



SB 79

Mapping

Approach and

Methodology

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Background

On October 10, 2025, Governor Newsom signed [Senate Bill 79 \(SB 79\)](#), the Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act, into law. Authored by Senator Scott Wiener (D–San Francisco), the bill establishes statewide standards to streamline housing development near transit by defining and mapping Transit Oriented Development (TOD) zones and stops. SB 79 aims to accelerate transit-oriented housing production by making qualifying projects an allowed use on sites zoned for residential, mixed-use, or commercial development if the project meets applicable requirements.

The law becomes operative July 1, 2026, unless a local agency adopts a TOD ordinance or a TOD alternative plan deemed compliant by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) before that date or secures deferred effectuation. For unincorporated areas, the provisions apply beginning with the planning of the 7th Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) cycle.

The legislation requires that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), like SCAG, develop and maintain a map identifying and classifying Tier 1 and Tier 2 TOD zones around major transit stops. The statute provides that the MPO map should be prepared in accordance with the guidance prepared by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The statute also states that the map carries a rebuttable presumption of validity for use by project applicants and local governments.

SCAG engaged with other affected MPOs and the HCD regarding interpretation of key statutory terms relevant to the MPO mapping assignment. The HCD provided the [SB 79 Advisory Clarifications on Definitions](#) (HCD Clarifications) on March 20, 2026.

Approach

SCAG's approach to map development is focused on providing clear and transparent assumptions and processes that meet SCAG's mapping obligation in the statute and provide affected jurisdictions and other stakeholders with the necessary information to inform local land use decisions. SCAG's mapping approach was informed by:

- SB 79 statute
- HCD Clarifications
- SCAG's technical interpretation of statute where HCD guidance was broad or lacked clarity

The following outlines the key terms that informed map development and how SCAG staff arrived at a recommended approach to produce the map.

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SB 79 Mapping Terms

Urban Transit County

The first step in assessing SB 79 eligibility is to identify eligible urban transit counties. The statute defines urban transit counties as counties with more than 15 passenger rail stations. SB 79 does not indicate whether those passenger rail stations are required to be operational or whether planned stations count towards the 15 stations.

THE HCD CLARIFICATIONS STATE THAT:

a passenger rail station includes all forms of public heavy rail, light rail, or commuter rail stations that are in active operation and provide regular service. A passenger rail station does not include planned rail stations that are not yet in service. A passenger rail station occupying one physical location counts as a single station, even if multiple rail services utilize the station.

SCAG Applicability: As of June 2026, Los Angeles County is the only urban transit county in the SCAG region. Orange County is anticipated to qualify as an urban transit county when the OC Streetcar opens for revenue service, subject to confirmation that the county then has more than 15 qualifying passenger rail stations under SB 79 and HCD's Clarifications. Future transit extensions and projects throughout the SCAG region will continue to be evaluated to determine whether additional counties may qualify as urban transit counties in the future.

Once an urban transit county is identified, **major transit stops** need to be evaluated to assess whether they qualify as TOD stops under the SB 79 statute.

TOD Stops (Tier 1 and Tier 2) and TOD Zones

SB 79 applicability is determined by the transit service type and level of frequency within an urban transit county.

TOD stops are major transit stops as defined by [Section 21064.3 of the Public Resources Code](#), and also include stops on a route for which a preferred alternative has been selected or which are identified in a regional transportation improvement program, that is served by heavy rail transit, very high frequency commuter rail, high frequency commuter rail, light rail transit, or bus service within an urban transit county meeting the standards of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of [Section 21060.2 of the Public Resources Code](#).

The statute includes two different tiers of TOD stops, each with distinct transit service characteristics and corresponding allowable development intensities.

To qualify as a Tier 1 TOD stop, a major transit stop must be served by heavy rail or by very high-frequency commuter rail (72 daily trains across both directions).

To qualify as a Tier 2 TOD stop, a major transit stop must be served by light rail, high frequency commuter rail (48 daily trains across both directions), or bus service meeting the standards of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 21060.2 of the Public Resources Code.

PLANNED TRANSIT PROJECTS

As noted in the TOD stop definition above, the statute encompasses planned projects (meaning transit projects that are not yet constructed or operational). This is inclusive of projects for which a locally preferred alternative has been selected or those identified in a regional transportation improvement program.

