

# TOD Priority Tool Executive Summary

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A Resource for Identifying TOD Opportunities  
to Support High-Capacity Transit







## THE TOD PRIORITY TOOL

Capital Metro is undertaking a system-wide initiative to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD) along its high-capacity MetroRapid and MetroRail transit corridors. TOD is an attractive, walkable, and sustainable development pattern organized around high-capacity transit that can maximize Capital Metro's system ridership and offer residents of the Greater Austin area with an array of housing choices, and convenient access to the region's jobs, services, campuses, and amenities.

This new TOD Priority Tool provides a foundation for planning and investment strategies around transit stations by:

- Examining the existing state of transit-oriented development along the Capital Metro system through careful research and analysis of each station.
- Establishing a closer relationship between land use decisions and transit system efficiencies, improving both to increase ridership.
- Identifying station-specific implementation action items.

The TOD Priority Tool is focused on areas within a half-mile radius around high-capacity transit stations on the MetroRapid and MetroRail system. The current version of the Tool, accessible from Capital Metro's website and in a full report, provides information about MetroRapid 801, MetroRapid 803, and MetroRail stations.

TOD is not a one-size-fits-all idea, and it doesn't happen overnight. Within Greater Austin, and even within a high-capacity transit corridor, TOD can occur in different shapes, sizes, and timeframes. A key feature of Capital Metro's Priority TOD Tool is an analytic framework that helps recognize how individual stations are alike, how they differ, and what they need to attract transit-oriented

development. This framework consists of two distinct classification schemes: a **TOD Place Typology** that describes different kinds of station areas, and a **TOD Readiness Score** that evaluates how a given station area is progressing.

The **TOD Place Typology** sorts Capital Metro's transit stations into five categories differentiated by location, connectivity, land use, urban form, and intensity. A station's Typology category reflects its existing conditions as well as its future aspirational character. In that sense, the Typology is timeless – it reflects the ultimate vision for a station area, regardless of current conditions, and is not expected to change unless the community's vision for a neighborhood or district fundamentally changes. The purpose of the Typology is to establish consistent expectations for the long-term character of station-area development, supported by diverse public sector and community stakeholders.

The **TOD Readiness Score**, by contrast, measures how a station is doing relative to the full TOD potential implied by its Place Typology category. This score, which is scalar rather than categorical, is expected to change over time as conditions in a station area evolve. The purpose of the Readiness Score is two-fold: to identify the high-priority investments or other actions required to get the ball rolling in a given station area, and to set realistic expectations for the timeframe in which different stations are likely to achieve their TOD potential.

The core of the TOD Priority Tool is the compendium of station profiles, found online and in the full report. These profiles inventory current conditions and provide a rich database for evaluating potential for TOD.

**TOD is a form of city design that integrates walking and biking with buses and trains, through smaller block sizes, complete streets, compact development, shade, places to sit, buildings with shop fronts, and other people-friendly features.**

**TOD is not a building or a project. It's a comprehensive pattern of land use and development. Nor is it a universal, one-size-fits-all pattern; TOD can and does vary from setting to setting, with different mixes of land use; different levels of population, employment, and civic activity; and different scales of development.**



## TOD PLACE TYPOLOGY

Capital Metro's **TOD Place Typology** includes five categories of TOD that reflect current and planned urban form in Capital Metro's service area.



**Central Core** station areas are located in the primary urban center, in and immediately adjacent to the downtown areas of the City of Austin. Compared to other place types, these station areas have the greatest diversity and mix of land uses, and feature the highest densities of built uses. Destinations in these areas are dynamic multi-purpose or seven-day attractions, and span the spectrum of residential clusters; business, government and institutional nodes; and entertainment and visitor features. These stations feature the highest segment ridership statistics in the system.

**Regional Hub** station areas are emerging centers of regional significance located outside of the Central Core. These station areas feature high densities and diverse mixes of land uses, and are multi-purpose destinations. These areas feature high multi-modal accessibility, and highly planned or grid-block patterns of paths and streets. Stations feature high segment ridership.





**TOD Village** stations are the focal points of urban sub-areas. These are nodes of moderate to high density amid lower-density surroundings. They feature a diverse mix of land uses and attractions, although the outlying portions of a station area may feature more concentrations of single use, such as residential or employment. These station areas function both as regional destinations as well as neighborhood service centers. They offer multi-modal access, and have an organized grid block pattern of paths and streets.



