POLICY

Transit-Oriented Communities Policy
RF 1-6

Category: Regional and Foundational Policies

Business Unit Responsible: MT: Transit-Oriented Development
CD: Metro HRA

Policy Owner: General Manager, Metro Transit
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Synopsis: Guides Council activities to advance Transit-Oriented Communities through transit planning and delivery, Council-owned land redevelopment, station area planning, funding, technical assistance, data, and performance measurement.

POLICY

Consistent with Imagine 2050 and its Land Use and Transportation Policy Plans, it is the policy of the Metropolitan Council (Council) to use its transit investments, land, funding, and authority to advance Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC), protecting and maximizing the long-term public value of the region's investment in transit.

As outlined in the Definitions section below, TOC is a station area or transit corridor; transit-oriented development (TOD) is an individual project in a station area; and joint development (JD) is a TOD project that uses Council property or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds. Every JD project is a TOD project, and TOD projects together build a TOC.

The Council will advance five TOC objectives that, together, grow transit ridership and advance the Imagine 2050 Regional Goals:

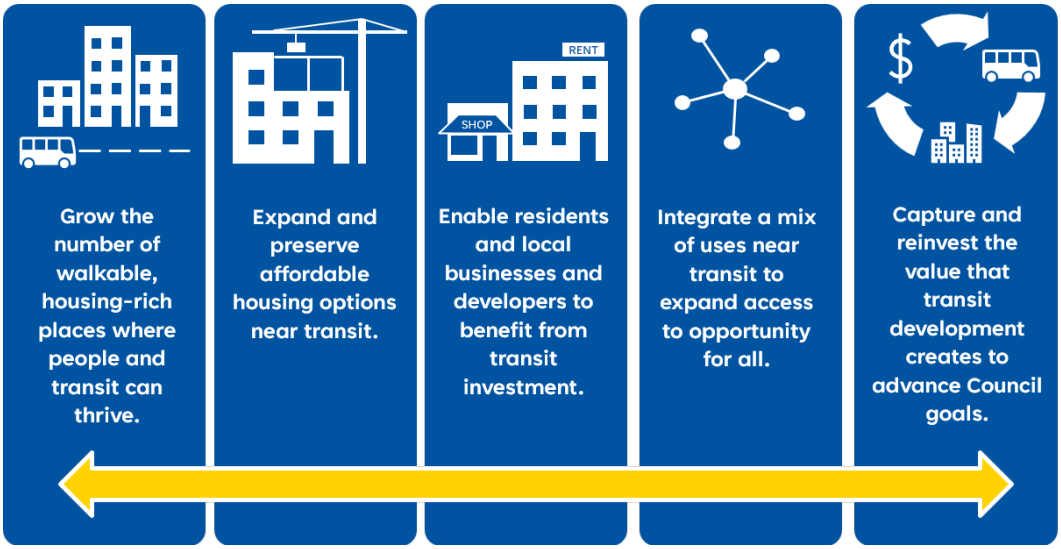

Figure 1 Metropolitan Council TOC Objectives

Local governments hold a key role in land use, zoning, and development approvals. The Council's transit investments, service, property decisions, grant programs, and funding restrictions also shape TOC. The Council places a strong priority on partnering with communities and will advance five TOC strategies consistent with its legal authority.

1. **Integrate TOD in transit planning, delivery, and operations.**
    a. Strategically structure and allocate transit capital and operating funds to enable TOD.
    b. Plan, design, and operate transit projects, service, and facilities to support TOD.
    c. Partner with local governments to strategically acquire land to maximize TOD potential, prioritizing sites where acquisition can prevent displacement and secure long-term affordability. The Council may also acquire land through a partnership between the TOD Office and the Metro Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA), consistent with applicable laws.

2. **Advance JD projects on Council-owned land.**
    a. Lead or support JD projects based on local government capacity, site conditions, and project complexity. The Council may only lead a JD through a partnership between the TOD Office and the Metro HRA, consistent with applicable laws.
    b. Prioritize land and air rights leases to support development near or above transit. Allow sales of land and air rights when leases are not feasible. The Council may only execute leases for JD directly with a public entity or, alternatively, with a private entity through a partnership between the TOD Office and the Metro HRA, consistent with applicable laws.
    c. Deliver JD with HRA purposes through a partnership between the TOD Office and the Metro HRA when it enables alignment of Council and local goals,

reduces project risk or cost, accelerates project delivery, or improves project outcomes.

d. Where fragmented ownership prevents or complicates development, the Council will consider selling, acquiring, or exchanging land to enable TOD. The Council may only sell, acquire, or exchange land for JD through a partnership between the TOD Office and the Metro HRA, consistent with applicable laws.
e. Reinvest revenue from JD projects in the TOD Fund to implement this policy and to cover FTA-eligible capital and operating expenditures.

3. **Support local governments' efforts to adopt and implement transit-supportive station area plans and policies.**
    a. Connect partners to federal, state, regional, and local funding and programs to support station area planning and policy.
    b. Support station area planning and policy, or lead when requested by local governments, in areas around and including Council-owned property.
    c. Support station area planning along transitways and high-frequency corridors, or lead when requested by local governments.
    d. Calibrate the Council's role in partnership with affected local governments based on local capacity, transit investment, and displacement risk.

4. **Ensure the Council's TOC objectives and strategies are integrated into Council plans, policies, and funding programs.**
    a. Review Council plans, policies, procedures, programs, funding criteria, local planning guidance, and technical resources against Imagine 2050 Goals and the TOC objectives in this policy and align them where they are inconsistent.
    b. Contribute TOC expertise and data to Council working groups and initiatives whose work affects TOC objectives.

