

MEMORANDUM

To: Twin Cities Metro Area Healthy Communities Planning Project Team

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**Re: Indicator Analysis: Transit Oriented Development for Metropolitan Communities
Twin Cities Metro Area Healthy Communities Planning Project**

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Indicator: Transit-Oriented Development

The following discussion includes key findings and analysis of the reviewed comprehensive plans regarding the transit-oriented development (TOD) health indicator. The Project Team define transit-oriented development as a form of mixed-use development that is designed around public transportation. TOD includes transit infrastructure, compact housing, and commercial development.

Overall Takeaways

In total, 33 of the studied communities include transit-oriented development as part of their comprehensive plan. When taken as a whole, these communities seem to approach transit-oriented development through focusing redevelopment on already existing transit infrastructure and ensuring their land use designations are conducive to transit-oriented development. Equity considerations were primarily found in urban plans, focusing on TOD's benefits for lower income and older households. Below are some common examples of approaches plans used to improve transit-oriented development, along with the number of communities who mentioned each approach.

Equity

Overall, the project researchers found that urban communities incorporated equity when approaching transit-oriented development in their plans. The major theme for approaching equity in urban communities is to emphasize transit-oriented development's benefits for older and low-income citizens. This is described in-depth below in the urban community designation section.

Redevelopment around Already Existing Transit Infrastructure

Many communities focus their efforts to create TOD into the redevelopment of areas around already existing transit infrastructure. Both **North St. Paul** and **Roseville** intend to “promote and support transit-oriented development and redevelopment near existing and future transit corridors” (North St. Paul, 83; Roseville, 124). **Columbia Heights** models their TOD density ranges on “land uses located along high-frequency bus corridors (existing and planned)” (Columbia Heights, 51). Focusing on redevelopment or land allows cities to develop areas that they already know can attract the densities required for TOD.

Land Use Designations

Additionally, many communities create local policies to ensure TOD is included in their cities by creating a land use designation for it, as either their own TOD zoning district, or a type of TOD overlay zone. **Brooklyn Center** and others created “TOD [which] is a new land use designation that is planned for a mix of residential, commercial, office and retail uses” (Brooklyn Center, 69). **Falcon Heights** combines TOD with other uses, creating the “Mixed Use Residential - TOD designation [... with] a mix of 50 to 90% residential uses, 25% to 50% commercial uses, and 0% to 25% office uses occurring either horizontally or vertically,” demonstrating its desire to focus on housing in transit-oriented developments (Falcon Heights, 56). **Coon Rapids** went a slightly different route, creating a “Transit Mixed Use Overlay” (Coon Rapids, 27).

Interesting and Innovative Approaches

Some of the most interesting approaches communities take in addressing transit-oriented development include explicitly connecting TOD to health.

Explicitly Connecting TOD to Health

A few communities make explicit the link between TOD and the health benefits it can provide. **Eden Prairie** acknowledge that TOD provides more opportunities for active transportation indicating that “TOD is based on the principles of smart growth and sustainable development aimed at creating active, healthier, and more livable communities” (Eden Prairie, 46). **Crystal** looks at how TOD can provide easier access to amenities that foster health like “community desired services (such as grocery stores and childcare). These are important aspects of a healthy community” (Crystal, 117).

Other Interesting Approaches

Other interesting approaches from communities include:

- Density bonuses: **Woodbury** considers awarding density bonuses “to developments that achieve certain objectives of the City including [...] affordable housing, assisted living, transit oriented development or greenway corridor development” (Woodbury, 46).
- Form-based code: **St. Louis Park** looks at form-based code instead of use-based code near transit indicating that it will “[c]onsider adopting form-based codes or similar zoning amendments to help implement station area framework plans” (St. Louis Park, 143).
- Bus Rapid Transit Overlay: A bus rapid transit specific overlay in **Roseville**:
“is located along the BRT corridor, and affects the mapped Development/Redevelopment Areas generally within a half-mile of BRT stations. Underlying primary zoning districts will govern land uses in these locations, except that any residential development occurring in the overlay must be at a minimum of 15 dwelling units per acre. Residential development should be well-connected to and accessible by those traveling by BRT line transit” (Roseville, 109).
- Rural TOD Around Park and Rides: Although rural communities in general do not include any consideration of TOD, **Inver Grove Heights** suggested “Transit Oriented Development for future park and rides in Inver Grove Heights” (Inver Grove Heights, 281).

