



# Transforming Woodward Together

## *The Journey to Better Transit*

Collaboration In Action

May 2015

# The Journey to Transform Woodward

Station 1: The Idea: Coming Together

Station 2: Our Vision

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- *Five Cities*
- *Two Counties*
- *\$2.75 M investment*
- *Three Plans*
- *One Big Vision for a Brighter Future*





## Station 1: Our Idea

### Voice Desire for Transit

In 2010, three newly elected municipal officials sought to collaborate together to help South Oakland County communities along Woodward focus on economic development and transit advocacy

Newly elected in Nov. 2009, three municipal officials wanted to help both their own cities and also explore how the region could work together.

- **Berkley** – Steve Baker
- **Birmingham** – Mark Nickita
- **Ferndale** – Melanie Piana

The three met many times over their first six months in office, and agreed upon a set of unifying principles to focus their efforts, including:

- **Engage** in inclusive and engaging partnerships with neighboring communities and businesses
- **Leverage** regional assets that the group shared and had common interests in together
- **Focus** on something that is achievable for the group that would be out of reach on their own

## Station 2: Our Vision

### South Oakland County Communities Work Together

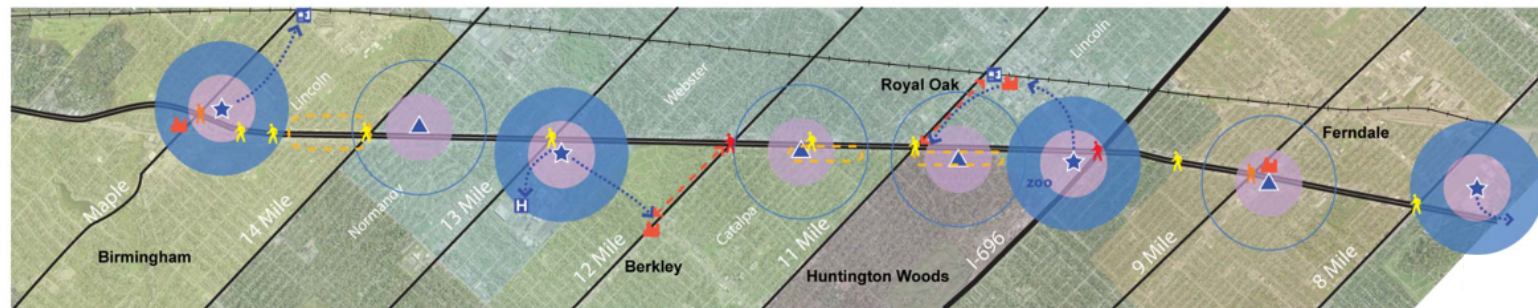
Rally around Woodward Ave., a historic yet vibrant landmark, and Detroit's then-active Woodward Light Rail initiative

#### Guiding Principles:

- Recognize Woodward Ave. is a key shared asset and foundation for our unified focus
- Understand the value of regional transit and that it was something we'd all need to rally around
- Leverage the emerging initiatives in Detroit with the light rail work underway with the team there

#### Lessons Learned:

- Expanded Task Force representation to include a critical core
- Organized under the Woodward Avenue Action Association
- Intentional outreach to diverse voices that brought together a variety of perspectives





## Station 3: Our Challenge

### Regional Transit Drama

Detroit's Woodward Light Rail line was proposed to end at 8 mile, but the program was in trouble. Oakland County communities lacked a common voice to build transit North of 8 Mile.

