

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2006**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Walter L. Alcorn, At-Large  
John R. Byers, Mount Vernon District  
Frank A. de la Fe, Dranesville District  
Kenneth Lawrence, Providence District  
Rodney Lusk, Lee District

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Suzanne F. Harsel, Braddock District  
Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Fred Selden, Director, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)  
Leanna Hush, PD, DPZ  
Deborah Albert, PD, DPZ  
Daniel Rathbone, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT)  
Keith Goodman, FCDOT  
S. Robin Hardy, Assistant Director, Planning Commission Office  
Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk, Planning Commission Office

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

SEE ATTACHMENT A

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Chairman Walter L. Alcorn convened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Conference Room, Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

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Chairman Alcorn announced that the Committee was close to completing proposed guiding principles for transit-oriented development (TOD) in Fairfax County for inclusion in the Policy Plan of the Comprehensive Plan. He explained that the process had started with information gathering, followed by presentations from both professional organizations and individual citizens. He said the next step would be to request the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to authorize an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan which would be followed by a citizen workshop and public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board.

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Chairman Alcorn noted that the first order of business was approval of minutes.

Commissioner de la Fe MOVED THAT THE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES OF AUGUST 2, 2006, SEPTEMBER 7, 2006; SEPTEMBER 27, 2006; OCTOBER 4, 2006; AND OCTOBER 12, 2006, BE APPROVED.

Commissioner Byers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

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Chairman Alcorn noted that two draft documents had been posted on the Planning Commission's TOD website yesterday: (1) TOD as New Objective and (2) Board of Supervisors' Transit-Oriented Development Policy, copies of which are in the date file. He asked Leanna Hush to summarize these documents.

Ms. Hush explained that the first document was a draft of Countywide Objectives and Policies related to TOD and how it might appear in the Land Use Section of the Policy Plan with an Appendix 11 reflecting the guiding principles. She said the second document was a draft BOS policy relating to the TOD process and implementation. Ms. Hush pointed out that Appendix 11, Guidelines for Transit-Oriented Development, Number 1, Transit Proximity, contained options for the radius from a station of ¼ mile, ½ mile, or within a 5 to 10 minute walk from the station.

### **DRAFT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

Responding to a question from Chairman Alcorn, Ms. Hush said instead of addressing specific process and implementation in the Comprehensive Plan, staff had decided that a separate document would be more appropriate since the Plan was not easy to change. Chairman Alcorn added that since this was an evolving process, it was most likely that changes would be made to Board policy.

Ms. Hush pointed out that a compilation of written comments received on the draft strawman guidelines had been distributed tonight and was also available online, a copy of which is in the date file.

Responding to a question from Sally Ormsby, Fred Selden, PD, DPZ, said staff believed that a separate Board policy was appropriate because the Comprehensive Plan should remain static for a period of years whereas strategies and programs were more dynamic.

Charles Hall commented that most people wanted to see a general principle calling for early and broadly inclusive community involvement.

Michael Horwatt, Esquire, said that the draft Board policy was the first statement that he had seen which articulated the unique aspect of TOD in an aspirational way. He said the planning process might be the most unique aspect of TOD if a holistic approach was taken early in the process before proposals had been defined. He commented that he understood the concern about

putting something in the Comprehensive Plan about the process, that was subject to change, but if it was looked at in terms of objectives rather than specifics, it could open the door for a meaningful agreement among all stakeholders which might not come about if typical standards were used.

### **TOD AS NEW OBJECTIVE**

Deborah Smith questioned the definition of "transit stations" found on page 1 of 6 of TOD as New Objective. Chairman Alcorn said it was his understanding that the document now limited transit stations to Metrorail. Commissioner de la Fe said a definition of a transit station area could be found in the Transportation Plan and that it was not limited to Metrorail.

After a discussion of the definition of transit-oriented development, Ms. Hush pointed out that the October 12, 2006 version of the strawman defined a transit station as "Metrorail or other systems that would achieve a similar rate of transit usage."

Mr. Hall said he had serious concerns about not limiting TOD to Metro Stations at this time because it was not likely that any other meaningful transit system would be available in the next few years and it could open up TOD proposals to every bus station in the County

Louis Grimm commented that at the present time there were other fixed guideway transit services in Fairfax County, such as Virginia Railway Express (VRE), and suggested the language say "around planned and existing transit stations along fixed guideway systems."

Daniel Rathbone pointed out that it was important to make clear that high density development should result in a reduction of single occupancy vehicle trips. Ms. Hush suggested adding "a system that would achieve a rate of transit usage similar to Metrorail." Chairman Alcorn suggested "along fixed guideway systems that would achieve rates of transit usage similar to Metrorail."

Commissioner Lusk commented that there could be light rail from the Springfield-Franconia Metro Station to Fort Belvoir via the Engineering Proving Ground (EPG) as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) project and said he would not like to see transit-oriented development in that area prohibited.

