OAKLAND TRANSIT

TRANSIT-READY GUIDE

For Communities

OAKLAND COUNTY MICHIGAN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DAVID COULTER
OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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A Message from Dave Coulter, Oakland County Executive

Retaining and attracting population is foundational to our communities' success. Communities that retain and attract people are those that have a strong sense of belonging and that promote well-being – communities in which all residents, from mothers with strollers to older adults with wheelchairs, have transportation choices available to them to meet their needs for housing, education, employment, medical services, fresh food, entertainment, and other goods and services that contribute to quality of life.

Transit is central to achieving these outcomes. But for transit to be successful, it needs to be planned in alignment with other community elements. Decisions about the placement and design of homes, businesses, parks, campuses, and other destinations greatly impact the types of transit that can be provided to a community.

This guide is intended to provide Oakland County communities with a better sense of what elements make transit work for everyone.

Introduction

What elements make transit work for everyone?

Transit improvements do not always require major investments—small changes like better sidewalk connections, lighting, and accessibility for wheelchairs and bikes can significantly enhance the daily travel. With thoughtful planning, transit can be seamlessly integrated into any community, supporting accessibility, mobility, and sustainable development.

Modern transit options are flexible and continue to offer key benefits, such as economic growth, a stronger sense of place, and increased independence by providing alternatives to driving. By including transit elements in ongoing community projects, you create safer, more appealing, and accessible transit for all residents now as well as into the future.

Elements of a transit-ready community can be grouped under the following categories:

- Transit Operations
- Vibrant Places
- Connections to Transit
- Marketing & Communications

See the following pages to learn about what elements make transit work for everyone!

Transit Operations

To transport passengers safely, efficiently, and effectively, transit services and the vehicles used to provide them come in a variety of shapes and sizes which require appropriately configured environments for them to operate in.

Types of Transit

In Oakland County, there are four different types of transit:

DEMAND RESPONSE

Community Transit

Prebooked door-to-door or curb-to-curb service within a designated area

Microtransit

On-demand app-based rideshare service with pickups and drop-offs at location sassigned by the technolgoy (life Uber/Lyft)

ADA Paratransit

Prebooked curb-to-curb service with pickups and drop-offs within 3/4-miles of bus stops for those unable to use fixed route due to a disability (ADA certification required)

Fixed Route

Schedule-based service along a designated route with pick-ups and drop-offs at designated bus stops

Door-to-Door or Curb-to-Curb

Driver picks up and drops off the rider at the curb of the location (may assist to/from the door)

Virtual Stop-to-Virtual Stop

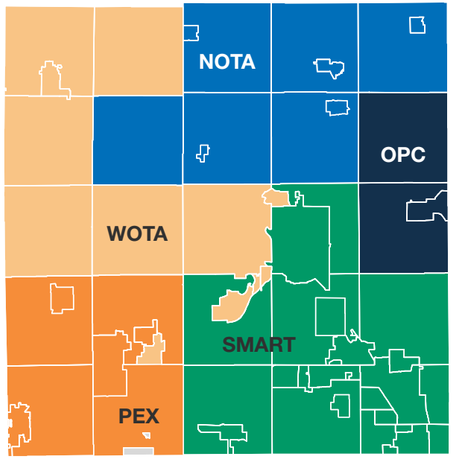
Technolgy assigns the rider a location to walk to for pickup/drop-off to keep vehicles on the most efficient route

Curb-to-Curb

Driver picks up and drops off hte rider at the curb of the location (no assistance to/from the door)

Bus Stop-to-Bus Stop

Location is marked with a signpost where a fixed route can pickup or drop off passengers



Community Transit

Transit Providers

Oakland County has five primary transit providers:

Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), operates Fixed Route, Connector, ADA Paratransit, and Microtransit (called “Flex”) service, partners with individual municipalities in its service area to provide Community Transit services.

North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), operates Community Transit in northeastern Oakland County as well as a trolley between Lake Orion and Oxford.

OPC Social & Activity Center (OPC), operates Community Transit in the Rochester/Rochester Hills area.

People’s Express (PEX), operates Community Transit in southwestern Oakland County.

Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA), operates Community Transit in northwestern Oakland County.

