

Transit-Oriented Development Basics



What is Transit-Oriented Development?

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is defined by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) as moderate to high-density, mixed-use communities generally located within a half-mile radius (ten-minute walk) of a rail or bus station designed to maximize walkability and transit access. Also referred to as New Urbanism or sustainable development, TOD provides residents with increased mobility options, a variety of commercial outlets and jobs within a short distance of their homes while the compact style of development preserves open space.

Why does the RTA support the use of Transit-Oriented Development?

The [RTA Community Planning Program](#) allocates funds and provides technical assistance to communities throughout the Region to help plan for TOD and supports the concept for its potential to increase ridership, improve access to transit, increase the number of jobs and housing located near transit, and for its perceived economic and environmental benefits. Additionally, TOD helps RTA implement the RTA [Strategic Plan](#) which states that the agency should “Encourage Transit-Oriented Development by partnering with communities, employers and other stakeholders.”

Transit-oriented development is driven by increasing traffic congestion, changing demographics and a growing desire to live in mixed-use, walkable communities accessible to transit. Communities realize that these types of developments tend to create more diverse, livable communities that allow their residents to limit their auto dependence by being able to walk to work, the grocery store or the transit station. The ability to walk to destinations and access transit is especially important for the mobility-limited, young people, the elderly, those who do not own cars

What are the benefits of Transit-Oriented Development?

TOD encourages the provision of transportation options, enhancing livability and economic vitality and has been shown to help increase ridership, reduce congestion, and provide for shorter commutes. The use of TOD can provide a range of benefits to residents, the environment, the transit system and the community. From the RTA's perspective, supporting the implementation of TODs can ultimately increase transit ridership by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of transit investments. Some estimates state that TOD may increase transit use by 20-40%. Improved access and circulation routes in and around the station area make the station more visible and accessible for riders. Alternatively, TOD can reduce rates of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and help relieve traffic congestion. The use of TOD has been shown to lower annual household rates of driving by 20 percent to 40 percent for those living, working, and/or shopping near transit stations.

TOD can provide benefits beyond transit trips or increasing mobility options in a community, including:

- **Functionally integrating the station into the community** can improve transit access, allow the station to become a focal point or gathering place within the community and also give the community a sense of pride by viewing the transit facility as a maintained asset.
- **Increasing public safety** by creating active places that are busy throughout the day and evening.
- **Bolstering household disposable income** by reducing household driving costs. Some estimates show a savings of \$3000-\$4000 per year.
- **Reducing air pollution and energy consumption rates** by providing safe and easy pedestrian access to transit, air pollution and energy consumption rates can be lowered. TODs also help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2.5 to 3.7 tons each year per household.
- **Conserving resources, land and open space** by consuming less land than low-density, auto-oriented growth and reducing the needs to convert farmland and open space to development.
- **Supporting economic development** by helping to revitalize aging downtowns and declining urban neighborhoods, which can enhance tax revenues for local jurisdictions.
- **Decreasing infrastructure costs** by featuring more compact development in infill locations, local governments can often reduce up to 25% of infrastructure costs such as expanding water, sewage and roads.
- **Contributing to more affordable housing** by providing lower-cost and accessible housing as well as reducing household transportation expenditures. Housing costs for land and structures can be significantly reduced through compact growth patterns.
- **Attracting younger populations and retirees** according to a recent survey administered by the RTA. This survey revealed that younger professionals and retirees that responded preferred to live in walkable communities near transit. Additionally, surveys by the National Association of REALTORS and Urban Land Institute (both in 2011) revealed that nearly 2/3 of 18-to-32 year olds polled preferred to live in

Transit-Oriented Development Resources



Chicago Region TOD Resources

[Municipal Funding Opportunities for TOD](#)

[CMAP Local Technical Assistance \(LTA\) Program](#)

[Pace: Transit Supportive Guidelines](#)

[RTA: Access and Parking Strategies for TOD](#)

[Zoning & TOD: A Best Practices Report](#)

[TOD: The Future of Development](#)

[RTAMS: Regional Transportation Authority Mapping and Statistics](#)

[RTAMS TOD Map Viewer](#)

[Streamlining the Entitlement Process for TOD](#)

National TOD Resources

[American Public Transportation Association \(APTA\)](#)

[Center for Transit-Oriented Development \(CTOD\)](#)

- [TOD 101: Why TOD and Why Now?](#)
- [TOD 202: Station Area Planning– How to Make Great Transit-Oriented Places](#)
- [TOD 202: Transit & Employment: Increasing Transit’s Share of the Commute Trip](#)
- [TOD 203: Transit Corridors and TOD](#)
- [TOD 204: Planning for TOD at the Regional Scale](#)
- [Performance-Based TOD Typology Guidebook](#)

[Congress for the New Urbanism](#)

[Transit Cooperative Research Program: TOD in the United States](#)

[Transit Cooperative Research Program: Effects of TOD on Housing, Parking & Travel](#)

[FTA Livable and Sustainable Communities](#)

[FTA Transit Oriented Development](#)

[FTA Joint Development](#)

[LEED-Neighborhood Design \(LEED-ND\)](#)

[Parking Policy for TOD: Lessons for Cities, Transit Agencies and Developers](#)

[Rail~volution](#)

[US EPA Smart Growth](#)

[TOD in the States](#)

[10 Principles for Successful Development Around Transit](#)

[10 Principles for Reinventing America’s Suburban Business Districts](#)

[Urban Land Institute: Shifting Suburbs](#)

[Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington \(Additional TOD Information\)](#)