FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2006

Unapproved 8-25-06
e-mailed 8-27-06

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
Walter A. Alcorn, At-Large
Frank A. de la Fe, Dranesville District
Suzanne F. Harsel, Braddock District
Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District
Kenneth Lawrence, Providence District

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:
John R. Byers, Mount Vernon District
Rodney Lusk, Lee District

STAFF PRESENT:
Fred Selden, Director, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)
Leanna Hush, Planner, PD, DPZ
Deborah Albert, Planner, PD, DPZ
Daniel Rathbone, Division Chief, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT)
Andrea Dorlester, Fairfax County Park Authority
Sandra Stallman, Fairfax County Park Authority
Barbara J. Lippa, Executive Director, Planning Commission Office
Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk, Planning Commission Office

OTHERS PRESENT:
SEE ATTACHMENT A

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Chairman Walter A. Alcorn convened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. in Conference Rooms 4/5 at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

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Chairman Alcorn explained that the Board of Supervisors had authorized formation of a committee to develop guidance for transit-oriented development (TOD) in Fairfax County. He said the committee was still in the process of gathering information upon which to base guiding TOD principles for inclusion in the Policy Plan. He noted that tonight a citizen panel would share their views on TOD and a presentation from FairGrowth would be made. Chairman Alcorn also said that a "strawman" of TOD principles would be distributed at the end of the session.

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The first panelist, Ed Batten, a member of the Lee District Land Use and Transportation Committee and Lee District representative to the Fairfax Park Authority, said that the Springfield area was undergoing growth and change including the "mixing bowl" highway and Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) projects. In addition, he said many new developments were planned in the area, one of which was a proposal for commercial and residential uses in central Springfield which was near his home and the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station. Therefore, Mr. Batten said he was very interested in transit and pedestrian-oriented development as tools to make growth and development in the County smarter, stronger, and more creative.

In response to questions from Chairman Alcorn and Commissioner Harsel, Mr. Batten said that his house was about a 10 to 15 minute walk on the Franconia Parkway trail to the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station and that Springfield had an internal bus system.

Earl Flanagan, Mount Vernon District Transportation Commissioner, asked Mr. Batten if assets such as the Backlick Road overpass were effective in getting people to walk to a transit station. Mr. Batten said he rarely, if ever, had seen anyone use that overpass. He said any infrastructure was an asset but people needed to be aware of its existence and encouraged to use it. Mr. Batten said most people in the area drove to the Metro Station and parked or dropped passengers off.

David Gill, Esquire, with McGuire Woods, said he was working on the development project in central Springfield that Mr. Batten referred to and would be happy to answer questions about it.

Responding to a question from Michael Horwatt, Esquire, Mr. Batten said he thought one of the most important concerns about walking to the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station was safety. Mr. Batten said he would drive slowly along the Franconia Parkway to get an idea of what walking to the station would be like. Commissioner Lawrence said other factors to be considered were walking to and from the station in all kinds of weather and after dark.

In response to a question from Commissioner Harsel, Mr. Gill said that although the development he was working on in central Springfield was not considered transit-oriented due to its distance from the Metro Station, transportation demand management (TDM) commitments similar to those for the Metro West and Tysons developments had been made. Mr. Gill also said that some of the TDM commitments would be effective before the issuance of a residential occupancy permits such as marketing incentives to target purchasers who desired to live in a high quality, mixed-use development and were willing to use the Metro transit system.

Responding to a question from Becky Cate, Mr. Gill said that if the TDM commitments were not met, the developer would be subject to a significant monetary penalty and would still be obligated to fund the TMD program.

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The next panelist, Dr. Jody Bennett said she had lived on Hunter Mill Road for 30 years and during that time had been involved in land use and transportation and the historical preservation of the area. She stated that TOD was an elusive concept due to fluid boundaries, undefined

parameters, and "myth versus reality" concepts. She said boundaries for transit oriented development should be clearly defined and maintained. Dr. Bennett expressed concern that the cost of housing in transit areas such as Tysons and Vienna would prohibit many people from living there and said workforce housing was needed for the success of TOD. In conclusion she said that a functional definition of TOD was needed with clearly stated rules, quantifiable goals, and measurable performance standards. In addition, she said neighborhoods had to be protected and TOD should fit in with residential, employment, transportation, and open space networks in Fairfax County. (A copy of Dr. Bennett's presentation is in the date file.)

Deborah Reyher commented that no traffic studies had been conducted for the transit-oriented development at Metro West and in her opinion, the impact on schools and the environment had not been adequately evaluated . She asked Dr. Bennett how to go about incorporating into the definition of TOD an affirmative obligation to collect such data and to protect an area from density creep. Dr. Bennett replied that there needed to be a clear plan to protect open space and noted that plans were already on the table for Metro West before transportation studies had been conducted. She also pointed out that when developers invested millions of dollars for transportation improvements they were not willing to reduce the number of units.

Greg Green said although he owned a home in Fredericksburg, he lived in Merrifield so he would be able to ride Metro to Washington, D. C. As a result, he said he only used a car on the weekends.

Responding to a question from Dr. Bennett, Chairman Alcorn said that language in the Comprehensive Plan defined transit-development as being within one-half mile from a transit station.

Fred Selden, Planning Division, Department of Planning and Zoning, said when plans were being made for Metro stations in the 1970s, a study had indicated that the probability of people walking to transit fell precipitously beyond one-fourth mile and that a seven minute walk would capture the highest patronage. He pointed out that physical barriers and topography could prevent people from walking to stations even though they lived within the one-fourth mile radius. For example, he said because the Dunn Loring Station could only be accessed from the south side of the highway, development had not been planned to the north until about four years ago when the Merrifield Plan was updated.

