



Equitable Transit Oriented  
Development: Federal Guidance &  
Best Practices

Presented by Bill McCamley  
Transit Forward Executive Director



Our mission is to inform the Austin metro community about the benefits of an accessible regional public transit system and to advance the implementation of transit-supportive programs and policies.

Transit Forward is a separate, independent organization that works with area agencies to educate, engage and provide accountability for the development of Project Connect, a world-class transit system for a world-class city. The two main agencies that we are proud to partner with are Capital Metro and the Austin Transit Partnership.

**Central Texas public transit that is robust, equitable, sustainable and accessible for all.**

# ETOD: Importance to Project Connect

**The Federal Transit Administration will be asked to fund roughly half of Project Connect's construction. Land use policy along transit corridors is a specific and direct part of their [grantmaking evaluation criteria](#).**

"The land use measure includes

- an examination of existing corridor and station area development;
- existing corridor and station area development character;
- existing station area pedestrian facilities, including access for persons with disabilities;
- existing corridor and station area parking supply;
- the proportion of existing "legally binding affordability restricted" housing within ½ mile of station areas to the proportion of "legally binding affordability restricted" housing in the counties through which the project travels."

# Economic Development

**The FTA furthermore has Land Use as part of their Economic Development criteria.**

“FTA evaluates transit supportive plans and policies, the demonstrated performance of those plans and policies, and the policies and tools in place to preserve or increase the amount of affordable housing in the project corridor.”

“At the project sponsor’s option, an additional quantitative analysis (scenario based estimate) may be undertaken that considers:

The extent to which the proposed project would produce changes in development patterns around the transit investment and the resulting magnitude of changes in population and employment, considering:

- the economic conditions in the project corridor; the mechanisms by which the project would improve those conditions;
- the availability of land in station areas for development and redevelopment;
- an evaluation of policies that enable or inhibit housing in transit-supportive development; and
- a pro forma assessment of the feasibility of specific development scenarios.”

# Best Practices From Other Communities

After researching ETOD practices in other cities, 5 best practices have emerged as part of effective strategies for ETOD:

1. Setting clear, concrete goals.
2. Utilizing publicly owned or financed properties.
3. Creating transit corridor zoning overlays.
4. Reducing parking requirements.
5. Design evaluation strategies.

# 1. Clear Concrete Goals

Best example: Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) [2016 document](#). Developed specific targets for “Complete Communities”, “Sustainable Communities Strategies” (total new units, jobs, emissions reductions), ridership, value creation, transportation choice, and affordability/equity.

BART Board of Directors: Transit-Oriented Development Policy Performance Measures and Targets

Adopted December 1, 2016

POLICY GOAL	INTENT	STANDARDS FOR TOD ON BART LAND				STATION AREA GOALS	
		#	Draft Performance Measures	Baseline	2025 Target	2040 Target	2040 Target Unit of Measurement
A. Complete Communities	District Vitality and Growth	A1.	Residential Units to be produced on BART property	2,397	7,000	20,000	84% Increase in Housing Units within 1/2 mile of BART stations from 2010 to 2040 <sup>1</sup> (155,800 new units)
		A2.	Office/Commercial Square Feet to be produced on BART property	208,682	1,000,000	4,500,000	53% Increase in Jobs within 1/2 mile of BART stations, 2010-2040 (277,500 new jobs) <sup>2</sup>
		A3.	Minimum net density threshold for units on BART property		Min 75 DU/Acre		
	Mix of Uses	A4.	# Station areas (1/2 mile) more than 1 mile from grocery store	9	7	0	85 Average Walkscore® for BART Stations (2016 Average: 75)
F. Affordability & Equity	Ensure all incomes can live near transit	F1.	# affordable units on BART property	764	2,450	7,000	No net loss of low income households (91,000 HH earning less than \$50,000 living in 1/2 mile in 2014) <sup>3</sup>
		F2.	Share of housing units systemwide that are affordable	32%		35%	
	Increase Opportunities for Disadvantaged Businesses (Federal) and Small Businesses	F3.	Disadvantaged Business and Small Business Utilization	TBD	TBD	TBD	

## 2. Public Land Use

Use of Public Land. Many plans specifically use transit-agency owned land for housing.