Transit Vehicles

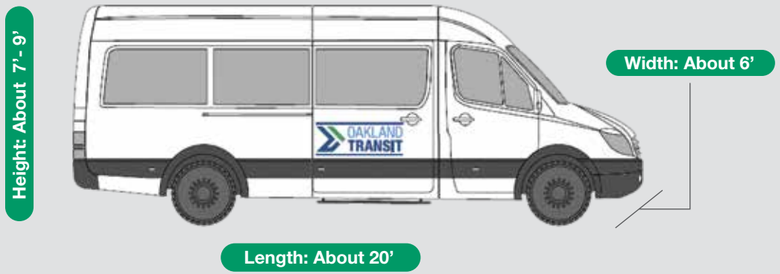
It may seem obvious, but: Transit vehicles are bigger! And specific conditions are needed to operate them effectively to provide transit service. Transit vehicles are often wider and longer than other vehicles and therefore require more room to make safe turns. Backing up is not an option for transit vehicles. Ensuring that places served by transit are appropriately designed to accommodate transit vehicles is critically important.

In Oakland County, several types of transit vehicles are used:

MINIVAN

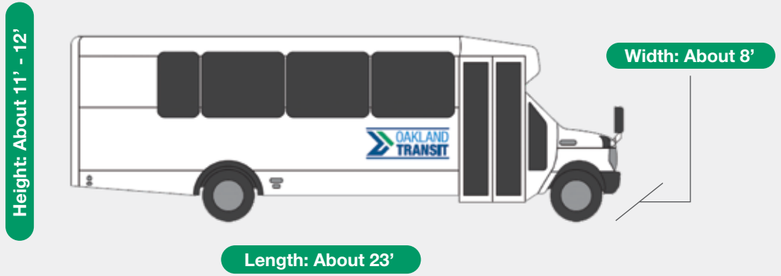
- Only requires a **Chauffer's License** to operate
- **Wheelchair accessible** minivan carries up to **3 passengers** equipped with wheelchair ramp or lift on the side or rear (side ramp or lift is preferred for safety)
- **Turning radius** of about **20 feet**

TRANSIT VAN



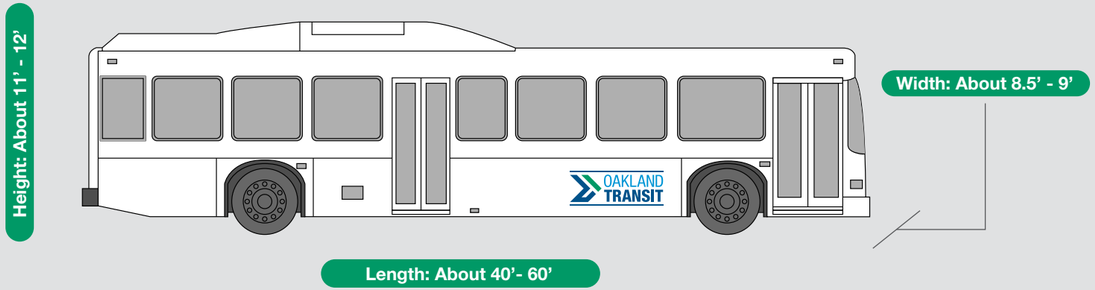
- Only requires a **Chauffer's License** to operate
- **Wheelchair accessible** minivan carries up to **7 passengers** equipped with wheelchair ramp or lift on the side or rear (side ramp or lift is preferred for safety)
- **Turning radius** of about **20 feet**

CUTAWAY (SMALL BUS)



- If **15 people or fewer** are on-board, only requires a **Chauffer's License** to operate
- If **more than 15 people** are on-board, requires a Commercial Driver's License to operate
- Equipped with **wheelchair ramp or lift** on the side or rear (side ramp or lift is preferred for safety)
- Carries up to **20 passengers**
- **Turning radius** of about **28 feet**
- Check with your transit provider on **overhead clearance needed**

ARTICULATED (BIG BUS)



For more information on SMART's fixed route vehicle fleet, see Section 2.2 "Vehicle Fleet" of the SMART Bus Stop Design Manual.

