MBTA Commuter Rail Station Site Suitability

Everett, Massachusetts

Introduction

Everett, Massachusetts is a small inner-city north of Boston. It has a high-density residential area north of Route 16 - which bifurcates the city - and a largely industrial and commercial area south of Route 16. Despite its dense residential makeup and being an industrial employment hub, public transit is lacking. The city is served by numerous bus routes, but none of these connect directly with downtown Boston; one must connect via Orange Line stations in Somerville and Malden. The MBTA Newburyport/Rockport commuter rail line does pass through the city, however, and Everett planners and policymakers have long discussed adding a stop in Everett, between North Station and Chelsea. Such a stop also has potential to encourage new transit-oriented development.

The commuter rail tracks run through two distinct Everett neighborhoods: Lower Broadway and the Commercial Triangle. A potential station would have to be situated in one of the two areas. The City is currently engaged in neighborhood master planning processes for both areas, making it an ideal time to analyze potential commuter rail sites in the two neighborhoods.

Lower Broadway is an appealing site if a proposed casino deal comes through, and is more centrally located between the current stations at North Station and Chelsea. The Commercial Triangle is appealing because it is more easily accessible from all points in Everett. This analysis seeks to identify the most suitable locations for a commuter rail station in Everett, based on criteria from the literature, parcel cost and ownership data, and a desire from Everett policymakers for walkable transit access.

Methodology

Based on the literature review and best practices, a series of guiding principles were used to determine suitable sites, primarily using parcel data from the City of Everett, commuter rail data and 2010 U.S. Census data.

1. The site should be at least one mile away (track distance) from the nearest station in either direction: Chelsea and North Station
2. The site should be within 100 feet of commuter rail tracks
3. Residential parcels should be excluded
4. Suitable parcels should be at least 0.5 acres to allow for basic station infrastructure

After these parcels were identified, each site was analyzed to show the following:

1. Population within walking distance (0.5 miles)
2. Vacancy and underutilization, using a rough estimate of (assessed building value/total parcel value)
3. Parcel assessed value, to compare different sized parcels by price

Using various GIS tools, including selection by attribute and location, clip, buffer, erase, and network analyst, all Everett parcels were systematically narrowed down to illustrate only the parcels meeting the aforementioned criteria. This analysis does not rank the resulting sites, but presents comparable data points for each so that policymakers can make an informed decision.

References