On environmental clearance, the HCD Clarifications note:

- *Selected preferred alternative route stops from an adopted CEQA/NEPA document, an adopted locally preferred alternative (LPA), or other local implementing document as determined by the MPO, regardless of their status in a federally or state mandated TIP.*

For projects with funding in the transportation improvement program, the HCD Clarifications note:

- *An existing or planned transit station or stop identified in a region's federally or state-mandated transportation improvement program (TIP) that is served by any of the following: light rail or heavy rail, high-frequency or very high-frequency commuter rail, or eligible bus service (see also "Bus Service"). Planned TOD stops in a region's TIP may be limited to include only those with any amount of committed construction funding.*

SCAG Applicability: SCAG's approach to planned projects is to map planned TOD stops where the station or stop location has sufficient certainty for regional mapping purposes. For purposes of the SB 79 map, SCAG will treat a planned project as having sufficient certainty where the project has completed full environmental clearance under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and, when required, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This approach will result in mapping planned projects that have more certainty in station location siting. This does not eliminate the possibility of a station location moving at a later date, but does create more certainty about where the station might be located.

Additionally, SCAG will map projects identified in the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) only when they include committed construction funding. This approach ensures that there is a greater degree of certainty that the project will be constructed.

Where a project is multi-phased and one phase has clearance but is not operationally feasible until another phase has clearance, SCAG will not map the phase until the related phase or phases necessary for operational feasibility have also achieved the required level of project certainty.

TOD ZONES

Although SB 79 specifies a one-half-mile radius for defining TOD zones, SCAG will enhance this approach by mapping around each qualifying TOD stop three distinct buffer areas as identified in SB 79: a 200-foot buffer, a quarter-mile buffer, and a half-mile buffer. Multiple buffers allow for a more nuanced understanding of the built environment and potential development intensity surrounding each stop. By displaying multiple buffers, SCAG's TOD map will provide planners, jurisdictions, and stakeholders with a clearer spatial framework for assessing housing and land use opportunities consistent with SB 79 objectives. Furthermore, if a zone buffer intersects a parcel, the entire parcel shall be considered within the zone for development under SB 79.

COMMUTER RAIL

Under SB 79 and HCD's Clarifications, Metrolink and Amtrak Pacific Surfliner are recognized as commuter rail systems, and stations within their service network will be included in the SB 79 map when they meet

the required weekday service frequency threshold for qualifying Tier 1 or Tier 2 transit stops. SCAG understands that SB 79's exemption of long-distance routes applies only to services such as the Amtrak Southwest Chief or Amtrak Sunset Limited, which traverse multiple states.

Commuter Rail Service Frequency

To determine which stations qualify under SB 79, a "day" is defined as a typical weekday service day. Overall frequency of commuter rail service is calculated at the station level, rather than at the line or system-wide level, to more accurately reflect the actual level of service available to each station area.

When defining high frequency or very high frequency commuter rail, the statute defines this as a **commuter rail service** and specifies how many trains must be operated at the station to meet the definition of high or very high commuter rail service.

The HCD Clarifications state, *"In assessing whether a station meets this threshold, frequency is based on the total number of trains serving the station, including trains operated by multiple commuter rail services where applicable. This approach reflects the overall level of transit access and frequency experienced by riders at a given stop."*

SCAG Applicability: SCAG's evaluation of commuter rail service frequency when calculating whether a station qualifies as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 station is that the statute is focused on counting a commuter rail service at a station, whereas the HCD Clarification expands the analysis to account for every train serving a station. This increases the train frequency that can be counted and increases the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 stations that qualify under SB 79.

SCAG's interpretation of how to account for frequency is in line with the statute as written and is that frequency is calculated at the station level for a single service or line, not aggregated across multiple services at the station level.

However, given HCD Clarifications that expand this, the SCAG map identifies stations that are affected by the HCD Clarification and includes a note explaining the difference between the statute and HCD Clarifications. Given that land use decisions are local determinations, impacted jurisdictions in the SCAG region will need to evaluate this distinction and make the final determination as to whether they will account for cumulative service at a station or if they will only account for one line at the station level. This approach is intended to preserve transparency for affected jurisdictions, project applicants, and the HCD while maintaining the map's function as the regional SB 79 mapping resource with a rebuttable presumption of validity.

HEAVY AND LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT

SB 79 defines heavy rail transit as a public electric railway line with the capacity for a heavy volume of traffic using high-speed and rapid acceleration passenger rail cars operating singly or in multicar trains on fixed rails, separate rights-of-way from which all other vehicular and foot traffic are excluded, and high platform loading. Heavy rail transit does not include California High-Speed Rail. Light rail transit includes streetcar, trolley, and tramway service. Light rail transit does not include airport people movers.

