



Integrating Energy, Transportation and Land Use

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It's impossible to think of ways of curing our overwhelming addiction to oil and other fossil fuels or significantly cutting our greenhouse gas emissions just through altering the source of our primary energy production. If one truly wants to achieve greater efficiencies and demand reductions, you have to start including two important policy areas: Transportation and Land Use.

We recently discussed New Jersey's Transit Oriented Development projects in local communities - the [Transit Village](#) program that encourages mixed use development around mass transit hubs.

Today, Jeff Zupan of the Regional Planning Association and Martin Robbins and Scott Weiner of Rutgers University calculate the efficiency difference of workers commuting to suburban office complexes, versus those that commute to downtown business centers. They write about it in [today's NY Times opinion section](#):

A recent Rutgers study documented the energy benefits that derive from commuting to cities by public transit versus commuting by car to suburban work sites. We found that driving to a suburban office campus in Morris County's Parsippany-Troy Hills area consumed 57 percent more energy than taking a train or a bus to downtown Newark. If the substantial job growth predicted over the next two decades was in downtown Newark and similar cities instead of in distant suburbs along highways, New Jersey would see huge energy savings. Nearly 11.5 million gallons of gasoline a year would be saved by increasing the number of jobs in downtown Newark, essentially doubling them, instead of locating them in the suburbs.

This shows that energy, transportation and land use policies are all connected. So, how can we change the path of job creation and development away from the suburbs and closer to denser population and mass transit hubs?

Here's what the author's of this study conclude:

As Gov. Jon Corzine begins to update the state's strategy for conserving energy, he should encourage initiatives that integrate energy, transportation and land use policies. At the state level, energy planning has focused primarily on stationary energy sources like power plants instead of cars and trains. But now, more than ever, energy and transportation issues need to be melded.

It is true that energy policy has often focused almost exclusively on electricity production. This more holistic approach to energy policy that the authors recommend is spot on the mark. And their data clearly show that a great deal of energy could be saved if development patterns changed in the future. The authors have some ideas on how this might be accomplished.

For starters, the state needs to establish financial and zoning incentives for developers to build and encourage companies to move to areas where public transportation is readily available to their employees. Over the last decade, the state has designated 17 municipalities in New Jersey, including South Orange, Rahway and Collingswood, as "transit villages." The state has given these villages incentives, like transit station improvements, to encourage them to build housing units and retail and commercial space. This should be broadened to include office development in major cities, like Newark, Elizabeth and Camden, that are served by public transportation.

To further encourage transit use, cities well served by public transportation should set strict limits on the number of parking spaces associated with new buildings in downtowns, following the example of Jersey City, which has a maximum of 0.9 parking space per 1,000 square feet of office space. Too much supply lowers the price, making driving too competitive with transit. Tightening the parking supply, as in Manhattan, drives prices higher and leads commuters onto trains and buses.

And transit planning should focus on projects that support downtowns, like upgrading neighborhood bus routes into the Newark business district and extending the southern New Jersey River LINE light rail system into downtown Trenton. These investments would further exploit the transit system's potential and encourage commuters to abandon their cars for the train or the bus.

It's time for energy, transportation and land use policies to be better coordinated around the principles of smart development around population and mass transit centers instead of scattered around the suburbs in isolated pockets. And it's time for energy efficiency to take center stage on the list of policy goals.



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