

# Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Study





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# 01

## Why Austin Needs ETOD

# With the approval from voters in November 2020 to fund Project Connect, Austinites have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to capitalize on a major public infrastructure investment and set a bold, community-led vision for the future.

Project Connect investments aim to increase and enhance the transportation options available in Austin with a zero-emissions fleet, a new light rail system, additional rail service (Green Line), added on-demand Pickup Zones, Park & Rides and plans for an expanded bus system, including the implementation of new Rapid lines.

The station areas along Project Connect lines have the potential to become vibrant, livable, and inclusive communities that are compact, walkable, and centered around high-quality transportation options.

Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) strives to ensure that those who have the greatest need for transit enhancements are also able to benefit from the improvements. This typically includes people of color, low-income households, seniors, people with disabilities, and households with limited or no access to cars. Achieving equitable outcomes through ETOD requires a holistic approach to transit investments that considers and addresses how transit infrastructure intersects with systemic racism, housing affordability, small business interests, economic opportunity, education, and health.

CapMetro is leading the Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Study in partnership with the City of Austin and the Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) to implement investments that focus on helping existing residents and communities thrive and enhancing their access to economic opportunity. CapMetro received a total of \$3.15 million in funding from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Grant. An essential component of implementing effective ETOD is a shared vision and set of objectives. The ETOD team created the following six goals to guide the project's ETOD framework throughout this historic investment:

- **Goal 1:** Enable All Residents to Benefit from Safe, Sustainable, and Accessible Transportation
- **Goal 2:** Help to Close Racial Health and Wealth Gaps
- **Goal 3:** Preserve and Increase Housing Opportunities That are Affordable and Attainable
- **Goal 4:** Expand Access to High-Quality Jobs & Career Opportunities
- **Goal 5:** Support Healthy Neighborhoods That Meet Daily Needs
- **Goal 6:** Expand Austin's Diverse Cultural Heritage and Small, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)-Owned, and Legacy Businesses



# 02

## Overview



## Partnership

CapMetro is leading the ETOD Study in partnership with the City of Austin (COA) and the Austin Transit Partnership (ATP). CapMetro also works alongside the Community Advisory Committee (CAC): a civic group formed to advise Project Connect on anti-displacement and equity matters, Community Connectors and grass-top and grassroots groups.

regarding small business and workforce, housing, mobility, land use and urban design and real estate

- Built two public dashboards for [existing conditions](#) and the [ETOD Priority tool](#), a data-driven framework to guide planning
- Compiled key takeaways from existing ETOD studies in the US to adopt tactics with proven success

## Key Deliverables

- Developed the [ETOD Policy Plan](#) (accepted by Austin City Council in March 2023) providing a comprehensive framework to help the Austin community ensure that future development around Project Connect supports residents of all incomes and backgrounds, especially those who have been disproportionately burdened by transportation and land use decisions
- Created the [ETOD Policy Toolkit](#) comprising of 46 buildable policy tools that provide a framework for Project Connect station-area planning

## Land Use, Urban Design, and Real Estate Engagement

A cornerstone to developing the ETOD Study was facilitating community input from historically underrepresented voices throughout the planning process to define equity and establish what equitable outcomes are needed across the station areas. Garnering their participation went beyond a box checking exercise. We utilized a variety of engagement methods, from traditional outreach to compensated focus groups, a community ambassador program of Community Connectors, workshops, and community open houses.

## The resounding challenges we heard included the following:

- **Rising Rents:** The pace of rent increases feels out of control for both commercial and residential properties.
- **Pressure on Small Businesses:** New development is not providing the right retail formats and sizes typically needed by small businesses and creating displacement pressures on long-established Austin businesses.
- **Dissatisfaction with Current Transit Service:** Concerns about current transit service included a lack of service to important destinations, no bus shelters and amenities, service too infrequent, stops too long to walk to, and a general lack of convenience.
- **Lack of Good Government Support/Execution on Affordability Crisis:** Frustration that interventions are too late/not timely or culturally sensitive; the crisis is already here.
- **Sustained Quality of Life:** There is a gap in the market for high-quality childcare options near stations and not enough support or knowledge for people seeking affordable housing and small business assistance.
- **Business Diversity:** Attracting a diverse pool of businesses and community organizations to the neighborhood helps create hubs people would like to visit.





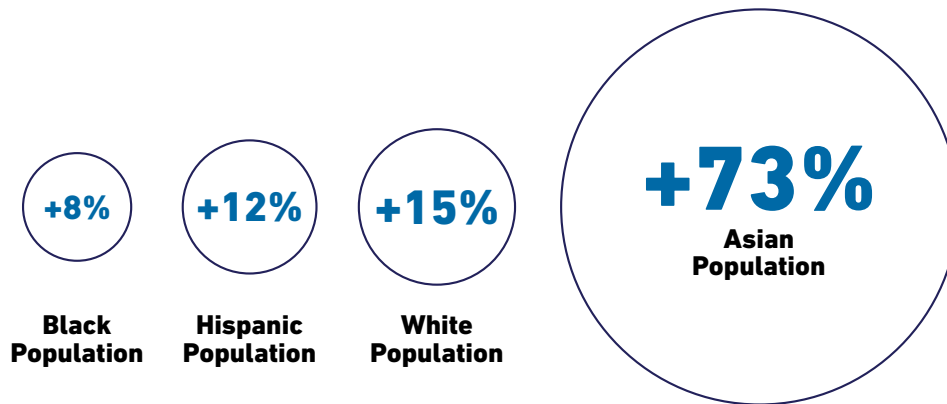


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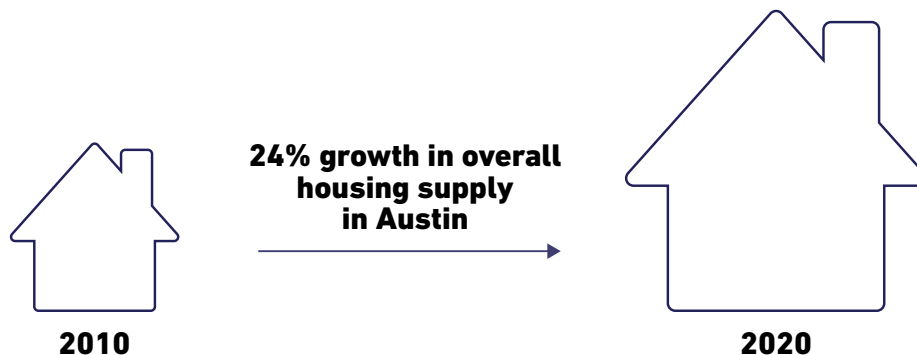
**Purpose &  
Need**

Over the last 30 years, Austin has expanded beyond its historic role as the Texas state capital and a college town to become a major urban center. The past decade has brought especially significant population and job growth.