Commissioner de la Fe said he would have a problem if bus service was excluded. He pointed out that bus rapid transit had existed in Reston since 1968, reducing automobile trips long before Metro was a reality.

Dr. Jody Bennett questioned the language "leverages major investments in public transit infrastructure" in the TOD subheading paragraph because it sounded like an outcome and said she had not seen that as a requirement in other transit-oriented development.

Mr. Horwatt said that Policy language for TOD talked about a conglomerate of outcomes that must occur. He acknowledged the concern of some that if only outcomes were addressed instead of a specific type of TOD, the policy could be used as a pretext for massive development around any mode of transit. But he said if criteria, objectives, and outcomes were clearly defined, it would not be possible to exploit the policy.

Responding to a question from Mr. Hall, Mr. Horwatt identified the following outcomes: provide an environmentally sound means to accommodate new growth; improve transit choices in the area; create opportunities for compact, vibrant neighbor centers within walking distance of transit. Mr. Horwatt said it was possible that a VRE station and a bus station would meet the criteria and thought that it would be a mistake for the policy to be too prescriptive.

In response to a question from Mr. Hall, Chairman Alcorn said the policy would have to be consistent with Area Plans which contained the primary guidance for specific areas. Commissioner de la Fe commented that TOD should occur along a designated enhanced transportation corridor but that did not mean that high density development should be located at every point along the corridor.

Commissioner Byers said the policy should not be too specific. He said applicants would have to prove that the proposed development met all of the requirements for TOD and the Planning Commission would decide what constituted a transit station. Commissioner Byers noted that the proposed document indicated that development was a strategy and said in his opinion, it was the outcome of a strategy.

Mr. Hall commented that if the policy was too general, developers could exploit it and communities could be traumatized by a proposal for TOD which should have been avoided in the first place.

Chairman Alcorn pointed out that draft Appendix 11, Transit Proximity, indicated that Area Plans delineated boundaries for transit stations areas (TSAs) as well as for transit development areas within TSAs. He said perhaps this language should be reviewed to include specific boundaries as suggested by Mr. Hall.

Mr. Horwatt said he had concerns with transit proximity because the criteria did not delineate boundaries. He said what might work for one area would not work in another area and concern about density creep could be addressed by a bright line. He explained that criteria should be used to determine outcomes and that it was important to create a stakeholder forum for the deliberative process.

Commissioner Lawrence suggested that TOD start with heavy rail with guidelines for other forms of transit such as busses.

Stewart Schwartz said that the guidelines looked good to him and captured general principles for transit-oriented development. He also said that there was a science to matching levels of

development to frequency of transit service and suggested that the language not include fixed guideways and Metrorail capacity.

Mr. Selden commented that he thought the guidelines should apply to existing and planned stations and expressed concern about transit choices for BRAC-related development.

Following discussion, Chairman Alcorn proposed the following introductory language for TOD as a new objective: "Transit-oriented development is the result of a deliberate planning strategy for reducing sprawl and automobile dependency by focusing growth initially around planned and existing rail stations."

#### **NEW OBJECTIVE: OBJECTIVE X: POLICY A.**

Ms. Ormsby suggested inserting "rail" before "transit stations." Dr. Bennett suggested adding "pedestrian-friendly."

Ms. Hush pointed out that staff could rework the introduction and Objective X, which had been drafted to show people how TOD might appear in the Plan, but that the committee's focus had been on guidelines.

#### **APPENDIX 11, GUIDELINES FOR TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT, NUMBER 1, TRANSIT PROXIMITY**

Mr. Horwatt said a boundary should be defined using a set of criteria the Planning Commission would apply on a case-by-case basis to protect existing neighborhoods, and include mappable boundaries, as well as delineate criteria for setting boundaries.

Mr. Schwartz suggested after the first sentence, indicate that transit-oriented development was generally defined as within one quarter to one-half mile or a 5 to 10 minute but could be modified by specific conditions of each site and must be defined in Area Plans.

Following further discussion on transit proximity, Ms. Ormsby suggested the first sentence of Transit Proximity be revised as follows: "... a transit-oriented development area may generally be defined as being within a quarter mile of the station tapering to a half mile (within a 5-10 minute walk) from the station."

Mr. Horwatt suggested the second sentence be revised to state: "Area Plans should include clearly delineated boundaries for transit-oriented development based upon established criteria for setting boundaries."

Roger Diedrich suggested replacing the word "barriers" with the word "conditions" in the third sentence.

In response to a question from Chairman Alcorn, the attendees indicated general support for these revisions. Chairman Alcorn said that a final meeting would be held on November 15,

2006. He requested that staff incorporate the revisions discussed tonight into a new draft document by Friday November 3, 2006. Chairman Alcorn also requested that comments be received by November 7, 2006 to give staff time to compile and publish them.

