



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

Testimony to the Chicago City Council's Committee on Traffic and Safety on Transportation Enhancement Districts

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Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony today. I am Kit Hodge, an associate with the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan group of business and civic leaders committed to serving the public interest through the promotion and implementation of sensible planning and development policies necessary for an economically competitive Chicago region. I am here today to speak in favor of the establishment of a Transportation Enhancement District pilot program.

One sign of a successful commercial district is the traffic—foot, transit, bicycle, car—filling the streets and sidewalks in the area. But when traffic gets too out of hand, it deteriorates the appeal of the shopping district and blocks new customers from accessing the stores. To stay competitive, these areas must find ways to be both attractive and accessible.

The goal of Transportation Enhancement Districts is to bring more people into stores to boost local sales and improve the vitality of commercial districts without overwhelming the district with additional car traffic. This means promoting the character of place and increasing the number of people accessing the area by means other than just private cars. In fact, MPC and some of our partners have chosen to use the term “Transportation Enhancement Districts,” aka TEDs, instead of Parking Improvement Districts (PIDs), because in our transit- and walking- rich city environment, these special districts are best used to improve access to shopping streets for people on foot, train, bus, and bicycle as well as car.

MPC believes that the City of Chicago has a unique opportunity to adapt the prevailing PID model in use across the country to suit our neighborhoods' particular needs. Parking Improvement Districts have been used in numerous commercial districts in the U.S. to create a virtuous cycle of development, but have yet to be used in a transit-, walking-, and bicycling-rich city context; most PIDs have been implemented in suburban towns or suburban-type cities.

Chicago stands apart from the existing model program locations. Fifty-third Street in Hyde Park features a Metra station and numerous adjacent bus lines as well as a strong walking and bicycling culture. Similarly, Milwaukee Avenue is anchored by the CTA

Blue Line, the Milwaukee Avenue bus, cross street buses, and an especially strong bicycling and walking culture. Our neighborhoods are fortunate to have these assets, and we should use the TED program to further capitalize on their ability to anchor neighborhood development. More specifically, Chicago's new TED pilot program should develop specific goals and parameters for spending local revenue that will feed our city's particular strengths. I am submitting to you suggested policy guidelines to begin that conversation.

The Department and local partners should agree on measurable goals before the implementation of the trial program in order to have a standard by which to judge their success or failure.

Finally, I encourage this committee and the Department of Planning and Development to plan ahead for potential impacts on the surrounding residential streets. TEDs need not negatively impact traffic or parking availability on neighboring streets if we anticipate this problem and commit to addressing it with an effective toolbox of measures. There are an increasing number of studies of best practices of parking management techniques in city contexts – including ones being used in Chicago – upon which the Department can draw.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I would be happy to answer your questions.

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