- **Population Growth:** In the span of 10 years Austin's population has grown by 20%, from 803,000 people in 2010 to 962,000 people in 2020. The large increase in population has not occurred at the same rates across all racial and ethnic groups, creating concerns about displacement.



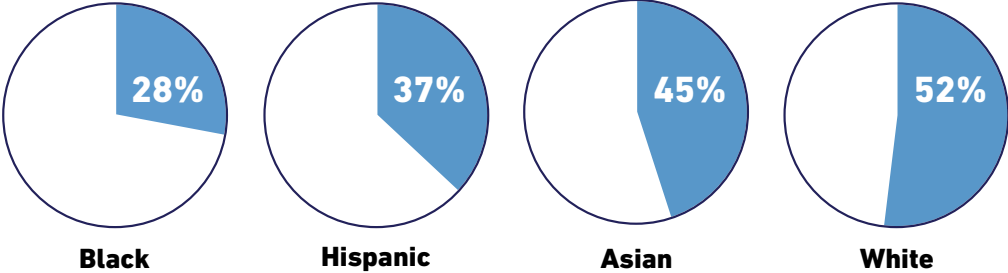
- **Job Growth:** Job growth has outpaced population growth in the same time period, growing by 32% from 431,000 jobs to 568,000 jobs. Job growth spans all industries but has been disproportionately concentrated in the technology sector.
- **Affordable Housing Crisis:** The City of Austin's 2020 Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis identified a gap of approximately 36,000 units in housing supply that are affordable to very low-income households, a shortage that impacts the growing number of unhoused residents of Austin. Affordable housing growth has been limited even though the overall housing supply in the city grew.



- **Active Displacement:** The growth in real estate prices has caused the displacement of low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents from communities across Austin.

- **Racial Inequity:** Income and wealth disparity by race have increased in recent decades in Austin. According to a 2019 study on the racial wealth divide commissioned by the Austin Community Foundation, incomes for Black and Latino households in Austin fell by 9% and 14% respectively between 1980 and 2016. These inequalities are further reflected in the racial breakdown of homeownership rates of Austin householders.

**Racial Breakdown of Austin Home Ownership Rates in 2020**



- **Traffic Congestion and Disparity:** In addition to the rising cost of housing, the increased population has contributed to greater traffic congestion. The 2021 Global Traffic Scorecard ranked Austin as 23rd in America’s most congested cities, with the average Austin driver losing 32 hours to traffic each year.



“

This is a significant milestone, not just for CapMetro, but for the entire city of Austin. As we continue to grow and thrive as a community, we need to ensure that we are building an inclusive city that lifts and supports all Austinites; serves our customers with different needs; of diverse backgrounds and all income levels and bring them along in this journey.

These policies and subsequent reports will help us be more intentional about the development around our city and our stations, minimize displacement and help combat our affordability crisis.

**Sharmila Mukherjee**

*CapMetro Executive Vice President, Chief Strategic Planning and Development Officer*

”

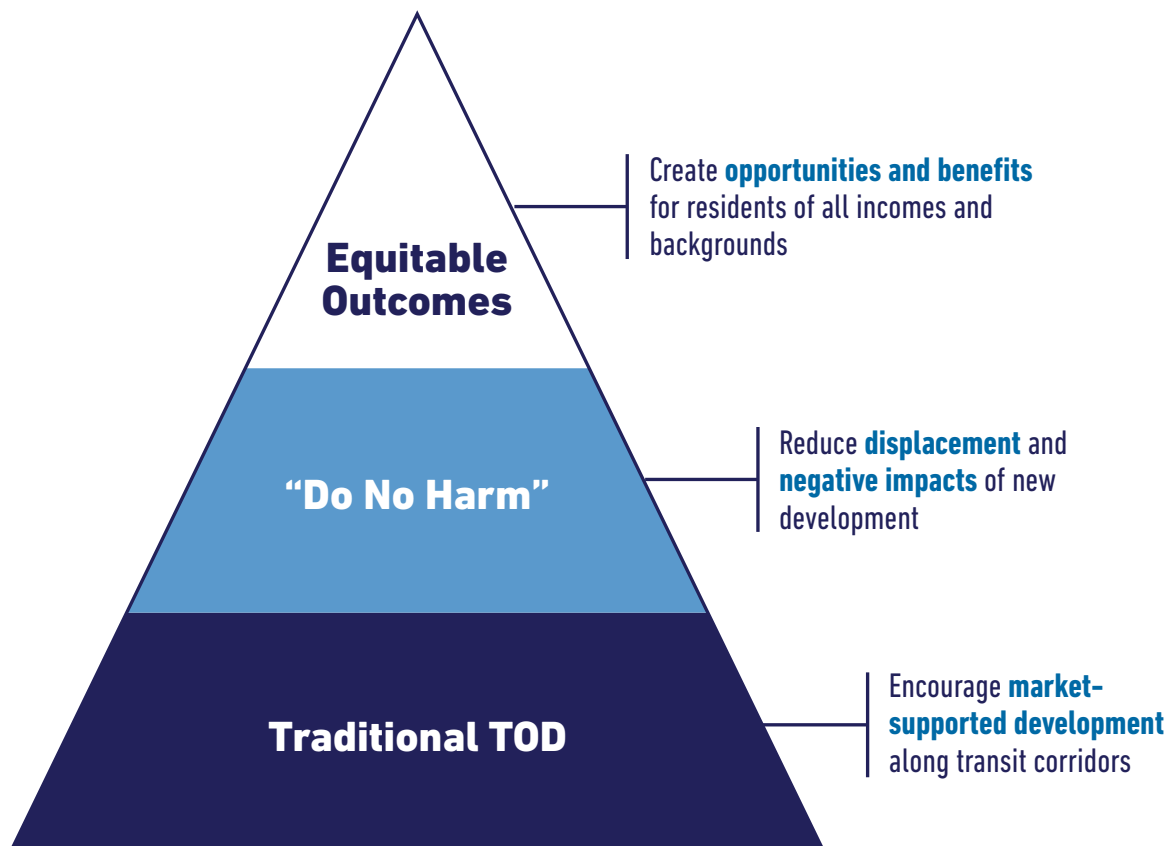


## TOD to ETOD

Traditional TOD refers to a planning and design strategy that promotes compact, mixed-use, pedestrian/bike-friendly communities built around mass transit systems. However, traditional TOD projects often do not benefit everyone equitably and have historically lacked meaningful engagement of people impacted by the implementation of TOD and often result in the rise of property values. This ends up disproportionately displacing low-income households and communities of color.