**Neighborhood TOD** station areas feature moderate density at the core or station site amid lower surroundings, but with less contrast outward across the station area than previous categories. These areas are more locally focused nodes, with neighborhood scale commercial uses that support the nearby and surrounding residential areas. There is good pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in these station areas.



**Special Destinations** station areas are organized around a predominant single-use attractor, destination, or function. This destination is a potentially significant transit trip-generator, but unlikely to support a typical mixed-use TOD pattern due to visitor trip purpose. It may contain retail or other uses in an ancillary or support capacity.



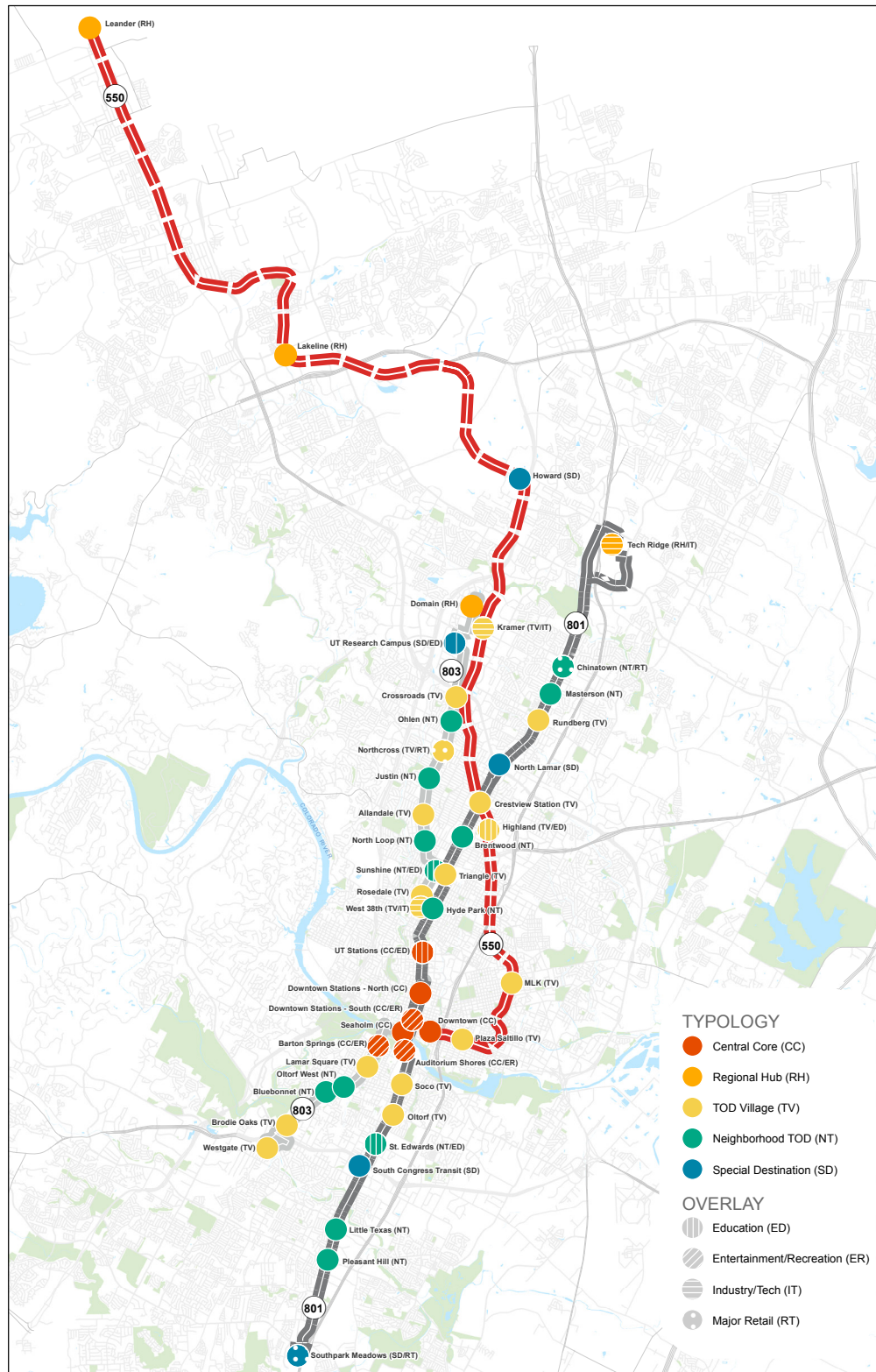
In addition to the Place Typology assignments, stations may be designated with a **functional overlay**, based upon particular transit rider patterns based on uses in the area.

