evanston and Oak Park are older communities with successful transit-oriented development, while Tinley Park, Arlington Heights and Elmhurst demonstrate more recent transit-oriented development.

The purpose of transit-oriented development is to build active and convenient communities that link people to their jobs as well as to commercial, retail, and entertainment centers. Separate transit-oriented developments connect with each other, contributing to a more vital region overall.

Transit-oriented development can spur neighborhood revitalization in disinvested areas, promote more efficient use of the region's existing public transportation network, and protect the region's natural environment. It is a way to manage growth in a region that will have at least 1 million more people and 1 million more jobs by 2020.

Transit-oriented development can help improve the environment. A recent NIPC study showed that increasing residential units near one station saved 500,000 auto vehicle miles per year, which in turn cut air pollution significantly. Greater density of housing and jobs around transit stations can reduce pressures to develop in more remote locations. It also preserves natural resources, such as flood plains, farmlands, wetlands, and open spaces.

Specific Benefits

Northeastern Illinois has an excellent rail network that encourages successful transit-oriented development. Developing land around many transit stations can result in a myriad of benefits for communities. These include:

- Renewed growth and reinvestment.
- Development patterns that focus on an extensive, in-place transit system.
- Protection of the environment.
- Reduced reliance on cars, congestion, roadway expansion, and air pollution.
- A range of housing to serve diverse households.

In addition, transit-oriented development can enhance community activity, stimulate redevelopment, increase neighborhood livability, and foster a vigorous, connected, and secure community.

Vernon Hills

Arlington Heights

Oak Park

Opportunities

Northeastern Illinois' vast existing and planned passenger rail network and the region's history of transit-oriented development suggest that transit-oriented development can be a key element in the growth planning of the region.

The CTA has 142 stations on its seven rapid transit lines along 100 miles of rail. Metra has 240 stations on 12 commuter rail lines along 505 miles of rail, and plans for 25 new stations. *(See Table 1)*

The development of land near transit stations can have an impact on the regional distribution of both employment and population. Tables 2 and 3 are based on information from the NIPC 2020 population and employment forecasts.

Table 2–Assumptions Used in Employment and Population Calculations–shows the employment and residential density assumptions for transit-oriented development in three types of areas (high density, suburban center, and outside suburban center).

Using these assumptions, Table 3–Potential Employment and Population Impact of Transit-Oriented Development–shows accessible land available in each of the 6 counties. This demonstrates how much population and job growth the land can accommodate, using the assumptions by type of area from Table 2. The nearly 40,000 acres of transit accessible land could accommodate almost 15% of forecasted employment increase and 30% of the forecasted population increase if communities took advantage of transit-oriented development.

ESTIMATING THE POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT IMPACT OF TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Table 1
Rail Stations in Northeastern Illinois

	1999	Additional by 2020	Projected 2020 Total
CTA	142	25	167
Metra	240	38	278
	382	63	445

Table 2
Assumptions Used in Employment and Population Calculations

	High Density	Suburban Center	Outside Suburban Center
# of Available Acres	5,121	7,765	26,255
Employment Density (jobs per acre)	32	12	11
Residential Density (dwelling units per acre)	18	9	6
Residential Density (persons per acre)	47	23	16

Table 3
Potential Employment and Population Impact of Transit-Oriented Development

	TOD Acres Available for Development	Potential Jobs Increase	Potential Population Increase
Chicago	4,479	57,779	126,930
Sub Cook	8,981	43,770	108,857
DuPage	4,845	13,829	62,543
Kane	4,852	20,857	52,342
Lake	6,790	28,240	74,904
McHenry	3,134	11,923	37,775
Will	6,061	27,814	60,135
Region	39,142	204,212	520,862

Land Use Patterns

A joint NIPC/Metra publication *Land Use in Commuter Rail Station Areas: Guidelines for Communities* offers strategies for integrating transit stations in communities based on six general land use patterns:

Stations In High Density Urban Areas

Creates a full complement of spaces—commercial, multi-family residential, entertainment, and employment-related—that are easily accessible from the rail station.

Stations in Suburban Central Business Districts

Integrates stations into suburban central business districts and multi-family residential areas, creating pedestrian-oriented environments.

Stations in Office/Shopping Complexes

Locates stations and major commercial centers at primary highway/railway intersections to provide park-and-ride and rail access to employment and/or shopping areas.

Stations Outside of Suburban Business Districts

Provides multi-family residences, job locations, and parking spaces close to nearby business districts.

