



New Paths to Housing and Transportation Affordability

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Across the country there is now an intensive focus on developing walkable, transit-oriented communities. But daunting roadblocks, including outdated codes vastly overestimating car ownership in walkable communities and requiring expensive traffic mitigations, prevent full realization of the tremendous benefits of transit-oriented development (TOD). Money that could be used to build more affordable homes is instead spent on structured parking, at a development cost of up to \$100,000 per space. In California, concerns about parking and local traffic congestion are the number one reason that communities reject infill affordable housing projects, and demand development restrictions that maintain modest densities.

TransForm, California's largest non-profit organization working toward transportation and land use strategies

for equitable and sustainable communities, launched the GreenTRIP certification program to directly address these issues around parking, traffic, and development, and prove that a new paradigm for TOD is possible. The GreenTRIP program certifies development projects that incorporate the most effective traffic reduction strategies and reduce unneeded parking, which in turn lowers overall development costs and maximizes every housing subsidy dollar to create more affordable housing units per project.

The program builds on other efforts currently taking shape in California to reverse the negative effects of sixty-plus years of highway expansion, sprawl development, and dependence on personal vehicles. State Senate Bill 375, for instance, sets regional targets for reducing vehicle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and regional planning bodies must demonstrate how the region will meet its GHG



reduction target through integrated land use, housing and transportation planning that helps households reduce vehicle travel. This is critical; in California, transportation is the fastest growing source of GHG emissions, composing 38 percent of total GHG emissions in the state. Compounding the environmental hazards are the economic and social costs of sprawl: low-income families are now spending over 31 percent of income on transportation alone, and in the Bay Area over 70 percent on housing and transportation combined. The GreenTRIP program helps developers and residents of affordable housing do their part to reduce GHGs by reducing development costs for TOD, and helping residents access public transportation and thereby lower auto use and transportation costs.

One of the newest GreenTRIP Certified projects helps illustrate how these benefits take shape. Ashland Family Affordable Housing is composed of 85 units located in unincorporated Alameda County near a BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station. GreenTRIP Certification helped the developer, Resources for Community Development (RCD), support a reduced parking requirement and avoid

additional parking, thereby reducing project costs. Had Ashland been required to add just 0.4 spaces more per unit, it would have resulted in 34 more parking spaces costing \$680,000, which would have put significant stress on the financial viability of the project. To address parking commissioners' concerns about spill-over parking, GreenTRIP worked with RCD to add a more economical solution by adding a significant transportation amenity – one free transit pass per unit to the project, at a total cost of \$320,000, or less than half the cost of parking spaces. This serves the community by reducing potential new cars and related congestion, and future low-income residents by providing free access to local transit.

The GreenTRIP program was created with the help of a multi-disciplinary advisory committee offering a range of skills and perspectives including: city planners, affordable housing associations, transportation/development consultants, academics, transportation agencies and lenders. The pilot project led to easier approvals for 1,970 TOD units that included over 80,000 years of free transit passes, and 24,000 years of car-share memberships for residents. By clearly identifying traffic reduction benefits, GreenTRIP helped build support for new homes, with a tremendous benefit to affordable housing developers.

Since 2009 we have doubled the number of GreenTRIP certified projects. Transform is now expanding GreenTRIP efforts to a larger scale by launching the Great Access: Deep Affordability Initiative. This effort includes data collection and the development of a regional affordable residential parking and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) database, along with continued work with cities to update transportation policies and project certifications. Through the GreenTRIP certification program and these affiliated efforts, Transform seeks to increase the total supply of homes near transit and job-centers, integrating the concept of "deep affordability," where we create more homes near transit affordable to people at every income, while dramatically decreasing household costs for transportation. **CI**