Education	Industry/ Technology	Entertainment/ Recreational	Major Retail
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## TOD PLACE TYPOLOGY ASSIGNMENTS

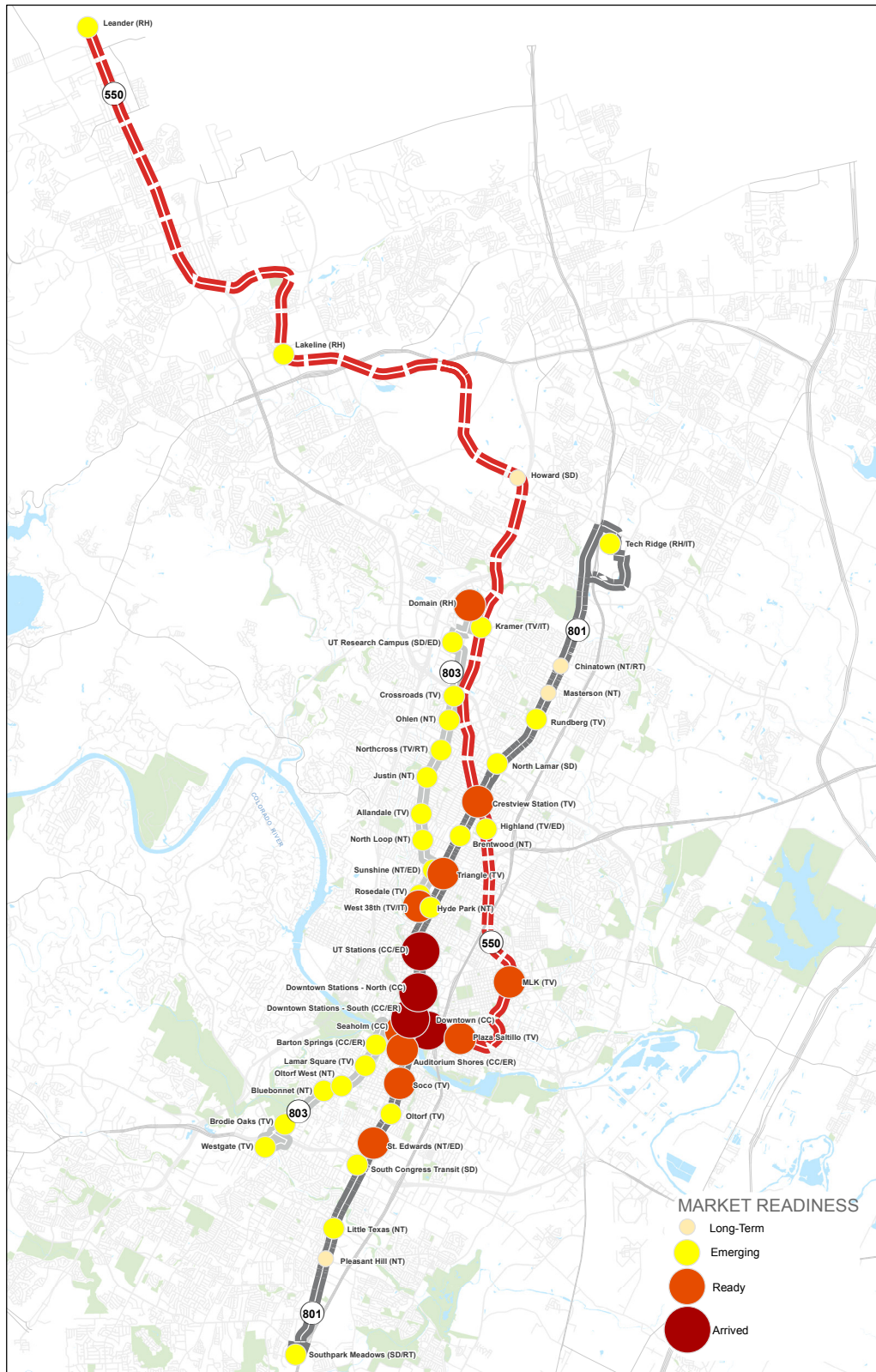
All five Place Typology categories are present on the MetroRapid 801, MetroRapid 803, and MetroRail corridors.





