




MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council Members

From: Rosie Truelove, Director, Housing and Planning Department 

Date: May 31, 2022

Subject: Update on [Resolution 20210610-093](#) regarding an Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) Policy Plan

On June 10, 2021, the City Council approved [Resolution 20210610-093](#) directing staff to develop a city-wide equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD) Policy Plan and provide an update on progress at six months. This memo provides background and an update on progress to date related to Equitable Transit Oriented Development.

Background

In 2005, Council adopted [Ordinance No. 20050519-008](#), creating transit-oriented districts. These districts were defined and established in the land development code (LDC) and implemented in a two-phase process:

- (1) identification of the TOD district and application of “interim” regulations and
- (2) development of a Station Area Plan and subsequent Regulating Plan.

Since 2005, nine TOD districts have been established, three of which have adopted Station Area and Regulating Plans: Plaza Saltillo TOD (regulating plan adopted 2008), Justin Lane TOD (2008), and MLK TOD (2009). The other six districts described in Austin’s LDC have associated “interim” regulations which are simple, high-level provisions that control land uses, site development standards, and parking design. In addition, the City of Austin has created transit-supportive plans and regulations for the University Neighborhood Overlay (2004), North Burnet Gateway (2009), and the East Riverside Corridor (2013). See the attached map showing these areas.

In November 2020, voters approved Proposition A, authorizing the initial investment of Project Connect, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (CMTA) long-range transit plan. The high-capacity transit system being implemented through Project Connect is considerably more extensive than the system that was assumed when Austin's TOD program was created in 2005.

Transit-oriented development planning in Austin has previously focused on land use, density, connectivity, and site development standards, with a goal of making the places along major transit lines more transit-ready. However, these plans have not included provisions for displacement prevention, development of community benefits, and other tools that are essential to ensure that lower income communities and communities of color benefit from transit investments and have not always led to equitable outcomes. More recent planning efforts in other cities, such as Chicago, have shown the importance of incorporating equity into transit-oriented development.

Capital Metro-led ETOD Studies

With support from the City of Austin, Capital Metro has applied for and received several grants from the Federal Transit Administration in support of Equitable Transit Oriented Development along key Project Connect corridors. City of Austin staff are partnering with Capital Metro and its consultant team to support these efforts, which could lead to a number of deliverables including existing conditions analysis, development of a preliminary typology for station areas, identification of tools for Equitable TOD, and development of station area vision plans at key station areas along the identified corridors:

- **Green Line:** In December 2018, Capital Metro received \$600,000 from the FTA to support equitable transit-oriented development planning along the Project Connect Green Line. Capital Metro engaged stakeholders and City of Austin staff and developed a draft Green Line Corridor study. This work will be incorporated into the Northeast Austin District Plan and future station area planning activities along the Green Line.
- **Orange and Blue Line:** In December 2020, Capital Metro received \$900,000 from the FTA to support equitable transit-oriented development planning along the Northern Orange Line and Blue Line, and planning work is underway.
- **Southern Orange Line:** In January 2022, Capital Metro received \$750,000 from the FTA to support additional equitable transit-oriented development planning along the southern Orange Line. This work will be integrated into the work already underway along the Orange and Blue lines.

Anti-Displacement Funding

The voter-approved Project Connect Proposition A in November 2020 included \$300 million dollars to support projects, programs, and initiatives aimed at preventing displacement along the Project Connect system. The City of Austin Displacement Prevention Division is coordinating efforts to prioritize this funding in the context of a Racial Equity Anti-Displacement Tool. Equitable TOD planning will coordinate with ongoing anti-displacement efforts in proximity to the Project Connect Transit lines.

ETOD Policy Plan

On June 10, 2021, the Austin City Council approved Resolution 20210610-093 directing the City Manager to work in partnership with Capital Metro to build on the work being undertaken as part of the Equitable TOD Studies along the Orange and Blue Lines, to use this work as a guide for revising existing TOD processes and plans, and to develop a citywide ETOD Policy Plan which would serve as an action-oriented policy document with options for updating existing TOD-related code provisions as well as setting measures of success for equitable transit-oriented development and preservation of affordable housing in areas along Project Connect Metrorail, light rail, and MetroRapid lines.