- a) Bay Area: See above. The most recent example of their policy is the [North Berkeley TOD](#).
- b) Twin Cities (MN): Focus on land owned by Metro Transit. When land is purchased for system needs, extra parcels are almost always acquired. The transit system works with affordable housing developers, with layered expectations for affordability and equity, to develop housing on their property. Michael Krantz, TOD Office Manager for Metro Transit said “Land shouldn’t just sit there”.
- c) Seattle: WA state law requires surplus property be developed as affordable housing. The Sound Transit Board internally memorialized that with [official policy](#). In 2021 they [transferred 10 sites](#) to the City of Seattle for Affordable Housing development.
- d) Salt Lake City: UTA controls a substantial amount of property located near transit stations (is prime for TOD). They land bank it as surface parking lots until market and political conditions are ripe for the appropriate development.

## 2. Public Land Use (cont.)

Revolving Loan Funds: Some communities have established loan funds for financing housing at an affordable level near transit stations. Examples include:

- a) Atlanta: Greater Atlanta Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Preservation Fund. First property was acquired last January ([\\$24.7M apartment complex](#)).
- b) Seattle: Sound Transit is contributing \$4M per year for five years into a [revolving loan fund \(RLF\)](#) to create more affordable housing near our transit stations. They also recently partnered with [Amazon for \\$100 M](#) in financing for affordable housing as part of an ETOD plan.
- c) Boston: Boston Foundation, Hyams Foundation, and Partners Healthcare set up an [ETOD revolving loan fund](#) with Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC Boston). \$18M in total funds have been invested since 2014 with 1500 units either built or acquired. 1100 are available to low-income residents.
- d) Denver: The Denver TOD Fund is a collaboration between housing agencies, local banks, Community Development Funds, and foundations. They note investment in preservation or construction of over 2000 affordable units along transit corridors since their inception, with plans for another [400 units](#) starting at the beginning of 2022.

Resources for further questions can include [LISC National](#), [Low Income Investment Fund \(LIIF\)](#), and [Enterprise Communities](#).



### 3. Zoning

Successful ETOD communities recognize that density along transit corridors is critical for allowing the most amount of people to live near and therefore utilize transit. They therefore change zoning to promote this type of development.

- a) Denver: Began zoning overlays that allowed for double the height (16 stories instead of 8) for construction near the [38<sup>th</sup> and Blake](#) train station if developers built affordability in to their plans.
- b) Raleigh: Implemented an ETOD plan in 2020 calling for increased development height for areas with station plans along BRT Corridors. They followed this up with a new zoning ordinance in 2021 allowing for increased townhouses and apartments near where TOD plans have been implemented.
- c) St Paul: In 2011, the City adopted zoning changes for their Central Corridor (focusing on their then new Green Line Light Rail system). It allowed for more mix of land uses, require pedestrian-oriented site plans, increase allowable density and building height, and reduce or eliminate parking requirements.

## 4. Parking Regulation

A major ETOD focus is relaxing or completely eliminating development parking requirements.

Denver: “One hurdle to get there was the parking code requiring 1 parking space per dwelling unit. I am pleased to report that it has now been changed down to 0.1 parking per unit making it more appealing for development in dense station-areas. We’re seeing more transit passes offered for no extra charge for tenants, and we have emerging eBike libraries for tenants. Denver uses its Climate Protection Fund to offer subsidized eBikes at affordable housing facilities. It has been instrumental in supporting car-free households.” Stewart Anderson. Denver Transportation Solutions Foundation. Denver released a [parking report](#) in 2020 showing that developments had 40% more parking then needed for market rate housing, and 50% more for affordable ones.

Other specific examples relaxation examples include Bay Area and St Paul (see above) code changes, while Salt Lake’s transit agency (see below) includes parking requirement relaxation as part of their scorecard for area cities.

## 5. Accountability

a) Salt Lake City: A complete scorecard for ETOD districts can be found in Utah using their [TOD Web Tool](#). It ranks all station sites for zoning (mixed use and high density), relaxed parking requirements, moderate/affordable housing financing, adopting TIF Districts, and whether or not there is a station plan in place.

b) Seattle: Sound Transit also lists [all TOD projects](#) in their jurisdiction, with documentation about total amount of units as well as those at affordable levels.