Ranking Analysis

Each community received a score of 1 to 4 on the Transit- Oriented Development (TOD) indicator, which ranks it on how much it incorporated TOD in its comprehensive plan. If a community scored a 1, that means there was no mention of transit-oriented development in the plan. A score of 2 would demonstrate that the community mentions transit-oriented development in the body of the plan, but does not include goals and policies to this end. Level 3 plans include goals and/or policies to address transit-oriented development. Communities with the highest score of 4 must include goals and policies in their plans,



notably through land use policies that promote transit-oriented development AND dedicate resources to implementation. Several communities received a score of “Not Applicable” on this indicator because their infrastructure and population are not dense enough to support transit and transit-oriented development. The number of communities to receive each score was:

Not Applicable	10 communities
Level 1	6 communities
Level 2	15 communities
Level 3	12 communities
Level 4	6 communities

Not Applicable

Communities that received a score of “Not Applicable” on this indicator were exclusively rural communities whose infrastructure and population are not dense enough to support transit and transit-oriented development.

Level 1

Communities that received a score of 1 on this indicator do not mention transit-oriented development in their plans.

Level 2

Communities that received a score of 2 on this indicator mention transit-oriented development in the body of the plan, but do not include goals and policies to this end. Communities scoring on this level tended to focus on supporting other jurisdictions implementing TOD, redevelopment around already existing high frequency transit, and shifting zoning to designations like mixed use that support TOD.

Supporting Other Groups Implementing TOD

In level 2 communities, places like **Chanhassen** focus on supporting other agencies or groups to develop TOD through statements such as, “the city has advised the Metropolitan Council that any commuter rail station located within Chanhassen would need to be located between Market Boulevard and Great Plains Boulevard in downtown Chanhassen” (Chanhassen, 142). **Minnetonka Beach** mentions it will “encourage transit-oriented development in the mixed-use Navarre area if supported by the City of Orono” (Minnetonka Beach, 31). **New Brighton’s** plan mentions that, “the City would strongly consider supporting/sponsoring an application to Livable Communities Account programs for proposals with residential units in areas guided as high density residential or mixed use that are along or near major transit services” (New Brighton, 70).

Focusing Redevelopment on Areas with High Frequency Transit

Level 2 communities also prioritize focusing redevelopment areas where there was already existing high-frequency transit. For example, **Golden Valley's** plan states that, "the City will focus redevelopment efforts near high frequency transit service and implement transit-oriented development policies in these areas" (Golden Valley, 580). **North St. Paul** includes a similar goal statement that says, "another [goal] is to promote and support transit-oriented development and redevelopment near existing and future transit corridors" (North St. Paul, 83).

Future Land Use Changes

Level 2 communities commonly included changing land-use designations in future zoning codes to become either "High-Density Residential" or "Mixed-Use." **Coon Rapids'** plan incorporates this shift through including "Future Land Use Designations: 'Transit Mixed Use Overlay: Within Residential Mixed-Use District, primarily residential use (at least 70%) at a gross density of 20 to 50 units per acre'" (Coon Rapids, 27). **Corcoran** also has a section of its plan highlighting this change as follows: "High Density Residential - The purpose of this land use district is to accommodate the development of multiplex and low- to high-rise apartment buildings and condominiums. [...] Ideally, streets and buildings will be designed around pedestrians to accommodate alternative transportation use such as bicycles and transit" (Corcoran, 48).

Level 3

A ranking of 3 on this indicator means that the plan includes goals and/or policies to address transit-oriented development. level 3 communities often designated specific locations for future TOD and focused on adding housing during the redevelopment that creates TOD.

Specific Locations Designated/Planned for TOD

Level 3 communities commonly discuss specific locations that are designed or planned for TOD. **Columbia Heights** states that, "given the frequent existing transit service along Central Avenue and its potential as a future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor, higher density transit-oriented development is appropriate along the corridor to provide new redevelopment opportunities and to enhance the pedestrian environment" (Columbia Heights, 56). **Shakopee** mentions that, "the aging industrial and warehouse uses east of Stagecoach Road have potential for long-term redevelopment as part of a mixed employment center. The redevelopment should include transit-oriented development to benefit from proximity to the Southbridge Crossings Park & Ride at the corner of Stagecoach Road and Crossings Blvd." (Shakopee, 190).

