

The Evolution and Research Prospect of TOD Theory

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Abstract. The essay explores the evolution and research prospects of Transit-oriented development (TOD) theory in sustainable urban planning. The TOD theory emphasizes integrating land use and transportation planning to create walkable communities around efficient public transit systems. The essay discusses the background and significance of TOD, highlighting its relevance in a rapidly urbanizing world. It delves into the development of TOD theory, its practical applications, and the consensus and challenges it faces. The case studies of Denver and Chengdu exemplify the adaptability of TOD principles to diverse urban contexts. Furthermore, the essay explores the potential of integrating emerging technologies into TOD research, showcasing how advancements like big data analytics and artificial intelligence can refine urban planning strategies. This exploration underscores the importance of TOD theory as a strategy to shape sustainable and flexible urban environments.

Keywords: Transit-oriented development, urban planning, public transportation, sustainable development, land use.

1. Introduction

A crucial topic in urban design and sustainable development, transit-oriented development (TOD) theory, has received a lot of attention because of its ability to modify urban landscapes and build more efficient transportation networks. TOD theory argues for an amalgamation of planning land use and transportation, intending to build dynamic, walkable communities focused on efficient public transit networks [1]. Understanding TOD theory entails investigating a plethora of interconnected issues. These include urban design, transportation engineering, environmental sustainability, social equality, and economic vitality. Understanding the complexities of TOD theory requires recognizing the synergy between infrastructure layouts, community dynamics, and environmental well-being [2].

In a world where metropolitan regions are expected to host about 70% of the global population by 2050, accepting TOD theory becomes critical. Prior research in the field of TOD has laid the foundation for this study. Past studies have investigated the criteria and fundamentals of TOD, emphasizing the importance of creating walkable, dense, and mixed-use communities around transit nodes to promote sustainable transportation and urban development. Various factors, such as land use, transportation options, and urban design, have been examined to define and measure TOD's success. Researchers have proposed different TOD indices and frameworks; however, many of these indices have overlooked development potential, building regulations, and policy dimensions, which are crucial for assessing the feasibility of TOD projects. Thus, in recent years, there has been research focusing on the development of a comprehensive TOD Index, filling this kind of vacancy. Unlike previous TOD studies, this research addresses the critical attribute of development potential. Using data analysis at the land, governmental, construction-related, and socio-environmental levels, this index aims to provide a more holistic assessment of TOD potential. In summary, the current academic research on TOD theory has reached a relatively advanced stage [2].

While earlier research has certainly set the route for comprehending TOD theory, significant research gaps and problems remain. Issues such as the equal distribution of benefits, the effect of technical breakthroughs, and the dynamics of public perception remain unexplored. Furthermore, the adaptation of TOD concepts to varied cultural and geographic situations demands a more detailed investigation. This essay delves into these important problems [3].

This essay navigates an exploration of TOD theory. The subsequent sections will delve into the historical evolution of TOD, its core principles, and the intersections of urban design and

transportation planning. The primary focus, however, will be on unearthing the complexities of benefit distribution and investigating the factors that influence it. By scrutinizing these dimensions, this essay aspires to contribute to a more holistic understanding of TOD theory and provide insights that resonate in both scholarly and practical realms.

2. Development of TOD Theory

2.1. Concept Origin

The TOD theory is an urban planning model that emphasizes the linkage between land use and public transportation. It was first formulated by Peter Calthorpe in the late 20th century and later became one of the guiding principles for urban planning [4]. However, the original theory has been refined a lot more in the 10s of the 21st century. The modern main objectives of this theory include the integration of public transit, housing, and other amenities within walking distance, leading to less dependence on private vehicles, and eventually fostering sustainable communities.