### **NUMBER 2, PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ACCESS.**

Mr. Hall suggested the last sentence be revised to state: "Bicyclists typically travel longer distances than pedestrians. To maximize ridership, and to better integrate surrounding communities to the TOD community, usable trails and other systems should be encouraged beyond the TSA."

### **NUMBER 3, STATION-SPECIFIC FLEXIBILITY**

Mr. Horwatt said stakeholders should be involved early in the process and in return for outcomes, varying levels of density should be spelled out in Area Plans that would meet public expectations and be economically feasible for the developer. Mr. Hall agreed and said another missing component was the lack of guidelines for helping people calculate the appropriate density depending upon the type of transit available.

Commissioner Lusk commented that although it would be several months before final BRAC decisions would be made, a review of existing conditions and a plan to identify where development should be located should be addressed.

Responding to a question from Dr. Bennett concerning the need for station-specific flexibility in the guidelines, Mr. Horwatt said a guideline was needed because the criteria may not apply to each station. Ms. Ormsby said she agreed that such a guideline was needed.

Mr. Grimm suggested that a sentence be added to Number 3 as follows: "Similar station specific flexibility should be provided for other planned and existing transit stations located along the enhanced public transportation corridors as identified in the County Transportation Plan." He said this would allow flexibility for transit modes other than Metrorail that might develop over time in the County.

Mr. Hall expressed concern that station flexibility could override other guidelines and suggested that the specific one for transit proximity be modified as little as possible to achieve the perceived community benefits.

Chairman Alcorn suggested adding "within the TSA boundaries established in Area Plans" to station-specific flexibility in the last sentence after "Implementation of these guidelines.....".

Mr. Rathbone asked if the committee would consider a relaxation of the acceptable level of congestion in and around transit-oriented development due to the impact on the road system. Chairman Alcorn said this was addressed in Number 8, Transportation and Traffic. Commissioner de la Fe said that language existed in the Policy Plan that levels of service could be made worse under certain conditions to discourage people from driving.

Responding to a question from Ms. Ormsby, Chairman Alcorn said Mr. Grimm's suggestion about flexibility for other transit modes would not be incorporated because it had been decided that initial TOD guidelines would address rail only at this point.

In response to a question from Mr. Hall, Ms. Hush said that Number 9, Vision for the Community, addressed public participation in the process.

Referring to diagrams provided by Patrick Kane, Mr. Horwatt said a graphic portrayal of ideas could lead to consensus.

Chairman Alcorn noted that the final meeting of the committee was scheduled for November 15, 2006 in Conference 2 and 3 of the Government Center.

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The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.  
Walter L. Alcorn, Chairman

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For a verbatim record of this meeting, reference may be made to the audio recording which can be found in the Fairfax County, Virginia Planning Commission Office.

Minutes by: Linda B. Rodeffer

Approved on: November 15, 2006

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Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk  
Fairfax County Planning Commission

Attachments:

Attendance List

Draft Board of Supervisors' Transit-Oriented Development Policy

Draft of TOD as New Objective

Written Comments received on Draft Strawman Guidelines

Draft of TOD as New Objective with edits made at November 1, 2006 meeting

ATTACHMENT A

**TOD ATTENDANCE – NOVEMBER 1, 2006**

Albert, Deborah	DPZ
Alcorn, Walter	PC
Baker, Searcy	Diamond Properties
Batten, Edward	Park Authority
Bennett, Jody	Hunter Mill Defense League History
Byers, John	PC
Cetron, Ari	Connection Newspapers
De la Fe, Frank	PC
Diedrich, Roger	Sierra Club
Dorlester, Andrea	FCPA
Edwards, Dave	
Fields, Robert	DHCD
Fields, Zack	BOS Office
Goodman, Keith	FCDOT
Grimm, Lewis G.	Franklin Farm Foundation
Hardy, S. Robin	Planning Commission Office
Harrison, Goldie	Hunter Mill District
Horwatt, Michael	Horwatt Law Offices
Hush, Leanna	DPZ PD
Jia, Wendy	WMATA
Kane, Pat	Reston
Kraucunas, Paul	VDOT
Lawrence, Kenneth	PC
Lusk, Rodney	PC
McKeeby, Elizabeth	Walsh Colucci
Mullin, Kevin	
Nicoson, Patricia	Dulles Rail Corridor Assn
Ormsby, Sally	FFC Citizens Cmte Land Use/Trans.
Rathbone, Dan	FCDOT
Rodeffer, Linda	PC Staff
Schwartz, Stewart	Smarter Growth
Selden, Fred	DPZ PD
Smith, Deborah	FairGrowth
Stagg, Inda	Walsh Colucci
Stewart, Douglas	Sierra Club
Switkin, Jill	Cooley Godward