

DATE ISSUED: May 29, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-113
ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee
Agenda of June 4, 2003
SUBJECT: Review of the Transit Area Overlay Zone and Residential Tandem Parking
Overlay Zone
REFERENCE: Manager's Report No. 02-195, dated August 28, 2002

SUMMARY

Issue - Should the definition of Transit Area be modified, with the effect of modifying the Transit Area Overlay Zone (TAOZ) and Residential Tandem Parking Overlay Zone (RTPOZ) boundaries?

Manager's Recommendations - Review potential changes to the TAOZ and RTPOZ as part of the Mobility Element of the General Plan.

Fiscal Impact – A review of the TAOZ and RTPOZ is currently an action item in the Strategic Framework Action Plan that will be accommodated within the budget for the General Plan update.

BACKGROUND

At the Land Use and Housing (LU&H) meeting of January 29, 2003, the committee asked staff to report on the current definition of Transit Area, the analysis undertaken to arrive at that definition, and alternative definitions.

Current Regulations

The Land Development Code currently defines *Transit Area* as follows:

- (1) the area within a quarter mile radius of either public *streets* as having location, mix of densities, mix of uses, and *development* patterns that can generate sufficient bus ridership to support a frequent and consistent level of bus service (as typified by a 10 to 15 minute frequency of service); or, (2) existing and proposed trolley stops and major bus transfer centers that have been approved for *development* by the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) with identified, available funding, as identified in Map No. C-900, on file in the office of the City Clerk, as Document No. OO-18911-2.

The TAOZ map identifies the location of *Transit Areas*, throughout the City (see Attachment 1). Within these areas, the off-street parking requirements are reduced by approximately 15 percent for most development.

In some communities, the location of the TAOZ affects where tandem parking (the placement of one required parking space behind another) may be counted as two parking spaces. In 13 of 22 communities where tandem parking is permitted, it is only permitted in TAOZ areas, while in the remaining nine it is permitted throughout the community, as shown in the RTPOZ map (see Attachment 2). Tandem parking is not currently permitted in 21 communities. However, tandem parking is commonly practiced by single-family residents citywide, as many residents park their cars in their driveways in front of their garages.

History

Reductions in required parking in areas with a high level of transit were first implemented in September 1987. The purpose of the parking reductions in these areas was to acknowledge the lower use of parking spaces where there is good transit service as well as to direct redevelopment to these areas to further increase transit usage. Parking reductions are also allowed for units occupied by very low-income households in recognition of lower automobile ownership by these households. Since parking spaces add considerably to the cost of development, the housing element recommends that parking requirements be further reviewed to help achieve more affordable housing. A brief history of Transit Area parking regulations since 1987 follows:

- Parking regulation amendments in 1994 restricted tandem parking to Transit Areas in some communities and prohibited tandem parking in others. Tandem parking was permitted citywide until 1994.
- When the Land Development Code became effective in January 2000, parking reductions were expanded to include most non-residential uses.
- In August 2001, updates to the TAOZ (Map No. C-900, Ordinance No. O-18911 N.S.) and RTPOZ (Map No. C-903, Ordinance No. 18910 N.S.) maps were implemented, expanding both of the overlay zones. The expansion was due to expanded transit service and to a change in the mapping methodology. (Mapping methodology is addressed in the Discussion section of this report.)
- On September 4, 2002, LU&H directed Development Services staff to set a hearing to consider repealing or amending the August 2001 update to allow greater community input on the map changes. This item was added to the Fiscal Year 2002 Code Update Work Program by LU&H. Due to staff constraints in Development Services, those hearings have not yet occurred, but will occur when the fifth update to the code is brought forward. Environmental review is scheduled to begin on this proposal in June 2003 and the proposed action will be scheduled for hearing as soon as possible following completion of the environmental document and public review periods. Based on current code update work priorities and staffing constraints, this action would be scheduled for City Council consideration by roughly September 2003.

- On October 22, 2002, the Strategic Framework Element and Action Plan were adopted. The Action Plan includes a recommendation to amend the TAOZ to include areas designated to receive a high level of transit service under the MTDB's Transit First Plan.
- The first LU&H workshop on the Mobility Element is expected in the Fall of 2003.

DISCUSSION

In the August 2001 update of the TAOZ and RTPOZ, staff worked with MTDB to develop a methodology for identifying Transit Areas. With the original establishment of the TAOZ, bus routes had a maximum 15 minute frequency of service during peak periods mapped. With the 2001 update, staff considered all bus routes on street segments to determine whether there was a 15 minute frequency of service. Thus, a street segment having two bus routes with a 30 minute service frequency, running 15 minutes apart, would qualify as a Transit Area. This decision was made for two reasons: First, travel within a street segment with multiple bus routes has a maximum service frequency of 15 minutes to travel anywhere else within that street segment, regardless of which bus is used. Second, street segments accommodating multiple bus routes act as a linear transit center. Within the segment, riders can board buses to go to multiple areas of the City, and have increased opportunity to access multimodal transit centers such as the Old Town Transit Center.

Connecting Land Use and Transportation

Staff believes that the TAOZ and RTPOZ are effective implementation tools to help shape the urban form to support transit and to recognize transit's mobility benefits. Research conducted locally, as well as in other major cities, has found that areas served by high-quality transit generally require fewer parking spaces, and that there is a direct and strong relationship between higher densities and higher transit ridership. In addition, areas with a high level of transit service also tend to be areas where people walk and bicycle more because residents have a rich mixture of uses in close proximity to them. Thus, there is a tendency in these areas to not have the second (or third) vehicle at the home, and to not have to accommodate as many vehicles in commercial parking lots.