## TOD READINESS SCORES

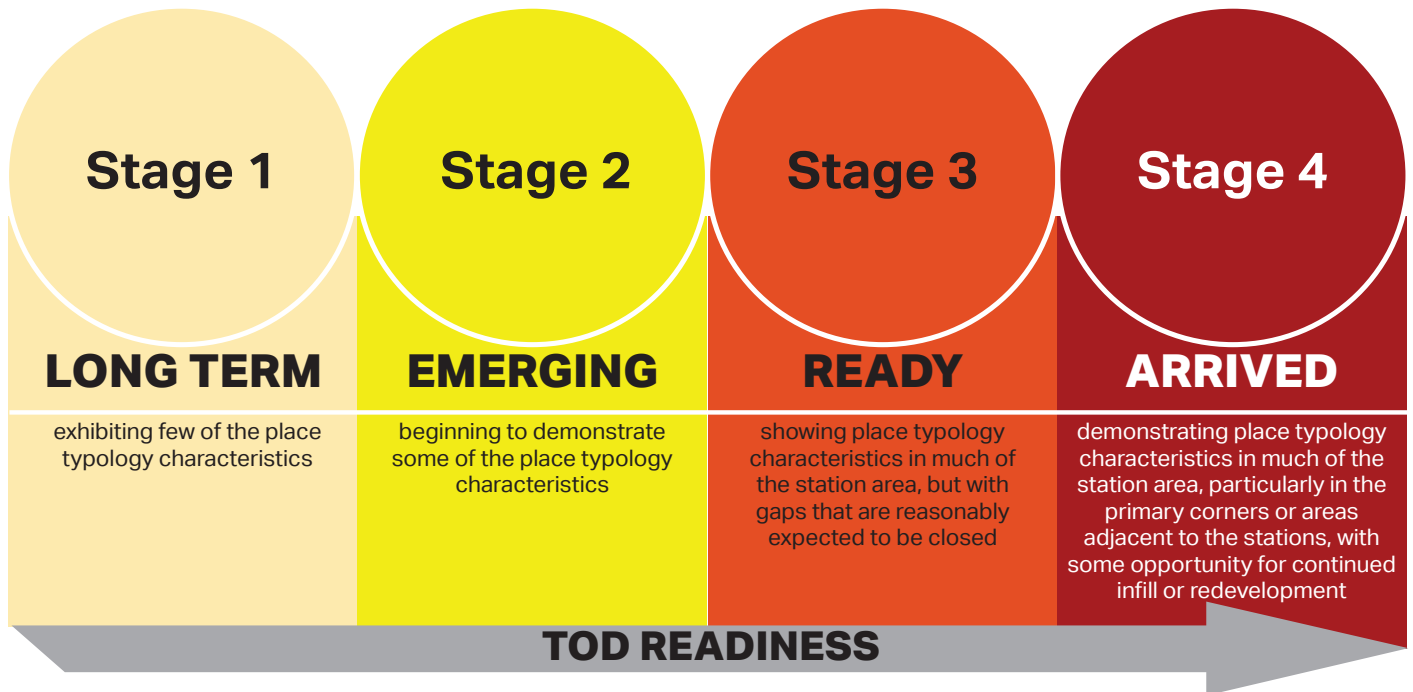
Stations on the MetroRapid 801, MetroRapid 803, and MetroRail corridors exhibit all four stages of TOD Readiness.



## TOD READINESS

The **TOD Readiness Score** that summarizes how far a station has progressed toward its full TOD potential and how far it has to go. Unlike the TOD Place Typology, a station's **TOD Readiness Score**

can—and hopefully will—change over time, as conditions evolve and TOD takes hold in the market. The **TOD Readiness Score** has four levels.



Capital Metro considers the four dimensions when assessing the Readiness of its station areas to attract successful TOD.

**Connectivity:** How well the station is connected to its surroundings and to other parts of the transportation network. TOD requires high levels of multi-modal connectivity between the station and its surrounding neighborhoods. Frequent and reliable transit service is necessary, as is easy and safe movement along sidewalks and bikeways connecting to the station. Access to primary vehicular routes is also supportive of development, as is convenient access to the region's employment base and other activity centers.

