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Testimony on Senate Bill 1210
Transit Revitalization Investment Districts

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My name is Matt Bergheiser, and I run University City District, a nonprofit special services district and economic development organization that exists as a partnership of universities, health systems, private developers and community members to make a 2.4 square mile area of West Philadelphia more vibrant and more competitive. University City has a concentration of economic assets and an acceleration of economic activity that is unrivaled in all but a few places in the entire country, and many of the $4 billion worth of new and recently completed real estate projects in our neighborhood have developed around key transit nodes.

I'd like to discuss a particular aspect of transit-oriented investments that's near and dear to our hearts at University City District – activating transit nodes and developing the public realm and public space around them.

Public spaces, in general, have great power. They shape the way people feel about our cities and about our towns.

Public spaces around transit centers are particularly impactful. They reinforce connections to jobs and employment hubs. They attract commercial investment. They activate transit stops to create a virtuous cycle of new riders and new investments. They introduce green space to places often replete with concrete. In short, they represent a truly 21st century way of renewing our infrastructure and simultaneously attracting more people on foot, on bike and via public transit to enliven a particular place.

And, in keeping with the basic tenets of TRID creation, public realm investments around transit promote community revitalization and enhance community character. They also often lack the dedicated and predictable funding streams that allow them to be developed to their fullest potential.

My organization works to develop and improve two such spaces every day, and I'd like to briefly take you on a photo tour of each of them.

(See attached slides.)

Summary: The Porch at 30th Street Station

- 37,000 transit riders daily
- Partnership among University City District, Amtrak, PennDOT, City of Philadelphia
- Initial investment of $300,000 private dollars to augment PennDOT bridge rehabilitation
- Has attracted more than $1 million in private improvement funds since opening in November 2011
- A model public-private partnership, with public infrastructure expenditures leveraging private activity and investment
- A hub of social and commercial activity that did not previously exist

Summary: The 40th Street Trolley Portal

- Confluence of three key commercial corridors
- Busiest at-grade rail station in Philadelphia
- 29,000 daily commuters
- Multi-modal connections to Delaware County/suburban bus lines
- 20,000 jobs, 18,000 residents within ½ mile
- $1.05 million raised privately toward $2 million project
- Anticipated to increase surrounding property values by $9.9 million
- New York Department of Transportation study found that similar public space improvement projects increased sales at adjacent business by 50% post-construction
- A model public-private partnership, with public dollars leveraging private dollars

We believe these spaces will be transformative. However, arranging the funding for them and for others like them around the region and around the state is a challenging and circuitous process. In my mind, there's no doubt that new and predictable sources of funding for public space improvements around transit will accelerate the pace at which such projects are built, and will offer signficant financial and social returns for the communities in which they sit.