Transit Stop Placement

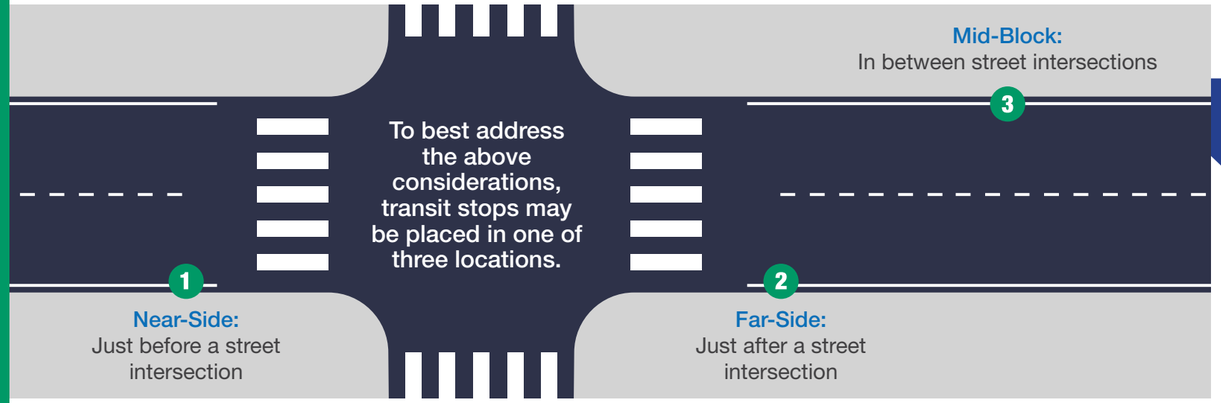
Bus routes should follow a direct path, minimizing turns and staying on a single street to improve speed and clarity. While some route flexibility is needed to reach key destinations, frequent deviations increase travel times and should be limited. Frequent stops—due to traffic or boarding—also slow service and reduce reliability. Streamlining transit stops can enhance the experience for all riders. The main considerations behind where transit stops are placed include:

Destinations:
What is the stop serving?

Spacing:
How far away from adjacent stops?

Traffic Flow:
How will transit vehicles interact with other traffic when picking up and dropping off passengers?

Pedestrian Crossings:
How will passengers cross the street to get to and from the stop and access their destination?



Communities can work with transit providers to identify the best locations for transit stops. They can also help transit providers identify opportunities to consolidate stops where they may be redundant or to remove transit stops from locations that no longer serve a destination or any ridership.

Pick-Up & Drop-Off

Providing proper vertical clearance and turn-around space for transit vehicles at places like senior centers, dialysis and rehabilitation centers, and medical facilities where front-door pickups and drop-offs are common can greatly improve transit's effectiveness.

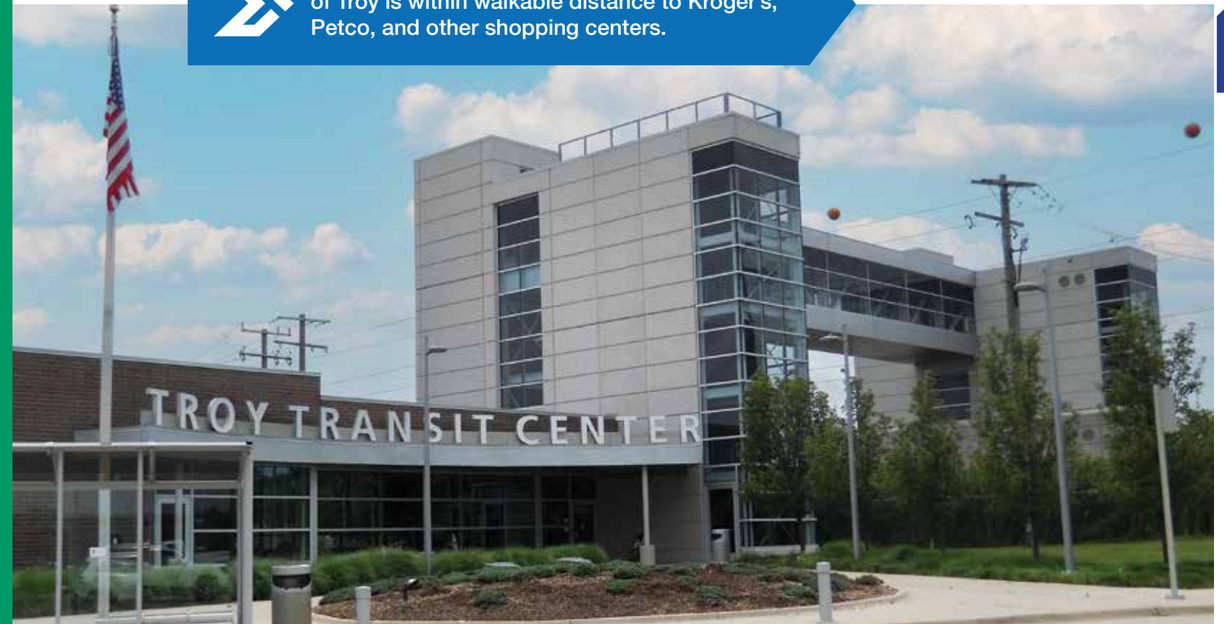
When it comes to transit stops, keeping the bus in the lane of travel so it does not need to merge back into traffic after pulling out is crucial for both safety and travel time reliability. Communities should avoid installing bus pull-outs and can instead install bus bulbs – also called bump-outs or bulb-outs – to allow riders to board the bus while keeping the bus in the lane of travel.

