**Thesis Title:** From Rhetoric to Reality: A Look at the Implementation of Transit-Oriented Development Plans Along the Gold Line in Los Angeles County

**Author:** Natalie Quinn

**Thesis Advisor:** David King

**Thesis Reader:** Jonathan Martin

**Department:** Urban Planning

**Abstract:**

The City of Los Angeles, known for its car dependency, has been making strides to revive public transportation in the city. In addition to transit system expansion and improvement, transit-oriented development (TOD) policy has been enacted throughout the city and county in comprehensive plans, community plans, special zoning ordinances, and the Metro Joint Development Program. TOD in this research is defined as high-density mixed-use development in close proximity to one or more forms of public transportation. The social, economic, and environmental benefits of TOD justify its use as an alternative to traditional auto-oriented development. Although the benefits of TOD are well understood, less can be found in current literature addressing the implementation of such policies. What implementation research that does exist has focused on performance in terms of resulting modal shift and transit ridership. Less research has been done to assess the success of implementation in achieving truly mixed and economically accessible transit neighborhoods.

This study uses policy analysis, data mapping, and site inventory to examine the implementation of TOD policies surrounding phase one of the Metro Gold Line in Los Angeles County, a light-rail line completed July 2003. Analysis focuses on density, mix of land use, and economic accessibility within a quarter-mile radius of eleven light rail stations. Change in these indicators between 2000 and 2010 is evaluated to capture the influence of the line opening in 2003. This thesis provides an assessment of the barriers, opportunities and practical issues affecting the translation of a TOD vision from rhetoric to reality. The findings of this research indicate a positive relationship between the strength of governing TOD policies and ability of the TOD vision to be successfully implemented. However, the findings also highlight the importance of additional socio-political factors in influencing plan implementation. The lessons learned provide constructive guidelines for the implementation of transit-oriented development policies around phase two of the Metro Gold Line, opened 2009.