Adding Housing as Part of Redevelopments

Another common theme across level 3 communities was the prospect of adding housing to redevelopment plans during TOD projects. **Falcon Heights** states that, "it is the City's intention to focus on [potentially adding housing to redevelopment plans] over the lifetime of this plan and to aim future development in the City toward realizing that vision of connection. Higher density, transit-oriented housing, including



life-cycle housing, along Larpenteur Avenue will be part of that vision” (Falcon Heights, 50). **Roseville** indicates that, “strategic development of housing can offer access to services, amenities, and employment opportunities for individuals without a personal vehicle [...] Providing housing in convenient proximity to transit with connectivity to jobs and employment centers should be an important consideration in the siting of new housing” (Roseville, 158). **Woodbury** has a goal to “[p]rovide flexibility for increased density to encourage housing suited for older residents (independent living, assisted living and skilled care) as well as affordable housing, transit-oriented development, and development of greenway corridors” (Woodbury, 45).

Level 4

To score a level 4 for this indicator, communities must identify strategies related to transit-oriented development for implementing policy and dedicate resource towards them. These high scorers mark specific locations around already existing transit stops for redevelopment and emphasize pedestrian friendly TOD.

Specific Locations around Transit Stops Marked for Redevelopment

Level 4 communities focus on specific locations around transit stops marked for redevelopment when discussing TOD in their plans. **Minneapolis** states that it will “allow and encourage a dense mix of housing, employment, and commercial goods and services near METRO stations and develop affordable housing near METRO stations” (Minneapolis, 228). **Newport** mentions that, “the City is working with the CDA [Community Development Agency] to redevelop the Red Rock Gateway Redevelopment Area as a mixed-use, transit-oriented neighborhood” (Newport, 144). **St. Louis Park** will “promote and support the Beltline Station Area and Louisiana Station Area as primarily transit-oriented, mixed-use employment centers” (St. Louis Park, 143).

Focus on Pedestrian Friendly Aspects of TOD

Another aspect of level 4 communities is a frequent focus on the pedestrian-friendly aspect of TOD. **Minneapolis** created a goal to “[a]llow space for connecting bus routes, bike-share and other first-last mile infrastructure near METRO station in the city rights-of-way, coordinating with development whenever possible” (Minneapolis, 228). **New Hope** states that, “the development of convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities in this area is another priority in order to better allow people to access the nearby light rail station and maximize commuter mobility” (New Hope, 294). **St. Louis Park** speaks towards TOD and mentions that, “the goal of this designation is to create pedestrian-scale developments within a ten-minute walk of a transitway station” (St. Louis Park, 131).

Community Designation Analysis

All 49 plans, representing 52 communities, reviewed in the project were sorted into three main designations: urban, suburban, or rural. The project researchers analyzed these types of communities separately to see if they approached the task of TOD in different ways that were more specific to their community type. These larger categories are combinations of the more narrowly defined categories the Metropolitan Council (Met Council) uses to distinguish communities. The urban category is made up of



urban center and urban communities, while the suburban category is made up of towns that the Met Council defines as suburban, suburban edge, and emerging suburban edge communities. The rural category is a combination of rural center, diversified rural, rural residential, and agricultural communities.

Urban

Urban communities are interested in connecting transit-oriented development to sustainability, increased density and housing, the blending of transit stops into the surrounding streetscape, and employment access, as well as the equity considerations of the needs of diverse households.

Equity — Needs of Diverse Households

Many communities emphasize that transit-oriented development provides a host of useful services to older and low-income citizens. **Roseville** states that TOD “will support seniors and lower-income households who traditionally have a higher demand for transit services” (Roseville, 158). **Columbia Heights** aims to use “transit-oriented development to respond to the needs of both the young and aging population” (Columbia Heights, 47). **Falcon Heights** also recognizes young residents as well as older ones benefit from TOD stating that, “[a]dding transit-oriented housing, especially for older citizens and students, [creates] more opportunities for residents to meet their needs for purchasing life’s necessities closer to home” (Falcon Heights, 41).

Connection to Sustainable Development

Some urban communities connect their desire for redevelopment around transit to sustainability, by explicitly prioritizing sustainable development. **Falcon Heights** includes expansive but not mandatory language to express this focus stating, “[a]ll redevelopment projects should incorporate sustainability and resiliency to make the City stronger now and into the future” (Falcon Heights, 41). While **Roseville** does not make the connection between transit-oriented development and sustainable development required, it instead focuses on “being an early adopter of creative and sustainable redevelopment policies” (Roseville, 365).

