

VI. Possible Policy Implications and Uses

This Guidebook includes several tools for stakeholders interested in using performance-based measures to improve TOD outcomes in their communities. Each of the sections above (the Performance-Based TOD Typology, the Normative Metrics, the Case Studies, and the Scenario Planning) can be utilized in different ways.

This section discusses a couple of examples of the possible uses and policy implications for each tool. Many scales of planning (federal, state, regional and local) may use these tools, and they may be applied to many issue areas (from climate change planning, to public health, long range housing and job growth planning, equitable TOD planning, and more).

This is not a finite list of possible uses, but should help to spark ideas for stakeholders to implement in their own communities.

Performance-Based TOD Typology

Place Types help define and group together transit zones.

- **Understanding transit ridership:** Federal agencies may use the place types created by

the typology to look at why some transit lines exceed ridership expectations while others struggle to meet their predicted service numbers. Examining the transit zones along high performing lines may reveal which place types result in higher ridership.

- **Comparing regions and transit networks:** Foundations and federal agencies (including the interagency partnership between FTA, HUD, and the EPA) may use the typology to determine how different regions and different transit networks compare.
- **Creating incentives to plan for reduced VMT:** The typology provides benchmark data that could be used to guide funding from federal agencies like HUD. Funding could be tied to planning for reduced VMT in the region, by rewarding regions implement strategies either to lower VMT in higher VMT transit zones or to concentrate housing and employment in lower VMT places.

Normative Metrics and Case Studies

Normative Metrics and Case Studies show how understanding underlying conditions in transit zones can be useful for policy decisions.

- **Improving public health:** Research has shown that people who take transit are more likely to reach the recommended amount of walking per day.¹³ Understanding which place types support walking to transit (as well as walking and biking to destinations) can support investing public dollars in creating more low VMT places through supportive land use policies and infrastructure improvements.
- **Understanding transit ridership:** Metrics that increase the understanding of which elements support higher transit ridership around stations include commute share and transportation options. Employment access will be a particularly important metric for stakeholders interested in transit usage.
- **Upgrading station area design:** Vehicle ownership and the transit ridership metrics can help to guide parking, land use, and urban design policies in manners that address potential deficiencies and boost ridership. Over the last 60 years development has been focused around the automobile; however this has been the driver of increased emissions and reduced walkability. Stations that perform higher on some of these metrics can be used

¹³ Wener, Richard E. and Gary W. Evans, "A Morning Stroll: Levels of Physical Activity in Car and Mass Transit Commuting," *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Pgs 62-74. Sage Publications, available at <http://online.sagepub.com/cgi/citmgr?gca=speab;39/1/62>.

to demonstrate successful examples of good pedestrian and bicycle design.

- **Linking VMT reduction strategies to equitable TOD:** Low- and moderate-income households can benefit from reduced transportation costs by living in lower VMT transit zones. Local advocates or national funders interested in supporting equitable TOD might use the Normative Metrics to determine how stations areas in a neighborhood or region perform in terms of these two metrics (median household income and transportation costs).

Scenario Planning

Scenario planning can help stakeholders understand the benefits and scale of increased residential density and employment proximity.

- **Directing regional growth:** Regional and municipal planners concerned with directing regional growth can use the scenario planning section to show how directing new residential and employment growth to transit zones may reduce regional VMT, or how particular transit zones may make more sense for certain kinds of growth.
- **Guiding visioning processes:** At the local level, the scenario exercises can guide

community visioning and policy making by showing residents the benefits to making changes in residential density or employment.

- **Influence firm and federal facility location decisions:** The scenario planning shows why locating new employment growth to employment centers near transit is an important component of lowering VMT for transit zones and the region. At the federal level, this tool could be used to help guide where new federal facilities locate and where new jobs can be directed among existing centers. Both regionally and locally, the tool can assist with the planning of new employment centers and can help advance arguments for enhancing accessibility to existing employment centers.
- **Understand the impact of developing new housing near transit:** This tool allows stakeholders to discuss new housing development near transit intelligently, with information about existing units, income levels, and how new development can reduce average household VMT. Lower VMT stations should ensure that a range of housing options exist so households making a range of incomes will be able to enjoy the benefits of living in places with lower VMT and lower transportation costs. While new housing may not be desirable or appropriate

in every transit zone, it is important to see how new housing can positively affect neighborhood change.

- **Influencing regional housing elements:** Regional housing elements could benefit from planning around stations that prioritize housing. In California, with GHG reduction mandates tied to housing allocations, station areas with lower VMT might have more housing allocated in the short term while higher VMT stations might be prioritized for investments in pedestrian improvements and amenities.
- **Coordinating VMT reduction strategies:** At the regional level, the tool can be used to coordinate VMT reduction strategies and regional housing and land use planning.

While these are not the only uses for the Performance-Based TOD Typology, they give a glimpse into what is possible with the information available in this Guidebook. Decisions made during local station area planning all the way up to federal grant making can be impacted by the knowledge that reductions in VMT can be affected by changes in baseline metrics locally. Additionally, it is within this venue that a better discussion can take place about the trade-offs necessary to achieve local and regional goals.