Executive Summary
CTfastrak is a bus rapid transit (BRT) service that began operation in 2015, running from downtown Hartford to downtown New Britain, Connecticut.

- With a dedicated right-of-way, frequent service, pre-boarding payment system, and specially designed buses, it is one of the highest-rated systems in North America.

- CTfastrak has carried over four million riders since its launch on March 28, 2015.

- The system runs along a former rail line through a variety of neighborhoods: from downtown urban settings to districts with an industrial heritage to single-family home suburbs.

- Through a number of initiatives, the State of Connecticut and local municipalities are exploring ways that this transit system can begin to catalyze transit-oriented development (TOD).
Anchor institutions can be first-movers of development along the CTfastrak corridor, even though most are close to, but not within, the station areas.
Anchor institutions are a region's schools, hospitals, large employers, cultural facilities, and government offices. Anchors are deeply embedded in a region and unlikely to move.
As documented in a major academic study*, anchors can contribute to economic growth and development, no matter the size of a community or the vitality of its economy.

Anchor institutions often drive the knowledge-based economy, producing goods and services directly tied to innovation and workforce development.

In order to carry out their institutional mission, many anchors face a constant need to modernize and expand, making them key real estate developers.

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* National Resource Network, NYU Wagner, Urban Institute, Striking a (Local) Grand Bargain: How cities and anchor institutions can work together to drive growth and prosperity, (September 2015).
Anchors and local governments can help each other, but certain barriers can prevent them from formalizing their relationship.

**Divergent Missions**
Anchor institutions typically focus their mission on their constituents and clients, which does not always align with community goals for economic growth or development in the surrounding area.

**Siloed Plans**
Anchor institutions and government tend to develop master and strategic plans in siloes. Leaving stakeholders out of the process can weaken the anchor-government-community relationship and undermine planning efforts.

**History of Disengagement**
Anchors can be disengaged from their surrounding communities. The mismatch between an anchor’s mission and community goals, in combination with property tax exemptions for most anchor institutions, can often lead to political tension regarding the long-term vision for an area.

**Lack of Shared Vision**
As large institutions, anchors are guided by a specific mission and constituency they serve, which may not align with the public policy objectives of local government, representative of a much broader and more inclusive constituency.
By establishing common goals and clear roles, previously disjointed and one-off relationships can become a sustained, mutually beneficial partnership.
HR&A researched anchor institution engagement in six peer regions, selected from a long list of 24 comparable corridors. Based on these case studies and existing research, HR&A identified best practices that can help advance TOD along the CTfastrak corridor.
**Best Practices:** Five key characteristics define best practices for engaging anchors, government, and community organizations in a mutually beneficial relationship that can spur TOD and economic growth in the region.

- **Common goals and a shared long-term plan for development.**
- **Formalized partnerships centered around a mutually beneficial vision.**
- **A public, private or nonprofit entity with the ability to guide development and channel multiple funding streams.**
- **A sustained commitment to include the community’s perspective in the visioning, partnership, and implementation phases.**
- **Government investment, including up-front financial commitments, incentives, and the physical relocation of government offices.**
**Best Practices – Vision:** Anchors, community organizations, and local government convene to establish common goals and a shared long-term plan for development.

In St. Louis, education and health anchors, as well as civic organizations created a vision for a biotech and innovation district in midtown, called the **Cortex**.

Phased development and district partnerships have aligned with the Cortex vision since its inception in 2002. Today, over 150 organizations reside within the Cortex district, including five incubator spaces.

Pittsburgh’s **East Liberty Revitalization** was driven, over the course of decades, by a firmly established vision shared by major stakeholders. This allowed for a plan to emerge to incrementally reposition the area for redevelopment, leading to the “overnight success” that rapidly emerged once these elements began to take shape and a critical mass was reached.
**Best Practices – Partnerships:** Effective partnership structures are formally or loosely organized to advance the development vision and create accountability.

In Cleveland, The Cleveland Foundation served as a neutral convener for a formalized group of education, health and arts & cultural anchors, called the **Greater University Circle Initiative (GUCI)**.

The GUCI coalition established an opt-in model for project collaboration in which anchors could participate in development aligned with their institutions’ mission and vision for growth. This flexible, structured approach to forming partnerships created accountability without the pressure to participate.

Northern New Jersey’s **Urban Essex Coalition for Smart Growth** was an effort that assembled a broad array of civic, non-profit, and private interests including real estate developer RPM and Rutgers University as a part of the development of a regional plan by Together New Jersey.

By working with the most invested partners in a transit corridor, plans for a number of station areas were able to efficiently coalesce, providing a roadmap to implementing TOD in each area.
Best Practices – Development Entity: The partners engage, or sometimes create, a public, private, or nonprofit entity to lead the development process and channel multiple funding streams.

In Pittsburgh’s East Liberty neighborhood, the City of Pittsburgh’s economic development agency, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, and nonprofit East Liberty Development Inc., a community development corporation, led revitalization efforts.

Both organizations played strong roles as funders of infrastructure development and leaders of public-private developments that brought jobs and affordable housing to the East Liberty neighborhood.

As the Master Developer for the district, Cortex in St. Louis has broad power and control to negotiate and fund development opportunities with private and public investors, guided by Cortex’s Master Plan. In this capacity, the organization buys land, plans development, and forms public-private partnerships.
Best Practices – Community Involvement: The partners actively engage local stakeholders to participate in a formal process to contribute meaningful feedback in development planning and implementation.

The Urban Essex Coalition for Smart Growth led community outreach in three municipalities—Orange, East Orange, and Newark, New Jersey—and five station areas to streamline planning along a commuter rail corridor.

The Coalition included nonprofit organizations with strong ties to local communities and a history of working on neighborhood revitalization efforts.

The Emerald Express in Eugene was founded on the basis of very strong community involvement, with early planning led by a Citizens Advisory Committee representing civic and business leaders that provided recommendations to the Metropolitan Planning Organization on transit policies and station-specific plans, leading to a very successful transit line and TOD.

The extension of the line has been met with difficulties from local interests as officials did not employ these methods in later phases.
Best Practices – Public Investment: Government often plays a major up-front role in development by providing financial commitments, subsidies and incentives, or even committing to relocate agency offices.

In New Carrollton, Maryland, development in the area near a new transit station was encouraged by government funding and County TOD planning initiatives.

The County’s strategic relocation of a rent-paying, government agency near a transit hub demonstrated to developers the marketability of the New Carrollton area.

Incentive funds were also important in anchoring the area by relocating businesses and subsidizing private development via municipal loans, tax breaks and site preparation.

Cortex in St. Louis utilizes a range of public investments to make improvements to the district in order to further enable success. This includes a USDOT TIGER grant to fund construction of a new MetroLink station as well as the establishment of a TIF district, which has provided $168M in order to subsidize new commercial development.