The Resolution also directs staff to work toward achieving goals described in the resolution, broadly related to:

- Anti-displacement and equity
- Creation of new housing
- Compact and connected
- Land use
- Preservation of existing affordable housing
- Creation of new affordable housing
- Transit and parking
- Context-sensitivity
- Economic opportunity

Council further directed staff to include within the ETOD Policy Plan a proposed tier designation with context-sensitive criteria for future ETOD areas and a proposed implementation timeline.

As part of the FY 2022 Budget, the City allocated \$500,000 in one time funding to support development and implementation of the Equitable TOD Policy Plan.

Progress to Date

As directed in the resolution, City of Austin Housing and Planning Department staff are working in partnership with Capital Metro to deliver Equitable TOD to Austinites and have accomplished a number of significant milestones since approval of the ETOD resolution in June 2021.

- **Retention of Consultant Team.** Capital Metro staff retained a consultant team to undertake the initial phase of work related to the ETOD Study along the Project Connect Orange and Blue lines.
- **Establishment of Core Interagency Staff Team.** The Housing and Planning Department identified a core group of department staff within the Inclusive Planning and Displacement Prevention Divisions to be involved in focused work to support ETOD. The staff meets regularly with Capital Metro and their consultants as part of the project team, and provide consultation, analysis, document review, engagement, and project management support as needed.
- **Project Kick Off and Engagement Activities.** A centralized ETOD webpage launched on the [Project Connect website](https://projectconnect.com/projects/etod). (<https://projectconnect.com/projects/etod>). A series of

public events have been held including surveys, virtual public meetings, and focus groups. The team has also recruited a group of paid Community Connectors who will serve a key role in the engagement process. City of Austin and Capital Metro staff have partnered to co-present at a series of briefings to relevant City Boards and Commissions and other groups.

- **Establishment of ETOD Working Group of the Project Connect Community Advisory Committee.** The Project Connect Community Advisory Committee has designated a working group that has been coordinating directly with the project team on engagement activities and project deliverables.
- **Establishment of Interagency Technical Advisory Group.** In late 2021, HPD staff convened departments impacted by the ETOD resolution to provide a briefing on the resolution and discuss a possible scope of work for the effort. With the launch of the Capital Metro-led ETOD Study, HPD staff partnered with Capital Metro to establish an Interagency Technical Advisory Group which includes relevant City department staff who have been meeting regularly to receive project updates and provide feedback.
- **Development of Various Project Deliverables.** Capital Metro and their consultant team developed a series of key draft project deliverables which have been reviewed by HPD staff and shared via the project website, including an interactive existing conditions analysis of all Project Connect stations, and best practices case studies.
- **Related Work.** City staff are also coordinating with Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) staff on the design and planning of the Orange and Blue Lines to ensure impacted residents and business owners are engaged and involved in right of way acquisition, as well as platform and line design. In addition, City staff are reviewing and providing recommendations on the Project Connect design as it progresses through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Next Steps

The Capital Metro-led phase of the work will include additional engagement focused on developing a policy toolbox for Equitable TOD, and categorizing station areas. Station area categorization will support an update to Capital Metro's TOD Priority Tool, as well as identification of tiered station areas as directed by Resolution 20210610-093. In addition, the Equitable TOD team anticipates engaging community to develop draft station area vision plans and/or recommendations for multiple stations along the Orange and Blue Lines in late 2022. The scope of this work is still being finalized, but several locations have been identified as possible candidates for this focused planning work based on the existing conditions analysis and community input. Possible locations for focused planning work include: North Lamar Transit Center (Orange Line), Crestview Station (Orange Line), Hyde Park Station (Orange Line), and South Congress Transit Center (Orange Line), as well as multiple stations along the East Riverside Corridor (Blue Line).

At the conclusion of the Capital Metro-led phase of work, the City of Austin will package a recommended systemwide ETOD Policy Plan building on the recommendations of the ETOD Study, including a work program for future ETOD station area planning, and potential amendments to the LDC needed to designate ETOD station areas and put in place potential

interim regulations. Staff anticipates presenting a recommended ETOD Policy Plan by December 2022, pending completion of Capital Metro-led phase of work in Fall 2022.

