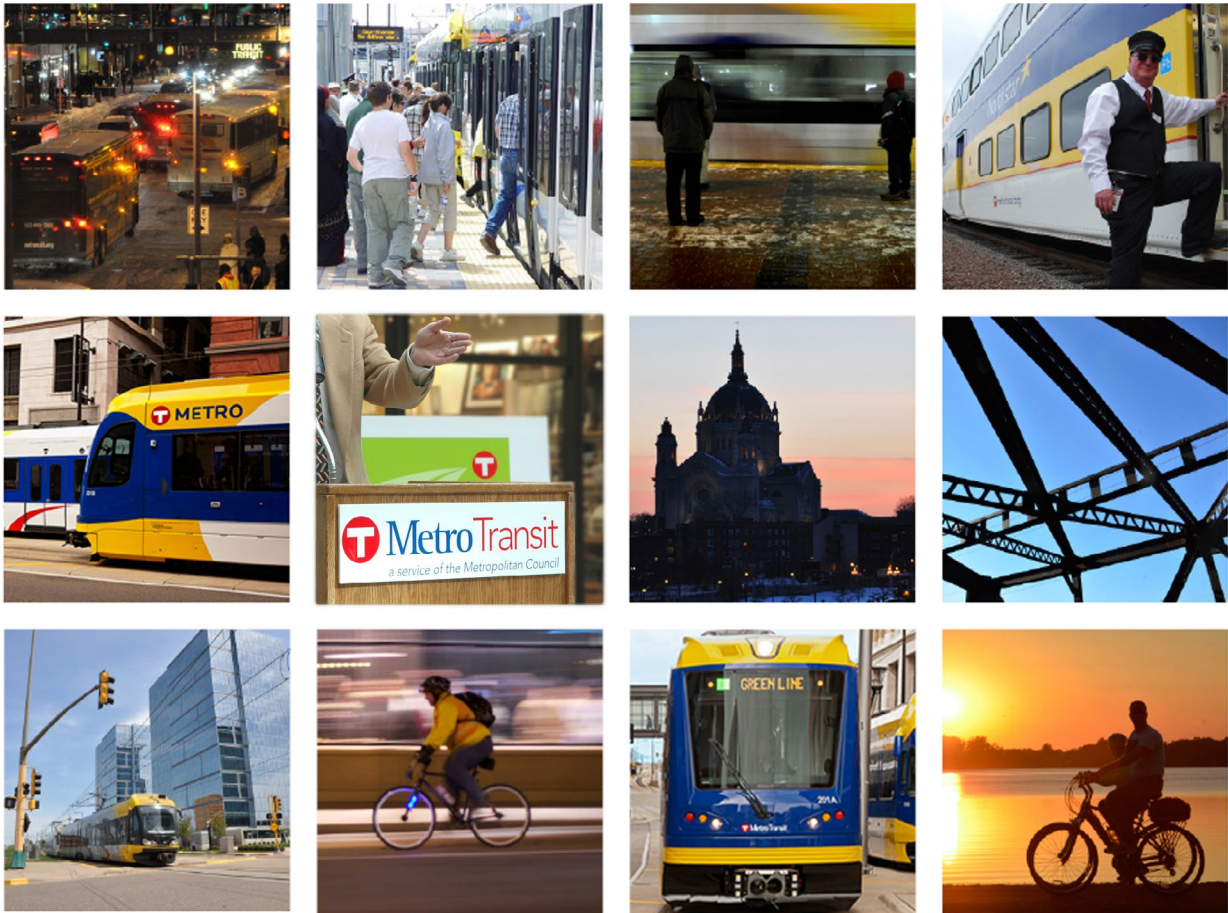


# Advancing TOD Through Corridor Planning: Regional Best Practices



Prepared by MZ Strategies, LLC for the Metropolitan Council TOD Office and the Partnership for Regional Opportunity TOD Work Group.

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## An Evolving Corridor Planning Process

Over the past fifteen years, the Twin Cities metropolitan region has witnessed a renewed investment in transit expansion not seen since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With the opening of the Hiawatha Blue Line Light Rail Transit (LRT) corridor in 2004, the 2009 opening of the Northstar Commuter Rail line, the 2013 introduction of the Cedar Avenue Red Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor, and the 2014 opening of the Central Corridor Green LRT line the region has engaged in numerous complex corridor planning processes with additional work underway to plan for future transitways.



Figure 1. The Metropolitan Council's TOD Office supports high-quality TOD projects to advance important regional goals. (Source: Metropolitan Council 2013)

The evolution in corridor planning practice reflects the growing desire for transit investments to catalyze economic and community development within and around station areas. Transit-oriented development (TOD) is the technical term associated with this concept

and is being seen with increased regularity and diversity across the region's growing transit network. However, successful TOD projects do not just happen.

Maximizing the potential for high-quality TOD projects requires close coordination throughout transit corridor planning. Determining where stations are located, what transit-supportive land use conditions exist or are needed, assessing environmental and pre-development conditions, choosing the preferred corridor alignment and even the preferred type of transit investment - bus, commuter rail, light rail, or streetcar - are all part of the process. Continuous and open coordination improves TOD potential, project cost efficiencies and public support. Working through these decisions involves many players from planners and engineers to elected officials, developers, business leaders and community activists.

Each transit corridor has its own unique planning and design attributes. A number of grants were awarded between 2011 and 2014 through the Corridors of Opportunity Program to communities across the region to advance inclusive public engagement during corridor planning and to build technical capacity for integrating transit planning with land use, economic development and housing.<sup>1</sup> This summary highlights the best practices informed by that work and additional regional corridor planning efforts undertaken by the Metropolitan Council and County Regional Railroad Authorities. It provides a general overview of key considerations for practitioners, public officials and interested citizens to ensure that transit investments catalyze and leverage the potential for development that generates economic and community benefits, increases transit ridership, provides regional access for people of all income levels, and reinforces the high quality of life our region enjoys.

