Overview: Transit Oriented Development Classification Tool

The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Classification Tool provides information to communities to prioritize investments in transit station areas in the Minneapolis - St. Paul region. Station areas are differentiated based on transit orientation and market potential in individual station areas and scoring them on a comparative basis. The TOD Classification Tool can help the region identify the different kinds of investments that make sense in different places at different times.

Station areas are scored on 9 different metrics (shown in the Transit Orientation and Market Potential diagrams to the right) and fall into these five implementation types:

- **Raise the Bar**: development potential is ready to support TOD and transit connections
- **Catalyze**: strong urban form in emerging or cool markets
- **Connect**: warm markets but with auto-oriented urban form
- **Transition**: auto-oriented urban form in cooler markets
- **Plan and Partner**: cool market areas with little existing urban form to support TOD

The Classification Tool can be used for:
- Planners to determine recommended investment and action steps for station areas
- Developers for guidance on regional or local markets
- Anyone looking for a regional language to quantify development potential in transit station areas

Scores are tallied and graphed based on Transit Orientation and Market Potential

Station areas are scored on 9 different metrics (Example: Fairview Avenue station)
User’s Guide Summary

The goals for the TOD Classification Tool are to:
• Prioritize and drive public and private investment in TOD
• Coordinate actors making investments
• Inform local community strategies

To achieve those goals, the TOD Classification Tool can:
• Differentiate TOD areas based on quantitative factors
• Measure TOD readiness
• Create a shared understanding of priority needs

The TOD Classification Tool is not meant to replace local planning and policy decisions, nor will it be the sole measure used to determine where to make transit-oriented investments. Instead, the Tool provides a framework for decision-making.

The TOD Classification Tool sorts stations into five implementation types, based on a quantitative assessment of 1) their market potential for transit-oriented development and 2) how transit-oriented the station area is today. The methodology is described in detail in the Classification Tool User’s Guide appendices.

Implementation Types and Activities

Based on the quantitative analysis, each implementation type is prioritized for a different set of activities. Priority activities for each type are those that will be most effective at driving the private market to build TOD projects. The activities vary in relevance for the five classifications and include infrastructure improvements, placemaking, design and zoning, planning and visioning, affordable housing strategies, economic development strategies, and others.

The Tool measures existing conditions in a station area, but does not imply that all station areas should be moving towards one ideal vision of TOD. TOD will look different in different contexts across the region. Station areas are scored on 9 different metrics (shown in the Transit Orientation and Market Potential diagrams to the right) and fall into these five implementation types:
**Raise the Bar:** These stations have strong existing transit-orientation and TOD development potential. Conditions are ready to support the highest-quality TOD. Investment activities are not needed to spur the market, so much as to “raise the bar” to ensure that high potential is achieved. Many of these station areas are in the major urban job centers (downtowns) in the region, and economic development investments should leverage the existing urban form. Several Raise the Bar station areas overlap significantly with Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty (RCAPs).

Example: *Nicollet Mall Station* (Blue and Green Lines)

**“Raise the Bar” Implementation Priorities:**
- Increase densities
- Lower parking maximums
- Design high-quality pedestrian environments
- Incorporate place-making investments (hard infrastructure and programming)
- Support small business retention and development with financing
- Support affordable housing, grocery stores, and financial institutions in station areas with social equity priorities

**Catalyze:** These station areas have strong urban form but are in cooler or emerging markets that could benefit from catalytic private development. Public and private sector investments and residential development can be transformative for these station areas. Mixed-income housing may be an affordable housing priority in neighborhoods that are areas of concentrated poverty — in order to both invest in these places and provide a broader mix of incomes. Many Catalyze station areas are on the edges of major regional job centers or are located in or near regional and subregional centers. Affordable housing strategies in Catalyze areas may prioritize supporting mixed-income housing, particularly in RCAPs. Economic development projects can be a major force in sparking the private market in these areas.

