INTRODUCTION

The Sacramento region is rapidly changing, and the way we live, work, learn, and move is changing as well. One of our most strategic regional assets is the well-established light rail system that connects major civic and entertainment districts, employment centers, academic institutions, and a wide range of housing through 52 different existing stations. While the system serves different cities and neighborhoods, many station areas are not developed to their full potential. There is an immediate need to prioritize new development, transit-oriented development, and equity that reduces congestion, increases housing, and creates more dynamic and vibrant neighborhoods. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a key strategy to meet our regional community and economic development goals, while also directly addressing the effects of climate change and the greatest housing crisis in California's history.

This Regional Transit-Oriented Development Action Plan (Action Plan) is the result of a strategic effort between the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and the Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT), in close partnership with the cities of Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove, and Folsom, and the County of Sacramento. The Action Plan is designed to help local governments, property owners, developers, and the community prioritize TOD projects that result in inclusive, sustainable, and successful neighborhoods with a variety of amenities for residents, workers, and the broader community.

This Action Plan articulates the need for a concerted effort between local municipalities, the State, SacRT, and SACOG to ensure TOD projects are prioritized, coordinated, and thoughtfully-implemented throughout the region.
WHAT IS TOD?

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a type of urban or suburban development that is located close to frequent, high-capacity transit such as light rail or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). It is specifically designed in such a way that it creates a walkable and mixed-use environment that supports a greater density of people. TOD areas are vibrant, livable communities that serve as activity centers and provide a range of benefits to the region, local community, and individual households.

A major goal of TOD is to increase transit ridership for both light rail and bus. By integrating housing, employment, and other activity centers with high-quality transit, TOD encourages people to utilize public transit for trips that would otherwise be taken in an automobile.

In order to be successful TODs, Station Areas (e.g., the neighborhoods immediately surrounding a light rail station) must support a mix of transportation choices that connect people to the station. Station access should be provided by high-frequency bus service (including BRT), micro-transit, walking, bicycle, shared rideables such as scooters or bicycles, and Transportation Network Companies (“TNCs” such as Uber or Lyft), in addition to automobiles.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL TOD

- Higher Density Housing
- Increased Employment
- Multi-modal Connectivity
- Community Amenities
- Active Uses
- Safety/Lighting
For TOD to truly function as a vibrant and connected community, there must be high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities connecting people to the places that transit does not. These bicycle paths and sidewalks are as important to the success of TOD as are bus shelters and on-time trains. First- and last-mile connections are an often overlooked, yet crucial parts of TODs. A mix of transportation choices provides residents and commuters the best variety of options to meet their daily needs while reducing their dependency on single-occupancy vehicles.

**Equitable TOD**

One of the main principles for this Action Plan is to focus development and public investment around light rail stations. These public and private investments can include new or improved transit services, light rail stations, lighting, sidewalks, street furniture, and open spaces or plazas. It also includes new development projects that contain a mix of civic, employment, commercial, and residential uses.

When these improvements occur in an area that historically has not seen this level of investment, these changes can often lead to gentrification. Gentrification, for purposes of this Action Plan, is defined as social and economic changes to a neighborhood that are associated with public and/or private improvements to the area. While gentrification is often associated with physical improvements to an area, it can also lead to negative consequences on the community, including displacement and inequitable access to new opportunities and facilities. Displacement, for purposes of this Action Plan, is the involuntary movement, or the pricing out of, lower income people or businesses from an area.

Many residents of these traditionally underserved neighborhoods would like to see physical and social improvements made to their community. However, local plans and policies have to be proactive about preventing outcomes where the physical and social improvements do not benefit the existing residents and businesses or the displacement of the existing residents occurs.

A key way to achieve this is by working with the local community (residents and business owners) to ensure new housing, building improvements, streetscapes, and multi-modal connectivity are planned, designed, and executed in such a way that they respond to the needs of the existing community and help support community character.
BENEFITS OF TOD

TOD provides a range of important benefits to the local community and the region, including: improved health and lifestyle outcomes (due to more active lifestyles); enhanced levels of access and connectivity for residents to jobs, school, entertainment, and retail opportunities; increased economic benefits and investment; a reduction in vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, and options for more affordable and diverse housing. The following pages identify specific examples of the benefits of TOD for the greater Sacramento region.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS
TODs around light rail stations provide a range of transportation options, from bike paths to light rail, that better connects residents to daily activities such as jobs, schools, shopping, restaurants, and services. As part of a larger network, TOD can help link regional housing to jobs in downtown Sacramento and local colleges and universities. This expands residents’ access to the regional economy and provides a convenient and less costly alternative to driving or car ownership.