**Transitways** are defined as operating within dedicated right of way for the majority of the line providing fast, reliable, attractive and efficient service to residents. Transitways may include but are not limited to: light rail, bus rapid transit and commuter rail.

## Integrating land use and transit investments to support high-quality TOD occurs at many scales

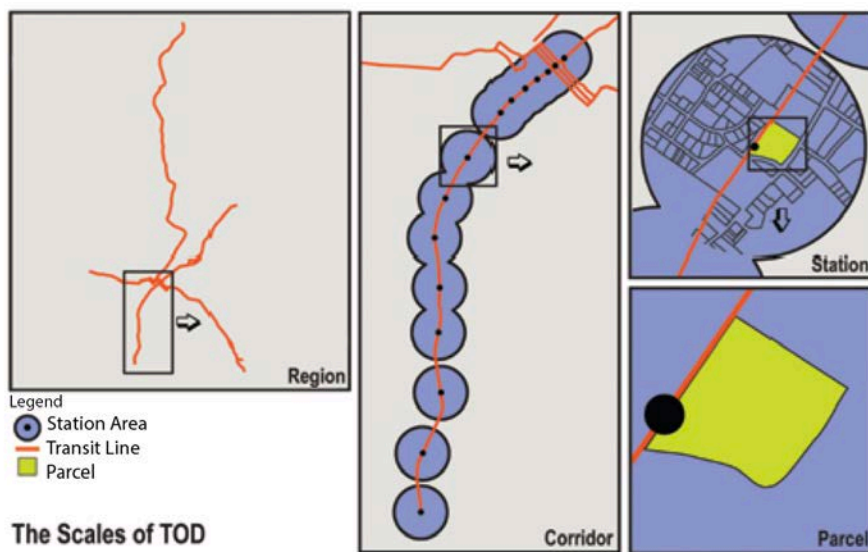


Figure 2. TOD Planning Occurs at Many Scales. (Source: Center for TOD, "Transit Corridors and TOD: Connecting the DOTS," 2010)

Transit networks are regional systems connecting to bus routes, park and rides, trails and highways in addition to the direct linkages between rail and BRT lines. Extending the Green Line LRT, for instance, will provide new mobility options for St. Paul residents to reach jobs in western suburbs and vice versa. Planning for TOD occurs at the scale of the region, the corridor, the station area, and the land parcel.

Each needs to be coordinated to achieve successful outcomes and efficient use of public resources. Recognizing how corridors relate to one another and to the diversity of TOD

<sup>1</sup> In fall 2010, The Saint Paul Foundation and McKnight Foundation jointly submitted and won nearly \$16 million in grants and loans from the [Living Cities Integration Initiative](#). At the same time, the Metropolitan Council was awarded a \$5 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 2011, the two programs were merged to form "Corridors of Opportunity." More information is available through <http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/>

opportunities across the system is important. Not all station areas should look or function the same and the market potential for each station varies widely.

### Regional TOD

The Metropolitan Council, the public agency with responsibility for regional long-range planning, transitway engineering and construction, and for operating the regional transit system supports TOD around transitways directly on real estate owned by the Council and in partnership with other public or private sector land owners. It is well suited to coordinate and monitor regional TOD opportunities and identify priority development sites. Continued investment in new transit corridors, increasing regional transit ridership and supporting more compact development along the region’s existing infrastructure are all policy goals included in the region’s long-range transportation policy plan which guide regional funding decisions.

In 2013, the Metropolitan Council adopted a TOD Policy and established an Office of Transit Oriented Development (TOD Office) to coordinate its involvement in Council-owned development sites, and to ensure that broader Council policies and planning efforts are aligned with TOD objectives. The TOD Office coordinates with the Metro Transit Systems Development Office who consider corridor-level land use and joint development issues as part of project development.

The Council staff and political leadership are committed to achieving both transit and development goals, specifically to:

- Design and Construct an on-time, on-budget, high quality transit project that meets regional transit system needs; and,
- Collaboration to achieve transit supportive development at and around stations to achieve benefits that serve the community

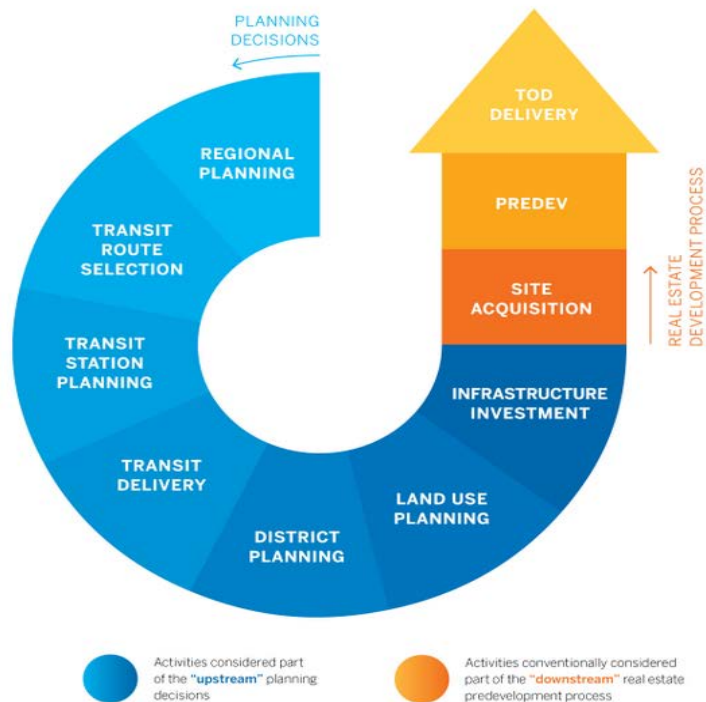


Figure 3. Planning for High-Quality TOD needs to occur throughout transitway development. (Source: Flessig & Carlton “Steps to Avoid Stalled Equitable TOD Projects,” Published by Living Cities, 2014)

## Corridor-level TOD

In considering the potential for high-quality TOD, it is important to distinguish between the transportation functions and development opportunities unique to a corridor. Each line is part of a regional network but provides different levels of access to opportunity with different land use and transit characteristics.

