

GUIDE FOR TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW



Across the country, communities are “putting two and two together” and getting more than the usual answer. Over the past several decades, cities have been combining clusters of mixed land uses with transit stations and producing prime examples of efficient and livable growth patterns that make walking and transit use more convenient.

These transit-oriented developments (TODs) have appeared in urban and suburban settings from Seattle to Atlanta, from Chicago to Dallas.

This guide highlights key ideas about transit-oriented development and shows how local Twin Cities projects have put these ideas to work.

The suggestions outlined in this guide are advisory only and are not part of requirements of the Metropolitan Land Planning Act.

Please direct comments about this guide to [Connie Kozlak](#) at the Metropolitan Council.

What’s in a name?

“Transit-oriented development” is the term most commonly used, but several others are also in play – “transit-supportive development” and “transit-friendly development.”

- [Definitions of TOD](#)
- [Topic index](#)
- [Twin Cities project descriptions](#)
- [Information resources](#)

POTENTIAL TWIN CITIES MARKET FOR TOD

In the Twin Cities area, changing demographics, individual preferences and highway congestion have created a potential market for TOD-type projects.

Mirroring a national trend, the Twin Cities area is seeing population changes that are affecting the real estate market. Smaller homes close to amenities are becoming more attractive to members of the aging baby-boom generation who have graduated from child-rearing to empty-nest status.

The Twin Cities area will be home to one million more residents over 30 years. Congestion (measured in vehicle-miles traveled per day) is expected to grow by more than 51% over the same three decades.

TOD ELEMENTS

Transit-oriented developments (TODs) come in various sizes and shapes but they share common elements.

Compact Development



- Transit-supportive development: medium- to high-density housing and employment.
- TOD locations within comfortable walking distance of transit station or stop (about one-quarter mile).

Left: Excelsior on Grand, St. Louis Park

Right: Regency, Hopkins

Mix of Uses



- Diverse and complementary high-activity uses, such as retail, professional services, housing and employment, within the central area of a TOD and adjacent to transit.

Left: Wesley Commons, Golden Valley

Pedestrian Oriented



- Attractive pedestrian environment, with street-facing buildings and a network of pedestrian-scaled streets connecting the transit stop or station with the TOD's commercial, civic and residential areas.

*Left: Grand Place, St. Paul
Right: Liberty on the Lake, Stillwater*

Transportation Interfaces



- Transit facilities – rail and bus stations and stops – tailored to the level of transit service.
- Parking to accommodate transit users and TOD customers.

*Left: Hennepin and 28th Street Transit Station
Right: LRT/Bus Transfer Station*

BUILDING THE TRANSIT FOUNDATION

The foundation of transit-oriented development is transit.

To accommodate growing travel demand, the region and the state will build a system of transitways that includes light-rail transit (LRT), bus rapid transit (BRT), regular-route buses and commuter rail.

Guiding the construction of this foundation are two regional plans adopted by the Metropolitan Council – the [Regional Development Framework](#) and the [Transportation Policy Plan](#).

The *Framework* is a plan for how the Metropolitan Council—in partnership with local communities, builders, environmentalists and others—can guide the region’s growth and shape its future.

The Council’s *Transportation Policy Plan* details regional transportation goals, system plans and investment priorities to ensure an efficient, well-functioning system as the region’s population grows by one million by 2030.

- [Framework policies/strategies](#) for transportation
- [Framework map](#) showing where various transportation and transit strategies apply
- [Transportation policies/strategies](#) supporting transit-related development

Local Transit Arterials

Local bus service can help create opportunities for TODs in higher-density urban neighborhoods and moderate-density suburban areas.

Here, TODs are likely to take the form of a nearly continuous and narrow corridor of development with frequently spaced stops and high service levels. Each TOD could encompass land within a short walking distance of a bus stop or transfer station.

Local transit arterials – located within the I-494/694 ring – will have enhanced bus service to help support TODs. Selected transit arterials will enjoy new limited-stop routes, improved frequency and longer service hours.

Transit Corridors

The Metropolitan Council intends to provide improved and expanded transit service in two types of transit corridors:

- (1) express commuter-bus corridors, and
- (2) corridors with dedicated rights-of-way.

Transitways on dedicated right-of-way will be developed with a variety of transit modes, including bus rapid transit, light-rail or commuter rail facilities.

TRANSIT ARTERIALS, CORRIDORS AND MARKET AREAS

The most promising locations for TODs served by express commuter-bus corridors would be at the origin and destination of those corridors. For transitways on dedicated rights-of-way, they would be at station stops along the corridor.

