



Pictured above: Large, brightly lit modular bus shelters on the Tradepoint campus make waiting for the bus a safer and more pleasant experience.

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-Aaron Tomarchio

Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Tradepoint Atlantic

In 2014, a group of investors led by Redwood Capital Investments bought a former steel plant at Sparrow’s Point, in Baltimore County, seeing the site’s strong potential as a distribution and logistics hub. The developers of what would be re-named Tradepoint Atlantic knew that this would not be an ordinary project. “We knew how important this property was to the community,” said Tradepoint Atlantic’s Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs Aaron Tomarchio. “The nearby neighborhoods grew up around the steel plant, so this property was very important to the community. We spent a lot of time meeting with neighbors and local leaders in community halls and school cafeterias, because we knew the neighbors had to be partners in this development from the beginning.”

In addition to the redevelopment plan and the environmental cleanup process, one key topic of discussion in these meetings was transportation, namely, Tradepoint Atlantic’s desire to revive the bus line that had previously connected the steel mill to Baltimore City. “There’s a stigma around buses in many communities,” said Tomarchio, “so there were definitely some misperceptions about what a bus connection to the city would mean, but we knew we had to have one.” Why were the developers of a thousand-acre site so concerned with an ordinary city bus? “We wanted to open up our job center to workers throughout the region, and that required transit. We put the transit connection in place before the jobs were there, which allowed workers to apply for and interview for jobs there,” said Tomarchio.

Tradepoint Atlantic has made access for its workforce a top priority in developing the site. When their first tenants arrived, they worked with MDOT’s Maryland Transit Administration to tailor bus schedules to coincide with employers’ shift change times to ensure that workers could get to work on time. They also created their own bus shelters which they installed at every bus stop on their property, offering bus riders solar-powered trash bins and better protection from the elements than a standard bus shelter. “We wanted to make sure bus riders had a good experience getting to and from Tradepoint, and we took responsibility for making sure that bus riders were respected,” said Tomarchio. Tradepoint Atlantic has also installed a network of bike paths through their site, to allow workers to take their bikes on the bus and then ride their bikes from the bus stop to their workplace.

Prioritizing transit has paid dividends for Tradepoint Atlantic, helping it attract a roster of tenants including Amazon, FedEx, Under Armour, and Home Depot. “Labor is a key site selection criteria for many businesses, and we’ve found that a lot of potential tenants asked about it when they looked at Tradepoint Atlantic,” Tomarchio said. While the biggest benefit of transit for a developer is tenant attraction, Tradepoint has continued to look for ways to improve public transit access to the site even as it has filled out its tenant roster. Noticing an increase in the use of ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft, Tradepoint Atlantic has begun to study dedicated pickup and dropoff points, and is also studying the possibility of supplementing public bus service with private shuttles connecting Tradepoint Atlantic workers more directly to their home neighborhoods.



EMPLOYER PROFILE

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT: THE TRADEPOINT ATLANTIC STORY

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Tradepoint Atlantic’s management team attributes their success to their ability to plan ahead and address tenants’ and workers’ needs before they arose. “We reverse-engineered the whole process, making sure the transit was there before the workers, and that’s the way we think it should be,” said Tomarchio. They also credit several local and state government agencies with crucial assistance, including Baltimore County’s Department of Economic and Workforce Development, as well as MDOT’s Maryland Transit Administration, who provided invaluable help in connecting Tradepoint tenants and the Baltimore area’s workforce. By bringing together the private sector, the public sector, nearby neighbors and a regional workforce, Tradepoint Atlantic has built a logistics hub in Baltimore County that’s within an entire region’s reach.

Pictured at right: Tradepoint Atlantic sponsored a branded bus to advertise the new service to their property.

