

# Introduction

The Danbury Branch (the Branch) study corridor represents significant opportunities and challenges for potential transit-oriented development (TOD). Over the next decades, Connecticut's Southwestern and Housatonic Valley regions are expected to continue to grow. As a result, even with transportation improvements (roadway, rail, bus, pedestrian, etc.) that are currently being implemented and prepared for the future, traffic congestion along I-84, Route 7, and I-95 is expected to intensify. Thus, commuter rail promises to play an even greater role in addressing the region's transportation need while encouraging new, sustainable development around rail stations.

Until recently, however, the frequency, reliability, and speed of commuter rail service on the Branch have not been sufficient to attract new rail ridership. Each year, the number of commuters utilizing the nearby Harlem Line in New York State increases at a faster rate than Branch ridership. As a consequence, the potential for TOD along the Branch has been just that: potential. To date, no TOD projects have been built, and new plans, such as the award-winning Georgetown Development project in Redding, have not yet been realized.

The Centralized Train Control (CTC) and Signalization System, in construction by the State, as well as the future possible improvements being considered for the Danbury Branch, begin to address ways to accelerate improvements to Branch service that could positively impact the TOD landscape. The addition of a new signal system and passing sidings will transform what has been termed "dark territory" into a modern commuter rail service.

The CTC improvements are essential for successful TOD along the Danbury Branch to occur, as it will provide for more reliable and flexible service. This project, however, is only a first step to re-invigorating an under-utilized transportation resource and attracting new riders. The FTAAA/DEIS presents a comprehensive improvement program for the Branch and outlines key improvements being planned to follow the CTC project and promote ridership growth. These enhancements include re-electrification of the Branch to make it compatible with the New Haven Main Line; track geometry and alignment modifications to maximize commuter rail speeds; addition of passing sidings to further increase flexibility of service; additional parking at existing stations to support growth; improved rail connections at South Norwalk to allow for more

frequent Branch shuttle connections and a potential connection to communities in the Housatonic Valley; and the potential extension of service approximately 14 miles north to re-introduce passenger service to the towns of Brookfield and New Milford. These improvements need to be considered to support a successful TOD program along the Danbury Branch.

This report outlines what TOD plans are underway for each of the existing rail stations along the Branch, as well as the TOD opportunities that could result if improvements to the Branch are implemented. The report also addresses the constraints to this type of development and what actions are necessary to facilitate TOD actions.



The Danbury Branch Corridor

The report is organized as follows:

## Section 1

What is TOD? - Provides definition of TOD and presents TOD "place" types and guiding principles.

## Section 2

The National TOD Picture and FTA Guidance - Presents case studies on transit-supportive land use - Presents FTA ratings for TOD projects within New Starts/Small Starts program.

## Section 3

Example TOD Projects Outside of Connecticut - Presents case studies of TOD projects and lessons learned.

## Section 4

TOD Examples in Connecticut - Presents examples of current TOD efforts in the State.

## Section 5

Danbury Branch TOD Communities - Presents details of TOD elements, opportunities, and constraints in each Branch community.

## Appendix A

Background Information on TOD - Presents policy, plans of conservation and development, and the role of metropolitan planning organizations and regional planning agencies.

## Appendix B

Municipal Zoning District Definitions and Station Area Zoning Maps - Contains a list of zoning districts and maps station area zoning.

## Appendix C

Station Area TOD Potential Maps - Identifies potential areas for TOD at each station.

## Appendix D

TOD Questionnaire Responses - Contains responses by municipal officials along the Branch regarding TOD in their community.

## Appendix E

Hazardous Contamination Sites - Contains a list of contaminated sites at each station.