Within the metro area, collaborative corridor planning efforts coordinate land use and transportation planning and implementation efforts across public agencies and across jurisdictions. The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative and Southwest LRT Community Works are two recent examples where this kind of coordination is being used to support corridor planning, community outreach and implementation activities such as identifying capital investment needs and aligning public finance tools.

## Station Area TOD

The half-mile radius around a transit station is the area typically viewed as having the greatest potential for TOD. Local governments have prime responsibility for land use and building codes at this scale. Cities and counties bring resources to fund necessary capital improvements including sidewalks, parking, streetscaping, trails, utilities and stormwater. Assessing current station area zoning, market conditions, land use types, housing inventory and infrastructure needs are early pre-planning activities for both TOD and transit corridor planning and require continued refinement through the project development process. Such considerations can play an important role in determining station location, design and function. As shown in Figure 3, they have a strong influence on future TOD including the level of predevelopment work, potential project financing assistance and market feasibility.

In Hennepin County, planning staff are assigned to support development of specific corridors. TOD efforts are coordinated through its Housing, Community Works and Transit Division which also has a specific TOD grant program and manages the transit station area planning processes for corridors that are proposed within the County. St. Paul and Minneapolis engaged in extensive community outreach as the cities conducted station area land use planning and updated zoning standards around Central Corridor station areas and made investments in sidewalks, lighting, amenities and other safety improvements.



*Figure 4. Parcel level TOD potential is impacted by corridor alignment and station location decisions. (Photo: Peter Ehrlich 2005)*

## Parcel-level TOD

Specific development opportunities occur at the parcel level and addressed through station area plans, TOD overlays, master development agreements, and other local zoning tools. Corridor planning and alternative analysis decisions have a significant impact on parcel

development potential. This includes directing land use and zoning changes, establishing development objectives, setting design standards, identifying necessary infrastructure needs to serve pedestrians, environmental clean-up and improvements to “last mile” connections to transit stations. Parcel-level TOD can be advanced through a redevelopment implementation strategy and capital improvement program that clearly identifies needs, potential funding sources and the parties responsible for implementation.

Corridor planning may lead to land speculation based on expectations that far exceed what local markets can feasibly support. Whether speculation is catalyzed by local land owners or natural market dynamics, high land costs can lead to frozen land markets, an inability to accumulate parcels necessary for development, and a stalled TOD investment. High land prices can translate into other difficulties for TOD projects such as reduced project profitability and a lack of diversity in housing type or affordability. In response, efforts by non-profit housing intermediaries such as LISC and the Family Housing Fund have focused on strategies to support land banking and financing to ensure long-term affordability along the corridor. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of counties and local governments to ensure that policies, tools, and standards are in place to keep land speculation in check and ensure that future development supports community goals.

## The Transitway Development Process

In the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan region, local jurisdictions and the County Regional Railroad Authorities are primarily responsible for **early** planning, community outreach and engineering design work. Figure 5 summarizes the general phases that transitway projects proceed through, beginning with early system and corridor planning and culminating in system construction and operation.

The Metro Transit Systems Development Office typically takes the lead coordination role once a project enters Preliminary-Engineering and Project Development to create a corridor-specific Project Office to manage the process. During Engineering and Final Design, the project scope and cost are finalized including decisions on right of way acquisition, station design, location and even future joint development sites.

Projects seeking federal funding (known as a “Full Funding Grant Agreement”) must adhere to a tightly structured process once a locally preferred alternative is selected. This process includes consideration of land use and economic development factors, provisions to create and maintain affordable

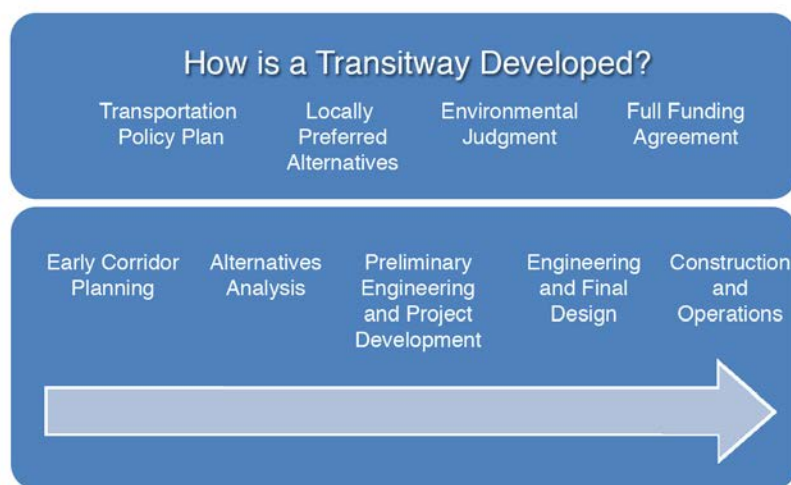


Figure 5. Typical transitway development process.

housing, environmental factors, mobility and finances. Public outreach is also part of this formalized process. However, most communities go beyond federally required outreach to ensure that transit investments are coordinated to leverage local land use, economic development opportunities and to achieve equitable community benefits.

- Corridor Planning Collaboration Checklist***
- ✓ *Create unified project vision and formalize a multi-agency commitment to collaboration*
  - ✓ *Secure senior leadership commitments to a corridor design, engineering, and construction process that promotes cooperation across agencies and disciplines*
  - ✓ *Establish community involvement as a meaningful project activity aimed to improve design quality and system effectiveness of transit and TOD*
  - ✓ *Closely integrate public works, planning, and development agency staff work to ensure that engineering/public works decisions are accomplished and lead to effective TOD*
  - ✓ *Create open and responsive communication channels and financial means to integrate the project with community development desires*

*Figure 6. Both formal and informal collaboration is needed between agencies, public and private sector partners and with the community.*

Understanding who leads different phases of corridor planning can be confusing. Close coordination is a necessity among the players involved since the public does not typically distinguish between responsibilities of local government or of the transit agency. When this coordination breaks down, confusion can lead to added time or duplicative efforts, public frustration and cost inefficiencies.