2.2. Practical Exploration

TOD practical explorations provide a diverse approach to developing vibrant urban communities. According to a study conducted in Shenzhen, China, the deployment of TOD can result in increased urban vitality via synergistic and nonlinear effects [5]. The findings of the study stressed the significance of adequate bus services, horizontal built-up coverage, and mixed-use buildings as major contributors to the vitality surrounding metro stations. Furthermore, the research highlighted the complexities of TOD's influences, reinforcing the view that TOD is a nuanced and adaptable planning method that can be customized to various urban situations [6]. For examples of TOD models in typical regions and countries, see the table below.

Table 1. TOD models in typical regions

Country	Goal of TOD	Type of TOD	Development Approach	Case City
The United States of America	Curbing urban sprawl, fostering compact urban growth, boosting bus ridership to lessen car-related pollution, addressing urban decay and land fragmentation, revitalizing cities and communities, and enhancing urban public spaces.	In urban downtowns and suburbs of sizable cities, bus station zones exhibit high-density, mixed-use, and circular development patterns.	The local government leads, the public transport department constructs the station, and the planning department guides land zoning around the station.	Washington D. C., San Diego, Denver
Japan	Relying on rail transit stations to form a multi-center urban structure; relying on rail transit stations to promote suburban land development.	Metropolitan areas exhibit TOD driven by both private and national rail networks. Private railway stations foster mixed-use development, while national railway stations facilitate high-density development.	Private railways utilize their land property rights along the railway lines for integrated development. State-owned railway engages in commercial ventures within and above stations, while the initial associated industrial land is sold to private investors for commercial revitalization.	Tokyo, Osaka
France	Encourage the usage of public transportation; direct the development of urban space.	TOD site supporting large development projects in new cities and areas.	Large-scale comprehensive development based on the Protocol Development Zone system around rail transit	Paris, Toulouse

			stations.	
Singapore	Form urban structures connecting new town centers by rail transit; improve land use efficiency and guide.	The TOD site is designed in a circular layout around the new town's development, housing community service facilities, and public housing.	The Land Transport Authority manages rail transit construction, the Housing Development Board oversees new town development, and the Urban Renewal Authority guides station development plot ratios via master planning.	Tampines, Clementi
China	Establish a transit-led polycentric urban structure; promote compact urban development.	TOD stations dominated by the subway are mostly in the central area of the city, and some stations form commercial covers.	Single operation, public transport hub construction with operational land development, and public transport hub construction with public transport operation and operational land development.	Shanghai, Shenzhen

2.3. Application Research

TOD research has evolved through time to become an essential component of urban planning efforts. Its applications include considering aspects such as the built environment, travel behavior, the economy, and social diversity. Researchers have recently begun to regard development potential as an important factor, indicating a shift in emphasis toward more practical criteria. TOD implementation involves a balance of urban and interurban transit, parcel-level densification patterns, and supportive policies such as upzoning and density bonuses [7]. However, ignoring considerations such as development feasibility and resident acceptance may stymie TOD implementation [8]. As a result, the application of TOD research remains a complex yet critical part of urban development initiatives [2].

3. Consensus and Challenges

3.1. Consensus

TOD theory has evolved from its inception to practical application, yielding a consensus among industry experts and scholars. This consensus highlights key principles. First, it emphasizes the significance of public transportation in urban development, advocating for transit-oriented development to reduce car use, lower emissions, enhance land use, and increase property value. Second, successful TOD demands multidimensional spatial control, integrating both vertical and horizontal development through cohesive planning regulations and standards. Lastly, the 3D principles (density, diversity, and design) serve as quantifiable frameworks for TOD projects.

3.2. Challenges

However, challenges exist. The TOD concept has been overgeneralized, extending to various transit nodes beyond urban rail stations. This prompts the question of whether TOD's layered development model is universally applicable. Moreover, while TOD is celebrated for boosting transit ridership and land efficiency, negative consequences like uncertain returns on investment and urban congestion have emerged. The related issue of gentrification and social exclusion due to elevated land values within TOD areas remains insufficiently addressed. Implementing TOD also faces multifaceted resistance, involving coordination hurdles among stakeholders and economic strain. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the continued evolution of TOD theory, paving the way for more sustainable urban and transportation development [9].

