

PLANNING CHALLENGE GRANT INITIATIVE

2006 PROJECT SUMMARY

PAWTUCKET-CENTRAL FALLS COMMUTER RAIL FACILITY – TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

Project Sponsor: City of Pawtucket, Department of Planning and Development

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Project Cost: \$62,500 **Challenge Grant Amount:** \$50,000

Completed: October 2007 **Products:** Study Report available at: <http://www.planning.ri.gov/misc/pcgrants6.htm>

Background

This Planning Challenge Grant study was undertaken in conjunction with the Pawtucket/Central Falls Commuter Rail Facility Feasibility Study and Site Analysis project which was initiated by the Cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls to determine the viability of reestablishing a stop on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Boston to Providence commuter rail line. The TOD Analysis project was to further review the potential impact of transit-oriented development (TOD) around the preferred commuter rail stop location. The TOD Study was funded via a \$50,000 Challenge Grant from the RI Division of Planning/Statewide Planning Program.

Objectives and Process

The Pawtucket/Central Falls Commuter Rail Facility Transit-Oriented Development Analysis was performed to determine the potential impacts and benefits to the communities around the preferred commuter rail stop site. Key aspects of the TOD analysis included:

- **Education and Public Outreach:** Through a series of interviews with community representatives and two public workshops, the team explained the principles of TOD, and learned about community needs, concerns, and visions.
- **Parking and Traffic:** By analyzing existing parking and traffic, and then predicting the impact of a commuter rail stop, the team developed recommended traffic improvements to address resident concerns and maintain quality of life in the community.
- **Multimodal Networks:** The team examined pedestrian accommodations, bicycle networks, and transit access around the former station site, and produced suggestions for improving these facilities.
- **Housing and Employment:** By means of analyzing existing socioeconomic data and economic development policies, the team determined a recommended policy framework for guiding TOD around the commuter rail stop so that it will blend with and serve the existing community.

Major Findings and Recommendations

Actions and policies for encouraging successful TOD near the proposed Pawtucket/Central Falls commuter rail stop recommended by the TOD study include:

Parking and Traffic: Traffic improvements at three locations:

- **Broad Street, Goff Avenue, and Exchange Street:** A second lane on the Broad Street southbound approach would improve level of service at this intersection.
- **Broad Street and Clay Street:** This intersection should be signalized.
- **Broad Street Corridor:** Signals along the Broad Street corridor between Barton Street and Cross Street should be interconnected and coordinated.

Pedestrians: Improvements to the pedestrian environment in the vicinity of the proposed station:

- **Broad Street Corridor:** Pedestrian amenities should be improved by adding zebra-stripe crosswalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) detectable warning panels at wheelchair ramps, and LED countdown lights at crosswalks. Trees, benches, and trash cans would also improve the streetscape.
- **Broad Street, Goff Avenue, and Exchange Street:** This intersection is wide and difficult for pedestrians to cross. Improvements might include median refuges to allow pedestrians to cross the street in two stages, tightened corner radii to slow down right-turning vehicles, and putting the pedestrian phase on recall so that pedestrians get a crossing signal every light cycle.
- **Broad Street Bridge:** Parking should be allowed on the bridge to help separate pedestrians from traffic. Lighting should also be improved.
- **Barton Street and Clay Street east of Broad Street:** These streets provide good pedestrian access; they should be improved with trees, lighting, and wider sidewalks, where possible.
- **Montgomery Street:** Neighborhood residents have expressed concern about safety on Montgomery Street. The street should be improved with better lighting and signage to guide pedestrians to the downtown.
- **Wayfinding:** A clear, consistent wayfinding system should be implemented to help pedestrians navigate between the proposed commuter rail stop, downtown Pawtucket, and other destinations.