Equitable TOD works towards building equitable outcomes through proactive actions to ensure that everyone, especially historically marginalized communities of color, can benefit from transit connectivity. At the core of ETOD is the tenet that new transit infrastructure should be accompanied by policies and strategies to mitigate displacement of existing residents and create economic opportunity for all Austinites to thrive.

Achieving equitable outcomes through ETOD requires considering and addressing how transit infrastructure intersects with systemic racism, housing affordability, small business interests, economic opportunity, education, and health. This approach builds upon the priorities outlined within the City of Austin's Nothing About Us Without Us Racial Equity Anti Displacement Tool by presenting strategies that directly support the needs of Austin's BIPOC communities. The following graphic demonstrates how equitable TOD approaches can build on traditional TOD across various planning stages.





04

Project Connect

# Project Connect investments will increase the transportation options available and the demand for housing and services near the new transit stations.

Without a proportional increase in housing development and corresponding policies to protect local businesses, many current residents and businesses around transit stations risk being displaced. CapMetro is committed to ensuring that development around transit stations enhances transit ridership, provides community benefits, and encourages equitable outcomes that benefit people who have not historically benefited from infrastructure projects.

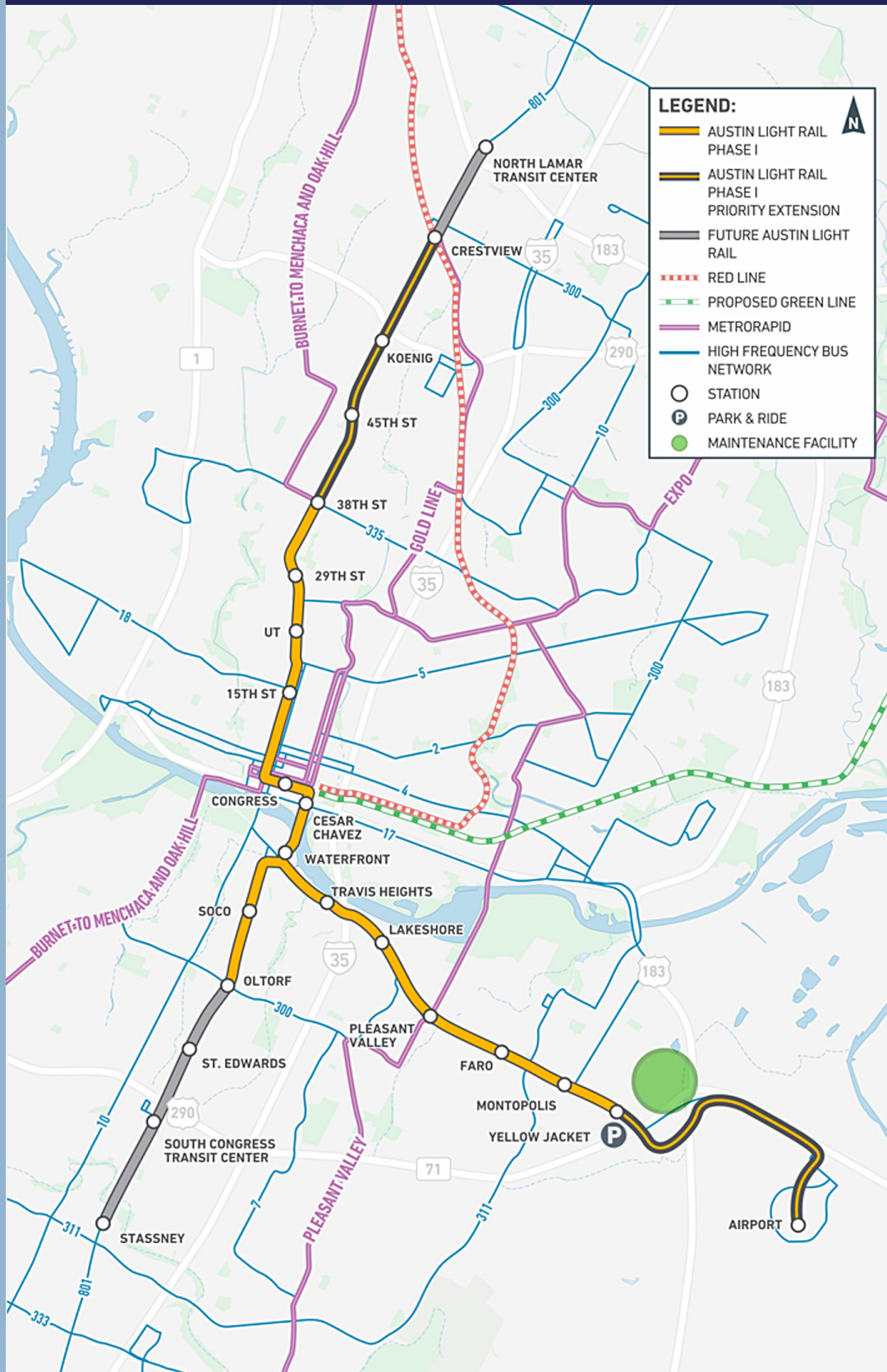


ETOD is built upon previous City initiatives such as the Prop A \$300 million anti-displacement fund, principles set forth by CapMetro as well as the City's 30 ETOD Resolution Goals outlined from the 2021 Council-approved ETOD resolution. The ETOD resolution calls for an ETOD Policy Plan that leads with equity as a guiding principle to planning and implementation and incorporates context-sensitive strategies centered on affordability, increasing transit ridership and displacement prevention. The City of Austin and CapMetro recognize the importance of implementing ETOD across Austin to achieve our community's vision for complete, connected, inclusive communities served by transit.

**The first phase of Austin Light Rail** expands coverage and aligns with ETOD policies by connecting the primarily BIPOC residents of densely populated areas like East Riverside to work and education opportunities throughout Austin. In addition to the Phase 1 alignment, access to the airport was also identified as a Priority Extension, along with 38th Street to Crestview.



# Phase 1 Austin Light Rail Investment





# Goals

CapMetro, ATP and the City of Austin built on the City Council ETOD Goals and Racial Equity Anti-Displacement Tool, learned from the ETOD strategies of other cities and listened to feedback from the local community to create the following 6 goals:

## **Goal 1: Enable all residents to benefit from safe, sustainable, and accessible transportation**

We seek to provide easily accessible, high-quality, reliable transportation that meets the travel needs of existing and new riders. This includes evaluating current transit networks and ridership to determine service gaps and expand the transit service network.