The attached timeline provides additional details related to anticipated schedule and deliverables for this work.

Future Planning Work and Funding Needs

Once the systemwide ETOD Policy Plan is approved, additional context-specific work will need to be undertaken to finalize and adopt the draft ETOD station area vision plans created during the Blue and Orange Line ETOD Study, to develop additional ETOD station area vision plans as needed, and to amend the regulations that apply within designated ETOD station areas. With an estimated 98 stations covered by the systemwide ETOD Policy Plan, future regulatory changes could include early adoption of system-wide regulatory changes needed to support affordability, increase transit ridership, and prevent displacement, development of detailed regulating plans at designated station areas, and/or amendments to existing station area regulating plans.

The resolution included direction to bring forward budget recommendations to support land use planning and community engagement processes, such as additional staff, a consultant to assist in the development of the ETOD Policy Plan, a consultant to assist with community engagement, or other elements of the resolution. The FY 2022 budget included \$500,000 to engage community and develop an Equitable TOD Policy Plan in partnership with Capital Metro as directed by the resolution. Additional resources will be necessary to continue station area planning and to begin regulating plans for the highest priority areas along the Project Connect light rail, commuter, and MetroRapid corridors to align with the Project Connect implementation schedule. Staff estimates that the resources needed could be five new FTEs and \$500,000 annually until planning for all ETOD areas is complete or \$1,000,000 annually until planning for all ETOD areas is complete.

For FY23, work could include:

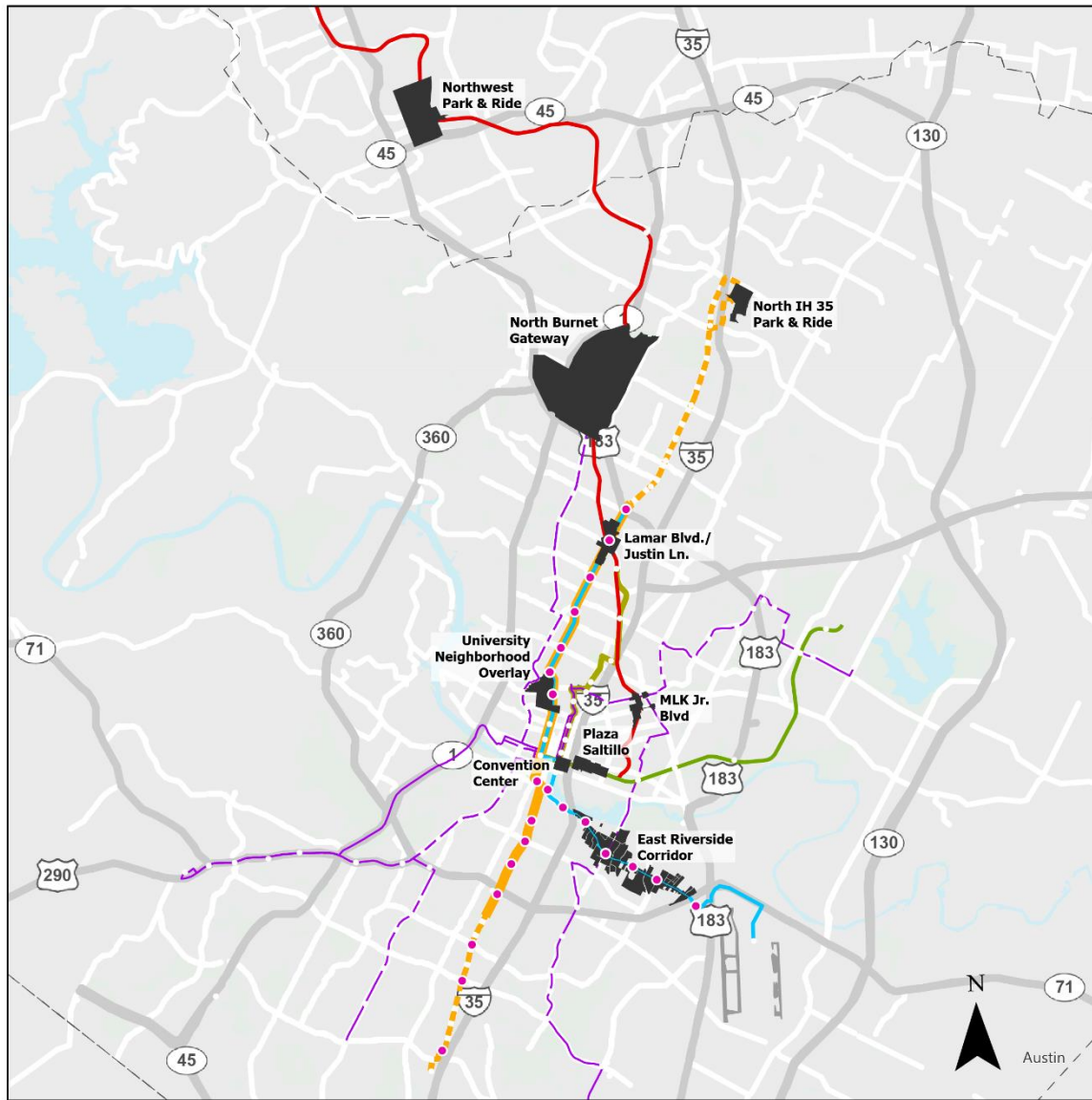
- Land Development Code updates needed to designate stations and update existing TOD Interim Regulations
- Wrapping up vision planning for the initial stations covered by Capital Metro-led ETOD Study effort and adoption of vision plans as needed
- Regulating Plan Development for North Lamar Transit Center
- Regulating Plan Development for South Congress Transit Center
- Other regulatory updates needed to implement station area vision planning along Orange and Blue Lines.