**Market Strength:** How the real estate market is performing in the station area. Areas exhibiting strong real estate fundamentals are likely to evolve into TOD more quickly than those lacking density, development activity, and market performance. A strong resident and employment base provides a captive audience for transit, retail, and other uses. Development begets other development – successful “pioneering” real estate projects trigger additional projects, and investment in established neighborhoods encourages other owners to maintain their properties and look for opportunities for infill development or redevelopment.







**Land Availability:** The extent to which the station area has vacant and underutilized land which could be developed or redeveloped. TOD is only possible to the extent that property is available, in parcels of practically developable size and shape. Some stations have plenty of open, developable land. Others, located in areas already developed, may provide opportunities carved out of places that are not immediately obvious: surface parking lots, publicly owned facilities, and underutilized or vacant properties ready for reuse. Such development is especially important at the corners and street frontages immediately around a transit station, where progress toward TOD (or lack of it) is highly visible.



**Government Support:** The degree to which the relevant jurisdictions provide planning, regulatory, and infrastructure support for TOD. Supportive land use plans and regulations, as well as local infrastructure investment policies, profoundly affect the feasibility of TOD. Without the underlying zoning, subdivision regulations, land use plans, and other administrative tools in place, the market may not be able to implement the mix of uses, form, and scale characteristic of TOD by-right, or without special permissions and interventions. Likewise, how local government prioritizes and executes investments in civil infrastructure, such as street maintenance, sidewalk repair, bicycle paths, and provision of water and sewer, has a real influence on how and where development or redevelopment happens.



## IMPLEMENTATION

There are many locations across Capital Metro's high-capacity transit network that are capable of producing vibrant transit-oriented development. The **TOD Place Typology** establishes the long-term vision for each station area. The **TOD Readiness Score**, along with its underlying subscores and metrics, provides a marker of how closely a station area currently resembles its aspirational TOD potential, while highlighting those aspects of TOD Readiness that are lagging. By examining the Readiness Scores, stakeholders can identify and prioritize the unique combinations of capital and infrastructure investments, policy and regulatory changes, and development initiatives that can move the station area up the Readiness scale.

**Connectivity:** Improvements to station area Connectivity will improve physical access to and through a station area by all transportation modes, as well as increasing access to the potential pool of riders who might visit or use the station area.

**Market Strength:** Improvements to station area Market Strength will improve the fundamental conditions necessary for successful real estate development and competitive position relative to other areas within Greater Austin. Encourage projects that accommodate a mix of land uses to enhance ridership: residential, retail, office, cultural, civic and employment uses should synergize to promote inbound and outbound transit demand and a vibrant 24x7 environment.

**Land Availability:** Land is a finite resource, and the ability to increase the supply is limited, especially in mature developed areas. Opportunities lie in creative possibilities to "find" sites in mature areas by spinning off underutilized portions of developed properties, by assembling smaller parcels where appropriate to create more viable development blocks, and by setting the stage for transit-oriented reuse as properties turn over or station-area land values increase relative to the cost of improvements.

**Government Support:** Improved readiness in Government Support can be accomplished by changes to public policy, investment strategies, and administrative controls and processes, consistent with the aspirational vision of the TOD Place Typology. Ensure by-right land entitlement ordinances and regulations permit development consistent with the Place Typology. Ensure public infrastructure investments improve connectivity and contribute to site redevelopment readiness.

In addition to these general strategies, each **station scorecard** contains specific opportunities to improve the prospects for future TOD success, organized in six topical areas:

- **Safety and security:** Implement amenities to increase safety through techniques such as improved lighting, signage, and placement and maintenance of infrastructure.
- **Streetscape improvements:** Make improvements to the aesthetics and function of the street experience for bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as vehicular movement around the transit station.
- **Development and Redevelopment Opportunities:** Support new construction, renovation, and revitalization of station area property.
- **Station amenities:** Add to the Capital Metro station facilities, such as shelters, seating, real-time information displays, and so forth.
- **Other amenities:** Make enhancements to the transit station and station area not captured above, to improve the vitality, quality of life, and navigation of the station area.
- **Public space / Placemaking / Arts:** Enhance public spaces at the transit station and throughout the surrounding district that reinforce district character and identity of the neighborhood and take advantage of the regions' innovative funding techniques.

**Implementation strategies for each high-capacity station area are summarized on the individual station area scorecard, found online and in the full report.**





**Capital Metro Transportation Authority**  
**Strategic Planning and Development/TOD**  
**2910 E 5th Street**  
**Austin, Texas 78702**  
**TOD@capmetro.org**