## **Goal 2: Help close racial health and wealth gaps**

This strategy includes (but is not limited to): providing supportive workforce programs, securing affordable housing options easily accessible to employment opportunities, incentivizing commercial uses that provide healthcare and food/grocery options, sustaining the growth and development of small businesses, and empowering homeowners and tenants with legal counsel and funding to strengthen housing stability. In order to achieve this goal, we will need to both increase opportunities for historically disenfranchised communities as well as decrease and remove burdens for these communities in accessing existing opportunities.

## **Goal 3: Preserve and increase housing opportunities that are affordable and attainable**

Our current and future anti-displacement interventions are aimed at protecting existing affordable housing options at risk of redevelopment due to new transit investments. In addition to preservation, we seek to bolster new affordable housing developments that align with existing and future transit-supportive networks.

## **Goal 4: Expand access to high-quality jobs and career opportunities**

Increasing opportunities for economic prosperity includes providing access to better employment options that, at a minimum, provide a living wage. Successfully achieving this goal would reduce the likelihood that a household will be cost-burdened by housing costs, which are often a household's largest expense.

## **Goal 5: Support healthy neighborhoods that meet daily needs**

Equitable Transit-Oriented Developments are most successful when they incorporate commercial, residential, and public uses that support daily household activities such as food shopping, health care visits, outside recreation and gathering, and access to educational opportunities.

## **Goal 6: Expand Austin's diverse cultural heritage and small, BIPOC-owned, and legacy businesses**

This strategy works in concert with Goal 2 to embrace the diversity of businesses that are invited to participate in Transit-Oriented Developments. The invitation includes ensuring that lease spaces are affordable and attainable. We seek to help build operating capacity for businesses that struggle in a high-value real estate market.



METRO



projectconnect

# SYSTEM PLAN

Adopted June 10, 2020

## LEGEND

### LIGHT RAIL

Orange Line

Blue Line

Gold Line

### METRO RAIL

Red Line

Green Line  
Potential Future Extension

### METRO RAPID

Enhanced MetroRapid Route

Potential Future Extension

### METROBUS

Current Frequent Local Routes

### METRO EXPRESS

Current MetroExpress

Future MetroExpress

### METRO ACCESS

Available within CapMetro service area

Current Park & Ride

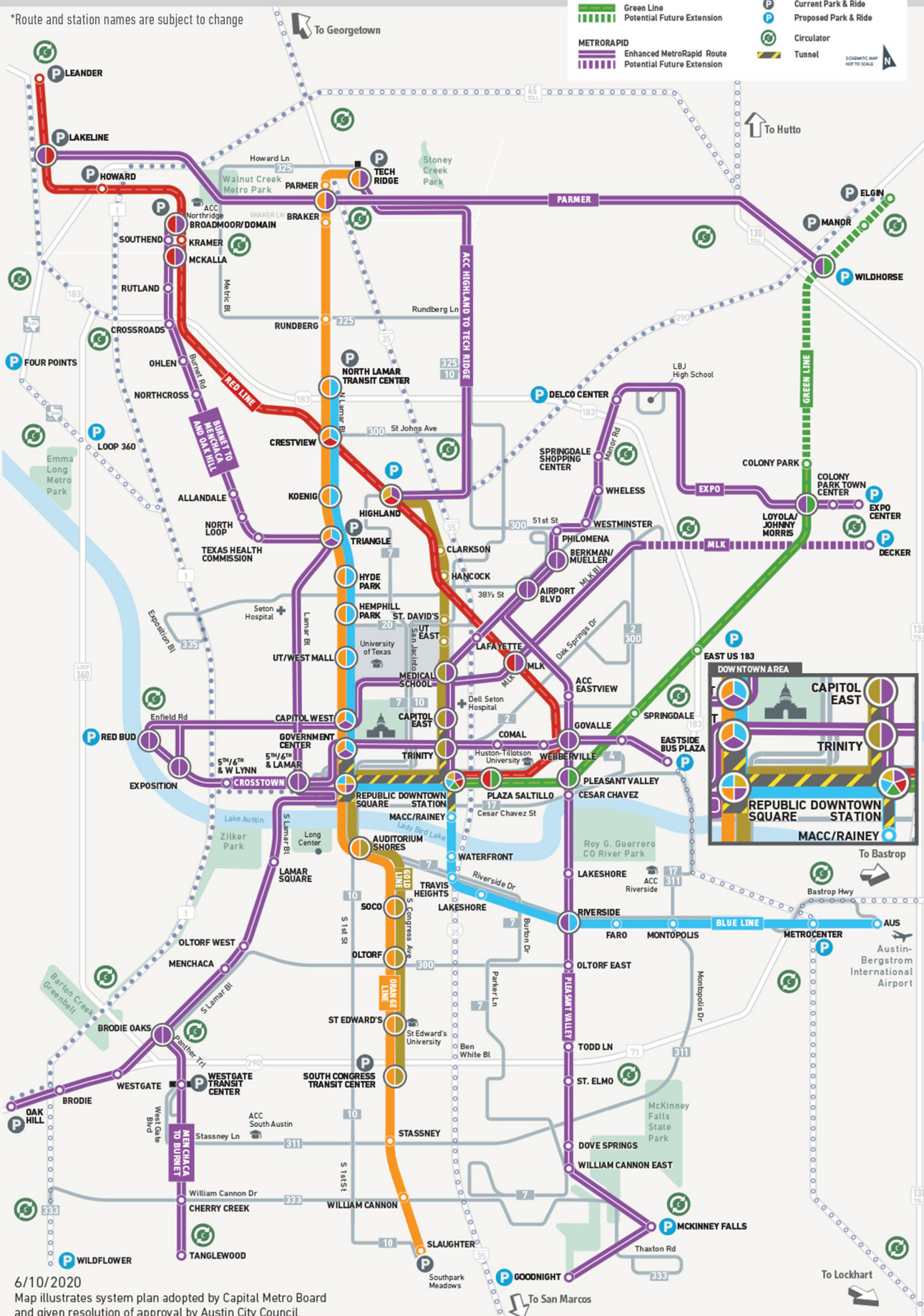
Proposed Park & Ride

Circulator

Tunnel

ISOBARIC MAP NOT TO SCALE

\*Route and station names are subject to change



6/10/2020

Map illustrates system plan adopted by Capital Metro Board and given resolution of approval by Austin City Council.

