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# 1. SUMMARY

This report addresses the North Corridor, specifically, assessing the economic mobility and accessibility that the SMART Plan can provide to those who live and/or work along the Corridor. Stretching approximately 13 miles from the Miami-Dade/Broward County Line to the Airport Expressway along NW 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the North Corridor will create an important transit link between North and Central Miami-Dade County, as well as Broward County to the north. The Corridor serves historically under-represented, low-income communities, providing the opportunity to better access jobs, as well as provide a key regional mobility link for the area's job centers, stadium district, and higher education.

It is important to note there are currently three studies of the North Corridor:

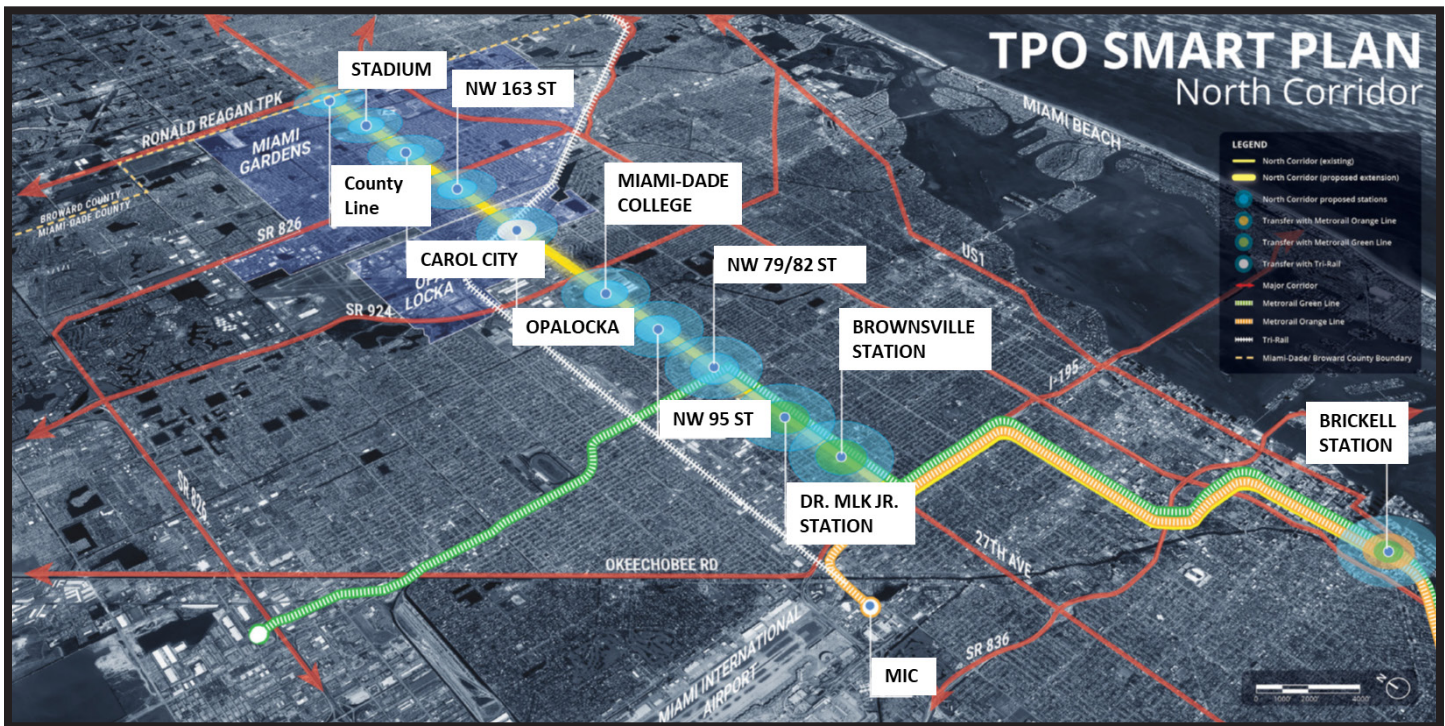
- Land Use Scenario and Visioning Planning – Lead by the Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization (TPO).
- Economic Mobility & Accessibility – Lead by the Miami-Dade TPO (this study).
- Project Development & Environmental Studies (PD&Es) – Lead by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)/District Six.