EXAMPLE: City of Ferndale, on Woodward and 9 Mile Road

Layovers

At the ends of a transit route, communities can work with property owners and businesses to allow transit layovers at their location and provide dedicated spaces where transit vehicles can park out of the way of traffic and the drivers can use the restroom and get something to eat and drink. Grocery stores and malls are great candidates for layover locations.

EXAMPLE: The Troy Transit Center, in the City of Troy is within walkable distance to Kroger's, Petco, and other shopping centers.



EXAMPLE: The intersection of John R Road and 14 Mile Road, City of Madison Heights, allows for buses to make left turns, breaking one of the two-lanes for vehicles in order to get around the Oakland Shopping Plaza more quickly.

Preferential Lanes

Generally, buses are subject to the same traffic control devices, including left turn signs, as other vehicles. However, the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) also includes conditions for situations related to buses and left turns,for lanes exclusively designated for buses, supplementary plaques, such as "BUS LANE", can be used with mandatory movement lane control signs to indicate required movements.

Connections to Transit

Every transit trip begins and ends with walking or rolling, so all riders—even those picked up at home—will need a safe path to and from the transit vehicle. Pathways must be accessible to users of all abilities, including those with mobility devices. At locations with frequent front-door pickups, like senior centers, allow space for safe wheelchair ramp or lift deployment near entrances. It is crucial to provide safe, well-maintained street crossings to and from transit stops.

Complete Walk & Bike Networks

For communities to readily use transit, they need safe, convenient access to stops. Communities can ensure this by connecting sidewalks to transit stops, filling gaps in walk and bike networks, and creating stronger connections. Walk and bike audits helps to identify needed improvements. Adopting a Complete Streets approach ensures that streets are planned and maintained to be a safe and accessible experience for everyone—pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit users of all ages and abilities.

EXAMPLE: The Cities of Farmington Hills, Farmington, Southfield, Oak Park, Ferndale, and Hazel Park worked together to conduct the Nine Mile Road Corridor Urban Trail Feasibility Study to determine which types of walking and biking facilities to implement where.

Safe Crossings

Communities can greatly improve access to transit by ensuring crosswalks are in the proper location, are well-marked, and have the appropriate safety enhancements as needed.

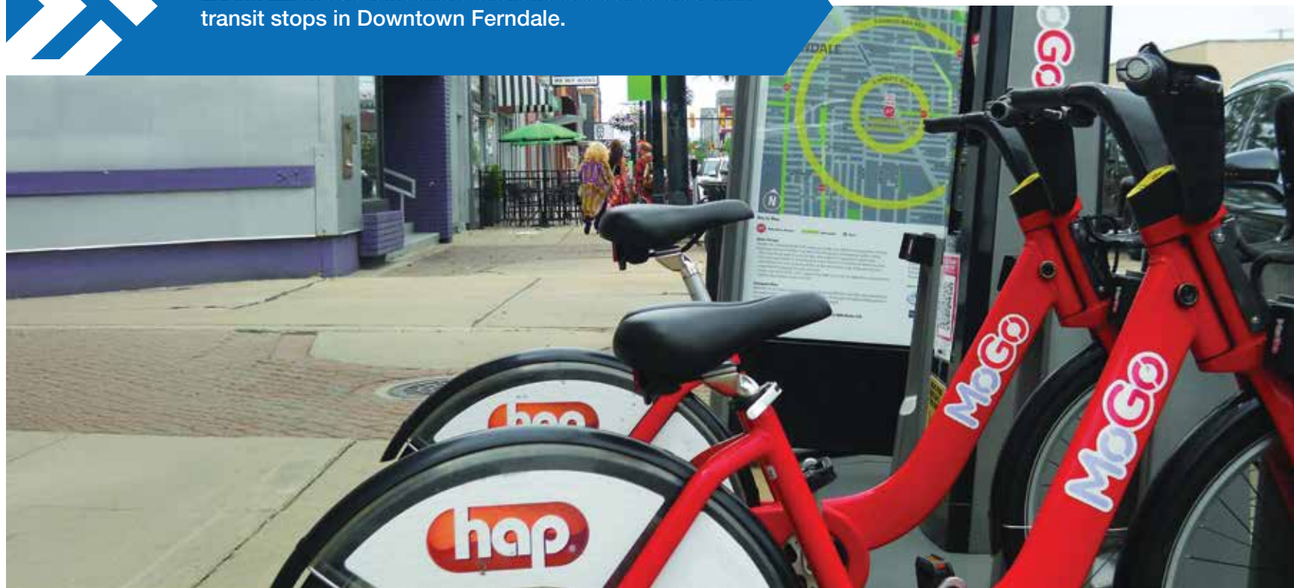
EXAMPLE: The City of Berkley piloted a road diet on Coolidge Highway between 11 Mile Road and 12 Mile Road to improve traffic flow and make the road safer and friendlier for pedestrians and bicyclists, including those crossing the street.