The local transit arterials and major transit corridors traverse different [transit market areas](#) that generally form a concentric pattern, with the Minneapolis and Saint Paul downtowns at the center. These market areas vary in [characteristics](#) and thus in [transit services](#) corresponding to their respective needs and ridership productivity.

Mapping an [overlay](#) of the local transit arterials and transit corridors onto the transit market areas shows that the type of TODs along the arterials and corridors can vary according to the type of transit service tailored to each market area.

TODs vary by location, composition, size and function to fit their respective markets for transit, housing, retail and commercial space.



[Transit arterials/transitways](#)
(map)

- [Transit market areas](#) (map)
- [Market areas' transit service](#) (table)
- [Transit/market area overlay](#) (map)
- [Additional standards](#) for transit service and performance (Appendix M, *Transportation Policy Plan*)

[Transit market characteristics](#)

Urban Downtown

- Transit Market Area I
- TOD locations: Downtown Minneapolis and Saint Paul

Left: Nicollet Mall LRT Station

Right: Government Plaza LRT Station, Minneapolis



Urban Neighborhood/Corridor

- Transit Market Area I or II
- TOD locations: Older neighborhoods surrounding the two downtowns

Left: 46th Street LRT Station, Minneapolis



Suburban Town Center

- Transit Market Area II or III
- TOD locations: Concentrations of employment shopping, services and housing.

Left: Falcon Heights Town Square



Commuter Town

- Transit Market Area III or VI
- TOD locations: Park-and-ride facilities with express service to downtown Minneapolis and Saint Paul

Left: SouthWest Metro Transit Station, Eden Prairie

CHECKLIST

Each TOD project faces unique issues and challenges. Selecting ideas and tools from a range of options can mean tailored solutions that meet both the needs of a particular project and goals for the regional transit system. This checklist offers features and characteristics to consider in the development of TOD projects.

Compact Development

- **TOD scale:** TOD locations within convenient walking distance
- **Block size:** Small enough for quick pedestrian access
- **Land-Use Densities:** Sufficient to support transit and land uses
 - Residential
 - Commercial

[Compact Development section](#)

Mix of Uses

- **Creating a Destination Magnet:** Complementary land uses that work together to make a “neighborhood” focus
- **Retail:** Retail concentrated in central part of TOD, near transit
- **Residential Mix:** Broad range of housing types
- **Commercial:** Moderate-to-high intensity forms of employment
- **Civic Uses:** Attractive public spaces and buildings

[Mix of Uses section](#)**Pedestrian Orientation**

- **Creating an Attractive Setting:** Design, scale and quality of buildings, streets and landscaping
- **Building Placement and Features:** Street-facing buildings, windows and entrances, and building height
- **Design for Climate:** Shelter and protection from the weather
- **Street Connections:** A grid network of interconnected streets
- **Street Design:** Traffic management and pedestrian street crossings
- **Street Alignment:** Avoiding high traffic volumes through the TOD
- **Sidewalks:** Separation of pedestrians from traffic and sufficient maneuvering space
- **Bike Facilities:** Bike lanes and coordination with vehicle traffic
- **Connections to Surrounding Areas:** Providing adjacent neighborhoods with access to TOD opportunities
- **Barrier-Free Access:** Creating an environment that enables people with mobility impairments to navigate the TOD

[Pedestrian Orientation section](#)

[Transportation Interfaces section](#)

Transportation Interfaces

- **Transit Stops and Stations:** Central location in a TOD, designed various ways to meet different needs
 - Range of Transit Facilities
 - Transit Stop and Station Design
- **Parking in a TOD:** Sufficient but not excessive space, configured to keep the TOD pedestrian-friendly
 - Amount of Parking
 - TOD Parking Management Strategy
 - On-Street Parking
 - Surface Parking
 - Redeveloping Parking Lots
 - Structured Parking
- **Park-and-Rides:** Workable in particular situations
- **Bicycle Parking:** An element of a TOD's multi-modal nature

TWIN CITIES AREA PROJECTS

The last few years have seen a host of TOD-related projects developed in the Twin Cities area. The projects offer lessons about how TOD can work for cities, neighborhoods, developers and citizens.

[Project descriptions](#)[Lessons learned](#)

RESOURCES

The interest in transit-oriented development around the country has generated a wealth of information resources.

[Information resources](#)[Top of section](#)