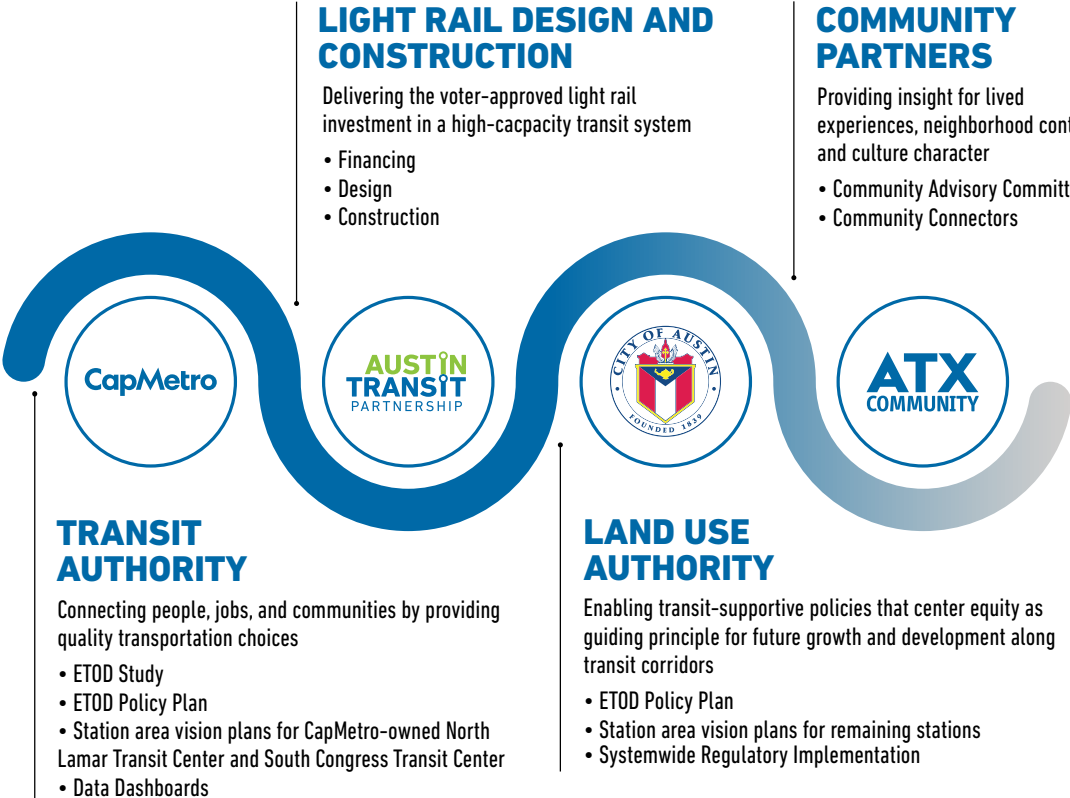
# Project Connect Partnership Structure

The following partners shape ETOD policy, programs, and frameworks to lessen the displacement of local communities, preserve and encourage more housing affordability, stimulate small business growth and create a more equitable quality of life for all.

After Austin voted in November 2020 to implement Project Connect, CapMetro and the City of Austin formed the Austin Transit Partnership (ATP). ATP is an independent local government corporation with the authority and resources to design, construct, and implement Austin Light Rail. The ATP board operates with full transparency and accountability for the community. The City of Austin works closely with CapMetro and the ATP to ensure the Project Connect is built and implemented with full transparency.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC), a group of community members nominated to advise staff of all three agencies on equity and anti-displacement, formed an ETOD working group that has regularly provided input and worked through analyses and recommendations throughout the ETOD planning process. Community Connectors are compensated community members recruited from across Austin. Out of 141 applications, we selected 12.

The community groups regularly attended project workshops, inputting ideas and considerations essential to guiding the direction of the ETOD policy, design and program. Our Connectors represented everyone from longtime Austinites, to populations who do not speak English as a first language; from Austin’s deaf community to Austin’s LGBTQ+ community; from disabled rights advocates to students and faculty.





05

What We  
Achieved

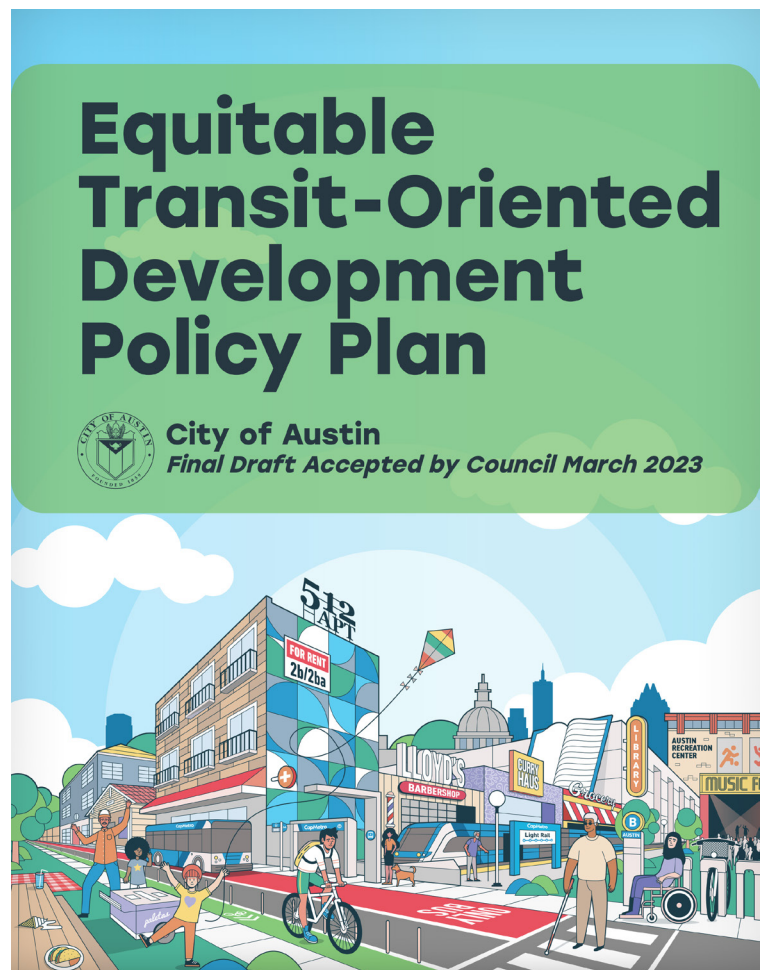
## Key Deliverables

The **Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) Policy Plan** is a comprehensive framework to help the Austin community ensure that future development supports residents of all incomes and backgrounds, especially those who have been disproportionately burdened by past transportation and land use decisions.