The Economic Mobility and Visioning work were tightly knit together. This report addresses Economic Mobility & Accessibility while the Land Use Scenario and Visioning Planning is covered in a separate report.

## 1.1 The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

Determining the economic mobility and accessibility of a North Corridor transit investment requires understanding the type of transit to be developed and the ridership potential. Ridership forecasts for the North Corridor were based on 2040 plans for land use in the Corridor. The resulting ridership supports the LPA. On December 6, 2018, the TPO Governing Board, after receiving the Project Development & Environmental (PD&E) Study preliminary results, approved an “elevated fixed-guideway transit system” as the LPA. Based on the Land Use Analysis conducted, approximately 1/3 of the North Corridor High Ridership Scenario 2040 ridership was forecast to be made by persons living in zero-car households. With a high indication of transit-dependent ridership and 21% of all corridor households having incomes below the poverty level, heavy rail technology was considered the appropriate system. While the BRT and LRT systems were reviewed, a continuous elevated system results in higher projected ridership due to a reduction of transfers. A decision on the preferred vehicle technology was deferred until the Fall of 2019 to examine vehicle technologies other than those similar to Heavy Rail Transit (HRT). On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019, FDOT, as part of its PD&E, recommended extending the Metrorail system along the proposed north corridor to connect with the existing Green and Orange Lines and connect to Brickell, Brickell Avenue, and Brickell Station. The new extension would attract an estimated 21,800 riders per day, far more than new daily riders of alternate technologies, such as a maglev train (8,600 per day) or monorail (8,200). The PD&E found that the Metrorail extension scores far higher on the cost-effectiveness scale @ \$17.42 per passenger-hour, compared to between \$40 and \$45 for monorail and maglev. Specifically, because the extension would connect/overlap with existing Metrorail routes to connect to Brickell, the proposed transit plan would get Federal Transit Administration credit for all riders using the new line, including those traveling between existing stations. That gives it a significant scoring advantage over new modes, which would only get credit for riders on the newly constructed tracks. SMART Planning by the TPO demonstrates a change in vehicle technology from Heavy Rail like the Metrorail system causes ridership to be limited to 22,000 per day because of system transfers, like the one at the MLK Station. Also, Smart Planning demonstrates that: 1)

Figure 1



Without transfers, ridership is projected to be 30,000; 2) Extending Metrorail to Broward (Nova Southeastern University) causes ridership to go from 30,000 to 40,000.

Expanding Metrorail along the North Corridor has been a goal since the rail system was launched in the Reagan Administration era of the 1980s. Seventeen years later, 2007, Miami-Dade secured federal approval for the North Corridor project, but the economic downturn during the Great Recession impeded its implementation. Now, under current FTA evaluation criteria, it has been determined that extending the Metrorail system to the Broward County line, and beyond, can generate at least 40,000 new riders. Other FTA criteria requires that the total Station Area Population and Corridor-Wide Employment served by the new line must exceed 120,000 people/220,000 jobs. SMART Plan work indicates the extension will serve a population of 124,500 and 254,000 jobs. The North Corridor Metrorail extension meets the FTA criteria making this project a candidate for federal funding. The implementation will support the upward economic mobility for those who live and/or work along the Corridor.

## 1.2 Economic Mobility

With this background, plus an intimate understanding of the corridor through field visits of each proposed station area, public input through four charrettes, and a detailed review of public policies, the SMART planners examined the Economic Mobility potential of each of the ten proposed station areas along the North Corridor according to the following categories/criteria:

- **Category: Livability**

- ✓ **Criteria:** Generate Pedestrian Activity, Improve Public Safety, and Improve Housing Choice.

- **Category: Sustainability**

- ✓ **Criteria:** Encourage Transit Ridership, Reduce Car Dependency, and Concentrate Development.

- **Category: Economic Development**

- ✓ **Criteria:** Create Jobs, Promote Small Businesses, Increase Tax Revenue, and Strengthen Local Economies.



The results are summarized below.