Example: *Western Ave* (Green Line)

**‘Catalyze” Implementation Priorities:**
- Execute model TOD projects to show development can work in different markets
- Utilize public financial tools such as land assembly, tax increment financing (TIF), tax abatement, special assessment bonding, joint venture investment, and brownfield remediation
- Invest in placemaking, urban amenities, and infrastructure to improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment
- Support neighborhood anchor institutions
- Support mixed-income housing and public sector facilities that link lower-income residents to opportunity in station areas with social equity priorities

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*Figure: Raise the Bar and Catalyze station areas in the Twin Cities TOD Classification Tool.*
Connect: These station areas have warm real estate markets, but their urban form is more auto-oriented than transit-oriented. Some of these stations are in strong suburban activity centers and may require significant investments to add pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Others are in residential markets with high land values where redevelopment may be challenging if zoning and infrastructure investments do not support density. Infrastructure investments, such as connectivity improvements, have the potential to transform these areas into more transit-oriented places.
Example: Bloomington Central (Blue Line)

“Connect” Implementation Priorities:
- Invest in pedestrian, bicycle, and street improvements
- Ensure that multi-modal transit connections are smooth and facilities are well-connected
- Utilize TIF districts, public improvement districts, or other mechanisms that allow the developments that benefit from the investments to contribute to those investments.

Transition: These station areas are in cooler markets and are more auto-oriented in nature compared to Catalyze and Raise the Bar areas. Smaller scale investments, such as investments in planning, zoning, and infrastructure, are essential to prepare these station areas to transition from planning to implementation. Because these efforts will set the stage for more catalytic investments in connectivity and development, they should be prioritized in places where initial planning and visioning is just beginning, such as along the Bottineau and Gateway Corridors. They have a more auto-oriented urban form and a weaker market but could change as smaller scale investments set the stage for implementation.
Example: Southwest Station (Green Line extension)

“Transition” Implementation Priorities:
- Plan for TOD investments: zone and guide to make station areas “development ready”
- Invest in smaller-scale infrastructure and public facilities
- Engage the community and make sure they are on board
- Complete feasibility studies
Plan and Partner: Station areas that fall into Plan and Partner are in cool market areas and have very little existing urban form to support TOD. They are located on the outskirts of the region, and some stations are surrounded today by farmland. These station areas have the least preexisting market or transit-oriented potential. Regional efforts should focus on beginning the visioning and planning conversations.

Example: Coon Rapids (Northstar)

“Plan and Partner” Implementation Priorities:
• Partner with local communities to create a vision for TOD and set near-term expectations
• Identify the kinds of investments that could make these places more transit-oriented over the long-term
• Monitor market conditions as transitway planning advances to help identify if and when these stations move into another category while local stakeholders can start engaging with community members and business leaders
**About the Classification Tool**

**Development of the Tool:**

The Tool was developed by Reconnecting America and funded by the McKnight Foundation in partnership with the Metropolitan Council. The advisory committee on this project included representatives from state, regional, county, and local government and the private sector who are responsible for allocating the resources related to implementing TOD across the region. These include staff from GreaterMSP, ULI, the Met Council, Hennepin County, Minnesota Housing, DEED, local jurisdictions and the McKnight Foundation.

**Case Studies:**

Similar classification tools or typologies in the Baltimore, Portland, Pittsburgh, Boston, Seattle, and Washington DC regions provide a regional framework for investments in station areas. These typologies are not designed to supplant local or citywide initiatives such as station area planning or zoning, but offer guidance on understanding implementation needs across an entire fixed-guideway system. Classifying study areas in a series of implementation types helps to differentiate between unique kinds of places, and coordinate appropriate sets of investments for each place.

**Recommendations for Long Term Use of the Tool:**

- Update the TOD Classification Tool using the methodology outlined in Appendix A of the Classification Tool User’s Guide, but not more than every five years.
- Develop implementation strategies for each place type that are tied to the opening of the transit line.

Read the full Classification Tool User’s Guide at www.metrocouncil.org

For questions about the Classification Tool, contact the TOD Office at TOD@metrotransit.org