

Transit works more effectively when there are concentrations of housing, jobs, and other uses. Policies in the 2040 *Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)* address this in two ways: 1) the density of future residential development; and 2) planning for activity that generates ridership, such as employment, schools, retail, and recreational uses. This Fact Sheet summarizes how these policies apply, including how they vary by transit types and community designations in *Thrive MSP 2040*.

### STATION AREAS ALONG TRANSITWAYS

Light Rail Transit (LRT), Commuter Rail, Dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and Highway BRT represent the highest level of regional investment in transit. As a result, policy expectations for residential density and levels of activity are highest for their station areas. A key planning task for local governments is to identify locations where these policy expectations apply.

Comprehensive plans must identify not only the route and station locations, but also the geography of station areas. These requirements apply to existing transitways, transitways under construction, and transitways where the locations of future stations have been finalized. The Local Planning Handbook Fact Sheet, [Transit Station Guidance](#), explains the timing of planning activities for transitways and their stations.

The *TPP* defines each transit station area as within a half-mile radius of the station, about 503 acres. The half-mile distance roughly approximates a 10-minute walk. This approach is consistent with practices of the Federal Transit Administration. Since actual walking distances vary, the directness and quality of walking routes is addressed in more detail during station area planning.

Station areas defined by a half-mile radius may overlap. Your City should define mutually-exclusive station areas to simplify land use analysis and avoid double counting. Overlapping station areas should be divided, as illustrated in Figure 1. In some cases, stations may be spaced more closely together because they serve dense areas with similar planned land uses. In these cases, station areas could be combined, as illustrated in Figure 2. Please consult your [Sector Representative](#) for further assistance as you consider combining station areas.

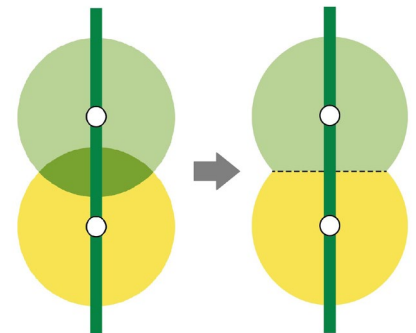


Figure 1: Most station areas should have mutually exclusive geographies.

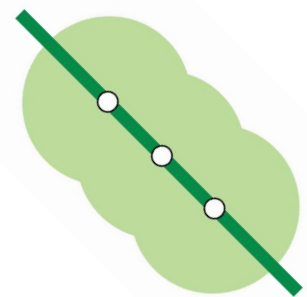


Figure 2: We recommend combining closely spaced station areas that have similar planned land uses.

### RESIDENTIAL DENSITY NEAR TRANSIT

The *TPP* requires that areas planned for new development or redevelopment near transit meet average minimum residential densities. Density requirements vary by transit type and community designation. The *TPP* has residential density requirements for station areas along fixed or dedicated transitways as well as highway BRT. In addition, there are residential density requirements for areas near Arterial BRT as well as along local bus routes that are part of the [High Frequency Network](#). Sometimes these different geographic areas overlap. When this happens, the geography with the higher requirements applies. Figure 5 at the end of this Fact Sheet shows the geographic extent of this policy for existing and planned transit.

#### Average Minimum Density

Communities must plan for minimum residential densities that are consistent with the type of transit and their community designation. (See Table 3-1 in [Chapter 3 of the TPP](#) and Table 1 below.) This policy applies to areas targeted for new development or redevelopment. Within each station area, the average of all areas targeted for development or redevelopment should meet the minimum.

Table 1. Average Minimum Residential Density Requirements (dwelling units per acre)

Right-of-Way Type	Transit Type	Geography	Urban Center	Urban	Suburban	Suburban Edge / Emerging Suburban Edge
Fixed or Dedicated Transitway	Light Rail Transit Commuter Rail Dedicated BRT	half-mile radius	50	25	20	15
Highway Transitway (MnPass / HOV)	Highway BRT	half-mile radius	25	12	10	8
Shared Rights-of-Way	Arterial BRT	quarter-mile radius	15	15	15	15
	Local Bus Routes on High Frequency Network	quarter-mile along route	10	10	10	10

### Recommended Target Density

The *TPP* also identifies target densities that best support transit, as shown in Table 2 below. We encourage your City to explore opportunities to guide land at these higher densities, or to consider scenarios where this level of density might be possible or desirable.