- County Line Station area was found to have low performance in the Livability category and strong performances in the Sustainability and Economic Development categories. Although performance was strong in the Economic Development category, the forecast did not reflect a strong attainment promoting small business.
- Stadium Station performed at a low level in the Livability category although it will generate pedestrian activity. This station had strong performances in Sustainability and Economic Development although the forecast did not reflect a strong attainment promoting small business.
- Carol City Station had acceptable performance levels in all categories with an overall score of at least 70, performing the strongest in the Sustainability category, based on scoring as described in Section 7.2 Station Area Evaluation and Economic Mobility, Table 12.
- NW 163<sup>rd</sup> Station performed at a low level in the Livability and Economic Generation categories with acceptable performance in the Sustainability category.
- Opa-Locka was found to have strong performances in Sustainability and Economic Development with acceptable performance in the Livability category.
- MDC Station had acceptable performance in all categories, with highest ratings in the General Pedestrian Activity, Encourage Transit, Reduce Car Dependency and Strengthen Local Economy criterion.
- NW 103<sup>rd</sup> Street station area performed at low levels in every category and almost every criterion.
- NW 95<sup>th</sup> Street station area performed at low levels in every category and almost every criterion.
- NW 79<sup>th</sup>/82<sup>nd</sup> Streets had acceptable performance levels in the Sustainability category, but was relatively weak overall.

The table below is a summary.

Table 1

OVERALL EVALUATION RESULTS			
STATION AREA	LIVABILITY	SUSTAINABILITY	ECONOMIC GENERATION
COUNTY LINE	LOW	STRONG	STRONG
STADIUM	LOW	STRONG	STRONG
CAROL CITY	ACCEPTABLE	STRONG	ACCEPTABLE
NW 163 <sup>rd</sup>	LOW	ACCEPTABLE	LOW
OPA-LOCKA	ACCEPTABLE	STRONG	STRONG
MDC	ACCEPTABLE TO STRONG	ACCEPTABLE TO STRONG	ACCEPTABLE
95 <sup>th</sup>	LOW	LOW	LOW TO ACCEPTABLE
79 <sup>th</sup> /82 <sup>nd</sup>	LOW	ACCEPTABLE	LOW TO ACCEPTABLE
Brownville	EXISTING STATION; THEREFORE, NOT EVALUATED AS PART OF THIS STUDY		
MLK	EXISTING STATION; THEREFORE, NOT EVALUATED AS PART OF THIS STUDY		

LOW	Below 70	ACCEPTABLE	70-80	STRONG	Above 80
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The station areas that perform at “acceptable” levels in two of the three categories are: County Line, Stadium, Carol City, Opa-Locka, and MDC. Others need to have their land uses strengthened.

### 1.3 Market Conditions

To strengthen the land uses in the corridor, a market assessment was first conducted. The results indicate *multifamily residential* is seeing growth, with over 1,200 new units projected to be delivered between 2018 and 2020 corridor-wide. Though the overall flow of development is modest, compared to the County as a whole, new market-rate development is planned in Miami Gardens at the northern end of the Corridor, for the first time in a decade. Newer development in the rest of the Corridor is driven by *affordable housing*, which has seen nearly 1,500 units delivered since 2010, the largest project of which was the Brownsville Transit Village. Affordable housing for seniors and families is expected to continue to be a source of new investment in the area.

The *private office market* in the Corridor is very limited and is primarily neighborhood-serving (including strip office buildings or second floor commercial), or “back office” for industrial uses. The Corridor is unlikely to see near-term office development.

The *industrial sector* is seeing a healthy growth given current trends, with nearly a million square feet under development in the Corridor, and another million square feet being developed nearby at the Amazon facility at Opa-Locka Airport.

Although the Corridor is not currently a regional retail destination, future redevelopment of the mall at Carol City indicates some potential for retail in the area, particularly near the emerging entertainment cluster at the northern end of the Corridor near Hard Rock Stadium. Otherwise, retail in the Corridor commands significantly lower rents than in the overall County. There may be additional opportunity for neighborhood retail as new residents accompany proposed development and move to the Corridor.

### 1.4 Market Development Recommendations

Given the length of the Corridor, and existing market challenges and constraints, development recommendations are targeted at key nodes to catalyze future investment along other segments of the Corridor and potential transit station areas. The recommendations cited below are “first-mover” concepts that could spur longer-term revitalization and investment in the Corridor and leverage the area’s urban scale, neighborhood context, nearby anchor institutions, major venues, and, importantly, market conditions. To facilitate new Transit Oriented Development (TOD), additional public-sector actions will be needed, such as: use of strategic development sites that are government-owned; updating zoning and land use regulations and guidelines; forming private/institutional partnerships; as well as establishing incentives and funding sources that address initial financial development gaps.

