

TO: Mayor Victoria Woodards and the Tacoma City Council
FROM: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
SUBJECT: **Status and Future of the Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG)**
DATE: December 27, 2022

This memo is in response to the City Council’s Resolution No. 40889, adopted on December 14, 2021, which extended the operation of the Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG) through the end of 2022 and requested the City Manager to develop recommendations for the potential continuation of TODAG in 2023 and beyond. This memo transmits the TODAG’s recommendations to the City Manager concerning the “new TODAG” and the City Manager’s recommendations to the City Council.

Background

The TODAG is a citizen-based advisory group established by the City Council per [Resolution No. 40303](#) of April 16, 2019, to help inform the design and development of significant transit projects throughout the City including the Dome District, one of the region’s most transit-rich areas. The TODAG was assigned to review and make appropriate recommendations on the following three major projects: Sound Transit's Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE), Pierce Transit's Pacific Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, and the City's Puyallup Avenue Transit/Complete Streets Improvement Project.

Resolution No. 40303 assumed an operating schedule of 24–30 months for the TODAG as a “pilot program,” but did not provide a specific sunset clause. It was not clear if the TODAG shall continue to operate upon the scheduled conclusion in October/November 2021. On December 14, 2021, the City Council adopted [Resolution No. 40889](#) directing the City Manager to take the following actions:

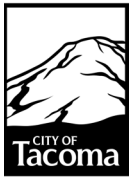
1. Extend the TODAG’s operation through December 31, 2022;
2. Develop recommendations as to whether the TODAG should be made a permanent advisory group, and if so, what its scope of work, membership and other relevant operating parameters should be; and
3. Fill all vacant positions of the TODAG in 2022 with the intent to add diversity and enhance equity in the current membership.

TODAG’s Recommendations

Attached is the Issue Paper, titled “Reshaping and Rescoping the TODAG,” developed by the TODAG and finalized on October 24, 2022. As documented in the Issue Paper, the TODAG evaluated five potential options for how the TODAG could be reshaped and identified the following two options as its primary recommendations to the City Manager:

- Option C – Joint Subcommittee (of Planning and Transportation Commissions).
- Option E – Permanent Advisory Group (City Manager appointed).

The TODAG also recommended that, regardless of whichever "reshaping" option is chosen, the scope of work for the “new TDOAG” should be expanded to citywide TOD projects, its membership should be fairly representative of the community and relevant fields of expertise, and it must be supported with adequate level of funding and staffing resources.



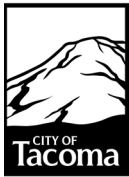
City Manager's Report and Recommendations

The first action requested by the City Council, per Resolution No. 40303, was to extend the TODAG's operation through the end of 2022. I am happy to report that the TODAG did conduct five bi-monthly meetings in 2022. They reviewed and commented on the TDLE and BRT projects, and developed the attached Issue Paper.

The third action requested by the City Council was to fill all vacant positions of the TODAG in 2022 with the intent to add diversity and enhance equity in the current membership. Staff established initial contacts with numerous individuals interested in filling the vacant seats of "Pacific Avenue Corridor Businesses and/or Residents," "Hilltop," and "East Tacoma," but was not able to solidify commitment from those individuals. Staff found that it was particularly challenging to get new individuals to commit to join the group after it had completed so much of its original charge and with the limited time left before the group's current timetable concluded.

Pertaining to the second request of the City Council to develop recommendations concerning the "new TODAG," I would respectfully submit the following thoughts:

- Upon careful review of the TODAG's Issue Paper, input from the Transportation Commission and Planning Commission, and consultation with some Council Members and my staff, I have come to the conclusion that the concept of increased coordination between the Planning Commission (PC) and the Transportation Commission (TC), through a joint subcommittee (or similar structure), is the most effective, efficient and feasible format for carrying on the duties and responsibilities of the TODAG regarding citywide policy-level issues around transit-oriented development and meeting the needs of the community, the City Council and the accountable City departments.
- The budgetary constraints make it challenging to provide appropriate staffing support for Citizen's Committees, Boards, and Commissions (CBCs). Instead of creating a new CBC, it would be more efficient and feasible to establish a joint subcommittee, task force or work group within the organizational structures of existing CBCs.
- The City Council may direct the PC and the TC to establish the membership, assignments and expected outcomes of the subcommittee. I will make sure appropriate staffing support for the subcommittee is provided.
- A PC/TC joint subcommittee provides a unique opportunity to institutionalize and further enhance the coordination and collaboration between the PC and the TC and between the supporting departments.
- A PC/TC subcommittee provides a platform that can streamline the presentation and outreach process for the agencies working on the TDLE, BRT and Puyallup Avenue Project; for example, they don't need to repeat the same presentations to the PC, the TC and the "new TODAG." The joint subcommittee can also more effectively consolidate comments and recommendations from the PC and the TC on these projects and present them to the City Council in a coordinated and cohesive manner.
- A PC/TC subcommittee can also be assigned to work on other issues of common interest to the PC and the TC, such as the Impact Fees Study, the Transportation Master Plan Update, and the continued development of TOD related policies, programs, and review guidelines. Another great opportunity for the subcommittee to weigh in is the upcoming State mandated 2024 Periodic



Update of the Comprehensive Plan that requires close collaboration between the PC and the TC and among several City departments.

- The subcommittee should be operating on an ad-hoc, as needed basis, and its effectiveness subject to periodic assessments by the PC and the TC.
- With regards to specific transit, infrastructure and planning projects, where the direct, focused input of local residents, businesses, key agencies and partners is needed, I feel that it is most effective to continue utilizing project-specific advisory committees where appropriate. Different than the policy-level scope of the PC/TC subcommittee discussed above, this project-level advisory approach allows the local individuals most directly impacted to be engaged on those particular projects, with a focus on the critical early planning and conceptual project design phases. With support from departments including Planning & Development Services and Public Works, this model has been used successfully in the past, such as with the Amtrak Station Citizen Advisory Committee, and continues to be used for key projects, such as the Pacific Avenue Corridor Subarea Plan (“Picture Pac Ave”).

Next Steps

If the City Council concurs with my recommendations, we will prepare a resolution for the Council’s consideration within the next few weeks.

Attachment:

1. Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group Report - “Reshaping and Rescoping the TODAG” (October 24, 2022)