Stations Along Highway Rights-of-Way

Makes parking available at commercial, employment-related, multi-family residential, and park-and-ride locations near stations in highway corridors.

Stations in Undeveloped or Developing Areas

Creates new development opportunities in many new station locations, such as station-oriented town centers that offer walking and cycling.

Design

Successful transit-oriented developments create synergy within a community. They combine innovative urban development and current market opportunities to enhance residential and commercial activity.

The best transit-oriented development provides pedestrians with convenient, safe, and pleasant access to the transit station, surrounding businesses, and other services. To do this however, there must be a sufficient number of pedestrians, transit riders and non-riders, to support the businesses.

Thriving transit-oriented development communities share the following qualities:

- Pedestrian-friendly environments. The design area is within a ½ mile radius from the transit station, or a 5–10 minute walk.
- Retail and entertainment venues focused on commuters and located between the station and parking.
- Housing density of between ten and sixty dwelling units per acre. Neighborhoods with lower density and mostly single family houses have succeeded in some communities.

  Ideal density varies from community to community, depending on what is needed to maintain local retail services, transit facilities, and a community's goals. Higher-density land use near transit stations, such as schools, employment centers, and multi-family residential developments results in greater pedestrian traffic.
- Access to feeder bus routes.
- Increased parking capacity that is compatible with pedestrian activity. This includes commuter and non-commuter parking.

Design Elements for Transit-Oriented Development

Elmhurst

Highland Park

Lake Forest

Some suggested design elements include:

Station Areas

- Buildings located close to the station to allow for a short walk.
- Retail services located on ground floors in buildings with varying heights, materials, and facades.

Commercial Areas

- Retail and entertainment activities located between the station, parking, and other land uses.
- Major commercial centers within the transit facility, such as the Merchandise Mart in Chicago.
- Businesses that serve commuters, such as drug stores, dry cleaners, banks, and grocery stores.

Physical Design

- Grid-like street patterns that avoid pedestrian barriers, such as cul-de-sacs.
- Attractive landscaping, continuous paved sidewalks, street furniture, urban art, screened-off parking, weather protection, safe street crossings.
- Public open spaces, pedestrian plazas.
- Respect for historic building traditions of the area.

Transportation

- Transit shelters, benches, and route information.
- Commuter parking that complements the station area.
- Access to buildings from front sidewalks.
- Access to different modes of transportation, walking paths, “kiss-n-ride” areas, bike racks.

Challenges

As a land use policy, transit-oriented development has wide applicability and increasing support. However, the cooperation of a wide range of people and agencies is required to meet challenges and assure its success.

Land Assembly

Land assembly can be a challenge when developing pedestrian and transit friendly station areas. More than 25% of station areas in the region do not have vacant land available for development. Even where vacant land exists, it is often not easily developed for various reasons. New developments require larger sites to reduce construction costs and allow innovative land development techniques.

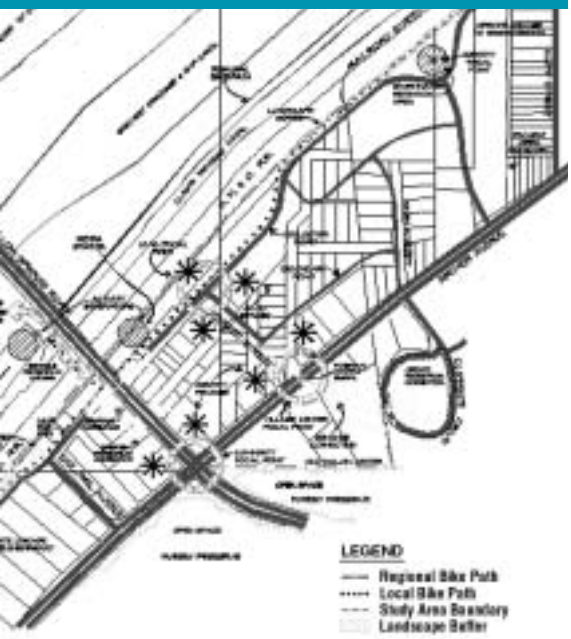
Sometimes it is difficult to gather enough adjoining sites, which may cause developers to avoid sites where transit-oriented development could be most successful. To meet these challenges, some local governments use their land assembly powers to acquire a site and then sell or donate the land to a transit-oriented development team.