**Segment 1 - Entertainment District:** The northernmost section of the Corridor is anchored by the Calder Casino and Hard Rock Stadium. Just south of the Broward County border, this area exhibits the potential to be a regional draw, not only bringing daily commuters from Broward County, but attracting visitors, fans, and workers from the greater Miami area.

In addition to residential and retail clusters adjacent to NW 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the district is broadly characterized by expansive parking lots and limited pedestrian facilities. Future development-related regulations should encourage a pedestrian-friendly street network and streetscape treatments, which could be conceived as part of a stadium-area master plan. That plan could provide a land use vision for the area, develop an event-day access and parking strategy, and create an urban design focus for the district that ties together various uses, including adjacent residential neighborhoods, with future transit service.

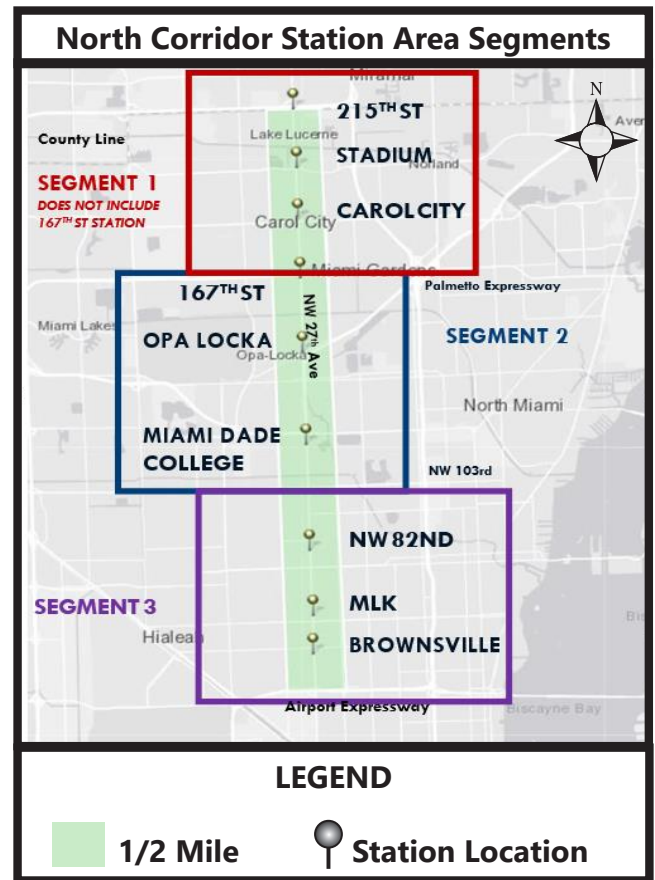
This district presents an opportunity to leverage the existing and planned sports and casino venues for a new mixed-use entertainment district that would also support a retail/shopping cluster that includes a range of food and beverage options, as well as a hotel. A walkable, urban-style stadium district can create a year-round destination, as seen at Patriots Place in Foxborough, Massachusetts. Pedestrian-only walkways, lined with retail, entertainment, and dining, can serve as a “gateway” to the stadium, creating a distinct identity for it and enlivening the experience on gameday.

There are significant development opportunity sites in this district, including over 260 acres of currently vacant land, 210 acres of which are County-owned. There is an opportunity to provide new housing in the area, including accounting for affordable housing needs in the corridor. In fact, based on the strength of development occurring in this area, without public-realm interventions, market forces will continue to advance the auto-oriented growth of the district. As an example, the Dolphins move of its training facility to team-owned land just west of Hard Rock Stadium is both an economic opportunity and a barrier to future Transit Oriented Development, as it consumes critically-located land.

A town center-style, walkable retail/restaurant cluster would activate the area on non-event days while providing ancillary amenities for fans and visitors to stay in the district before and after events. Based on the proximity of the district to Broward County, which contains a resident and work-force population with significant spending power, these uses would also attract a broader regional customer and visitor base.

Finally, the creation of a walkable entertainment district would add value to the area, strengthening the existing and pipeline residential market that is already relatively strong compared to the rest of the Corridor.