Mobility Hubs

To expand the ways riders get to and from transit stops, the following elements can be incorporated nearby:

- Wayfinding
- Bike and scooter parking (including e-bikes)
- Bikeshare
- Park-and-ride parking spaces
- Carshare

EXAMPLE: MoGo bikeshare stations are collocated with transit stops in Downtown Ferndale.



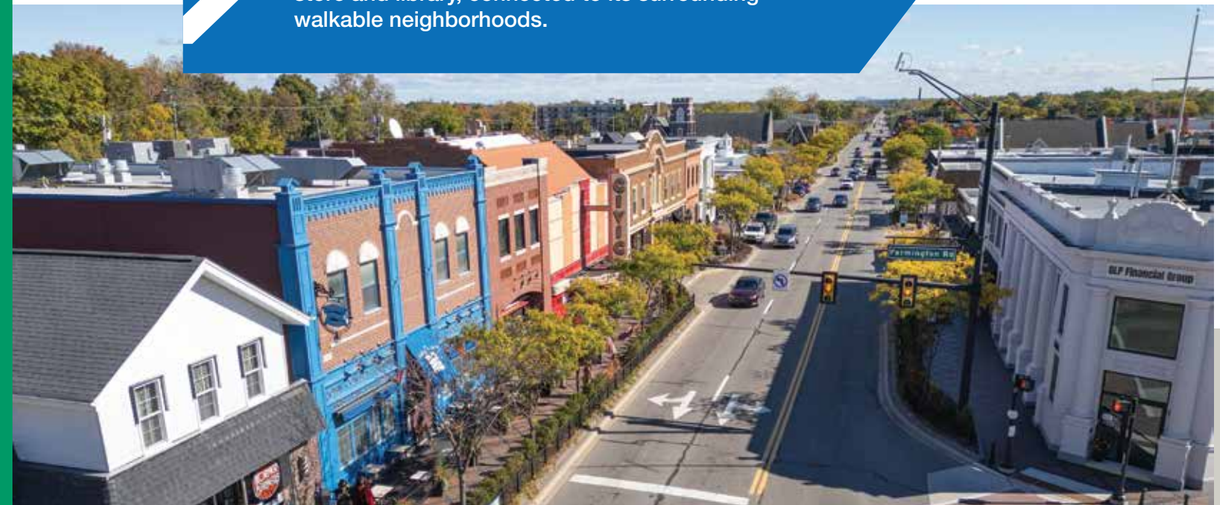
Vibrant Places

Vibrant places are a fundamental part of what makes Oakland County's communities so great. As shown in the map, Oakland County has a wide variety of places prime for transit, from urban centers to rural main streets.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Communities can support transit through planning development around transit stops—also known as Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). TOD encourages diverse housing, jobs, and amenities near transit, emphasizes pedestrian-friendly design, and places buildings close to the street with safe paths. It manages access by moving parking behind buildings and minimizing driveways. TOD likewise encourages multi-story buildings, mixed uses, and workforce housing.

EXAMPLE: Downtown Farmington is a prime example of transit-oriented development, incorporating a vibrant and diverse mix of places, including a grocery store and library, connected to its surrounding walkable neighborhoods.