There are formal public involvement requirements associated with transit corridor planning such as the environmental review and development of the long range

transportation plan. The Metropolitan Council typically leads these formal processes but local governments and the TOD Office also lead and engage in outreach efforts.

Several recent examples illustrate the region’s growing recognition of the importance of linking public sector coordination with community engagement efforts to ensure a diversity of voices in the process. For instance, during the Gateway Corridor project the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority contracted with both the East Side Prosperity Campaign and East Side Area Business Association to implement a local transit planning engagement process that involved hiring and training ten ethnically diverse community organizers. Known as Fostering East Side Transit Equity Conversations (FESTEC), the project highlights great approaches toward meaningful engagement. Hennepin County is initiating early transit station area planning for several urban stations along the proposed Bottineau Corridor, providing consulting services to assist the city and neighborhoods in early identification of TOD needs and opportunities.

As the project development process unfolds, engineering and design work are continually refined with significant implications for TOD within and around station areas. At the same time, land use changes, TOD policies and financing tools are also being developed by communities that can impact station design, final alignment and other infrastructure elements. Coordination of project development with potential transit-oriented

development is one of the tasks of the new Metro Transit TOD Office. In addition, continuous community outreach is a critical component of project development.

To better understand this process, Figure 7 highlights key activities and the different public sector players involved in corridor planning for transit and TOD. As the project moves from idea to reality, leadership roles and responsibilities shift and additional stakeholders are impacted.

Transitway Development -- Process and Players					
	Early Corridor Planning	Alternatives Analysis	Preliminary Engineering & Project Development	Engineering & Final Design	Construction & Operation
<i>Transit Project Development Activities</i>	Assess transit needs; Ridership forecasts; Right of way assessment; Cost estimate	Complete early conceptual designs & engineering; Draft environmental review (DEIS); Adopt into regional Long-Range Transportation Policy Plan	Complete at least 30% of engineering & design; Manage environmental review process (NEPA); Begin securing financial commitments; Complete Initial Project Risk Assessment (Submit applications to FTA to enter New Starts pipeline)	Secure Environmental approval (Record of Decision); Finalize scope and engineering specifications; Secure funding commitments (FTA evaluation and rating)	Project Construction, Fund and manage construction mitigation efforts; Conduct project management oversight (Secure Full Funding Grant Agreement from FTA)
<i>Both TOD and Transit Activities</i>	Identify alternatives mode/alignment/stations; Identify key origins, destinations and major re-development sites	Establish corridor coordinating approach and outreach process; Examine alternatives; Select Locally Preferred Alternative	Station Area Planning; Establish TOD overlays and/or update zoning; Conduct corridor housing needs assessment; Assess TIF capacity; Establish community engagement team or similar process	Complete Station Area Action Plan Strategy; Land Acquisition; Update zoning and land use; Pedestrian and Bicycling improvements; Fund community engagement	Predevelopment activities for TOD (brownfields clean-up), Land assembly; Land acquisition funds; Fund community engagement
<i>Other TOD Planning Activities</i>	Corridor land use assessment; Race impact & Equity assessments	Housing and Market Assessment; Developer Roundtables	Assess available TOD funding programs & needs; Develop a Corridor Investment Strategy; Conduct Developer Roundtables; Identify (Metro Transit) Joint Development	Developer Roundtables; Market assessments; Identify (Metro Transit) Joint Development opportunities; Aligning TOD funding programs	Secure and implement Joint Development and/or Master Developer Agreements; Monitor TOD performance
<i>Who involved (lead in bold)</i>	<b>Cities,</b> Neighborhoods, Metro Council, Metro TOD Office, Counties	<b>County Regional Railroad Authority,</b> Cities, Neighborhoods, Metro TOD Office; Metropolitan Council, Counties	<b>Metro Transit Transit Systems Development Office;</b> CTIB, Metro TOD Office, Counties, Cities, Metro Council, Corridor Management Committee, Community Advisory Committee, Business Advisory Committee, Neighborhoods (FTA)	<b>Metro Transit Transit Systems Development Office (transit); Metro TOD Office (TOD),</b> CTIB; Counties, Cities, Metro Council, Corridor Management Committee, Community Advisory Committee, Business Advisory Committee, Neighborhoods (FTA)	<b>Systems Development Office (transit), Metro TOD Office (TOD),</b> CTIB; Counties, Cities, Metro Council, Corridor Management Committee, Community Advisory Committee, Business Advisory Committee, Neighborhoods & Business owners (FTA)
<i>Length of Time</i>	Timing varies	1-2 years	2-3 years (Federal process has a 2-year deadline for Project Development)	1-2 years	2-5 years

Figure 7. Overview of key Activities and Roles during the typical Transitway Development Process.



## Shared and Distinct Goals of TOD and Transitways

The corridor planning process takes many years to complete, typically starting with recognition that traffic congestion, population growth, or development patterns necessitate some type of premium transit. Several years may be spent in pre-planning activities by cities and counties to better define the needs, issues and goals for a transit project before defining potential alternatives that may be studied such as the type of transit (bus, rail, streetcar), preferred routes (along a main arterial, existing right-of-way, shared rail corridor) and potential station locations.

Throughout this process, there may be trade-offs between transportation needs such as minimizing project costs, reducing environmental impacts, ensuring adequate travel times and ridership, and supporting the broader regional transportation network. At the same time, TOD needs seek to maximize the potential for development, reduce pre-development costs and delays, and improve project financial feasibility. For instance, both the proposed transitway and TOD may require parking to be available. However, locating significant surface parking or even a park and ride structure immediately adjacent to a transit station can significantly limit the potential for TOD at that station.