Figure 2



Source: The Corradino Group, Inc.; HR + A Associates

**Segment 2 - Educational District:** Miami Dade College (MDC) is the major public institution along the Corridor and could support academic-oriented development, such as new housing and college-oriented retail and restaurants. The College's partnerships with tech firms, like Tesla, which currently works with Miami-Dade to recruit low-income and minority students who are under-represented in the tech field, are important opportunities to expand workforce training, local resident hiring, and private firm/tech expansion in the Corridor.

Creating a campus-oriented development strategy around a potential MDC station is an important step in this effort. Should MDC's future mission include residential uses, a future campus development plan that supports a higher-density, pedestrian-friendly facility could include mixed-use development fronting NW 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This development could feature college-oriented housing (e.g., modestly-sized rental units) and ground-floor retail anchored by college-oriented uses (e.g., bookstore, fitness facilities), making it more attractive to students and faculty. Mixed-use, academic-oriented developments, like the Hub at New Brunswick Station in New Jersey, offer retail, residential, and office amenities.

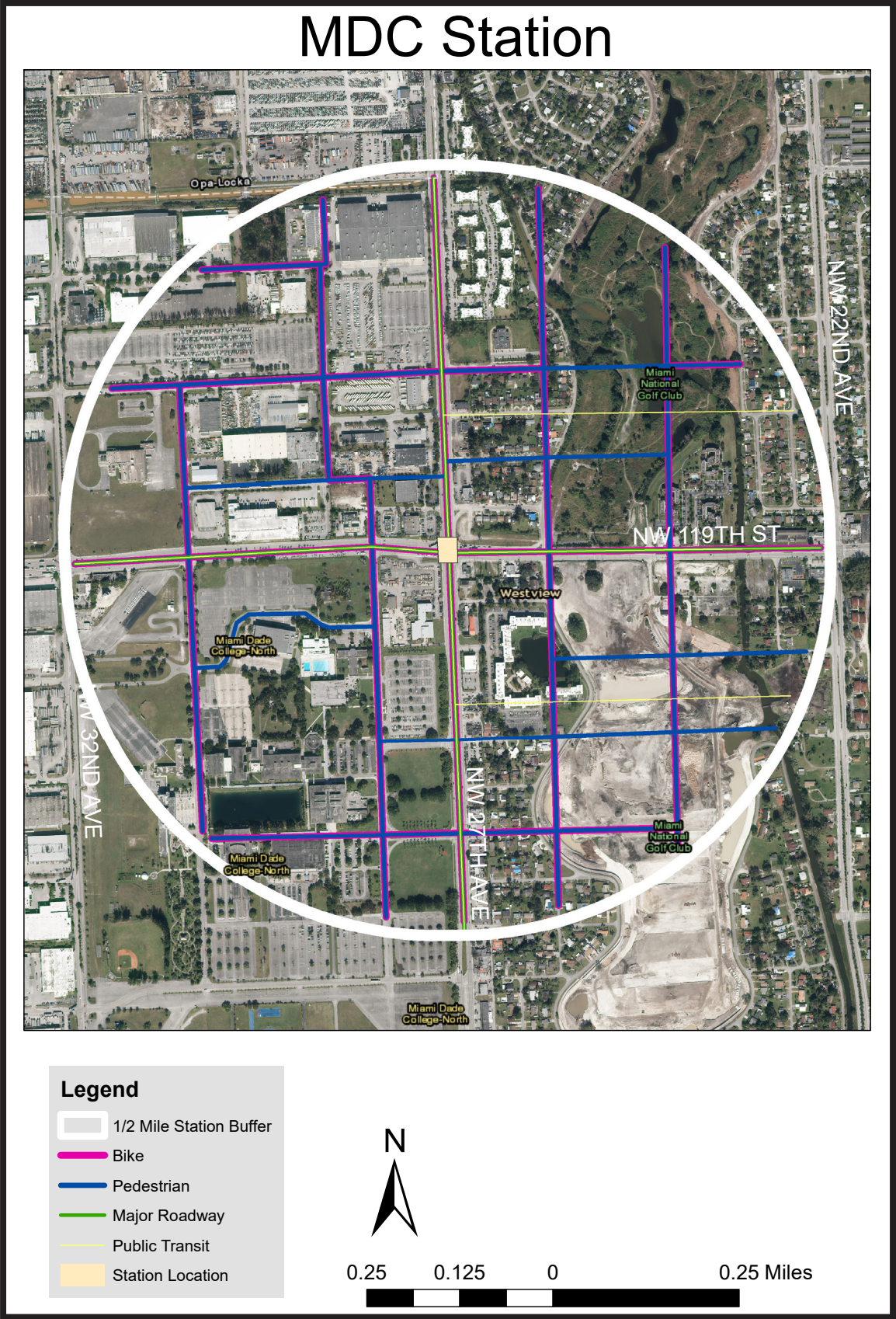
**Segment 3 - Infill Residential District:** The southernmost segment of the North Corridor presents a compelling opportunity to connect to existing Metrorail stations as well as recently-developed transit-oriented, multi-family residential buildings, such as the Brownsville Transit Village. Identifying key infill sites at the publicly-owned parcels throughout the Corridor may be an opportunity to support mixed-income housing products that would add new residential population. Increased growth will support higher quality retail in an area that currently suffers from a paucity of quality grocery and restaurant options. Residential buildings that offer a mix of market-rate and affordable units would draw into the area a population that reflects a more diverse range of incomes, adding needed housing at a variety of price points to incent future investment. Lastly, targeted public-realm improvements would help transform the character of existing streets and blocks to leverage future TOD.