#### **Challenges:**

- Transit in Oakland County wasn't fully supported by all leaders at the municipal and county level
- Detroit's WLRT was intended to stop south of 8 mile, and the program was in trouble...
- More than 20 initiatives to bring regional transit back over the years since it was decommissioned
- Current perceptions of transit were focused on existing traditional bus service, itself underfunded

#### **Opportunities:**

- Our expanded core team recognized the need and decided to take a significant step forward
- Rallied around a Transit Oriented Design (TOD) study – something that would require both public and private groups to come together
- Grants were secured for the funding, and the public outreach and regular meetings began
- Collaborative partnerships and long-lasting relationships emerged that remain in place

## Station 4: Our Approach

### Public, Private, and Non-Profit Partnerships

Leaders joined and united around the shared vision and common cause  
Became known as the *Transit Oriented Development Task Force*

#### Public

- Berkley
- Birmingham
- Ferndale
- Huntington Woods
- Royal Oak
- DDOT
- FTA, DDOT, MDOT, ...

#### Private – Businesses and Organizations

- Woodward Ave. Action Association
- Michigan Suburbs Alliance
- Beaumont Hospitals
- Detroit Zoo
- LSL Planning
- Lawrence Tech (class project)
- Detroit's Woodward Light Rail initiative





## Station 5: Our Results

### Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan

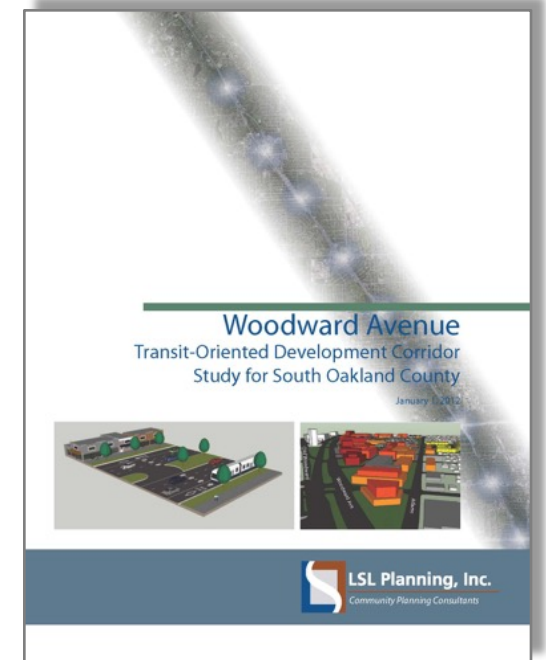
Awarded \$32,000 for planning research grant to study land use, zoning and master plan changes to support TOD in all 5 communities

#### Successes:

- Met monthly with broad participation
- Planning Commission Congress (all PC's from each 5 cities met to discuss possible changes)
- Plan Adoption: every city planning commission and city council adopted the plan.

#### Challenges:

- Did not include all Woodward communities (Pleasant Ridge in Oakland County)
- Detroit decision to end Woodward Light Rail to 8 Mile, leaving void
- No RTA in place to unify the four affected counties together



## Station 5: Our Results (continued)

### Woodward Avenue Alternative Analysis

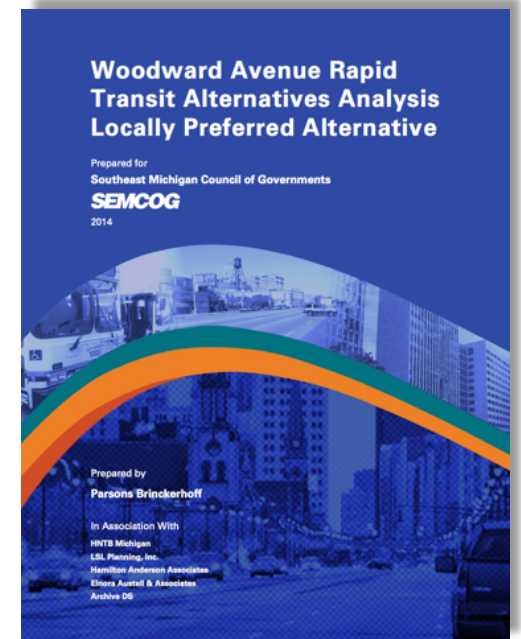
Awarded \$2M for Alternative Analysis from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to study the entire 27 Mile Woodward Corridor