Bicycle: Improvements are recommended at the following locations:

- **Broad Street Corridor:** Dedicated bicycle lanes should be provided where possible, with shared-use markings provided elsewhere.
- **Cross Street and Central Avenue:** This corridor should be improved with dedicated bicycle lanes or shared-use markings, as appropriate.
- **Blackstone River Bikeway:** Connections to the existing and proposed Blackstone River Bikeway should be emphasized, including the Broad Street corridor.
- **Wayfinding:** A clear, consistent wayfinding system should be implemented to help cyclists connect between the proposed commuter rail stop, downtown Pawtucket, the Broad Street Corridor, the Cross Street/Central Avenue corridor, and the Blackstone River Bikeway.

Transit Access: Improvements are recommended to RIPTA's existing Routes 72 and 75 services:

- The cities should engage in discussions with RIPTA to determine options for rerouting Bus Routes 72 and 75 to serve the proposed commuter rail facility.

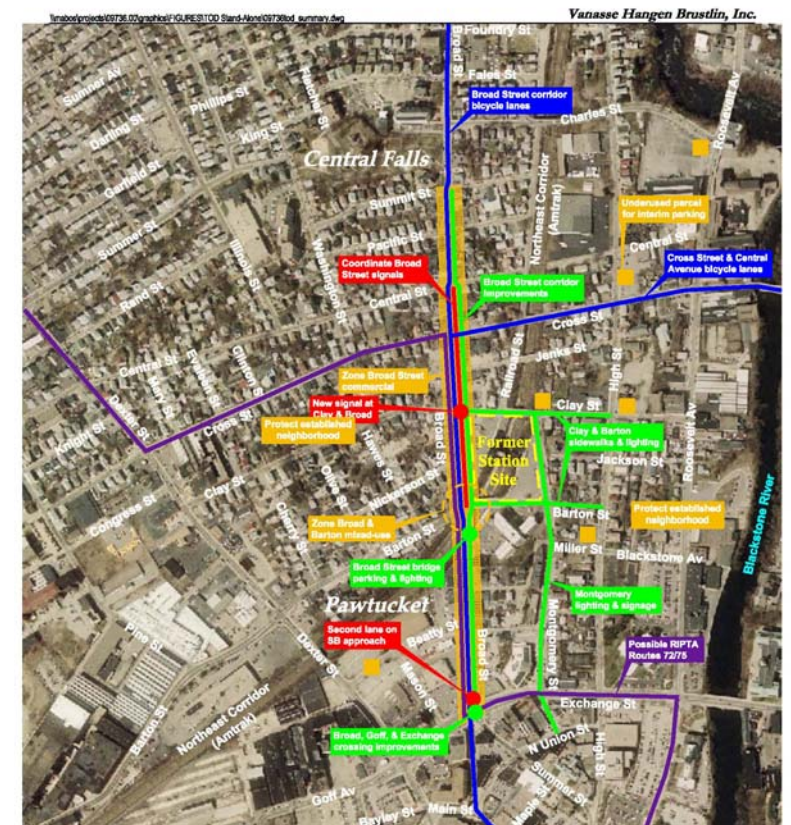
Housing and Employment: Improvements and changes are recommended at the following locations:

- **Broad Street Corridor:** Zone Broad Street as a commercial corridor, connecting downtown Pawtucket, the commuter rail stop, and Central Falls.
- **Existing Residential Neighborhoods:** Protect established neighborhoods through zoning or tax incentives.
- **Broad Street and Barton Street:** Zone this vicinity for mixed-use development.
- **Unused or underutilized parcels:** Consider parking as an interim use.

Next Steps

The commuter rail stop project will next enter the NEPA environmental permitting process. During permitting and design, it is important that communication channels between the cities, the state, and the community remain open, to ensure that the project is consistent with the neighborhood's vision. After construction of the commuter rail stop, the cities should work to promote TOD around the stop that is consistent with community concerns and needs, again working with the community, to make viable, beneficial TOD projects a reality.

Funding for the Challenge Grant Initiative is provided by the Federal Highway Administration.



Pawtucket/Central Falls Commuter Rail Facility Feasibility Study and Site Analysis
Figure 7-1
Recommended Improvements and Changes

0 250 500 Feet

- Traffic Improvement or Action
- Pedestrian Improvement or Action
- Bicycle Improvement or Action
- Transit Improvement or Action
- Housing or Economic Action