

SB 79 Frequently Asked Questions: SCAG Mapping Requirements

[Senate Bill 79 \(SB 79\)](#) 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 legislation requires metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), like SCAG, to 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). HCD provided the [SB 79 Advisory Clarifications on Definitions \(HCD Clarifications\)](#) on March 20, 2026, and issued additional clarifications via [a letter to SCAG](#) on June 25, 2026. The statute and the HCD Clarifications informed the [SCAG SB 79 Approach and Methodology](#) that was approved by the Regional Council on July 2, 2026.

HOW DO I DETERMINE WHETHER MY JURISDICTION CONTAINS SB 79-ELIGIBLE TOD STOPS AND ZONES?

Step 1: Are you an 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 a *county with more than 15 passenger rail stations*. As of July 1, 2026, Los Angeles County is the only urban transit county in the SCAG region. Orange County will become an urban transit county when the OC Streetcar opens for revenue service.

Step 2: Do my stations meet the definition of a TOD stop and does the transit service type and level of frequency qualify as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 station?

Being an urban transit county does not mean that SB 79 applies to every transit stop. SB 79 applicability is determined by the transit service type and level of frequency. To qualify as a Tier 1 station, 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 station, 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](#).

Considerations for planned projects are addressed under the "How are future or planned services treated?" question.

HOW ARE BUS STOPS EVALUATED AS TOD STOPS/TIER 2 STATIONS UNDER SB79?

SB 79 eligible bus service must first qualify as a major transit stop and eligible bus service includes:

- Bus rapid transit, OR
- The intersection of two major bus routes with a frequency of service of at least 20 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak hour periods
- Additionally, SB 79 establishes more stringent criteria for eligible bus service which includes the requirement of:
 - A full-time dedicated lane and
 - Frequency of service of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak periods

HOW IS “A SERVICE” DEFINED WHEN CALCULATING FREQUENCY FOR COMMUTER RAIL?

Commuter rail service is calculated at the station level and must account for service over the last three years.

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.”*

The SCAG map reflects HCD’s clarifications by accounting for multiple rail services serving the same station.

HOW ARE FUTURE OR PLANNED SERVICES TREATED?

Based on the [statute](#) and HCD Clarifications issued on [March 20, 2026](#), and [June 25, 2026](#), eligible planned transit projects are mapped when they meet the following conditions:

- Projects with construction funding in the Federal Transportation Improvement Program
- Projects with a locally preferred alternative as part of the environmental process

Additionally, 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 transit-oriented development stops unless they would be eligible as Tier 1 transit-oriented development stops. 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 transit-oriented development stop.

HOW ARE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS POINTS DEFINED AND MAPPED?

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.

SCAG utilized general transit feed specification (GTFS) data, when available, to map pedestrian access points for bus, commuter rail, and light and heavy rail stops. However, for light and heavy rail stations, GTFS data points are typically represented by a '0' which represents the station location/the platform and a '2' which represents access points to a station including but not limited to elevators, escalators, and stairs.

When both a '0' (station/platform) and '2' (access points) are available, SCAG utilizes the '2' point. However, when a '0' is the only point available for planned projects, SCAG will utilize this information except for circumstances when a project is operational or when a planned project has construction drawings with sufficient level of detailed identified by transit operator. In these circumstances, SCAG will work with the transit operator to identify and map the pedestrian access points and provide the corresponding latitude and longitudinal coordinates for inclusion in future GTFS publications.

For planned projects with federal transportation improvement program funding and a locally preferred alternative, the pedestrian access points for these projects will be developed in close coordination with the transit operator and will include either the center point of platform or the nearest street intersection, based on data availability, with the goal of siting them as close to the future station as possible.

Given the complexity and time required for manual mapping, additional refinements to stops that are currently mapped and the addition of planned projects without available GTFS data will be incorporated into a future map update after July 1, 2026.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE SB 79 STOPS, ZONES, AND TIERS MAP?

The map includes applicable TOD stops by tier and the associated TOD zones. Zones are identified using 200-foot, quarter-mile, and half-mile distances measured from the pedestrian access points. The map also displays the SCAG region, county, and city boundaries for reference.

The SB 79 statute includes provisions that a radius beyond the quarter mile does not apply to cities with less than 35,000 people. Accordingly, the SCAG region SB 79 map will only include the 200-foot buffer and the quarter-mile buffer for cities that have a population under 35,000.

ARE TOD ZONES MEASURED FROM THE STATION CENTER OR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS POINT?

Zone boundaries are identified using the distance from the pedestrian access points.

HOW DOES SB 79 APPLY IF A COUNTY BECOMES AN “URBAN TRANSIT COUNTY” AFTER THE BILL’S IMPLEMENTATION DATE?

Once a county exceeds the 15 operational passenger rail station minimum to qualify as an urban transit county after the July 1, 2026, effective date, SCAG will proceed with only evaluating the rail services in that county because bus service in that county will remain ineligible for designation of a transit-oriented development stop. If the rail stations meet the statutory definitions for qualifying heavy/light/commuter rail services, then the rail stations will be included in the TOD stops, zones and tiers map developed by SCAG. As noted under the “How often will maps be updated?” question, SCAG will update the region’s SB 79 map when a new county becomes an urban transit county.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN THE MPO’S ROLE VERSUS HCD’S ROLE IN SB 79 IMPLEMENTATION?

- HCD sets statewide guidance and interpretive standards and oversees compliance.
- MPOs, like SCAG, are required to develop the SB 79 map of TOD stops and zones for their region, based on the statute and HCD clarifications.
- Local jurisdictions are responsible for SB 79 implementation at the local level.

WHERE SHOULD I SEND QUESTIONS ABOUT SB 79 IMPLEMENTATION?

Questions about SB 79 implementation including but not limited to TOD alternative plans, how to treat historic properties, capacity analysis, and the California Environmental Quality Act should be directed to the HCD. Questions and contact information should be submitted to the HCD portal, and the HCD staff will follow up.

HOW OFTEN WILL MAPS BE UPDATED?

SCAG will update the SB 79 map when a new county becomes an urban transit county and on an annual basis. SCAG is in process of developing an approach and timeline for annual map updates.

WHO AT SCAG SHOULD JURISDICTIONS CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SB 79 MAP?

Questions about the SB 79 map can be submitted via email to sb79@scag.ca.gov.