#### Challenges:

- Sought to leverage the WLRT as a foundation
- Needed to sustain and increase the transit momentum
- Wanted to add our voices to the emerging RTA discussion
- Knew that we needed to go big or go home (in other words, broaden the scope to all of Woodward or find a different area of focus for us)

#### Accomplishments:

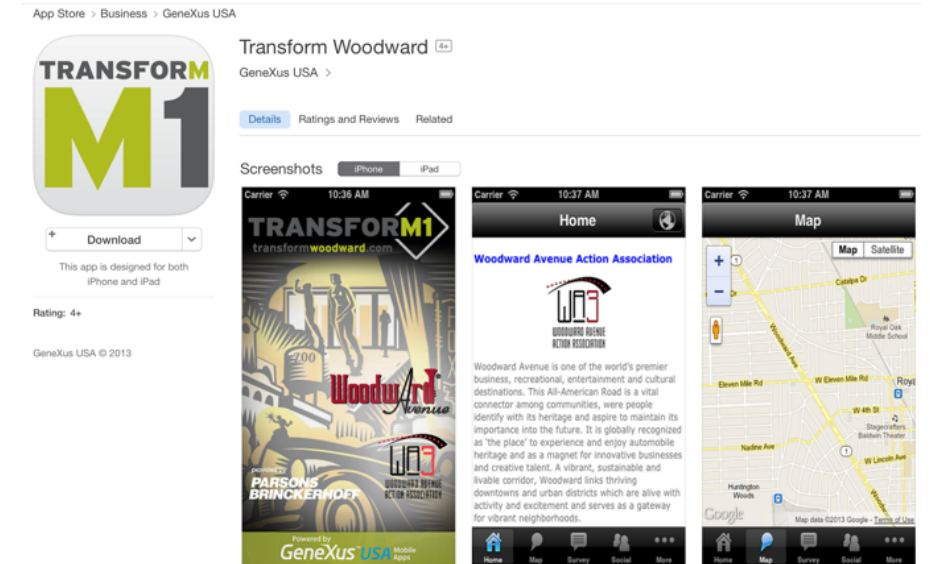
- Successfully applied for and received significant federal funding as a region
- Formed a collaborative steering committee
- Partnered with SEMCOG and others to drive the LPA work and the resulting materials
- Broadened process similar to our TOD work with regular meetings, draft materials, public hearings, revised content, public outreach, and more





## Station 5: Our Results (continued) Woodward Avenue Complete Streets Plan

Awarded \$750,000 for Complete Streets Plan and deployed a comprehensive, free Transform Woodward mobile app



### Challenges:

- Needed to ensure complete streets concepts were considered along with rapid transit
- Sought to ensure the region's transit designs would ensure safe, effective modes for all
- Wanted to engage a broader community of potential users and interested parties
- Desired to bring together a variety of initiatives that were adjacent but not fully aligned

### Accomplishments:

- It can be done! Transit oriented design and complete streets complement one another
- Successfully achieved funding to ensure the study was thoughtful and comprehensive
- Leveraged the existing teams and groups, and broadened to an even wider participation base
- Continued to build momentum for dialogue, and furthered the relationships along the way

## Station 6: Knowledge Sharing

### Working together within and across communities

Agree on principles for working together, focus on areas of common interest and benefit, and leverage opportunities as they emerge from challenges

#### Key Learnings:

- Our core principles brought us together – and kept us united in the tough times
- We each sought to enhance the community in ways that united us for a common cause
- We leveraged shared assets and mindsets, knowing that together we are even stronger
- Our open, collaborative approach embraced change and emergent opportunities

#### Key Recommendations:

- Seek and harness the desire to collaborate and partner together within your communities and with your neighbors
- Embrace positive change that emerges as the project rolls along – harness rather than fight it
- When one project ends, find the next thing for your communities to collaborate on together
- Foster long-lasting relationships that will further unite your communities over time