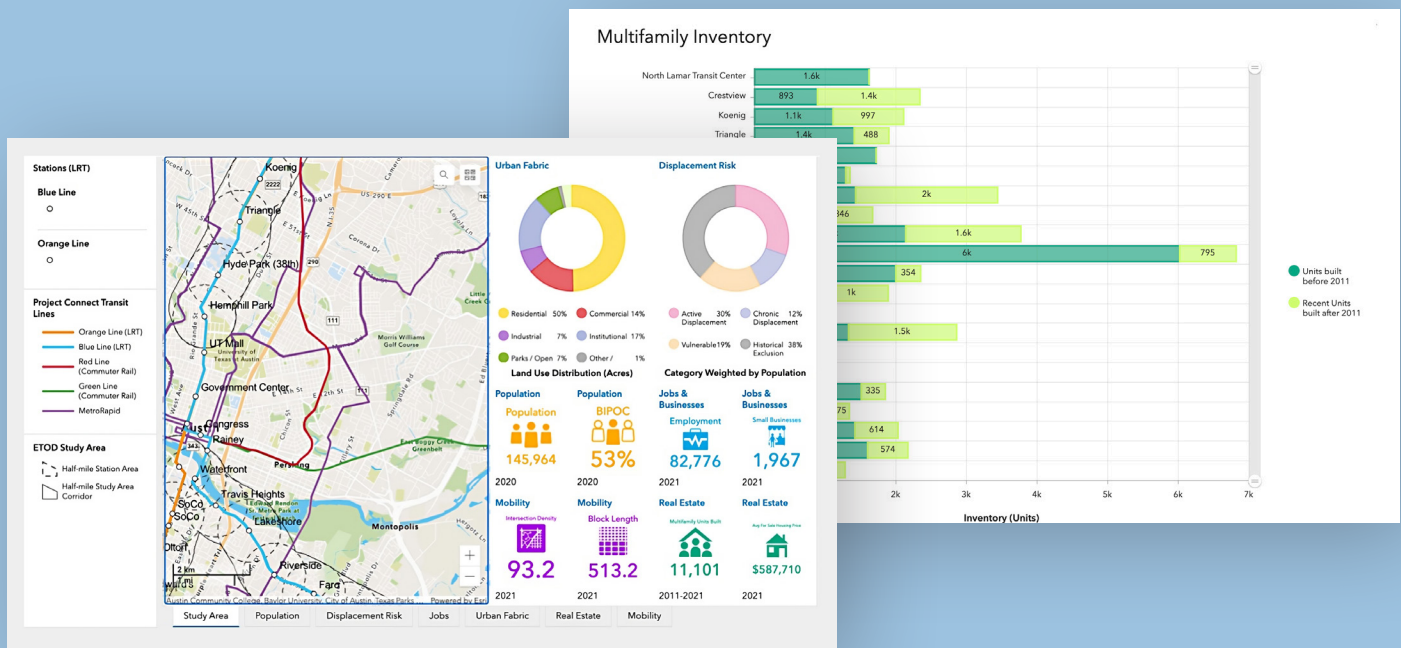
The Plan was created by CapMetro and the City of Austin's Planning Department with help from ATP and the community. Together, staff and the public drafted the goals for ETOD in Austin, the tools that can help us reach those goals, and the actions we must take to make equity possible in the transit system and the neighborhoods around it. The Plan was accepted by City Council by resolution at their meeting on March 9, 2023.

The **ETOD Policy Toolkit** is a set of 46 policy buildable tools that can be tailored to the goals and needs for each station area. The ETOD Policy Toolkit is incorporated into the policy plan and provides a framework for Project Connect station-area planning and investment so that residents, businesses, and neighborhoods can fully and equitably realize the benefits of transit investment in Austin. The Toolkit allows team members to select from a list of policy tool options and identify funding sources to implement across transit corridors and in specific station areas.

We initiated **Station Area Vision Plans** for the neighborhoods surrounding two CapMetro-owned transit centers along the planned light rail. CapMetro is partnering with the City, crafting responsive land-use policy that grows future ridership, and supports local communities. We use community-established goals as guiding principles in the station area planning process as well as the lessons learned from our engagement strategies. We pivoted our methods to ensure BIPOC residents, low-income earners, daily transit users, people with disabilities and elderly residents were heard after early outreach failed to adequately represent these communities.



[View the full Policy Plan and Toolkit here](#)



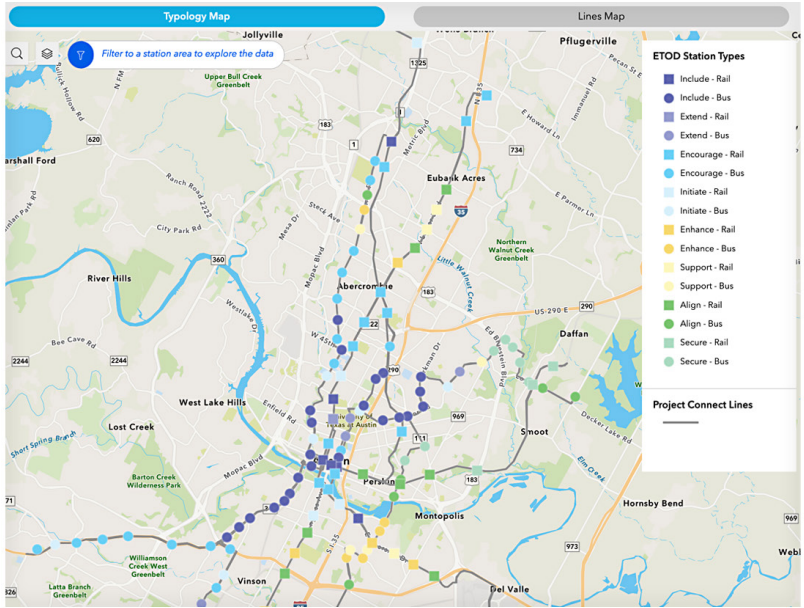
The **Existing Conditions Analysis** was made using 60 data sources for the Project Connect stations along the Austin Light Rail Lines spread across North Central Austin (from the North Lamar Transit Center to Hemphill Park), South Central Austin (from Auditorium Shores to Slaughter), and the Riverside Area (from Waterfront to MetroCenter station near Austin-Bergstrom Airport). CapMetro will expand this analysis to include all stations within the system. The analysis explores each area through 6 dimensions: population, displacement risk, jobs & business, urban fabric, real estate market and mobility. [View the full interactive conditions analysis here.](#)

The **ETOD Priority Tool** is a data-driven framework to prioritize ETOD initiatives and investments. The goal of prioritizing is to minimize displacement risk but also support opportunities to achieve equitable outcomes. The tool is organized into three main tabs:

**Typologies:** Stations are grouped into categories according to shared characteristics that allow decision-makers to tailor policy tools to address unique needs of the people in each area, not market readiness.