Transportation Needs	TOD Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transitway Project Development Process</b></li> <li>• Engineering and design – locally preferred alternative, vehicles, platforms, <i>stations &amp; other facilities, capital improvements</i></li> <li>• Project Scope and Budget</li> <li>• Financial Plan &amp; Funding</li> <li>• <i>Environmental review &amp; mitigation</i></li> <li>• <i>Ridership forecasts</i></li> <li>• Acquire Right of Way / <i>land assembly</i></li> <li>• Negotiate Shared Use Agreements</li> <li>• Operating and Maintenance costs</li> <li>• <i>Joint Development</i></li> <li>• Transit system <i>connectivity</i> (to regional bus, rail and highway network)</li> <li>• <i>Parking</i></li> <li>• Project Oversight and Risk Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Land Use Planning Process</b></li> <li>• Corridor land use vision and local comprehensive plans</li> <li>• <i>Station area location</i>, typology, &amp; land use plans</li> <li>• Corridor &amp; Station Area Investment Strategy</li> <li>• <i>Needed Capital Improvements (streets, sidewalks, lighting, utilities)</i></li> <li>• <i>Environmental review &amp; mitigation (including brownfields clean-up)</i></li> <li>• <i>Ridership forecasts</i></li> <li>• Land Assembly and Site Acquisition</li> <li>• <i>Joint Development</i></li> <li>• Market studies</li> <li>• Housing inventory + gap analysis</li> <li>• Local street, transit, trail and sidewalk <i>connectivity</i></li> <li>• Streetscape design and <i>Parking</i></li> </ul>

Figure 8. TOD and Transportation Needs Compared.

Pursuing a TOD or joint development project that includes parking may be preferable but also impacts the project’s design and financial feasibility. Figure 8 presents some of the key transportation and TOD needs, highlighting those that are shared between both and that require feedback loops between the land use planning process and transitway project development process.

Good corridor planning manages the project development process and the land use planning process to identify the needs of both and work to create synergies between the two. Regions that create an open and collaborative process to share information,

coordinate public engagement, and address developer and community needs in the transit planning process are best poised to catalyze TOD.

A transitway isn't just about moving people, it's also about transforming places. As such, good corridor planning engages a broad spectrum of community voices including the historically under-represented, technical experts, and elected officials. These stakeholders are involved in different ways throughout the process.

## Corridor Planning Involves Many Players

As previously noted, specific public agencies have responsibility for making a successful transit project happen. These public actors are shown in Figure 9 and each plays a different role in funding the project and planning process, influencing land use decisions, and making transportation engineering decisions.

Public Partners	Private Partners
1. State agencies	1. Major employers
2. Metropolitan Council	2. Philanthropic foundations
-Metro Transit	3. Anchor Institutions
-Transit Project Offices	4. Developers
-TOD Office	5. Land owners
-Community Development Division	6. Community groups
-Transportation Services Division	7. Riders, customers, interested citizens
3. Counties Transit Improvement Board	
4. County Regional Railroad Authorities	
5. Local jurisdictions	

Figure 9. Public agencies and private partners with a prime funding, decision making and/or planning role during the Corridor Planning process.

The **Metro Transit Systems Development Office** plays the lead role in delivering a transit project with prime responsibility for completing necessary environmental work, project engineering, design and construction. It does not become involved until the analysis of alternatives has been completed and a locally preferred alternative is selected. Metro Transit is part of the Metropolitan Council, and will also be the system operator.

The **County Regional Railroad Authorities** were established in 1980 under Minnesota Statute (Chapter 398A) and given broad powers to plan, acquire, construct and operate railroads, including LRT. They play the lead role in pre-project development

work of transit corridors and are responsible for initiating corridor planning, identifying alternatives and undertaking the draft environmental work. This structure is unique to the Twin Cities. In most other regions, the transit agency has lead responsibility throughout the entire project development process. The County Regional Rail Authority allows for a more locally-driven process during pre-planning activities but also requires close coordination with Metro Transit to ensure planning efforts are not duplicative, fail to foresee important future engineering needs, or fully take into consideration other factors that the federal government requires if their funds are used. Recently, Hennepin County and Minneapolis provided early seed money to allow for Metro Transit Systems Development Office staff to participate in early pre-project development work to help facilitate stronger linkages to facilitate a smooth transition as the corridor planning evolves.

The **Metropolitan Council's TOD Office** was created in July 2013 to lead the implementation of TOD and to coordinate efforts across different Metropolitan Council program areas and divisions. This office convenes both a regional TOD advisory group and an internal TOD working group to advance the Council's TOD Policy. Besides managing development of Metropolitan Council properties (where appropriate), the TOD Office also works hand in hand with other local, state and national partners to deliver high-quality TOD in the region.

The **Metropolitan Council** is involved beyond the role of the Metro Transit Systems Development Office. The proposed transit project needs to be included in the region's long-range transportation plan which is developed and adopted by the Council. Council staff from the **Community Development** and Metropolitan **Transportation Services Divisions** work with counties and local communities to coordinate transportation, land use and housing plans with regional policies. The Council uses a formal committee process to manage input by citizens, local jurisdictions and elected officials. Figure 10 shows the structure used for the Green Line extension to coordinate between the many players involved with Southwest LRT planning.

