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CITY COUNCIL APPROVES MAYOR EMANUEL'S PLAN TO EXPAND THE CITY'S TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT POLICY TO EIGHT BUS CORRIDORS ACROSS CHICAGO

Proposal targets high-ridership, high frequency bus routes to enhance development, support affordability and connect communities

City Council today approved Mayor Emanuel's plan to expand the City's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) policy to more than 20 high-ridership bus routes along various major corridors across Chicago.

"Through infrastructure, public way and transit improves, Chicago continues working to make this one of the most livable cities in the nation," Mayor Emanuel said. "The City's Transit Oriented Development model has seen great success along rail stations and we can continue to provide benefits to residents by applying it to our major bus corridors."

Chicago's TOD policy was created in 2013 to foster pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods by enabling new construction projects near rapid transit stations to have higher densities and less parking than is typically allowed by the City's zoning code.

Under the proposal, various transit corridors would be given the same TOD eligibility as rapid transit stations for projects that are within a quarter-mile, or within a half mile if the development site is located on a Pedestrian-designated street. Announced by Mayor Emanuel in June, Chicago is the first major city to pursue a citywide expansion of transit-oriented development along high-ridership, high frequency bus corridors.

"Chicago's TOD policy is intended to support and sustain pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods by making it convenient and affordable to live without a car and to make it easier for developers to cater to that market," DPD Commissioner David Reifman said. "This proposal will enable more neighborhoods to achieve those benefits."

The incentives would include a potential 100 percent parking reduction, a potential .50 in additional floor-area ratio, and streamlined approval processes.

“Expanding transit-oriented development to bus routes brings neighborhood-scale development potential to often overlooked corridors and provides residents with affordable housing options that can substantially reduce transportation costs,” says Dr. Helene Gayle, President and CEO of The Chicago Community Trust. “Too often, transportation systems are used to separate. TOD is fundamentally about connection to opportunity in our own neighborhoods and in the neighborhoods the bus or train takes us to,” says Gayle.

The proposal covers the following corridors, served by the following routes:

- 39th Pershing Rd. (#39)
- 55th/Garfield Blvd. (#55)
- 63rd Street (#63)
- Portions of 67th St., 69th St., and 71st St. (67)
- 79th Street (#79)
- Ashland Ave. (#9, #X9)
- Chicago Ave. (#66)
- North Lake Shore Drive (#134, #135, #136, #143, #146, #147, #148)
- South Lake Shore Drive (#2, #6, #J14, #26, #28)
- Western Ave. (#49, #X49)

These corridors represent some of the highest ridership and highest frequency services offered by the CTA, with many of them meeting or exceeding ridership on parts of the Blue, Orange, Green and Pink lines.

“Expanding the Transit Oriented Development policy incentives to include areas served by some of our highest ridership, highest frequency bus routes, makes sense for CTA, makes sense for the communities we serve, and makes sense for the real estate market,” CTA President Dorval R. Carter, Jr. said. “It recognizes that bus service is a valuable neighborhood asset that provides affordable and accessible transportation options to connect people to jobs, education, and opportunity—while simultaneously reducing the need for parking. Expanding to bus corridors also makes the TOD policy more inclusive since the CTA bus network serves the entire city of Chicago, providing comprehensive coverage even where there are gaps in the rail network.”

Additionally, the corridors include areas where CTA and CDOT have targeted investments to improve traffic flow and service, like signal prioritization on Ashland and Western avenues. Mayor Emanuel’s 2019 Budget also allocated additional funds for CDOT to implement targeted intersection improvements along these corridors to eliminate bus “slow zones” at bottle-neck intersections, starting with the #79 79th Street and the #66 Chicago Avenue lines. Beginning this spring, these investments will also include improvements that support pedestrian safety and overall traffic flow for all vehicles.

“There’s vitality and value at intersections where transit, enterprise, arts and culture and service co-exist. MPC strongly supports the City’s expansion of the TOD ordinance to include bus transit. We believe development near transit is important to support equitable growth in all of Chicago’s neighborhoods. This new policy, if followed by implementation of an equitable TOD plan will allow for a more integrated approach that takes into account local market conditions and leverage resources to help stabilize neighborhoods in need of economic investment so that people of all incomes can experience the benefits of dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development near bus and rail transit hubs,” Kendra Freeman, Director of Community Engagement, Metropolitan Planning Council said.

On the South and West sides, the high-frequency corridors also overlap with multiple City-led initiatives to promote development, including Retail Thrive Zones, the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund and the Opportunity Zones program. Developments that benefit from the City’s TOD policy are required to comply with the Affordable Requirements Ordinance, which requires new developments of 10 units or more to reserve affordable units on site or pay into the City’s Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund, and reforms to the TOD policy passed in 2015 added additional incentives for developments that include a greater proportion of affordable units on site.

“In spite of decades of disinvestment, the commercial thoroughfares along 55th, 63rd and 79th streets have fought hard to remain vibrant and relevant. Businesses and residents have been resilient, and the momentum to restore these areas is in full swing. I believe this expanded ordinance will spark further development on these major corridors, benefitting thousands of users of the Green and Red line stations, and those who ride the heavily used bus lines,” Ghian Foreman, Washington Park Development Group and Elevated Chicago Steering Committee member said.

As part of the ordinance, the City will publish an Equitable Transit Oriented Development Policy Plan within 18 months that assesses the policy’s impact and recommends any revisions that may be necessary to address potential issues involving gentrification, congestion, transit investment needs and other issues, as well as opportunities to further enhance its goals.

“Communities of color and low-income communities across Chicago are experiencing depopulation triggered by long-term disinvestment, as well as displacement due to gentrification. This ordinance tackles both issues by simultaneously expanding transit-oriented development (TOD) incentives to a diverse set of bus routes, and ensuring that anti-displacement measures are in place so TOD can equitably benefit existing residents, small businesses, and other community stakeholders located near transit hubs,” Roberto Requejo, Program Director for Elevated Chicago said. “The ordinance’s commitments to racial equity, retention and community engagement have the potential to place Chicago and

its communities at the forefront of global cities advancing equitable development,” says Requejo.

Since January 2016, more than 144 TODs containing approximately 24,419 residential units have been approved either as Planned Developments, Type 1 zoning amendments or by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

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