Quantifying Transit-Oriented Development's Potential Contribution to Federal Policy Objectives on Transportation-Housing-Energy Interactions

This project involves a comprehensive and compact study of the built environment in light rail transit station areas in Denver, Colorado and travel behaviors in both TOD- and non-TOD areas in the region. Graduate students from the University of Connecticut and University Colorado Denver will participate in a workshop in Denver in Spring 2011 to collaborate on designing questions for two comprehensive travel surveys and subsequently carry out an intensive field campaign to collect data. Our principal objectives are to provide insight into how different types of TOD affect travel behavior patterns—"specifically reductions in vehicle miles travelled"—and to understand what prevents people from living in TOD areas. The latter information will help us to assess the potential for region-wide reductions in VMT. An additional objective is to provide UConn students with experience of carrying out collaborative, integrative, and interdisciplinary research with students from a National Science Foundation (NSF) Integrative Graduate Education, Research and Training (IGERT) Program. We envisage that this will both help to build a community of emerging scholars equipped to engage in transdisciplinary work on policy-relevant issues, and help to better position UConn faculty to advance ongoing initiatives to establish an IGERT in Sustainable Urbanism. The research is policy oriented, and results will be disseminated to academics, practitioners, and policymakers interested in the interactions between transportation, housing, and energy demand. The Federal Government's increasing focus on collaborative efforts to address exposure to structural dependency on fossil fuels and automobile travel should make this research ideally suited for a more comprehensive NSF proposal in August 2011.

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