Table 2. Target Residential Densities (dwelling units per acre)

Right-of-Way Type	Transit Type	Geography	Urban Center	Urban	Suburban	Suburban Edge / Emerging Suburban Edge
Fixed or Dedicated Transitway	Light Rail Transit Commuter Rail Dedicated BRT	half-mile radius	75-150+	50-100+	40-75+	40-75+
Highway Transitway (MnPass / HOV)	Highway BRT	half-mile radius	40-75+	25-50+	20-40+	20-40+
Shared Rights-of-Way	Arterial BRT	quarter-mile radius	20-60+	20-60+	20-60+	20-60+
	Local Bus Routes on High Frequency Network	quarter-mile along route	15-60+	15-60+	15-60+	15-60+

## ACTIVITY NEAR TRANSITWAY STATIONS

Activity refers to land uses that can generate trips on transit. A concentrated mix of uses makes transit more cost-effective and competitive for funding. Besides residential land uses, other uses that generate activity include employers, schools, retail, entertainment, and recreation. Chapter 3 of the *TPP* includes a guideline that each half-mile station area along transitways, including Highway BRT, achieve a combined total of at least 7,000 residents, jobs, and/or students. The guideline was developed to support major transit infrastructure. Many station areas already meet this target, and the Council has baseline data for Activity Levels. The guideline of 7,000 does not apply to Arterial BRT or local bus routes that are part of the High Frequency Network.

### Divided Station Areas

The geography of some station areas may be smaller than others after overlapping areas are split, as illustrated in Figure 3. These stations typically have higher levels of existing or planned density. The Activity Level Guideline is 7,000 for each area.

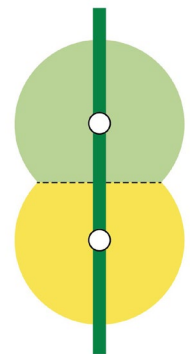


Figure 3: The Activity Level Guideline for each station area is 7,000.

### Combined Station Areas

If you choose to combine station areas, as illustrated in Figure 4, the Activity Level Guideline will be proportional to the number of stations. For example, if there are three stations, the Activity Level Guideline would be 21,000.

### Development Challenges & Constraints

Some station areas may have development challenges or constraints. Challenges might include weak market demand or unsupportive development patterns. Constraints might include interstate highways, railroad rights-of-way, large parks, or major water bodies. Some of these features, however, may also enhance opportunities for development. Your comprehensive plan should address challenges and constraints in station areas, including strategies to overcome them.

If development challenges and constraints are significant, your community can propose an alternative to the Activity Level Guideline based on market studies and planning analysis. During the review of your comprehensive plan, we will consider such information as we review for consistency with policy. Please consult your [Sector Representative](#) for assistance.

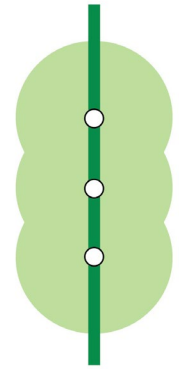


Figure 4: The Activity Level Guideline for this combined area is 21,000.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW

Please refer to the checklist of minimum requirements for your comprehensive plan that are related to transit. You can find your checklist on your [Community Page](#). In addition, keep in mind the following questions for station areas.

- As with the rest of your comprehensive plan, do you identify locations near transit for development or redevelopment?
- Are the areas identified above guided so that the average minimum density meets the minimum required, as shown in Table 1?
- Can you demonstrate how new development will impact the future Activity Level?

### FAQS:

The Metropolitan Council has discussed the issue of density and activity levels with communities since the adoption of the *TPP*. Below are some of the most common questions raised.

**Q: *How much flexibility do we have in defining station areas?***

A: Communities can adjust boundaries based on accessibility. If small portions of station areas are difficult to access because of barriers (e.g., rivers and highways), you can propose excluding that portion from policy requirements. You should not exclude them, however, if they could become more accessible in time. Please consult your [Sector Representative](#) to discuss your rationale.

**Q: *When should I consider combining station areas for analysis?***

A: We recommend that you combine station areas only when the stations are spaced closely together and the planned land uses and densities are similar, such as for a central business district.

**Q: *Do we have to map station areas for Arterial BRT, or for local bus routes that are part of the High Frequency Network?***

A: You must address density policies for Arterial BRT (quarter-mile radius from stations) and along bus routes that are part of the High Frequency Network (quarter-mile from route). We need you to map these locations with summary information that is consistent with the mapping.

**Q: *How do I estimate future Activity Levels?***

A: You should apply assumptions about planned growth to the baseline data we provide. Factors include employment densities, residential density, household size, and projected student populations. See also the resources listed below under We Can Help.

**Q: *Can I divide the overlap of the station areas in some other way?***

A: Yes. You can define non-overlapping station areas in ways that make sense to your community, such as along roads. Please keep in mind that our baseline Activity Level data is estimated by splitting the overlap in half.

**Q: What happens if our plan *can't* support 7,000 residents, employees, or students?**

A: Your plan should support land uses and other policies that take advantage of transit and promote its use. Activity also includes retail, entertainment, hotels, parks, and entertainment uses. Please consult your [Sector Representative](#) if your City wants to propose an alternative to the minimum Activity Level Guideline because of significant market constraints and challenges.

**Q: What if a station area is in *more than one city*?**

A: Each City must meet the minimum density requirements for their portion of the station area. Because the planning area is smaller, the Activity Level Guideline of 7,000 will be adjusted proportionately.

## WE CAN HELP

Your [Sector Representative](#) in Local Planning Assistance can assist you with policy and data questions you have. Below are some links that may be useful for your work.