## **1.5 Station Area Conceptual Design**

The above information was used to conceptually design accessibility and connectivity improvements for each station area to support a complete transportation network. Each design focuses on providing walking, biking, and roadway connections throughout the ½ mile station buffer. Each design also considers the communities located outside the buffer by providing a transportation network that allows for a greater level of connectivity to the station area. Current physical and geographical boundaries were also taken into consideration when determining the conceptual network designs. An example is provided below for the MDC Station area. Similar presentations for all station areas are in Section 7.4 of this report.



Figure 3





The station areas in this Corridor are envisioned as compact centers of moderate-to high-intensity and density development, comprised of a mix of uses occurring within 1/2-mile of the transit station itself. These station areas are characterized by well-defined streetscapes and an urban form that promotes walking to and from stations. Development within the station areas is seen to be concentrated around station then to “step down” as the distance from the station increases.

## THE FUTURE

### Neighborhood Center



## THE FUTURE

### Community Center



## THE FUTURE

### Regional Center



## 1.6 Policy Guidance

Local governments can utilize several techniques to regulate and provide the basis for effective station area development. Comprehensive Plans, authorized by Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes, provides them the authority to set forth the goals, objectives and policies for land use, transportation, housing and a host of other elements.

The **Land Use Element** of a Comprehensive Plan specifies minimum and maximum densities of residential, commercial and industrial uses. For transit station areas, individual zoning codes, or districts, can be developed to specify heights, floor-area ratios, lot coverage, block spacing and parking requirements.

**Transportation Element** policies focus on supporting the land uses with multimodal infrastructure recommendations to be considered as development and redevelopment occur.

**Housing Element** policies should encourage a variety of housing unit-sizes and types, and, ultimately, foster a higher level of affordable housing in station areas. Housing policies should recognize that affordability is contingent on both housing and transportation costs. As families tend to shift costs, either by paying more for transportation when paying less for housing, and vice-versa, effective affordable housing policies address trade-offs between these two costs.

Detailed policy guidance is provided in Sections 7.6 and 8 of this report.

## 1.7 Implement Overall Project Recommendations

Unless the Locally-Preferred Alternative is implemented, those who live and work in the North Corridor will have limited opportunities for Economic Mobility. The following series of major actions must be taken to implement the LPA:

- Complete Appropriate Environmental Documents
- Develop Financial Plan
- Prepare, Submit and Gain Approval of an FTA Grant Application

These, and other items to be addressed to implement the LPA, are incorporated in a federally-mandated Project Management Plan (PMP). The LPA is defined as a Major Project in 23 U.S.C. 106(h), i.e., a large, complex project designed to address major transportation needs and requiring investment of significant resources. The PMP helps the Project Sponsor maintain focus effectively and efficiently deliver a quality product. It is to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the agency leadership and management team, and to document the procedures and processes that are in effect to provide timely information to project decision makers in areas such as:

- Identifying project requirements
- Establishing communication protocols
- Managing: Scope, Cost, Schedule, Applicable laws and regulations, Quality, Resources, Risks
- Securing local financing

Securing local financing may be the biggest challenge – it has been in the past. Perhaps, extending the North Corridor Metrorail into Broward County may address it. Broward County recently passed a 1-penny sales tax to support transportation.