

Summary: MTC TOD Policy and SMART

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All source materials included in document

MTC Resolution 3434

In 2005, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), our Bay Area regional transit planning organization under state law, adopted MTC resolution 3434 (links to both the resolution itself and a summary description appear below.)

http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/tod/TOD_policy.pdf

http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/tod/RES-3434-Att-D-2.pdf

This resolution formalized MTC's transit oriented development (TOD) policy, outlining conditions under which a transit project is eligible to receive discretionary regional funds under MTC's purview.

For each type of transit project, Resolution 3434 defines a minimum average for housing within ½ mile radius of all transit stops in the transit line, based on both existing land uses and planned (already zoned) development.

This calculation includes all existing as well as zoned but not yet built housing. It does not count, require or anticipate "future" housing that has not already been zoned.¹

Thus, the calculation for a project is: Total number of units (existing +zoned) within ½ mile of all stations ÷ Total number of stations = Project Average. Additionally, New (already planned) below market rate housing is provided a 50% bonus towards meeting the housing unit threshold.

It is important for local jurisdictions to note that this is not a "requirement". Zoning decisions over local land use are independent actions by local jurisdictions, and MTC has no jurisdiction to require any kind of specific land use or development. The numbers defined by Resolution 3434 are a threshold MTC has established as a baseline for any requests for MTC to allocate its regional funds to a particular transportation project.

Resolution 3434 and SMART

In terms of the transit project types defined by Resolution 3434, SMART is classified as a "Commuter Rail" project, and thus has a target threshold of an average of 2,200 units within ½ mile of all stations in the project.

Note that the threshold for Commuter Rail is lower than the threshold for Bus Rapid Transit (2,750), Light Rail (3,300) or BART (3,850).

For purpose of context, ½ radius around a station is approximately 502 acres. Vis a vis the Commuter Rail regional funding threshold, the TOD policy laid out in Resolution 3434 is looking for an average of about 4 dwelling units per acre.

2009 Analysis of SMART by MTC: Novato

¹ Some local jurisdictions along a transit project may already have plans for areas near transit stops that include housing. MTC does, as part of Resolution 3434, outline how local jurisdictions may, at their sole discretion, individually request MTC funds for Station Area Planning. See the "Station Area Planning" sections of the MTC documents for more information.

In 2009, MTC publicly published an analysis it performed on the SMART project, and whether it meets the target of 2200 units of housing within 1/2 mile of stations. This analysis covered the entire 70-mile alignment, prior to any SMART board action on project phasing (link below).

http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/tod/MTCTOD_SMARTAssesment2009_120109.pdf

MTC noted that as of 2009, the SMART project overall was low on the target number when averaged across the full alignment, and analyzed 4 separate scenarios for how communities along the SMART corridor could make up the difference if SMART wanted to seek funding support from MTC.

The report analyzed each station area individually. Specifics on the two Novato station areas can be found in the table on page 14:

- In Novato, there are 2 stations designated by the City of Novato, at Hamilton and at "Novato North" (at Atherton/San Marin Drive, near Fireman's Fund.)
- Hamilton already exceeds the threshold, in and of itself. Again, however, the calculation vis a vis Resolution 3434 simply averages the units across the entire project, so Hamilton's numbers are simply added into the total to be divided by the total number of stations
- In NONE of the four potential scenarios identified by MTC in 2009 is there a single unit of additional housing suggested for Novato at the Novato North location, an area of concern by neighborhood groups during Novato's recent Housing Element process.
- Rather, the analysis focused its scenarios on the communities who were already working proactively on planning around the station areas (several had already applied to MTC for Station Area Planning Grants.)

The SMART Project and MTC's TOD Policy Status Today

As of today, SMART's Phase I project exceeds the threshold average vis a vis MTC's TOD policy by a fairly wide margin, with an average of 2516 existing or already zoned units within ½ mile of all stations.

Several changes to the project since MTC's 2009 analysis contributed to the current status:

1. In November 2010, the SMART board voted to phase the project, defining an Initial Operating Segment (IOS) from the Marin Civic Center to Railroad Square in Santa Rosa.
2. In Spring 2011, as a result of further discussion by the board, along with staff analysis and a project review by MTC requested by the SMART board altered the IOS in several ways:
 - Extended the southern terminus to Downtown San Rafael
 - Deferred Novato North and Corona Road (Petaluma) stations
 - Deferred several project elements

At this point, the IOS as altered qualified for and was granted \$32 million in additional funds approved by MTC in September 2011, with a specific statement from the MTC Program & Allocations confirming to the MTC Board of Commissioners that SMART project meets the TOD target and thus was eligible for regional funding.

This statement can be found in Item 2 at the bottom of page 3 of MTC staff memo submitted for board approval (link below):

http://apps.mtc.ca.gov/meeting_packet_documents/agenda_1723/3a_RM2_SMART_Public_Hearing.pdf

3. Throughout 2011, SMART staff continued to work on cost savings and project refinements.

During 2011, Rohnert Park elected to move their station location to a site they felt will take greater advantage of proximity to a SMART station. This move increased the overall average, as the prior station site had 810 existing + zoned units within ½ mile, and the new site has 2,899 existing + zoned units.

This change solved the TOD policy issue of including Novato North (which has one of the lowest numbers for housing near the station, at 693 existing +zoned units), which left budget as the only remaining issue for its inclusion in the first phase.

As a result of a successful bond issuance and favorable bid climate, SMART was also able to negotiate its initial construction contract with enough savings to:

- Restore Novato North to the initial phase (with no expectation of any additional housing near this station)
- Extend the northern terminus for the first phase to include the Guerneville Road station in north Santa Rosa, a major employment, educational and residential area that includes 4,913 existing + zoned units within ½ mile of the station.
- Restore several project elements not related to the stations

The following table summarizes the current calculations for the SMART Phase I project vis a vis MTC's TOD policy:

Corridor Total Units	22,646
Total per Station	2,516.22
TOD Policy Threshold	17,600
TOD Policy per Station	2,200
Difference All Stations	+5,046
Difference per Station	+360
Meets Policy	Yes (Exceeds)

Conclusion

As a result of the various improvements to the initial phase (now termed "Phase I" to distinguish it from the previous definition of the IOS), the project exceeds the threshold average by a comfortable margin, with no additional units of housing near any station.