Redevelopment Opportunities

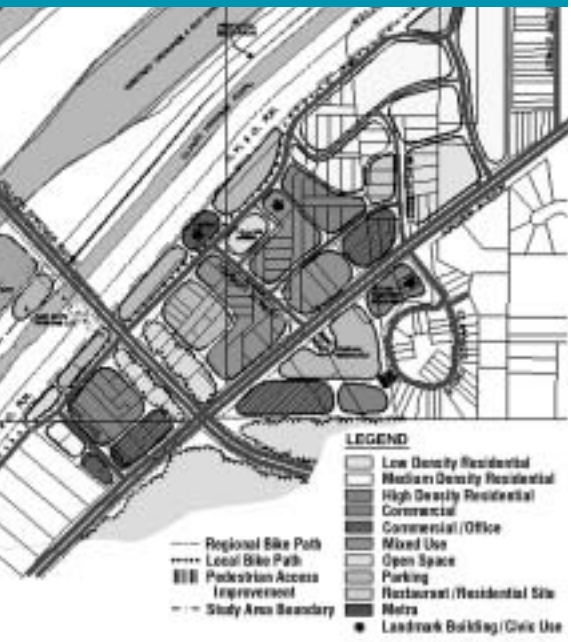
In some older neighborhoods, redevelopment may be difficult or not feasible because connections between bus, automobile and train have become weak or nonexistent. Critical pedestrian links between transit stations and the surrounding community may also be missing. However, existing patterns can be rearranged or refocused, and older patterns may be reestablished. Communities can establish parking standards and designs that encourage transit-oriented development by locating parking sites to meet the needs of pedestrians, taking advantage of “shared parking” where possible, and building parking structures on the periphery
of the development area.

Incentives For Property Owners

Local property owners who could capitalize on transit-generated customer-traffic may not know how to do this. An inclusive transit-oriented development planning and education process can help them. Grant and low-interest loan programs can also furnish the capital needed for undertaking transit-oriented development projects. In addition, local government can reduce traffic impact fees for development projects that incorporate transit-oriented development principles, as in the case of Gresham, Oregon, where a 26.9% discount was made available for new development in transit districts. Local government can also help with land assembly, as in San Diego and San Francisco where local redevelopment agencies assembled multiple land parcels into sites of sufficient size to support a large-scale transit project.



Willow Springs Village Center
Development Concepts and
Circulation Patterns



Willow Springs Village Center
Land Use Plan

Density Considerations

Some local residents may be concerned that a more dense community or mixed land use could produce crowded schools, traffic congestion, crime, or lower property values. Including community representatives in development programs and design processes can bring these fears out into the open and alleviate them.

Good transit-oriented design and citizen involvement can overcome or allay people's fears about density. Regional agencies and programs are available to communities throughout our region to assist with achieving good design.

Local Regulation

Local codes and zoning ordinances may restrict mixed-use or multi-family development, make pedestrian access difficult, and affect the financial viability of development projects. However, communities can design development standards and zoning ordinances that are compatible with transit-oriented development. These may include modifying Planned Unit Development ordinances and establishing transit-oriented development "overlay zones" near rail stations. Communities can also create a cooperative voluntary process for reviewing those local regulations that discourage transit-oriented development and pedestrian access.

Financing

Conventional financing sources are sometimes hesitant to fund transit-oriented development projects. Their concerns relate to higher construction costs, development fees, cleanup costs, and potential lending risks associated with higher density housing and mixed-use development. Government initiatives can help with financing and include assembly of land, revised zoning codes, creative financing packages, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) designation. Funding programs can facilitate transit-oriented development by making it a priority. Other options include consolidating different state funding programs into "one-stop shopping" and creating a state tax-exemption program.

Communities

Chicago Transit Authority Brown Line

The CTA Ravenswood Line (Brown Line) is a prime example of a transit-oriented development network. Along the route from Kimball to the Loop, some of the city's very popular residential neighborhoods are connected with some of the city's most successful commercial and employment areas. Where there were once run-down houses and decaying factories, there are now bustling neighborhoods, luxury condominiums, town houses, acclaimed theaters, trendy restaurants, boutiques, hospitals, and universities, as well as light industry and office space. This direct and accessible transit line has contributed to a dramatic redevelopment effort in the Chicago neighborhoods it serves, which has, in turn, contributed to a substantial increase in the use of the CTA's Brown Line.