SCAG Applicability: For the purposes of SB 79 implementation, LA Metro's B and D Lines are heavy rail transit, consistent with their grade-separated operation and service characteristics. All other Metro rail lines are light rail transit, including the C Line, which—despite operating primarily within its own right-of-way—does not meet the criteria for heavy rail classification. Additionally, the OC Streetcar will be recognized as a qualifying light rail transit service, given its fixed-guideway operation and alignment with

light rail service standards; however, its inclusion is contingent upon the system opening for revenue service.

BUS SERVICE

SB79 considers two types of bus stops: a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station and the intersection of two or more major bus routes with a frequency of service interval of 20 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods (Section 21064.3 of the Public Resources Code). In either case, to be eligible as a TOD stop, SB 79 requires full-time dedicated bus lanes or operation in a separate right-of-way dedicated for public transportation with a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods (paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 21060.2 of the Public Resources Code).

BRT is defined in Section 21060.2 of the Public Resources Code:

- a) “Bus rapid transit” means a public mass transit service provided by a public agency or by a public-private partnership that includes all of the following features:
 1. Full-time dedicated bus lanes or operation in a separate right-of-way dedicated for public transportation with a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods.
 2. Transit signal priority.
 3. All-door boarding.
 4. Fare collection system that promotes efficiency.
 5. Defined stations.
- b) “Bus rapid transit station” means a clearly defined bus station served by a bus rapid transit.

The HCD Clarifications note that a qualifying bus service TOD stop is a location where the bus stop is adjacent to a full-time dedicated transit lane and the average bus service intervals across the combined morning and afternoon peak periods is 15 minutes or less.

SCAG Applicability: For BRT services, such as the Metro G Line, that meet the definition in Section 21060.2 of the Public Resources Code, all associated BRT stops adjacent to a full-time dedicated bus lane are included.

For bus service not meeting the full definition of BRT, full-time dedicated bus lane segments were identified in coordination with transit agencies and local jurisdictions for consideration in this analysis. Bus service eligibility and stop inclusion were further evaluated by determining bus frequencies, which were calculated by route and direction to identify major transit stops on these segments. Each major transit stop was checked against the major transit stops identified by Cal-ITP. The major transit stops adjacent to a full-time dedicated bus lane and with service frequencies of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods are included in the SB 79 map, provided they also met the Major Transit Stop criteria through an intersecting major bus route operating at headways of 20 minutes or less.

When defining the ‘adjacency’ of a dedicated lane, SCAG includes dedicated lanes that are directly at the bus stop and those located across the intersection. However, in instances where a dedicated lane is not at a bus stop and starts or ends a block or more away, the stop will not be counted as a TOD stop under SB 79. Additionally, dedicated bus lanes that allow bicycles and/or right-turn vehicular lanes are still considered dedicated lanes.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS POINT

While SB 79 does not define a pedestrian access point, it requires that the distance of a transit-oriented housing development project from a TOD stop shall be measured in a straight line from the nearest edge of the parcel containing the proposed project to a pedestrian access point for the TOD stop.

The HCD Clarifications state that a pedestrian access point is any applicable station entrance, boarding platform access point, or location of a transit stop as defined and depicted on the applicable MPO SB 79 map. MPOs may rely on General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data, if provided by individual transit providers within each region, and may add additional pedestrian access points for TOD stops with multiple entrances.

SCAG Applicability: For the purposes of SB 79 implementation, a pedestrian access point is the primary location where pedestrians enter a transit station or boarding platform and is used to determine the 200-foot, quarter-mile, and half-mile zones.

In general, the pedestrian access point corresponds to the official stop or station location contained in transit agency-provided geospatial datasets, including GTFS data for existing stops and validated shapefiles for planned stops. Because these datasets are vetted and validated by the transit operators, SCAG utilizes the geocoded points contained in the shapefile or GTFS data to represent the official, agency-approved station locations and access points.

Note the following resources for [GTFS](#) data:

- [LA Metro GTFS](#)
- [LADOT GTFS](#)
- [Metrolink GTFS](#)
- [Santa Monica Big Blue Bus GTFS](#)

Where GTFS or shapefile point data are not yet available for a planned project, SCAG will identify a point at the center of the platform or bus stop identified by the transit agency.

Map Updates

SCAG will update the SB 79 map on an annual basis and when a county becomes an urban transit county. The annual updates will account for updated GTFS data, when an eligible transit project secures environmental clearance, and when an eligible transit project secures committed construction funding in the FTIP.

SB 79 provides that when a new transit route or extension is planned that was not identified in the applicable regional transportation plan on or before January 1, 2026, those stops shall not be eligible as TOD stops unless they would be eligible as Tier 1 TOD stops. Further, if a county becomes an urban transit county subsequent to July 1, 2026, then bus service in that county shall remain ineligible for designation of a TOD stop.

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