Transit Stop Amenities

Transit stops can become inviting places with good design and maintenance. While transit providers supply basic infrastructure—like concrete pads, signs, and schedules—and sometimes add amenities at busy stops, communities can further enhance stops to boost comfort and appeal.

For more information, see the SMART Bus Stop Design Manual.

Basic Bus Stop Amenities

- Concrete pad
- Bus stop sign and schedule

Bus Stop Enhancements

- Lighting
- Bench/seating
- Shelter
- Trash and recycling receptacles
- USB charging ports
- Real-time bus arrival display
- Emergency blue light phone
- Landscaping
- Public art

Keeping transit stops clean, inviting, and well-marked is just as important as installing the right amenities. Maintenance partnerships and agreements can be established with nearby property owners and businesses to keep transit stops clean, snow removal service, and report any problems to the transit provider. Winter maintenance should be incorporated into maintenance plans.

EXAMPLE: The City of Ferndale maintained a green roof on top of a custom bus shelter in its downtown.

TOD for Your Community Context

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) can take different shapes and forms depending on the community context. The guidance below was developed based on other communities' TOD guidance and characteristics, and outlines the recommended characteristics of TOD for each community context in Oakland County.

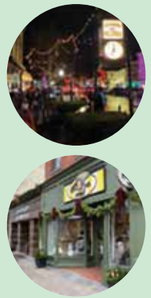
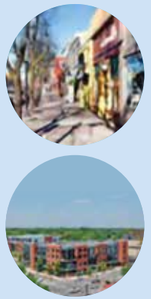
TOD for Any Community Context

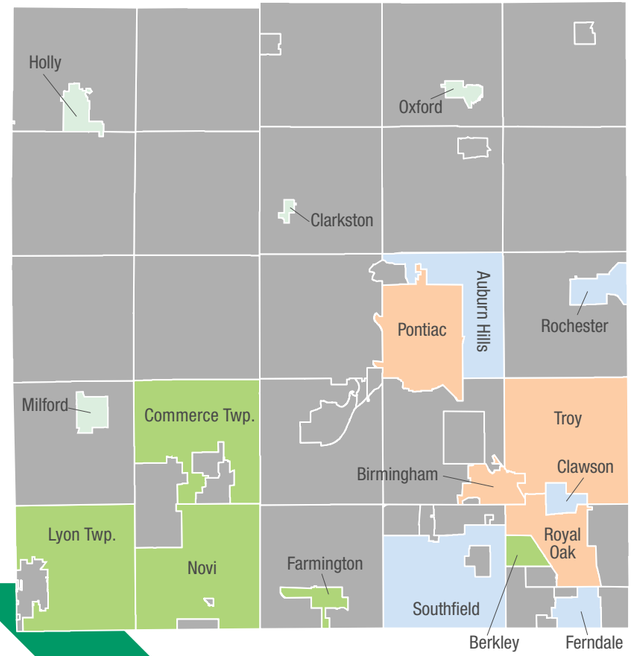
The following are recommended characteristics of TOD, regardless of the community context:

- Affordable housing incorporated into residential land uses
- Maximizing building façade along Required Building Line (RBL)
- Minimizing building setbacks from the street
- Maximizing coverage as much possible
- Encourage parking maximums

TOD for Specific Community Contexts

The table below features recommended characteristics of TOD depending on the community context. The target area for these characteristics is within walking distance (¼-mile) of a transit route.

	COMMUNITY CONTEXT			
	Rural Main Street	**Suburban Center**	**Urban Center**	**Urban Core**
Building Height	2-3+ stories	3-5+ stories	6+ stories	7-10+ stories
Residents/Jobs Mix	More residents than jobs	About even number of residents and jobs	About even number of residents and jobs	More jobs than residents
Land Use Mix	Focus on office and retail with a mix of residential	Focus on residential with a mix of retail and office	Mix of residential, retail, and office	Focus on office and retail with a mix of residential
Housing Density	5-8+ units per acre	12-15+ units per acre	25-60+ units per acre	60-100+ units per acre
Parking Location	On-street: 30% Off-street: 50% In buildings / structures: 20%	On-street: 30% Off-street: 40% In buildings / structures: 30%	On-street: 20% Off-street: 30% In buildings / structures: 50%	On-street: 20% Off-street: 20% In buildings / structures: 60%
Lot Width	50 feet typical	25 feet typical	20-25 feet typical	15-20 feet typical
Units per Lot by Right	4+ units	12+ units	20+ units	20+ units
Examples				



Potential TOD Locations for Specific Community Contexts

Potential locations for continued and/or future TOD throughout Oakland County are identified below.