HEALTH AND SAFETY
TODs that are designed for pedestrians provide safe and walkable destinations, and encourage healthy lifestyles by making it more efficient to walk or bike to daily amenities and services. Further, by providing viable alternatives to automobile commuting, light rail transit can reduce: traffic, air pollution, driving-related stress, and auto accidents in the Sacramento region.

EFFICIENT USE OF TIME
Light rail service that is high-quality and frequent allows riders to easily and reliably travel to and from work, allowing more time to enjoy leisure activities and socialize, rather than having to spend time driving a car in traffic. In addition, TODs that include daily amenities such as day care facilities, dry cleaners, and grocery stores can help riders more easily complete daily tasks without having to take additional automobile trips.

QUALITY OF LIFE
Active and vibrant public places within TODs can become destinations with opportunities for more community social interaction and engagement. Residents with access to these lively areas benefit from an active lifestyle as well as the conveniences provided with accessible and dedicated transit options. When tied to community equity, as discussed above, this can help create more vibrant neighborhoods throughout the Sacramento region that better serve the needs of the local community.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Low-income residents often struggle to afford housing and the costs associated with personal vehicle ownership, and in turn, these residents tend to have a higher need for accessible and dependable transit. Ensuring affordable housing is created near transit helps serve those who need transit access the most, and helps the region meet its housing goals.
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

REDUCED GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND IMPROVED AIR QUALITY
A multi-modal network that connects residents to the amenities they need helps reduce the dependence on private vehicles. Ultimately, this helps reduce the amount of traffic and greenhouse gas emissions released each day. Incorporating more vegetation and green features in TODs will also help enhance the pedestrian experience by providing improved aesthetics and shade, while also improving stormwater quality and reducing air pollution.

REDUCED VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED
Multi-modal and mixed-use neighborhoods allow residents and workers to visit a range of destinations, while minimizing time spent in a car. This reduces the total amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and reduces congestion. Reducing regional VMT and traffic are keys goals for both SACOG and SacRT. However, to achieve these goals, there needs to be a more concerted effort to create truly mixed-use neighborhoods that have access to a variety of transportation options.

BETTER USE OF EXISTING ASSETS
TOD has a more compact urban form than traditional suburban development. It maximizes the amount of land dedicated to buildings and in turn provides more land for public and open space uses. This development pattern not only encourages more walkability for a neighborhood, but it also typically has lower maintenance costs because it requires less public infrastructure to support the same amount of development.

REDUCED HEAT ISLAND EFFECT
Trees can provide shade and enhance neighborhood aesthetics while also reducing the urban heat island effect – important for encouraging people to walk or bike, rather than drive. TOD’s compact development pattern, in conjunction with a strong emphasis on reducing automobile travel (and its associated parking requirements), results in TOD areas having less land area consumed by large asphalt surface parking lots, and therefore, less heat sink.
ECONOMIC BENEFITS

**SAVES RESIDENTS MONEY**
Households in traditional suburban neighborhoods spend about 25 percent of their income on transportation. In transit-rich neighborhoods, that number drops to around nine percent. By reducing dependency on automobiles, TODs can save people money by reducing or eliminating costs associated with vehicle ownership, such as: auto payments, insurance, fuel, maintenance, and storage.

**CATALYST FOR DEVELOPMENT**
TOD investment makes cities more economically diverse and competitive by encouraging a mix of uses where residents can linger, shop, dine, and interact. These spaces are better equipped to withstand evolving economic climates and shifts in societal trends.

**EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE**
The more urban and compact development patterns characteristic of TOD areas promote more efficient and sustainable infrastructure investments, such as rail transportation, structured parking, protected bicycle lanes, and pedestrian bridges.

**ADDITIONAL ATTAINABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS**
By encouraging higher density, multi-family housing, TOD provides additional housing options in areas that have access to a wide range of jobs and amenities, many of which are lacking affordable housing options today. Increasing housing supply in these areas can increase housing access for renters of all income categories.

**INCREASED ACCESS TO JOBS, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**
For many residents, particularly those with lower incomes, transportation costs and access limit economic opportunity. Locating jobs and training opportunities in TODs will provide residents better access, and reduce the economic burden associated with reaching employment centers.

**ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES**
- Federal Transit Administration
  [www.transit.dot.gov/TOD](http://www.transit.dot.gov/TOD)
- Transit-Oriented Development Institute
  [www.tod.org](http://www.tod.org)
- Measuring the Benefits of TOD (San Jose State University)
  [https://transweb.sjsu.edu/mntrc/research/Measuring-Benefits-Transit-Oriented-Development](https://transweb.sjsu.edu/mntrc/research/Measuring-Benefits-Transit-Oriented-Development)
- Community Wealth
PROJECT OVERVIEW

In many places, TOD does not happen by itself. It takes a coordinated effort to link the multi-modal transportation network with land use and urban design strategies, while responding to local conditions at the station and parcel level. This holistic approach to planning creates a framework for sustainable growth, connecting the places with the highest concentration of people, activities, and jobs to the highest quality transit facilities, and the most transportation options.