**Complete Communities Indicators:** Metrics that describe each station area's progress towards meeting the community's goals for achieving ETOD

**Policy Recommendations:** Applicable policy tools based on the typologies and complete community indicators of each station area. Data feeding this tool is updated by CapMetro with coordination from the City of Austin on a rotating basis to track progress on achieving equitable outcomes as envisioned by the community and Project Connect.



If a station has...	...and is...	...and has experienced...	...its Typology is:
More Residents Today	Historically Exclusionary or Less Vulnerable to Displacement	Rapid Change	Include
More Residents Today	Historically Exclusionary or Less Vulnerable to Displacement	Slow Change	Extend
Fewer Residents Today	Historically Exclusionary or Less Vulnerable to Displacement	Rapid Change	Encourage
Fewer Residents Today	Historically Exclusionary or Less Vulnerable to Displacement	Slow Change	Initiate
More Residents Today	Vulnerable to or Experiencing Displacement	Rapid Change	Enhance
More Residents Today	Vulnerable to or Experiencing Displacement	Slow Change	Support
Fewer Residents Today	Vulnerable to or Experiencing Displacement	Rapid Change	Align
Fewer Residents Today	Vulnerable to or Experiencing Displacement	Slow Change	Secure

[View the ETOD Priority Tool here](#)

## Learning from Existing Studies

We examined ETOD studies from select cities we have the most opportunity to learn from. We reviewed domestic applications to understand policies and programs feasible within Austin, to assess locations with similar demographics and trends and model our strategies after those of other places that also have restrictive laws and prohibit inclusionary zoning, among other equity tools. Each example provides relevant and specifically equity-focused approaches towards transit expansions.





06

Engagement



# Phase I - IV ETOD Engagement by the Numbers

## Total Engagement Counts\*

		Phase 1: Goals and Objectives	Phase 2A: Verify Goals & Discuss Policies	Phase 2B: Policy & Program Application	Phase 3: Station Area Vision Plans	Total Counts
		Winter 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022	Spring 2023	Winter 2021 to Spring 2023
Engagement Method	Survey Responses	211	502	281	120	<b>1114</b>
	Focus Group Sessions	10	15	11	7	<b>43</b>
	Focus Group Attendees	52	74	44	28	<b>198</b>
	Focus Group Compensation	\$2,669	\$4,400	\$1,750	\$1,400.00	<b>\$10,219</b>
	Public Meeting/ Workshop Sessions	1	N/A	N/A	4	<b>5</b>
	Public Meeting/ Workshop Attendees	268	N/A	N/A	47	<b>315</b>

\*Phase 4 Engagement commences in fall 2023.

## Engagement Participants by Race

		Engagement Method			
		Surveys	Focus Groups	Combined Methods	Citywide Comparison (Census 2020)
Race	White (Non-Hispanic)	49%	24%	45%	<b>47%</b>
	Hispanic or Latino(a)	31%	49%	34%	<b>32%</b>
	Asian and Pacific Islander (Non-Hispanic)	6%	3%	6%	<b>9%</b>
	Black (Non-Hispanic)	10%	19%	12%	<b>7%</b>
	Native American (Non-Hispanic)	1%	1%	1%	<b>&lt;1%</b>
	Other or Two or More Races (Non-Hispanic)	2%	3%	2%	<b>4%</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Engagement Participants by Income

		Engagement Method			
		Surveys	Focus Groups	Combined Methods	Citywide Comparison (ACS 2021)
Income	Less than \$25,000	17%	25%	18%	<b>14%</b>
	\$25,000 to \$49,999	22%	38%	25%	<b>17%</b>
	\$50,000 to \$74,999	19%	20%	19%	<b>17%</b>
	\$75,000 to \$99,999	11%	6%	10%	<b>13%</b>
	\$100,000 to \$149,999	17%	5%	15%	<b>18%</b>
	More than \$150,000	14%	6%	12%	<b>22%</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



# What We Heard

A closer look at community members' main priorities around ETOD issues.

## Focus Group Responses

### ACCESS

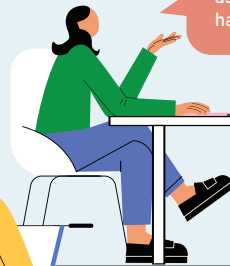


"I struggle to afford housing on a fixed income, especially since I need to live central for transit. I don't know where to go, this has been my home."

"Folks in the blind community look for bus routes when choosing housing."



### INCOME



"Getting access to affordable housing and assistance programs is hard and complicated."

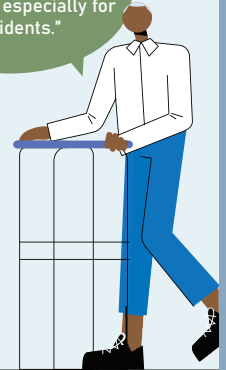
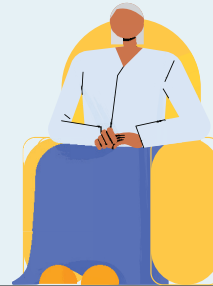
"Rents are at least \$2,500, even if you go far north or south. What can people do?"



### SENIOR CITIZENS

"Focus on offering senior residents the ability to stay and age in place."

"We need more shaded seating areas with benches, especially for older residents."



### CAC

"The priority should be getting affordable housing and deeper tiers of housing."

"Expanding home repair is one of the most important programs to help sustain people in place."

"Some affordable housing is owned by people out of state. Landowners don't necessarily care about what's happening in the state they own land in."



1,114 TOTAL RESPONSES

## Survey Responses

### INCOME

40% respondents earn less than \$50,000

"The city of Austin needs to remain affordable and accessible to long time residents. Rent, transit, and green spaces need to be subsidized and made a priority to keep residents from losing their homes and livelihoods."

### SENIOR CITIZENS

19% respondents over 55 years old

"The needs of people with disabilities must be centered here. This includes blind people, deaf people, and wheelchair users, but also cognitive disabilities and the many people who need safe, sanitary rest and bathroom areas."