Urban Cores
- Downtown Birmingham
- Downtown Pontiac
- Downtown Royal Oak
- Troy City Center/Somerset Collection

Urban Centers
- Downtown Auburn Hills
- Downtown Clawson
- Downtown Ferndale
- Downtown Rochester
- Southfield City Center

Suburban Centers
- Commerce Crossing
- Downtown Berkley
- Downtown Farmington
- New Hudson (in Lyon Township)
- Novi Town Center

Rural Main Streets
- Downtown Clarkston
- Downtown Holly
- Downtown Milford
- Downtown Oxford

Marketing & Communications

Promoting Transit

Nothing precipitates increased transit quality more than robust ridership. Communities can encourage more people to ride transit by providing easy-to-understand educational materials on how to use the system, running promotional campaigns, and enrolling in commute programs for employees and visitors.

Consideration should be made for translating to multiple languages and using a variety of media including print, video, social media, and web sites.

For more transit information, click here for transit app: transitapp.com/en/region/detroit/smart

EXAMPLE: SMART runs a “Zoom to the Zoo” campaign with bus advertisements and messaging on its website to encourage people to take the FAST Woodward route to the Detroit Zoo.

Communicating Service Changes

Ensuring the public is aware of changes being made to transit services, routes, and stops and why the changes being made are needed. This can be facilitated by providing up-to-date notices using a variety of media in a variety of places to meet people where they are.

EXAMPLE: When implementing a transit system redesign that changed many routes in its network, the Central Ohio Transportation Authority (COTA) in Columbus, OH stationed staff at transit centers and on buses to alert passengers to the changes and help them understand how to get to their destinations using the new routes.

Implementation

Refer to the table below for the primary parties responsible for the different transit elements presented in this guide. Refer to the SMART Bus Stop Design Manual for more information.

TRANSIT ELEMENT	MUNICIPALITY	TRANSIT PROVIDER	ROAD OWNER	OTHERS INVOLVED
Transit stop placement	Input	X	Permitting	Property owners
Layover designation	Input	X	Permitting	Property owners
Pick-up & drop-off environment	X	X	X	Property owners
One-way to two-way street conversion	X		X	
Transit lanes		X	X	
Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)		X	X	
Pavement	X		X	
Other transit operations accommodations	X	X	X	
Land use & placemaking (see Transit-Ready Checklist for Municipalities)	X			Developers
TOD (see TOD for Your Community Context)	X			Developers
Basic transit stop infrastructure		X		
Transit stop amenities	Secondary	Primary		Developers
Transit stop maintenance	Secondary	Primary		Adopt a Stop
Walk & bike network installation and maintenance	X		X	
Crossings	X		X	
Mobility hubs	Secondary	Primary		Mobility companies
Marketing & communications	X	X		Local community centers and advocacy groups

Additional Information

February 2024 Oakland County Planners Gathering on Sidewalk System Maintenance Programs:
youtu.be/XkOD7Ba4X80?feature=shared

Oakland County Development Authority finder:
arcg.is/1vuryr0

Oakland County Main Street Program:
MainStreetOaklandCounty.com

PEDSAFE Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System:
pedbikesafe.org/pedsafe/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=23

Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG):
access-board.gov/prowag/

RTA Mobility-Oriented Development Action Plan:
drive.google.com/file/d/18sLHtFbe_ZHbStFaNLlAzncyCOp78eJz/view?usp=sharing

- Affordable housing: pages 21-22
- Mobility hubs and park & rides: pages 13-18
- Pedestrian-friendly site design: pages 11-12

SMART Bus Stop Design Manual:
SmartBus.org/About/Our-Organization/SMART-Bus-StopDesign-Manual

SEMCOG Commuter Connect program:
CommuterConnectMi.org/

TransitCenter Bus Stop Balancing Guide on bus stop consolidation best practices:
TransitCenter.org/publication/bus-stop-balancing/

TransitCenter Transit Ridership Recipe:
transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/TCRecipe-20170221.compressed.pdf

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and ways to get involved by visiting:

OakGov.com/**OaklandTransit**

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All ways,
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