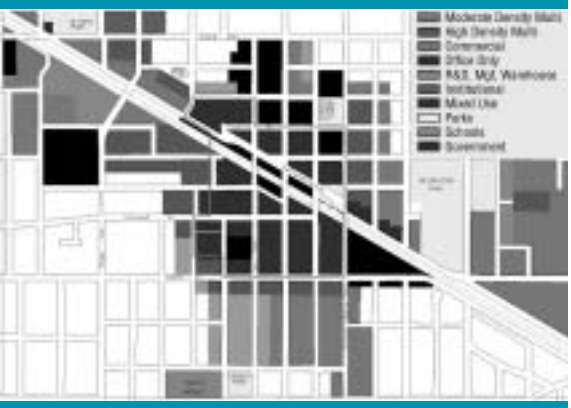
Oak Park (1999 estimated population: 53,787)
Marion Street Transit Center Plan

Oak Park is an example of early transit-oriented development. The village has been on rail lines since the beginning of the twentieth century, but over time the effectiveness of the original design gave way to the pressures of automobile traffic. The "Marion Street Multi-Modal Transit Center and Commuter Parking Facility Plan" exemplifies a transit-oriented development's contribution to the improvement of existing transportation, enhanced pedestrian access to transit, and downtown redevelopment. It brings together a number of area needs, plans, and developments into one project. It integrates the transit needs of riders in Oak Park, River Forest, and Forest Park and provides an attractive and safe environment, enhanced shopping district, entertainment, tourism sites and downtown employers.

Deerfield (1999 estimated population:18,893)

In early 1998, the Village announced its plans for VISION 2000, the redevelopment of approximately 30 acres within the Village Center south of Deerfield Road and within one block of the Metra station. The plan includes a 17-acre commercial development with 189,000 square feet of retail space, 64,200 square feet of office space, and a 100-car underground parking garage; a second retail-residential complex with 19,800 square feet of office space and 60 units of rental apartments; and the South Commons, a 153-unit multi-family residential project consisting of 80 condominium units in two four-story buildings, 51 villas, and 22 row houses. All the developments reflect transit-oriented development with pedestrian friendly design, and all are within walking distance to the Metra train station. The Village anticipates that the Lake-Cook employment corridor will provide a further customer base for new downtown shops and restaurants.

Oak Park



Arlington Heights
Downtown Land Use Plan

Arlington Heights

Palatine (1999 estimated population: 53,768)

The Village of Palatine wants to revitalize the area around its old transit station adjacent to the main downtown. Village planners have many necessary TOD elements in place: a plan for station area redevelopment, open space and parking lots nearby, a station area TIF district, and strong community support. Using the parking lot land, they plan to build more than 800 mid-rise residential units, some office space, and nearly 200,000 square feet of new commercial space. A village-owned parking deck on the site of the old shopping center and a strip mall near downtown will consolidate parking facilities. The village also hopes to enhance the commercial corridor of nearby Palatine Road, perhaps drawing some larger national retailers.

Arlington Heights (1999 estimated population: 76,522)

Arlington Heights is a model of long-term planning. When downtown businesses began to move to outlying malls in the 1970s, Arlington Heights began planning to revitalize the town center. In the 1980s officials overlaid the downtown area with two Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and designed a zoning ordinance to allow a creative mix of densities. This allowed new commercial blocks and residential buildings to support retail businesses.

The commuter rail station was moved and rebuilt to make the rail corridor a larger part of the downtown, help traffic flow, and reduce the separation between the north and south sides of the central business district. The new station includes shops and services to serve commuters and downtown residents. Walkways and crossings are being enhanced to encourage pedestrian use.

After thirty years of planning, the village is gaining high amenity status. It is now set to take advantage of residents near retirement age wishing to stay in the community as “empty nesters.” During the 1990s there was an increase of more than 600 residential units in the central business district and Town Square, a mixed-use development that offers retail, theaters, office space and restaurants, was built. Parking has been relocated to underground facilities using TIF funding to pay for these improvements. All buildings are designed with handsome facades and setbacks to provide pedestrian amenities and defined public street space.

Mokena: (1999 estimated population: 13,199)

There are two station areas in this little community that is planning for its future with transit-oriented design. The Hickory Creek station is in the northeast section of town and is a focus of commercial and industrial development. The downtown station helped forge the original growth and development of this village dating back to the 19th century. A comprehensive plan for downtown revitalization is underway and there is a healthy housing market with downtown sites in high demand. The Village Board has expressed a willingness to be flexible on zoning regulations that currently allow a maximum of only eight units per acre. There is a concerted effort to acquaint the community with the benefits of transit-oriented development.