TOD to Increase Density/Housing

Many urban communities use TOD to help meet housing goals and increase density. **Columbia Heights** shows how cities use areas near large transit routes to increase housing density saying, “land within a 1/4 mile radius of Central Avenue includes areas of opportunity that have been guided for higher residential densities. Combined, these areas of opportunity [...] would support a total of 417 to 867 new homes or an average density of 13 to 29 units per acre” (Columbia Heights, 51). **New Hope** discusses “transitioning from primarily single-family homes to smaller lot single family, townhouses, and apartment buildings” in areas with transit (New Hope, 64). **Minneapolis** intends for TOD density to include more than housing by “[allowing] and [encouraging] a dense mix of housing, employment, and commercial goods and services near METRO stations” (Minneapolis 228). Minneapolis places particular emphasis on “[developing] affordable housing near METRO stations [...] and requiring] a minimum level of development near METRO stations to ensure that land is used efficiently near major transit investments” (Minneapolis, 228).

Blending Transit Stops into the Streetscape

Urban communities also consider the details of how transit stops and transit-oriented development more generally can integrate into city streets. **New Hope**'s goal is to "blend transit stops and related facilities into New Hope's streetscape designs to provide attractive, safe, and inviting locations by including [...] landings, benches, shelters, lighting, and trash receptacles" (New Hope, 295). **St Louis Park**, meanwhile, is "[considering] adopting form-based codes or similar zoning amendments to help implement station area framework plans" to help integrate multiple elements of transit-oriented development into a cohesive streetscape (St Louis Park, 143).

Employment Access

Another important benefit of TOD for urban communities is its ability to provide better access to employment. **Roseville** states that:

“[a]llowing jobs, housing, and businesses to be located close to each other and to transit has the potential to provide residents with employment opportunities, increase business opportunities for minority entrepreneurs and provide better access to community desired services (such as grocery stores and child care). These are important aspects of a healthy community” (Roseville, 117).

While Roseville connects this employment access to the health of the community, **St. Louis Park** focuses on using the employment access TOD provides to combat auto-dependency, saying it will “[s]upport transit oriented development so people can live and/or work in transit served areas and not be auto-dependent” (St Louis Park, 241). **New Hope** also emphasizes pedestrian and bicycle mobility, stating that “development of convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities in this area is another priority in order to better allow people to access the nearby light rail station and maximize commuter mobility” (New Hope, 284).

Suburban

Suburban communities emphasize TOD as a tool to reduce the problems that cars cause and improve pedestrian access.

Reducing Parking, Impervious Surfaces, and Vehicle Congestion

Suburban communities variously focus on the different problematic elements and infrastructure of an auto-dependent city, and how specific implementations of TOD can mitigate these issues. For example, **Plymouth** wants “[t]o encourage pedestrian movement and reduce impervious surfaces, [as] parking for either residential or non-residential uses should not dominate the site” (Plymouth, 58). **Minnetonka Beach** wants “to provide transit improvements that will improve transit access for Minnetonka Beach residents and limit congestion on County Road 15 while maintaining the community's character” (Minnetonka Beach, 65). **Shakopee** goes even farther than Plymouth, stating its intention to “[r]educe or eliminate parking minimum requirements and/or add parking maximums for certain types of uses or developments, especially mixed use developments” (Shakopee, 207).

Improving Pedestrian Access Through Housing Proximity to TOD

Suburban neighborhoods show interest in improving pedestrian access by making housing close to amenities and transit. For example, **White Bear Lake** builds on its concept of life cycle housing with access to walk to community services as follows:

“Life Cycle Housing: The concept is relatively straightforward - to provide a range of housing types so a community member can start and end living in the same neighborhood - hospital, apartment, starter home, move-up home, town home, assisted living, extended care and chronic care. That goal is embodied in the healthy communities strategy along with the smart growth objectives” (White Bear Lake, 143).

Stillwater wants to “[c]reate a pedestrian plaza at Chestnut Street with limited vehicular access to facilitate pedestrian-oriented open spaces and expand upon event space connecting Main Street to Lowell Park and the riverfront” (Stillwater, 143). **Eden Prairie** combines the two well by “[prioritizing] housing around public transit with convenient access to basic services including places of employment, shopping, restaurants, services, and parks [...and utilizing] housing in these areas to complement the City's denser commercial development and more closely connect residents, including seniors, with jobs, transit, and resources” (Eden Prairie, 74).

Rural

All rural communities received a non-applicable score because of their lack of access to mass transit around which to orient development. A couple of rural communities including **Belle Plaine**, **Corcoran**, and **Inver Grove Heights** nevertheless consider how they might incorporate elements of TOD into their communities. For example, **Inver Grove Heights** wants to consider “[t]ransit oriented development for future park and rides” (Inver Grove Heights, 281).