### RACE

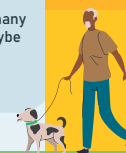
50% BIPOC respondents

"We need to preserve the small businesses especially of minority groups in Austin. It is hard with so many big businesses coming to town...maybe small minority businesses can get special loans or grants."



### 3 Languages

- English
- Spanish
- Hindi





07

Lessons  
Learned



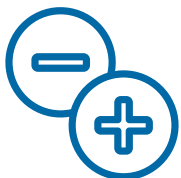
**The importance of partnership** and working together to implement a common vision. The transit operator, regulatory body, implementation and the community bodies need to collaborate to make impactful change. Given the pace of change in the market, no agency can work on ETOD alone.



**Implementation with practical and buildable solutions.** We approached ETOD with the understanding that CapMetro needs to work together with the City to build a common framework, then focus on site-specific implementation (station area vision plans) before finally piloting implementation on CapMetro-owned property. The City will continue to focus on broader systemwide implementation, including updating the Imagine Austin Plan, various Land Development Codes and small area planning around the ETOD station areas.



**Flexibility in policy solutions across stations.** While successful ETOD requires a cohesive framework across the transit system, it needs to adapt to the distinct conditions and needs of different station areas. In some cases, it even requires creative solutions from an individual parcel level or entire corridors. The ETOD Toolkit started with 46 buildable policy tools that identify responsibilities for planning and implementing effective ETODs for the public sector. As we further identify needs and opportunities, additional tools can be added.



**Understanding the benefits and tradeoffs of ETOD.** It's important to acknowledge that market forces that shape neighborhoods will be accelerated by TOD. However, we hold these difficult conversations with the community to articulate how we mitigate displacement and advance public priorities in station areas through additional funding sources, program administration and community engagement. These conversations are necessary to effectively implement ETOD, as well as address potential legal and political limitations.



**Importance of meaningful community engagement.** We spent significant time to be inclusive, transparent and engaging to offer the community the opportunity to co-create. We implemented a range of strategies to hear from the community members that have historically been under-represented and disproportionately impacted by racism, disinvestment and gentrification in Austin.

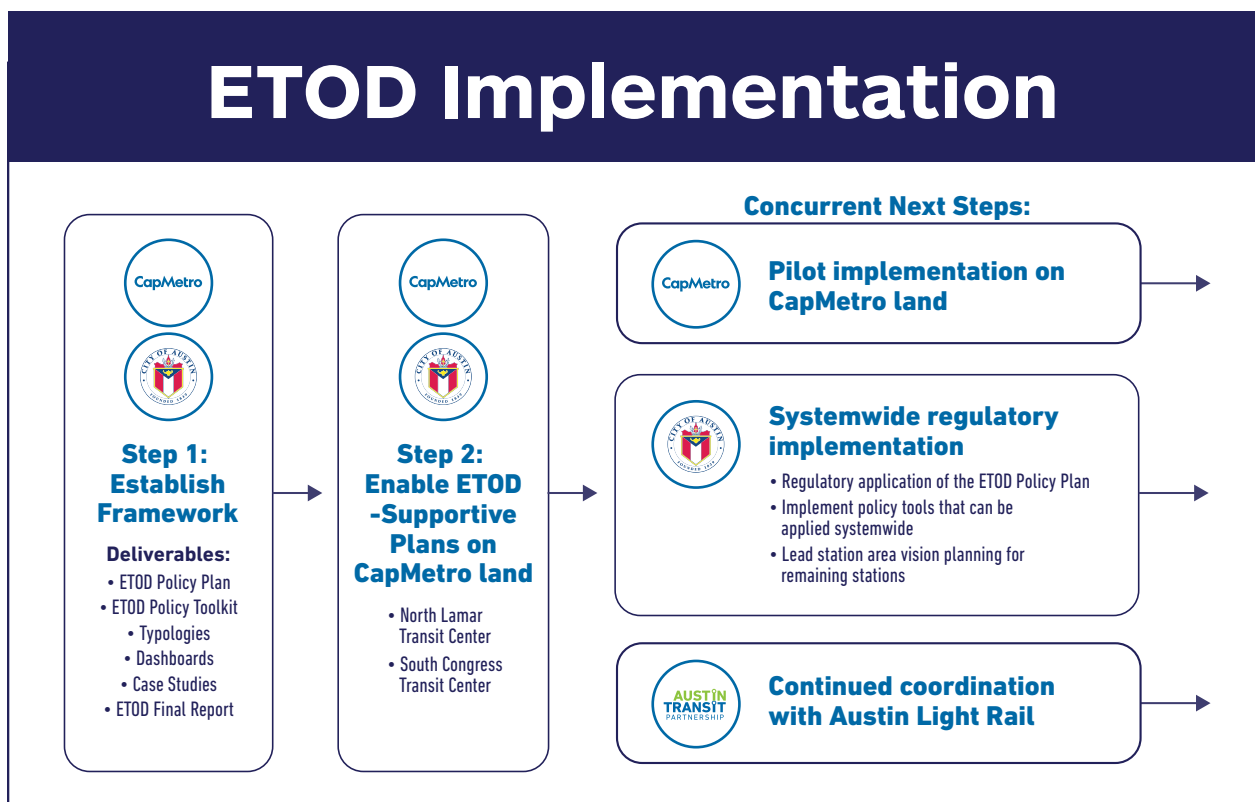


08

Next Steps

# After establishing a baseline framework through the ETOD Policy Plan, the project partners are focused on implementation.

CapMetro is focusing on the delivery of ETOD through site specific implementation, such as the station area vision plans for CapMetro’s North Lamar Transit Center and South Congress Transit Center. As the land use authority, the City of Austin is implementing ETOD policy tools with a systemwide approach, focusing on regulatory application of the plan, such as amendments to the City’s comprehensive plan, land development code and station area vision planning for the remaining stations. The project teams will continue coordination with the Austin Transit Partnership on the Austin Light Rail implementation.



# Acknowledgements

## Project Team

### CapMetro

Anna Lan  
Rose Lisska  
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Edna Parra  
Peter Breton

### City of Austin

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Shanisha Johnson  
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Rachel Tepper

### Austin Transit Partnership

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### Consultant Team

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Brianna Snitchler  
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## Community Connectors

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Rashmikant Shah  
Ariel Marlowe  
Odett Garza-Witherspoon  
Naomi Wilson  
Pierre Nguyen  
Leland Murphy  
Fabian Wood