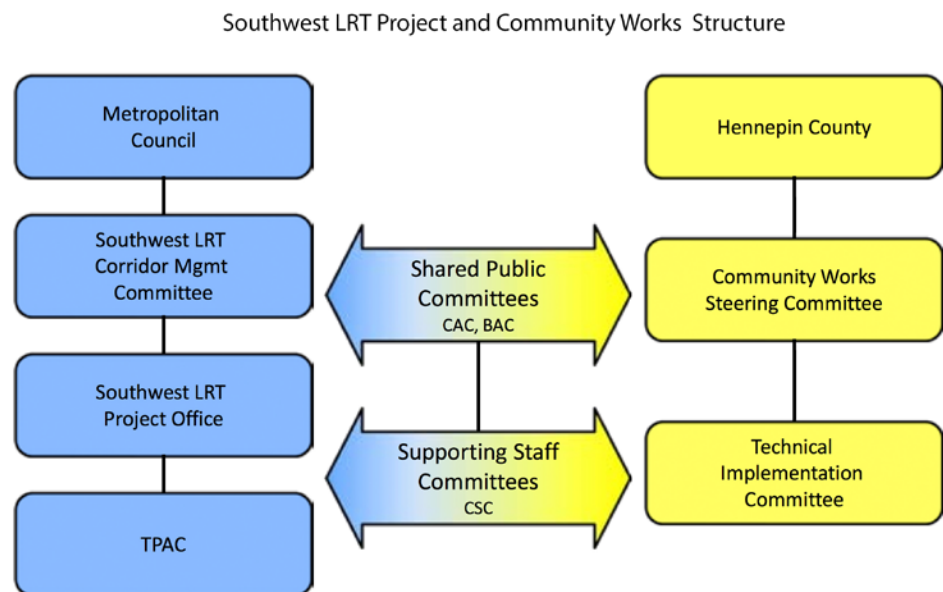


Figure 10. Example of relationship between Regional Transit Players. (Source: SW LRT Community Works)

Funding for transit projects come from many sources, with the

**Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB)** – consisting of Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington Counties - being the major local funder. CTIB was established in April 2008 by the Minnesota Legislature to award annual transitway capital and operating grants funded by the regional quarter-cent sales tax and \$20 a motor vehicle sales tax. On average, CTIB and its member counties provide the 30% local funding share for New Start projects and under its Transit Investment Framework may provide up to 80% of the funding share of a transitway project. Counties are largely responsible for leading and funding initial transitway planning efforts.

**Cities** have responsibility for revising their local land use plans and targeting capital improvement, economic development and housing budgets to support redevelopment and

local infrastructure improvements within and around station areas. Counties can support this work, too. Hennepin County, for instance, funded station area planning along Hiawatha, Bottineau and Southwest LRT. The Metropolitan Council also funded station area planning, market studies, and parking management studies along Hiawatha LRT. St Paul, Bloomington and Minneapolis funded their own station area plans for Central and Hiawatha corridors.

In addition to these key agencies, there is an even broader cast of players who influence the corridor planning process with interests in both the transit expansion and TOD development potential. Local philanthropic foundations have played a major funding role for many planning efforts and non-government partners such as the Urban Land Institute

**Key TOD and Transitway Planning Stakeholders**

Developers \* Major Employers \* Advocates for Affordable Housing, Smart Growth, Public Health & Environmental Justice \* Business Owners \* School Districts, Colleges & Universities \* Elected Officials \* Neighborhood Associations \* Community Development Corporations \* Philanthropy \* Land Use & Transportation Planners \* Public Works & Engineering Staff \* Redevelopment agencies \* Public Housing Authorities \* State agency partners \* Major Property Owners \* Stormwater management, Parks & Trails Agencies

have been critical to bringing mayors and developers to the table.

Figure 12 shows the relationship between regional players and the Federal Government which has funded at least 50 percent of the cost of the region’s existing light rail and commuter rail lines. The Federal Transit Administration has a rigorous process, legislated by the US Congress, that dictates factors that transit planning and engineering

*Figure 11. A diversity of stakeholders need to be engaged in transitway and TOD planning.*

must address and by which a project is evaluated against its national peers before being recommended for federal funding. This process, referred to as New Starts or the Capital Investment Grant Program, is highly competitive.

Some transit projects, like the Cedar Ave Red Line BRT, are built outside of the federal process. Whether federalized or not, transit projects go through a similar planning and project development process though Metro Transit may lead on a project from the beginning if CTIB funds are not used.