The need for fewer parking spaces in areas with high transit and pedestrian activity was confirmed in a 1996 parking study commissioned by the City (San Diego Shared Parking Study, JHK & Associates). This study was conducted to confirm the City's parking requirements are appropriate, including the Transit Area reductions and shared parking reductions. The study concluded the following:

Based on comparisons of sites located in high pedestrian Transit Areas (areas with high pedestrian activity and high transit availability) and low pedestrian Transit Areas, the data validated the City's policy of requiring less parking in high pedestrian Transit Areas." The executive summary of the study is provided as Attachment 3.

Other research has confirmed the need for fewer parking spaces for residential use close to transit. Dr. Robert Cervero at U.C. Berkeley has conducted extensive research on residents

living within a quarter mile of urban rail stations in California. He found household sizes in these areas were 31 percent smaller (1.66 vs. 2.40 persons per household) and they owned 23 percent fewer vehicles (1.26 vs. 1.64 vehicles per household). Another study by Bunt and Associates Engineering in Vancouver, British Columbia concluded households near rail transit used transit more and owned ten percent fewer vehicles, while frequent transit riders owned 29 percent fewer vehicles. Based on these findings, the city of Vancouver has since allowed parking reductions ranging from 14 percent to 28 percent for projects near major transit stations, although the reductions are not universally allowed and must undergo a hearing process. While the above studies are limited to rail transit, other studies have shown residents are actively choosing to live in locations that offer bus as well as rail transit accessibility to job sites.

The following is from Transit Oriented Development (Transit Cooperative Research Program; Cervero, Ferrell, and Murphy, 2002):

Research shows living and working near transit station correlates with higher ridership. In the San Francisco Bay Area, those living near transit were generally 3 to 4 times as likely to commute via transit as other residents. Research from metropolitan Washington DC and Toronto found even higher market shares among station area residents.

Census data shows in San Diego communities, with the highest level of transit, up to one-third of households have no vehicles, while citywide only nine percent do not have a vehicle.

Considerations for Mobility Element

Potential amendments could be considered to both the TAOZ and the RTPOZ; and will be discussed in the context of the Mobility Element. The following provides an overview of amendments that could be considered and discussed at the future LU&H workshop on the Mobility Element.

Potential TAOZ Amendments

A number of variables should be explored in reviewing the TAOZ. Listed below are those that have become known as of now. This list may be expanded during the course of the analysis and based upon input from the LU&H Committee.

1. Specify that multiple bus route methodology should be used - Maintain the current methodology for designating Transit Areas, whereby all bus routes on a street segment are considered to establish frequency of service. While we do not believe a code amendment is needed to specify methodology, this is an option.
2. Consider pedestrian orientation - The 1996 parking study looked at sites that were considered both transit-and pedestrian-oriented. The definition could be changed to consider both of these factors. For example, the latest amendment to the overlays added some areas that have the required bus service but are less pedestrian-oriented, including Mira Mesa, Kearny Mesa, Clairemont Mesa, Navajo, and Otay Mesa-Nestor. The definition could be revised to consider the degree to which the area is pedestrian-oriented. This would likely be a more subjective determination based upon community character,

street network, street design, or other available data. Additional research would be necessary to identify the appropriate factors to be considered in making this determination.

3. Consider other factors - Other factors could be considered in the establishment and implementation of the TAOZ. These include project design, housing tenure (although this is not always known), residential density (some studies only looked at projects over a certain density, such as 20 units per acre), changing definitions of transit due to the Transit First Strategy land use (the reductions are currently applicable to all uses except single family and hotel/motel), actual use of tandem parking, among others, indicated by the research. Consideration of some of these factors in allowing the parking reduction may require a discretionary review process.

Potential RTPOZ Amendments

Tandem parking is predominantly used in residential construction, although some limited use is permitted for other land uses. The advantage of tandem parking is that it accommodates more vehicles in a smaller area, reducing construction costs and allowing development to more easily achieve the density allowed by the zone.

Prior to 1994, tandem parking was permitted throughout the City. The result of the 1994 amendments to the tandem parking regulations is that regulations vary from community to community based upon City Council decisions at the adoption hearing. For 60 percent of communities, tandem parking is permitted only in Transit Areas, although half of those communities do not currently have Transit Areas. Of the remaining 40 percent of communities, half allow tandem parking throughout the community and half do not allow tandem parking at all. There are conditions for allowing tandem parking in City Heights and the Beach Impact Area. An attempt should be made to provide a standard method for applying the regulations in the City while allowing adjustments, to reflect the characteristics of a specific community.

CONCLUSION

Per Land Use and Housing Committee direction in September 2002, Development Services staff intends to set hearings to consider repealing or amending the previous updates to the TAOZ and RTPOZ, as outlined earlier in this report. Subsequently, Development Services staff along with Planning staff will pursue a thorough review of these overlay zones in conjunction with preparation of the Mobility Element of the General Plan. This will allow us to examine these implementation tools in the context of the policies they are intended to implement. While it is expected the General Plan elements will not be brought forward for adoption until 2006, a proposal for TAOZ/RTPOZ amendments could be ready for consideration in advance of that time frame.

Respectfully submitted,

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Planning Director

Approved: P. Lamont Ewell
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Note: Attachment 3 is not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

- Attachments: [1. Transit Area Overlay Zone \(Municipal Code Chapter 13, Article 2, Division 10\)](#)
[2. Residential Tandem Parking Overlay Zone \(Municipal Code Chapter 13, Article 2, Division 9\)](#)
3. Executive Summary of the San Diego Shared Parking Study (1996)