This Action Plan builds upon the various community engagement, planning, and other efforts recently completed by local agencies, non-profits, and other stakeholders. It is meant to serve as a springboard for TOD projects and to help encourage further exploration and implementation of TOD projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Scope and Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SacRT light rail system serves a broad range of communities and Station Areas. In order to create a coordinated strategy for encouraging TOD throughout the region, this Action Plan includes recommendations and tools that are grouped into several Station Area categories (e.g., “Typologies”). This will allow individual jurisdictions to apply and adjust strategies based on the unique context and factors impacting each of the 52 existing stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The specific goals for this Action Plan include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>IDENTIFYING</strong> current barriers to TOD and ways to overcome these obstacles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>DEVELOPING</strong> strategies for prioritizing TOD projects within all jurisdictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>FOCUSING</strong> near-term TOD projects to key Station Areas and specific opportunity sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>INSPIRING</strong> TOD champions at the local and regional levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>INCREASING</strong> bus and light rail transit ridership while also reducing vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES AND PUBLIC SPACES ALLOW FOR GREATER SOCIAL INTERACTION AND RELAXATION
Stakeholder Engagement

SACOG, SacRT, and the project consultants (Project Team) conducted a broad range of technical stakeholder engagement activities. This included forming an Advisory Group comprised of municipal staff that met over the course of the project to provide critical input, local knowledge, and informed feedback. This group met regularly to brainstorm ideas, develop conceptual policy changes, and create priority site projects.

The Project Team convened six Focus Groups to gain a better understanding of challenges, opportunities, and assets impacting TOD’s potential around light rail stations. The groups included a diverse cross section of stakeholders representing the following topics:

- Transportation
- Commerce
- Housing
- Real Estate Development
- Public Agencies and Community Organizations
- Education and Institutions

The Project Team met with each jurisdiction where light rail stations are located to discuss potential impediments to TOD found within development codes and municipal policy documents. These consultations provided an opportunity to discuss site-specific considerations at key sites near light rail stations.
HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The Action Plan is structured to be useful for elected officials, local agency staff, non-government organizations, developers, property owners, and the general public, and anyone else interested in encouraging sustainable development patterns, reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), or efficiently investing public sector dollars. The following is a recommended approach for how to best use this document based on your goals and interests.

- Identify the regional benefits to transit ridership and living/working in TOD areas.
- Understand developments that contribute toward the long-term success of the light rail system.
- Identify ways to become a champion for light rail ridership and TOD.

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT RIDER

- Identify sites that are appropriate for TOD in the region and specific neighborhoods.
- Identify development incentives and likely funding sources for TOD, including affordable and market rate housing.
- Align your project/development with TOD design principles and public agency goals.

AGENCY STAFF OR ELECTED/APPOINTED OFFICIAL

- Identify strategies that will help remove physical and economic barriers to TOD in your city/county.
- Identify ways to direct public funds and incentives to support TOD projects.
- Identify strategies that will ensure TOD projects will result in the maximum return on public dollars.

RESIDENT OR BUSINESS/PROPERTY OWNER IN A STATION AREA

- Identify areas to locate or grow your business that capitalizes on transit riders and future TOD projects.
- Identify ways to become more engaged in the planning and design of TOD projects in your neighborhood.

- Identify where public investments will likely be directed and how this relates to private development.
Action Plan Organization

The Action Plan is designed to be concise and easy to read, and organizes information into the following four chapters:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
Provides an overview of the project, including the many benefits of TOD, key goals and desired outcomes of the Action Plan, and a summary of partner and stakeholder engagement activities that led to the concepts and recommendations included in this Plan.

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONTEXT
Includes a summary of existing light rail stations in the Sacramento region, and key economic conditions and factors that influence the readiness of different Station Areas to support more TOD.

CHAPTER 3: READINESS FOR TOD
Summarizes opportunities that will support TOD in the near term and long term, including a detailed analysis conducted to identify the specific “readiness” of each light rail station to support more TOD. This includes a specific discussion on High Opportunity and Priority Sites that will be the focus for immediate policy, planning, and design interventions.

CHAPTER 4: ACTION STEPS
Outlines a clear path of policy and regulatory changes, incentives, and partnerships that are recommended in order to fully implement the TOD concepts included in this Action Plan. This includes strategies that are specific to each jurisdiction.