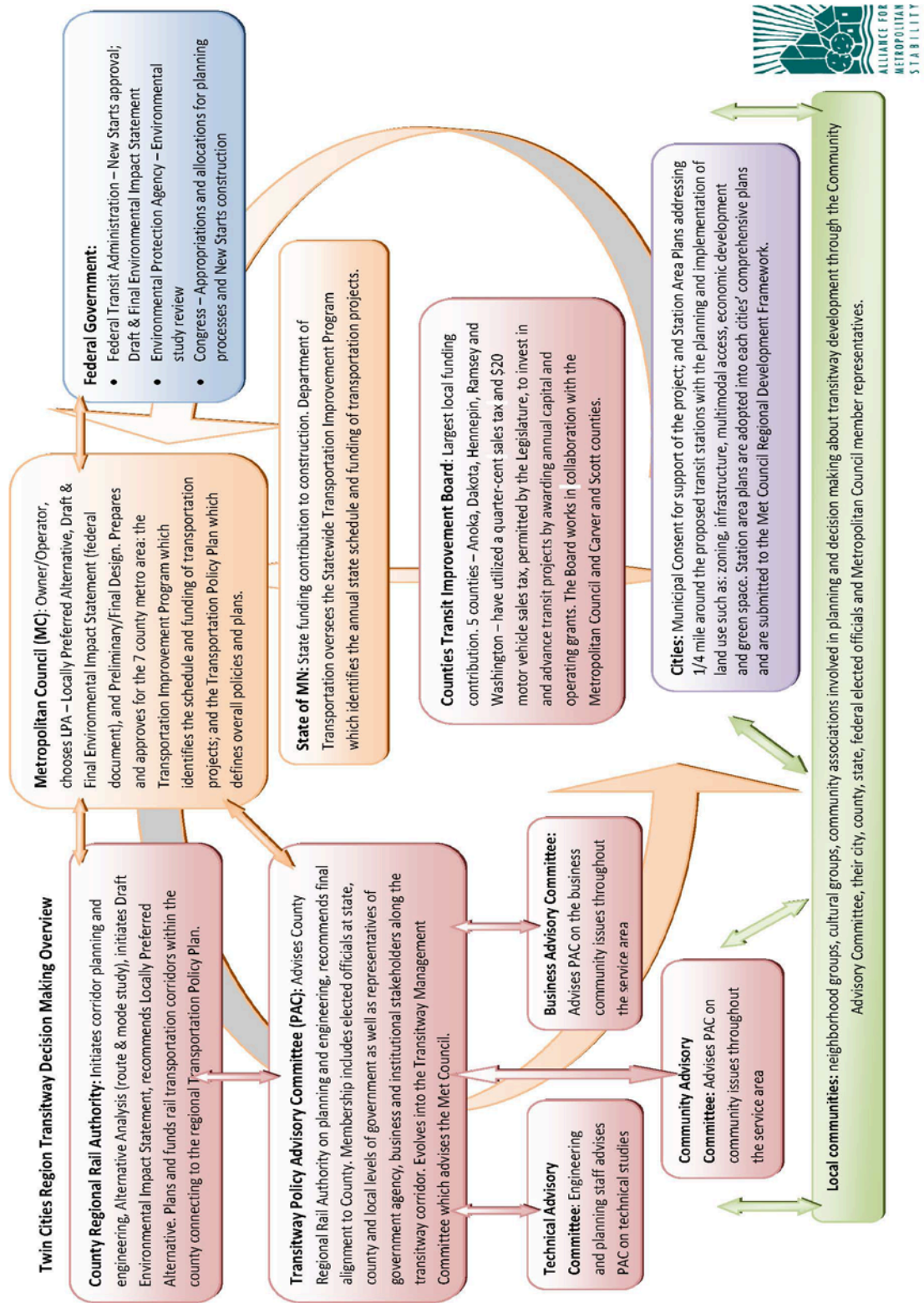


Figure 12. Overview of the different players involved in transit corridor planning. (Source: Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, 2013)

## Best Practices in Twin Cities Corridor Planning

Over the past 15 years, the region has evolved its approach to corridor planning and learned lessons from its successes and failures. One of the most significant lessons is the importance of aligning land use and engineering efforts. The following section highlights four main lessons learned and provides best practices from past corridor planning efforts.

### 1. The Importance of Corridor-Level Partnerships

The formation of strong, working corridor-level partnerships has become the state of practice in the Twin Cities. Along Bottineau Corridor, early planning and engagement efforts were used to address challenges concerning community engagement and the technically complex environmental impact statement (EIS) development process, influencing recommendations on the preferred alignment, mode and proposed stations.

The Southwest LRT Community Works partnership provides an on-going relationship with engineering and transit planning staff and the jurisdictions and multiple key stakeholders along the corridor. Developing the *Southwest Corridor Investment Framework: Transitional Station Area Action Plans* underscored the necessity that relationships are fostered in an environment of honesty, transparency, and flexibility. The collaborative environment surrounding community planning and engineering can be eroded when information is not shared.



Figure 13. Southwest LRT Community Works has been an important corridor planning collaborative effort. (Photo: SWLRT Community Works)

Developing the necessary trust between the diverse actors involved can take time. In early planning for Gateway corridor, regular opportunities for diverse actors to come together and discuss their thoughts on transit planning, engineering, and community engagement helped to build improved understanding between the many stakeholders. The Cedar Avenue BRT planning process emphasized collaborative partnerships between public and private entities. Given the auto-oriented nature of existing development, actively engaging with developers and other private entities helped to ensure incorporation TOD principle in future developments.

### 2. Corridor Context Impacts TOD Potential

The early alternative analysis of transit corridors must consider development issues including local market conditions and land use context in determining the preferred

alignment and station area locations. Market conditions and land use can change over a project's life, and in fact, should change as a result of good planning and improved transit. Planning and fostering change needs to be part of corridor planning. In the early planning of Hiawatha LRT, the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, a private company and a foundation assisted Minneapolis with early station area land use planning funds, provided Minneapolis neighborhood organizations with communications and outreach grants and granted funding for the Hiawatha development market study.

For Northstar Commuter Rail, the Regional Rail Authority provided consulting expertise to assist local communities in updating zoning, conducting market assessments and developing station area plans. Understanding the local market realities was crucial in developing TOD plans specific to each station area. Conducting economic viability analyses, market analyses, and connectivity analyses, and then tailoring implementation strategies around findings are important pre-development activities.

Parking is another critical factor to assess and refine throughout project development. Determining the amount, location and design of parking facilities can have profound impacts for TOD and transit usage. Two years before Hiawatha LRT opened, the Metropolitan Council brought in parking management experts and hosted expert panel workshops in Minneapolis to help assess park and ride plans and allowed the community to hear about best practices in avoiding LRT hide-and-ride around stations. Southwest LRT Community Works has been an important venue for addressing parking issues and the need to balance its location with community redevelopment opportunities. Station area planning also continues after the line opens. Recent efforts along the Hiawatha Blue Line have helped to support recent developments along Franklin, Cedar Riverside and the North Loop.

### 3. Creative Methods Needed to Tackle the Challenges Implicit in TOD

In every corridor planning effort, practitioners have found it necessary to pursue unique



*Figure 14. Cedar Avenue BRT planning including establishing new finance tools to support suburban TOD. (Photo: Star Tribune, 2013)*

and creative strategies for overcoming the challenges presented by TOD. Along the Cedar Avenue BRT, several new financial tools were developed to overcome suburban development pressures. These included establishing a mixed use special services district and expanding tax increment financing. Livable Communities funds, available through the Metropolitan Council, are an important source of funding land use planning, early predevelopment analysis and financing for many projects along existing and emerging transitways.