4. Application Under Different Circumstances

4.1. Denver

Denver, in the United States, and Chengdu, in China, have both exhibited successful TOD uses, albeit in distinctive ways customized to their metropolitan situations. For the landscape of the Denver urban area, please refer to Figure 1.



Figure 1. Denver Urban Neighborhoods [10]

Denver, located just east of the Rocky Mountains' Front Range in Colorado, has a burgeoning metropolitan population of around 7 million as of 2022. Recognizing the city's growth trajectory and potential transportation challenges, Denver's urban planners have prioritized TOD as a pivotal strategy. The core concept in Denver's TOD endeavors is to transform comprehensive transit stations into regional hubs that offer more than just transportation services. These hubs are envisioned as mixed-use developments that combine commercial, residential, and recreational spaces, fostering vibrant and sustainable communities. A testament to the city's commitment to TOD is its successful evolution of commercial and living areas around these comprehensive stations. Not only does Denver's TOD model ensure functional efficiency, but it also emphasizes aesthetics, contributing to an enhanced urban living experience.

4.2. Chengdu

Chengdu, a city in southwestern China, is built according to the "park city" concept, with nature, human needs, and productivity in harmonious co-existence. For the landscape of Chengdu, see the example below. In contrast, Chengdu offers a different but equally compelling TOD narrative. A case in point is the Xipu station of Chengdu Metro.



Figure 2. Chengdu Landscape [11]

Located at a strategic confluence of universities, commercial plots, and residential areas, Xipu station serves as a critical transfer point between Chengdu Metro Line 2 and a light rail line. Traditional planning for areas around the station initially resulted in a fragmented layout with minimal green spaces, concentrated commercial and residential zones, and uneven development [12]. However, with the adoption of TOD principles, transformative measures were implemented. Urban planners prioritized the seamless integration and connectivity of various transportation elements at the station. Collaborative efforts between local governments, enterprises, and other stakeholders were harnessed to promote intensive land development. Additionally, the revamped TOD model for the Xipu station accentuated the importance of landscaping and environmental aesthetics, resulting in a harmonious blend of functionality and beauty.

While Denver and Chengdu have diverse urban characteristics and challenges, their TOD applications highlight the universality and adaptability of this urban planning approach. By focusing on transit as the anchor for development, both cities have successfully fostered sustainable, efficient, and aesthetically pleasing urban environments. As urban centers around the world grapple with congestion, sustainability, and livability challenges, the TOD experiences of Denver and Chengdu offer valuable insights and exemplars.

5. Prospects for TOD Research in the New Technology Environment

In the modern technological context, the opportunities for TOD research are both attractive and diverse. The introduction of technologies such as big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things expands the scope of TOD by allowing for more precise planning and dynamic reactivity [1]. Real-time data collecting, for example, can lead to more accurate demand forecasts, optimizing resource allocation, and improving the user experience in public transportation systems [13]. However, the incorporation of these technologies presents problems, such as potential privacy violations and the likelihood of growing social inequities due to unequal access. Despite these limitations, the convergence of TOD and developing technology provides significant opportunities for urban planning innovation and refinement, establishing TOD as a critical strategy for creating sustainable and flexible urban settings in the age of technological breakthroughs.

6. Conclusion

The evolution of TOD theory has showcased its capacity to reshape urban landscapes and foster sustainable communities. The principles of spatial control and design, as well as the general agreement on the significance of public transit in urban development, have provided a solid foundation for the effective implementation of TOD. The case studies of Denver and Chengdu underscore the universal applicability of TOD principles, showcasing the effectiveness of tailored implementation to address specific urban challenges. As technology continues to reshape urban dynamics, the prospects of integrating emerging technologies into TOD research offer exciting opportunities for precise planning and dynamic urban development. As cities worldwide strive for sustainable growth, the study of TOD theory remains essential for fostering resilient, livable, and sustainable urban landscapes.

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