If you have questions, contact me at (512) 974-3064 or rosie.truelove@austintexas.gov or HPD Development Officer Erica Leak, at (512) 974-2613 or erica.leak@austintexas.gov.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
J. Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager

The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and will provide reasonable modifications and equal access to communications upon request.

Attachment A: Map



Legend

■ Regulation Areas

• Stops included in CapMetro FTA Study Area

LIGHT RAIL

— Orange Line Initial Investment

- - - Orange Line Future Extension

— Blue Line

METRORAIL

— Green Line

— Red Line

METRORAPID

— Gold Line

— Other Routes

Section 25-2-766 of the Land Development Code designates additional TOD locations at Oak Hill, Highland Mall, and South IH 35 Park & Ride; however, boundaries for these TOD areas were never identified.

Attachment B: Timeline and Deliverables



Deliverables:

- **Case Study.** Inventory and analysis of relevant equitable Transit Oriented Development case studies and best practices from other cities that provide examples of policy approaches that Austin may be able to use as we approach Equitable Transit Oriented Development Planning.
- **Conditions Analysis.** Geographic analysis of existing conditions along the Project Connect System related to land use, design, connectivity, demographics, equity, real estate, and other features. Results will be shared through an interactive dashboard, and data can be compared over time to gauge the success of our Equitable TOD Planning efforts in particular locations.
- **ETOD Policy Framework.** Recommended toolbox of policies that can be used to support Equitable TOD along the Project Connect System. Toolbox will be developed based on case studies, existing conditions, and community engagement, and informed by work already underway along the Project Connect System, including investments in anti-displacement activities.
- **Station Area Vision Plans.** Focused equitable station area planning activities in the vicinity of station areas along the Project Connect Orange and Blue Lines. This work will focus on station areas that can serve as prototypes for future planning in other locations and will lead to development of draft small area policy plans for particular station areas and/or recommended changes to existing plans. (Action to review and adopt station area vision plans and/or modify existing plans would occur after Council approval of overall ETOD Policy Plan.)
- **Priority Tool.** Development and application of a hierarchy of station area types based on station area context, including demographic context, and related updates to existing Capital Metro TOD Priority Tool.
- **Council-Directed ETOD Policy Plan.** Development of an action-oriented ETOD Policy Plan that includes options for updating existing TOD-related code provisions, supports identified goals and provides measures of success, includes a tiered designation of station areas with context-sensitive criteria for future ETOD areas, and includes a proposed implementation timeline. ETOD Policy Plan would build on other Equitable TOD deliverables, and would cover areas along Project Connect MetroRail, light rail, and MetroRapid lines.