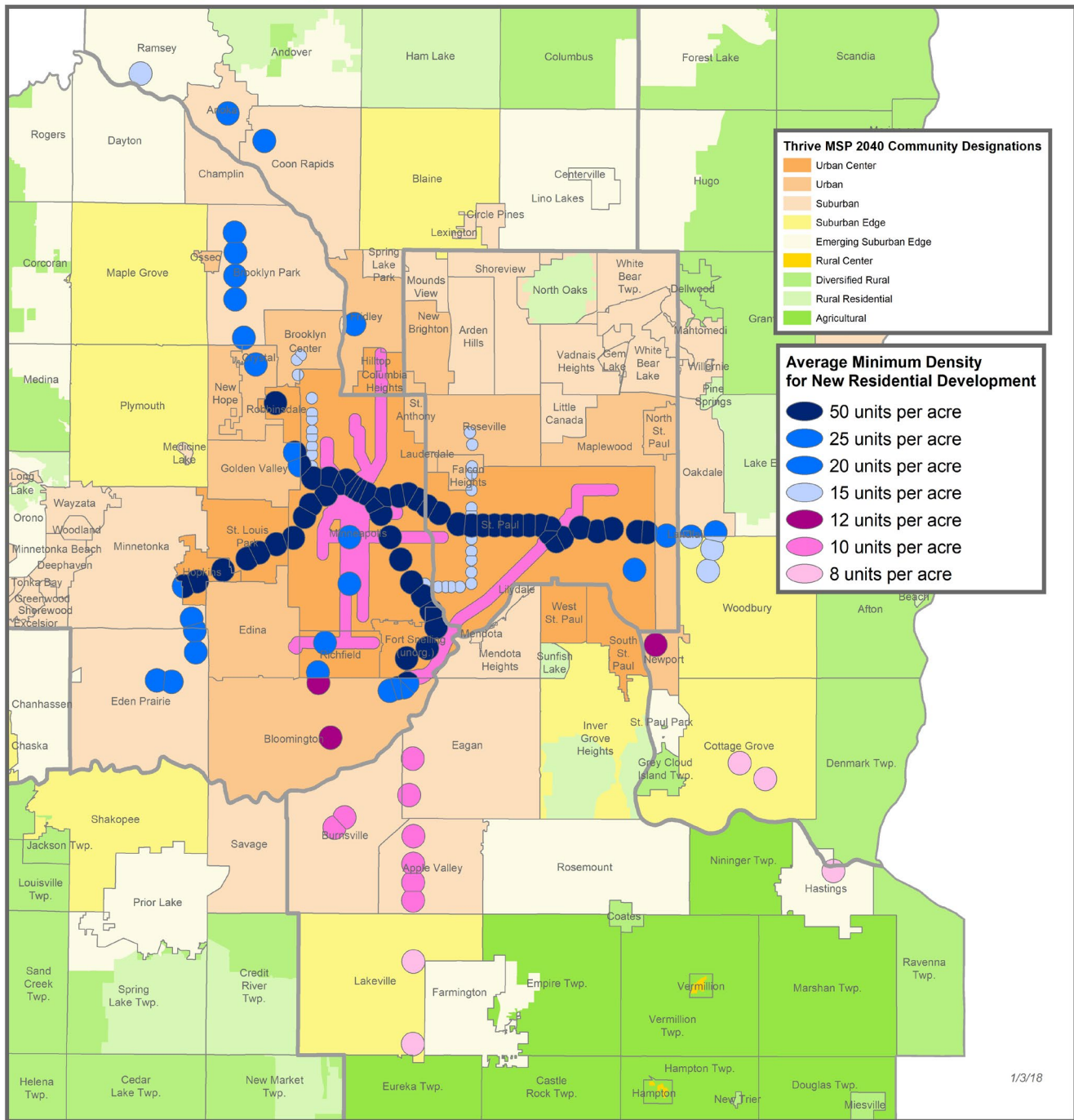
### Local Planning Handbook Resources

- Review your Checklist of Minimum Planning Requirements (located on your [Community Page](#))
- Consult the [Transit Station Guidance](#) Fact Sheet, which explains the timing of various planning activities for transit corridors and station areas.
- Consult the [Measuring Employment](#) Fact Sheet.
- Refer to the section on [Density, Diversity, and Design](#) in the online [TOD Guide](#).

### Online Mapping and Data Resources

- Existing Transitways & Arterial BRT
  - [Alignments](#)
  - [Station locations](#)
- Planned Transitways & Arterial BRT
  - [Alignments](#)
  - [Station locations](#)
- [High-Frequency Network](#)
- [Density and Activity Level GIS and Data Files](#)

Figure 5: TPP Density Policy for Transit



Please note that this map is based on transitways that are part of the Current Revenue Scenario of the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (adopted January 2015), or as modified by changes to the Locally Preferred Alternative for the future METRO Gold Line. The geographic areas shown on this map could change as projects advance through planning, or if priorities change. Changes to this map are expected as part of the 2018 Update to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan. Please contact your Sector Representative if you are uncertain about the status of transitway planning and projects. Density policies take effect and apply to local comprehensive plans when station locations have been finalized.