5. **Evaluate implementation and progress toward the TOC objectives.**
    a. Develop and track regional TOC metrics, building on the Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program.
    b. Develop and track portfolio-level JD metrics for Council-owned land.

Definitions

Transit-oriented community: A *TOC* is a station area or transit corridor with high-frequency transit service, medium- to high-density development, a mix of uses, and walkable, multimodal streets, where people can safely and comfortably reach their destinations without reliance on a personal vehicle.

Transit-oriented development: *TOD* is an individual development or redevelopment project within a station area that is designed and sited to provide safe, comfortable multimodal connections to transit and that adds housing, jobs, services, amenities, or destinations to the surrounding area. TOD is how a station area or corridor moves toward TOC — the strongest projects add what the surrounding area most lacks — but no single project, by itself, creates a TOC.

Joint Development: Federal law and FTA guidance define *JD* as a public transportation project integrated with commercial, residential, or other non-transit development. In this policy, JD

means a TOD project that uses Council-owned real property or FTA funds. FTA joint development requirements apply only when a project uses FTA funds or federally funded property.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to guide and align Council operational decisions and activities that shape TOC, including transit planning, service and facility planning and delivery, real estate transactions, TOD project delivery, its role in station area planning, regional and local policy coordination, housing and economic development coordination, funding, technical assistance, data, and performance measurement. The TOC Policy is intended to clarify the Council's operational role, establish consistent expectations for internal and external partners, and provide direction for implementation procedures.

BACKGROUND & REASONS FOR POLICY

The region is making a substantial and sustained investment in transit, and the return on that investment depends on what surrounds it. Transit produces very different ridership, cost recovery, and regional benefit depending on the density, mix of uses, and walkability of the places it serves. The 2050 Land Use Policy Plan sets the Council's objectives and policies for managing growth across the region and in relationship to its regional transit investments, including setting expectations for how local governments plan for these areas. The Council has a responsibility to protect and maximize the long-term value of that investment, and TOC is the most effective and durable means of doing so.

The Council has maintained a formal TOD Policy since 2013. Since then, the regional transit network, the number of station areas, and Council-owned development opportunities have grown substantially; implementation experience has shown the need for clearer procedures and more consistent cross-departmental coordination; and national practice continues to evolve and improve.

Imagine 2050, adopted in 2025, provides the regional vision and goals that guide the Council's plans, programs, investments, and partnerships, and recognizes the importance of transit-oriented places. TOC meaningfully advances every Imagine 2050 goal. This policy provides operational direction for additional Council roles in advancing TOC.

This TOC Policy aligns with federal policy. The FTA weighs transit-supportive land use, plans, and policies when evaluating major capital investments; funds station area planning competitively; and, through its joint development guidance, encourages transit agencies to retain and leverage property with a federal interest to support development near transit. A robust TOC Policy aligned with federal policy makes the Council a more competitive applicant for federal transit funding.

IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

The TOD Office is responsible for coordinating implementation of the TOC Policy across the Metropolitan Council. The TOD Office will maintain the Council's JD project portfolio, support

implementation of TOC-related procedures, facilitate coordination among Council business units and external partners, and monitor progress toward the objectives established in this TOC Policy.

Implementation of the TOC Policy is a shared Council responsibility. Council business units whose plans, programs, funding, property interests, or decisions affect TOC or TOD outcomes are responsible for participating at appropriate stages and carrying out their respective operational, financial, legal, technical, and programmatic responsibilities. The TOD Office is responsible for coordinating and supporting this work but does not replace the authorities or responsibilities assigned to other Council business units. The TOD Office and the Metro HRA will coordinate any Council action involving the exercise of HRA authorities under this policy.

Council procedures, listed below, establish the processes, roles, decision points, and approvals needed to implement this policy. The TOD Office will convene a cross-departmental project team, including the Metro HRA, for each JD project. The TOD Office will facilitate opportunities for internal collaboration and information sharing. The TOD Office will track and periodically report on regional TOC outcomes, the Council's JD portfolio, and implementation barriers and will recommend updates to policy, procedures, Council practices, or law as needed.

PROCEDURES

- [IN DEVELOPMENT] RF 1-6x TOD Priority Site Redevelopment Procedure
- [IN DEVELOPMENT] RF 1-6x TOD Financial Interests, Transaction Strategy, and Reinvestment Procedure
- [IN DEVELOPMENT] RF 1-6x TOC Integration in Transit Planning, Design, Delivery, and Operations Procedure

RESOURCES

Related Policies

- RF 1-2 Affordable Housing Policy
- RF 1-5 Transportation Planning and Transit Services Policy
- RF 1-7 Transitway Advancement Policy
- RF 7-2 Use of Council Property Policy
- FM 9-1 Real Estate Policy
- FM 12-1 Sources of Revenue Policy
- FM 12-3 Transit Funding Allocation Policy

Procedures

- RF 7-2c Use of Council Property Procedure

Other Resources (training, relevant links)

- Imagine 2050
- FTA Circular 7050.1C

HISTORY

Version 3 – Major Revision

Version 2 – Template Update
10/12/2020 - Updated content into new template.

Version 1 – Approval Date
11/13/2013

Last Reviewed Date
01/02/2014

Next Content Review Date
01/02/2015

Former Reference #
1-4

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