

## **DRAFT POLICY – Transit Oriented Development (TOD)**

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### **I. Policy:**

The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Policy provides a framework for the Metropolitan Council to play a leadership role across sectors and political subdivisions in the planning and implementation of TOD throughout the region. Transit Oriented Development is walkable, moderate to high density development served by frequent transit with a mix of housing, retail, and employment choices designed to allow people to live and work without need of a personal automobile.

The Metropolitan Council, as the regional planning agency and transit provider, has an important stake in maximizing TOD potential along existing and proposed transit corridors. TOD advances the Council’s mission to “Foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region” by capitalizing on its investments to realize the vision of a prosperous, livable and sustainable metropolitan region for people of all income levels, races, ethnicities and abilities.

The Metropolitan Council will advance four TOD goals:



**Figure 1.  
Metropolitan  
Council TOD  
Goals**

Recognizing that land use, zoning and development approvals are local decisions, the Council places a strong priority on partnering and coordinating with communities, many of whom have or are developing their own TOD programs, policies and goals.

As part of this Policy, the Council will pursue five key strategies to advance the TOD goals in a transparent and collaborative fashion across the agency and with external community partners:

- 1. Prioritize Resources:** Prioritize TOD in the planning, engineering and operation of transit; Prioritize TOD in the development of Council-owned land and facilities.
- 2. Focus on Implementation:** Pursue private sector and local government partnerships to accelerate development and land acquisition for TOD; Develop and share technical resources and education materials to improve regional TOD capacity.
- 3. Effective Communication:** Provide clear policy guidance to local partners concerning the types of plans and local controls that will be needed to effectively implement these policies; Provide on-going and publicly accessible information on TOD; Connect partners with site-specific TOD resources and opportunities.
- 4. Collaborate with Partners:** Engage with communities and private sector stakeholders in TOD and joint development activities including policy development and specific Council-led projects; Engage with local partners in station area planning to enable TOD.
- 5. Coordinate Internally:** Align TOD goals into clear outcome-based criteria for grant, loan and transportation funding programs; Integrate TOD goals into regional planning documents.

## **II. Purpose of policy:**

The purpose of this policy is to guide the activities to advance TOD throughout the Metropolitan Council from transit service provision to regional planning, grant making, data collection and technical assistance. The Council has an important stake in successful TOD as the regional agency charged with building and operating the transit system, guiding regional development and transportation investments, supporting affordable housing and providing regional access to opportunity.

TOD involves multiple partners and regional stakeholders, from local governments to private developers. This policy communicates the Council's TOD priorities to its implementation and planning partners.

## **III. Background and reasons for policy:**

The Metropolitan Council has engaged in TOD-supportive activities for decades. The 2030 Regional Development Framework and 2030 Transportation Policy Plan reference the need to coordinate land use and transportation, and include strategies for strengthening transitway corridor potential. The passage of the Metropolitan Livable Communities Act (LCA) in 1995 was a legislative effort to provide the Council with financial tools to implement the 2030 Regional Development Framework. Furthermore, it signaled state recognition for the need to stimulate housing, economic and community development in the seven-county region. Since the opening of the region's first light rail line in 2004 the Metropolitan Council has steadily evolved its involvement in supporting development around high-frequency transit lines to support transit ridership and regional development goals. In 2011, the Council created the Livable Communities TOD grant category (LCA-TOD), which, to date, has directed \$26.2 million in funding to development projects within established and emerging station areas. The Metropolitan Council has also issued Regional Transitway Guidelines encouraging local communities along transitways to complete station

area land use plans that reflect best practices in TOD planning and design, and has previously issued a Guide for Transit-Oriented Development. In July 2013, the Council approved the TOD Strategic Action Plan, signaling its long-term commitment to serving as a regional TOD leader.

During this period, the Federal Transit Administration has also placed increasing importance on the adoption of programs and policies by transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations and local governments to support TOD. The Federal Guidance for Major Capital Investment Grants including New Starts and Small Starts, which was finalized in August 2013 evaluates proposed transit projects on the existence of TOD-supportive land use and economic development policies.

**IV. Implementation/Accountability:**

The TOD Policy was developed in alignment with the Council’s forthcoming Thrive MSP 2040 regional framework and 2040 Transportation Policy Plan. Future system plans and policies on joint development and land acquisition will provide technical guidance to inform specific implementation efforts.

The Metropolitan Council’s Office of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD Office) was established in July 2013 to lead the implementation of TOD and to coordinate efforts across different Council program areas and divisions. To that aim, a TOD Working Group has been created and staffed from Council departments with TOD-related activities. Figure 2 below shows its composition. Through the leadership of the TOD Office, the TOD Working Group is responsible for implementing the TOD Policy, ensuring consistency across TOD-related activities, sharing information and resources about TOD-related activities across the organization, and aligning efforts to achieve Council TOD goals.

**Figure 2. TOD Working Group Composition across Metropolitan Council Departments**

