2014 marks the end of a productive startup year for Metro Transit’s Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Office. The next twelve months will involve increased TOD implementation tasks and activities, hiring new staff, and continued TOD collaboration as the TOD Office matures from its startup phase to its role as a facilitator of TOD within the region.

Thrive MSP 2040 states that “effective stewardship of public transit dollars requires a more strategic coordination of regional transit investments with more-intensive surrounding land uses, connected development patterns and urban form.” Creating these vibrant, high quality mixed-income places around transit requires leadership and resources to capitalize on opportunities. To that end, the Metropolitan Council adopted a Transit Oriented Development Policy in 2013 to achieve four goals:

1. Maximize the development impact of transit investments by integrating transportation, jobs and housing.
2. Support regional economic competitiveness by leveraging private investment.
3. Advance equity by improving multimodal access to opportunity for all.
4. Support a 21st century transportation system through increased ridership and revenues.

While TOD goals impact the work of many areas within the Metropolitan Council, the TOD Office is the implementer, strategist, and convener of the TOD Policy’s goals. The TOD Office coordinates TOD efforts across the organization, bridging many different departments and functions within the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit to implement TOD.

What is Transit Oriented Development?

TOD is walkable urban development served by frequent transit with a mix of housing, retail, and employment designed to allow people to live and work with transportation choices.

Thrive MSP 2040, the vision for the region over the next 30 years, emphasizes the coordination of land use and transit as a strategy to “make the best use of public and private investments” and increase options for urban living in the region.

The TOD Policy provides a framework for the Metropolitan Council to play a leadership role across sectors in TOD implementation while building upon the TOD-supportive activities that the Council has completed for years. The Metropolitan Council has an important stake in maximizing TOD potential to help foster efficient and economic growth for all residents.
**Council-Owned Land Development**

The Council’s TOD Policy includes the goal of maximizing development impacts of transit investments, including developments on Council-owned land. In 2014, the TOD Office started an analysis of all Council-owned properties in the seven counties. The Office identified 116 parcels within a half-mile radius of transitways that are anticipated to be completed or under construction by 2020. While many properties are currently utilized for facilities, other parcels (including some Park & Ride facilities) may be underutilized or have redevelopment potential. The TOD Office consulted internal and external leaders about ways to categorize parcels in terms of their TOD-readiness. Suggestions included filtering by market strength and TOD potential and overlaying Council-owned land with other publicly-owned parcels for joint opportunities. The process of land prioritization and a strategy to use the parcels for development continues into 2015.

**Tools**

The TOD Office provides a first point of contact for developers and cities looking to learn more about TOD. In addition to its regional network of contacts and staff expertise, the TOD Office has produced TOD resources and tools in the past year. The new TOD Office website contains a TOD funding guide, a TOD and transitway planning guide, and transitway corridor information sheets. Additionally, the TOD Office maintains the Council’s TOD page which includes the regional TOD Classification Tool.

Visit metrotransit.org/tod to access TOD resources.

**Teams, Committees, and Project Participation**

TOD Staff participate in and contribute to a variety of projects, teams, and committees related to development, land use, and transit. In 2014, the TOD Office contributed to Livable Communities grants scoring, Local Planning Assistance’s TOD Guide, Engineering and Facilities projects, and a variety of plans and TOD applications within the organization and with external partners.
Partnership for Regional Opportunity

The TOD Office convened an external advisory group called the Partnership for Regional Opportunity (PRO) TOD group six times throughout 2014. PRO TOD is a subgroup of PRO, a regional initiative focused on equitable economic competitiveness. PRO TOD was composed of regional leaders from over 30 organizations and cities who gathered to share and discuss TOD best-practices. The meeting content focused on the coordination of TOD and transitway planning and implementation, TOD financing, equity, and joint development. During the course of the year, over 170 seats were filled by leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Leaders will continue to convene at four TOD events organized by the TOD Office in 2015.

Visit corridorsofopportunity.org/pro-work-areas/tod-work-group to access the content produced during 2014’s External Working Group meetings.

Communication and Information

As the lead advocate for TOD at the Metropolitan Council, TOD Office staff continuously provide transit information, referrals and assistance to cities and developers, and communicate TOD best-practices to various audiences. In 2014, the TOD Office provided ridership and transitway updates to developers, co-wrote an article for Finance and Commerce magazine’s TOD issue, and presented to the Rail~Volution conference and the ULI Committee on Land Use and Transportation Coordination.

Equitable TOD

Equity is one of the four primary TOD goals specified in the TOD Policy. Jobs, activities, and diverse housing types along transitways can increase opportunity for residents. The TOD Office has created a 2015 Equitable TOD Work Plan which includes the following activities for the upcoming year:

• Work with partners to apply the principles and test the Twin Cities Equitable Development Scorecard, developed by the Community Engagement Steering Committee, on a pilot project.

• Meet with internal engagement staff and external partners to implement the Public Engagement Plan.

• Incorporate equity into the 2015 Quarterly TOD Events.

Visit corridorsofopportunity.org pro-work-areas/tod-work-group to read the full Equitable TOD Work plan.
2015 Work Plan

2015 will be the TOD Office’s first full year of activities and will involve hiring two new full-time staff. While 2014 was a startup year involving capacity-building, 2015 will involve full implementation of the TOD Policy. Implementation tasks include developing a program for using TOD funding sources, defining a TOD solicitation process and joint development procedures, and determining redevelopment or development sites.

The full TOD Office Work Plan specifies upcoming activities listed by the strategies defined by the Council’s TOD Policy.

Strategy 1: Prioritize Resources
1. Develop program for investing TOD funding sources.
2. Coordinate and align existing Met Council funding sources with TOD Policy.
3. Monitor federal grant opportunities.
4. Ongoing compilation of existing TOD funding resources.

Strategy 2: Focus on Implementation
1. Define TOD solicitation process, issue at least one solicitation for development in 2015.
2. Establish joint development procedures.
3. Determine potential sites for re-development of Council-owned property.
4. Test the “Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard.” Work with partner groups to revise, if needed, and incorporate into TOD project evaluations.

Strategy 3: Effective Communication
1. Track projects on transitways region-wide.
2. Produce and share annual TOD report.
3. Develop relationships with major regional TOD stakeholders, including state agencies, universities, and foundations.

Strategy 4: Collaborate with Partners
1. Convene quarterly events on TOD topics.
2. Convene TOD Office external advisory groups as needed on specific issues and programs.
3. Provide transitway projects with expertise on integrating transit with land use and best-practices for TOD.

Strategy 5: Coordinate Internally
2. Convene the TOD working group monthly.
3. Participate in TOD related programs and projects across the organization.

Metro Transit TOD Office Staff
Lucy Galbraith, AICP - Director
lucy.galbraith@metrotransit.org

Amy Geisler - Development
amy.geisler@metrotransit.org

Allison Bell - Program Manager
allison.bell@metrotransit.org

Contact us at:
tod@metrotransit.org
Metrotransit.org/tod