Homewood (1999 estimated population:19,378)

The downtown transit station features Metra and Pace connections. The village is mostly built-out now, but a few open parcels have been identified as good candidates for more upscale condominium development in the future. In the past twenty years, two major residential developments have been constructed within one-half mile of the station. Planners anticipate a gradual increase in mixed-use development in the downtown and an increase in residential density. Transit-oriented development here is a work-in-progress and the result of encouragement from local government and market forces.

Tinley Park (1999 estimated population: 47,929)

There are two very different types of stations in this community. The Oak Park Avenue Station is part of the Village's historic core. The retail district is spread out over more than a mile with few linkages. Plans focus on establishing a commercial area surrounding the Metra station that will attract business and customers. In addition, several gathering places will be developed to produce a pedestrian friendly "town center" for community events. Increased residential development in the station area is being encouraged.

The 80th Avenue Station is a "park-n-ride" station and an emerging auto-oriented residential area. There are no existing transit-oriented development influences and the station is physically isolated. Proposed improvements will link the station to the surrounding area with connections for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles. Additional plans include improvements in station facilities and access patterns, commuter-oriented services, and expanded housing.

Mokena

Tinley Park

Resource Agencies

Agencies that provide assistance to communities planning for TOD include:

Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC)

222 S. Riverside Plaza
Suite 1800
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Telephone 312-454-0400

NIPC provides planning assistance to encourage the use of mass transit, including transit-oriented development. Guidelines for Transit-oriented Development, a brochure published in conjunction with Metra, is available upon request. The Commission has also produced a model ordinance that encourages transit-oriented development and a list of transportation funding sources, many of which can be used for transit-oriented development.

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)

181 W. Madison Street
Suite 1900
Chicago, Illinois 60602
Telephone 312-917-0700

The RTA Transit-Oriented Development Clearinghouse is a source of information and resources for municipal officials, agency staffs and developers throughout northeastern Illinois.

The Regional Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) provides technical and financial support to local governments for innovative, cost-effective projects that increase or enhance the transit market. It also provides grants for planning and market research studies.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

Real Estate Department
120 N. Racine St.
Chicago, Illinois 60607
Telephone 312-664-7200

The CTA provides guidelines for creating transit-oriented development near its facilities. It is developing a program to convert CTA property near transit stations into areas that will provide services and attract riders.

METRA

547 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60661
Telephone 312-322-6900

Metra promotes transit-oriented development by assisting communities in planning for areas near commuter rail stations. It has published a series of informative publications about this subject (see Suggested Reading).

Campaign for Sensible Growth

25 East Washington, Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60602
Telephone 312-922-5616 ext. 132

The Campaign is an action-oriented coalition of government, civic and business leaders in northeastern Illinois' six counties (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, Will). It promotes economic development while preserving open space, minimizes the need for costly new infrastructure, and improves the livability of our communities.

Pace Suburban Bus Service

550 Algonquin Road
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
Telephone 847-364-7223

Pace has produced Development Guidelines to encourage the coordination of real estate development and transit service. These Guidelines present recommendations designed for municipalities and the development community to include transit in their development plans.Pace has a complimentary outreach program providing assistance to municipalities and land developers.

Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)

2125 W. North Avenue
Chicago, IL 60647
Telephone 773-278-4800

CNT has several programs for providing assistance in transit-oriented development areas. These include a Location Efficient Mortgage Program (LEM), and a Connections for Community Ownership program designed to connect franchise companies with highly desirable locations (i.e., transit-oriented developments). The LEM Program, a new mortgage product developed by the CNT and the Federal National Mortgage Association (FANNIE MAE), is currently available in Chicago to help home buyers afford homes in transit-oriented development areas. Extending the LEM to communities outside of Chicago can be of great benefit to suburban Cook and the collar counties.

Suggested Reading

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Fader, Steven. ***Density by Design.*** Urban Land Institute, 2000. (see the ULI website for a list of their many excellent publications on transportation and land use: www.uli.org)

Ewing, Reid. ***Transportation & Land Use Innovations.*** APA Planners Press, 1997. (similar publications from the American Planning Association may be viewed at the APA website: www.planning.org/bookstore/)

Credits

Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission

Project Director: John H. Paige
Project Planners: Alan Mamoser, Jim Ford and Jay Larson
Planning Intern: Tom Pearson
Project Editor: Alice Kaderlan

Writer: Nancy Seeger
Design: Randi Robin Design
Photography: John H. Paige