Efforts to proactively address land speculation and acquire land for TOD and affordable housing are still emerging. Hennepin County is working with the Twin Cities Community Land Bank to explore collaborative options. In 1998, The City of Minneapolis placed an interim ordinance on Hiawatha neighborhood LRT station areas, regulating development of commercial and industrial land within up to ½ mile of the stations between Cedar-Riverside and the 50<sup>th</sup> Street/Minnehaha Park station until station area master plans could be developed and/or until the permanent pedestrian-oriented and transit station area zoning overlay was in place.

4. Community involvement must be coordinated and continuous

Throughout the Corridors of Opportunity process, community engagement efforts significantly expanded (See Figure 15). The value of building local capacity of neighborhood and community organizations along University Avenue and providing construction mitigation for the Green Line are resulting in growing support for transit by residents and business owners and an explosion of TOD projects along the corridor. It has also created and empowered new advocates in suburban communities and among

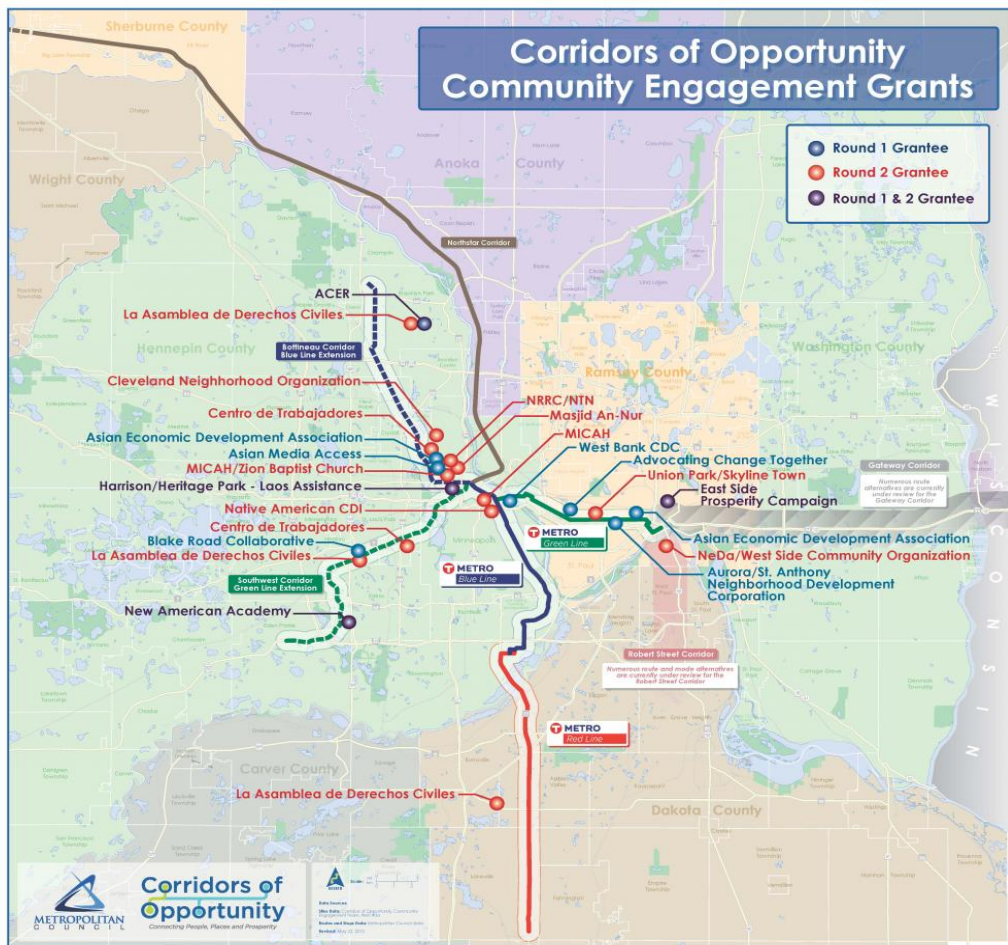


Figure 15. Community Engagement Team Grants awarded through the Corridors of Opportunity. (Source: Metropolitan Council, 2013)



traditionally under-represented populations including new immigrant communities.

This type of deep community engagement does not just happen. Going forward, funding and public support for coordinated and continuous involvement in corridor planning is needed. The Corridors of Opportunity planning efforts all benefited from hiring local community engagement experts to manage outreach efforts. The Community Engagement Team was an innovative approach to elevate community assets along proposed transitways. Grants were provided to local non-profits to perform their own engagement process to secure the inclusion of low-income people, people of color, people with disabilities and new immigrants. The result was more meaningful working connections with communities and improved credibility.

In order to combat low level of local participation in the engagement process, the Cedar Ave BRT project team took a proactive approach to engaging under-represented riders through meetings at senior housing developments and community organization spaces. Grants were awarded to support groups working with local businesses along Central Corridor who may be impacted by project construction. These grants provided an invaluable opportunity to build financial capacity of local small business entrepreneurs and were vital to the ability of many to stay in business throughout the construction process.

SW LRT Community Works, Bottineau Community Works and Central Corridor Funders Collaborative all demonstrate the value of prioritizing the needs, commonality and connections between stations and communities along a transit corridor over parochial interests. A corridor-level focus encourages the involved entities to focus on shared challenges, opportunities and mutual benefits that accrue to all through the project's success.

### **Aligning TOD and Corridor Planning Going Forward**

The Twin Cities region has ambitious plans for transitway development of additional light rail, bus rapid transit, and streetcar service. This summary provides a roadmap to help inform future corridor planning so that the potential for high-quality TOD can be realized. With each new corridor planning process, the region continues to refine its approach to integrating land use and transit investments. The Metropolitan Council's TOD Office brings an important new player to this work, helping to coordinate across public agencies including within the Metropolitan Council and facilitating improved coordination between communities, developers and Metro Transit.

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