

1. Delhi's Tod Policy – Polity

The Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs announced a new transit-oriented development (TOD) policy for Delhi. The push is part of broader strategy to promote integrated urban development along mass transit networks including Delhi Metro and Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors. This policy marks significant shift in Delhi's approach to urban planning and affordable housing.

About Transit-Oriented Development

Definition and Concept

1. TOD projects typically combine residential, commercial, and recreational spaces within walkable distances of transit hubs.
2. The concept prioritizes integration of land use with public transportation reducing car dependency.
3. Creates compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods centered around high-capacity transit stations.

Benefits of TOD

Quality of Life

1. Higher quality of life with better places to live, work, and play.
2. Integration of essential services and amenities within walking distance.

Mobility and Transportation

1. Greater mobility with ease of moving around reducing commute times.
2. Reduced traffic congestion through modal shift from cars to public transport.
3. Car accidents and injuries decrease significantly in walkable neighbourhoods.

Economic Benefits

1. Reduced household spending on transportation resulting in more affordable housing.
2. Increased foot traffic and customers for area businesses boosting local economy.
3. Property values typically increase near transit stations attracting investment.

Environmental and Health

1. Healthier lifestyle with more walking and less stress from traffic.
2. Reduced dependence on foreign oil reducing pollution and environmental damage.

Major Features of Delhi's TOD Policy

Overall Aim

1. Creating large-scale, planned affordable housing projects for lower- and middle-income groups in Delhi.
2. Targeting housing shortage while promoting sustainable urban development.

Areas Included

1. The policy opens up areas within 500 meters of metro lines for development.
2. Includes areas near Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors and railway stations.
3. A total of 207 sq. km in Delhi has been identified for TOD.
4. Of this, around 80 sq. km including areas identified for land pooling, low-density residential zones, and unauthorised colonies.

Planning Framework

Housing Requirements

1. 65% of permissible built-up area in TOD zones must be used for housing.
2. Unit sizes largely capped at around 100 sq. m to keep them within reach of middle-income families.
3. Ensures affordability while maintaining housing quality standards.

Commercial and Mixed-Use Development

1. Remaining 35% can be used for commercial activity, offices, and other amenities.
2. Allowing development of mixed-use neighbourhoods integrating work, shopping, and living.
3. Promotes vibrant urban centres with diverse functions.

Walkability and Connectivity

1. Policy encourages walkability with provisions for pedestrian links connecting housing clusters to nearby transit stations.
2. Creates pedestrian-friendly environments reducing car dependence.
3. Links ensure convenient access to public transportation.

Density and Construction

1. Revised norms reduce minimum lot size significantly from traditional standards.
2. Increase permissible Floor Area Ratio (FAR) enabling denser construction.
3. Allows more efficient land utilization maximizing housing supply.

Shift in Policy Framework

From Node-Based to Corridor-Based

1. Most important reform is shift from being node-based to corridor-based approach.
2. Switching to corridor logic reduces minimum lot size from one hectare to 2,000 square meters.
3. Means more landowners, more plots, and more locations now qualify for inclusion.
4. Significantly expands participation and land availability for development.

Single Window Clearance

1. Single-window clearance and unified TOD charge introduced for faster approvals.
2. Earlier policy's insistence on Influence Zone Plans for approval was procedural bottleneck.
3. Streamlines approval process reducing bureaucratic delays.

Affordable Housing Mandate

1. Policy mandates 60% share for affordable housing ensuring equity in new developments.
2. Protects affordability of housing in premium transit-adjacent locations.

Gaps in the Policy

Uniform Application of FAR

1. Policy fixes Floor Area Ratio (FAR) mix and applies this formula uniformly across 207 square kilometres.
2. No clarity on whether this particular mix is what corridors actually need at individual station or neighbourhood level.
3. More apt approach would set minimum residential obligation allowing remaining mix determined through local planning.

Design Considerations

Pedestrian-Friendly Environment

1. TOD essentially focuses on walking-friendly commuter district.
2. But policy says project proponents "may, at their option, provide a pedestrian walkway" connecting site to transit station.
3. This optional approach may not ensure consistent pedestrian infrastructure.
4. TOD neighbourhoods need to be cooler, greener, and more pleasant to encourage walking over driving.

Quality and Liveability

1. Policy is meticulous about FAR, charge structures, and approval timelines.
2. But almost silent on quality of streets, comfort of pedestrians/commuters, and liveability of neighbourhoods.
3. Missing focus on public realm design, street furniture, shade structures, and public spaces.

Implementation Challenges

Infrastructure Coordination

1. Requires coordination between multiple agencies ensuring utilities and services integrated with development.
2. Timing of transit infrastructure commissioning critical for project success.

Community Integration

1. Need to ensure existing communities are not displaced by development.

2. Relocation and rehabilitation policies essential for social equity.

Demand Alignment

1. Must balance housing supply with actual demand ensuring projects are occupied and vibrant.

Conclusion

Delhi's TOD policy marks progressive step towards creating compact, efficient, and sustainable urban spaces. Aligned with modern mobility needs integrating land use with mass transit corridors like Delhi Metro and RRTS. Policy has potential to enhance accessibility, reduce congestion, and improve overall quality of life. However, success depends on moving beyond regulatory ease and density targets to prioritizing context-specific planning. Pedestrian-friendly design and liveability must become central to implementation ensuring vibrant, liveable neighbourhoods.

Source - <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/what-delhi-s-tod-policy-gets-right-what-it-does-not-101776871170418.html>