Keely Lauretti commented that it was very important to provide diversity in housing choices for a diverse population.

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The third panelist, David Keyes, a resident of the Hunters Branch community in the vicinity of the Vienna Metro Station, said during the 20 years he had lived in Fairfax County he had seen County policies for housing density, zoning, public transportation, and other associated issues evolve to address the needs of a burgeoning population. He focused on the following issues that were necessary for successful high density, transit-oriented development:

- Environmental protection – development must be in accord with federal, state, and local regulations and oversight must be provided for public facilities as it was for private development;

- Needs of residents surrounding transit hubs – recreational areas for children; neighborhood services within walking distance of homes, including daycare, elder care, shopping; accessibility for disabled persons; and clearing walkways to transit stations in the winter.

- Private roads – narrow roads that do not meet state standards cannot be used by buses and are not safe for both bicycles and motor vehicles; County police will not enforce traffic laws on private roads and do not respond to non-criminal complaints.

- Satellite parking – TOD must address satellite parking with bus service to transport riders to station areas.

- Hybrid homeowners associations – multiple homeowners association subordinate to a master association which is controlled by commercial interests; TOD should equitably address master associations and cost sharing proffers.

Mr. Horwatt asked the panel if concentrating development around transit stations was a viable vision for the future of Fairfax County. Mr. Keyes responded that he had lived in many places both in the United States and abroad and he thought that a TOD plan could be developed that would allow individual communities to remain with high density housing around transit hubs. Steve Pastorkovich said that the concept of higher density near transit made sense with infrastructure capacity and consensus of residents, without which TOD would fall short. Mack Rhoads said he lived in the Huntington area and he supported high density development near Metro Stations and had seen it work in his community. Mr. Batten said TOD needed different modes of transportation to the station in addition to walking. Dr. Bennett said her vision for Fairfax County was one in which all interested residents from different parts of the County could provide input for planning and development of the entire County.

Responding to a question from Mr. Horwatt, Dr. Bennett said she was not opposed to TOD but believed criteria for it should be clearly defined and adhered to.

Deborah Smith said she lived in a community on the north side of the Vienna Metro Station and that Metro had not been a great neighbor. She said she agreed with Mr. Keyes' comments on private roads, parking, and homeowners associations.

Stella Koch commented that wider roads would have an adverse impact on the environment because impervious surface would increase.

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Keely Lauretti remarked that street width should be able to accommodate buses and public safety vehicles.

The next panelist, Steve Pastorkovich, said he had been a Metro commuter since 1987 and at the present time he lived one-half mile from the Vienna Metro and had to cross Nutley Street twice a day to arrive at the station which put his personal safety in jeopardy. He said he supported transit-oriented development in general, but that the Metro West development was overwhelming and uncoordinated. He said he thought the County should measure transit capacity and impacts and coordinate transit, traffic, and land-use. He noted that Metro was overcrowded and underfunded and had sufficient capacity only until 2012. He said increasing car capacity would not increase the capacity of station elevators, escalators, and platforms.

Patti Nicoson noted that the there was an opportunity now to plan for TOD around the eight new stations in the Dulles Corridor area.

Becky Cate expressed concern that transit was becoming secondary to high density residential development in the Metro West area, noting that WMATA was planning to sell 8 out of 15 acres near the Vienna station for residential development. She said she walked ¾ of a mile to the Dunn Loring Metro station and pointed out that bus service was not available in her community.

In response to questions from Chairman Alcorn, Ms. Cate said developers were using the Area Plans Review process to increase density for areas in proximity to transit.

Mr. Selden commented that the community, not staff, wanted additional parking at the Dunn Loring Station.

Mr. Horwatt remarked that it seemed to him that Mr. Pastorkovich thought development should not occur unless adequate infrastructure was in place. Mr. Pastorkovich clarified his position that the County's land use planning process should include an evaluation of transit capacity impacts. He added that a contingency plan should be developed if the infrastructure improvements could not be made due to lack funding.

Fran Hooper pointed out that arbitrary rules for TOD were prescriptive and would not allow the flexibility needed to address the unique characteristics of each development. She said it was the lack of vision on the part of County planners when transit stations had been authorized and that was the reason for the problems with the current Metro West development. She said the County had an opportunity now to develop a vision for the Dulles Corridor area with the advent of transit stations. Mr. Pastorkovich agreed that flexibility was needed because each site was different, but said that the process should be predictable with community involvement guaranteed.

Ms. Reyher expressed concern that the Vienna Metro Station did not have adequate parking capacity at the present time and this situation would be exacerbated as communities were developed to the west.

Responding to a question from Mr. Flanagan, Mr. Pastorkovich said that if the future Dulles line shared a track with the Orange Line, the downtown core stations would be over capacity. He said he had requested information from the Dulles Corridor Rail Association about this issue.

Mr. Keyes explained that in his development where there were two wage earners per household, one used Metro and other person drove because Metro could not take them to where they needed to be. He said if this holds true for the Metro West development 2,500 car trips would be added to the roads daily.

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The final panelist, Mack Rhoads, President of the Huntington Community Association and the Co-chair of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Association and the Co-chair of the APR Task Force for the Mount Vernon District, said that Metro was viewed as part of the community. He said the residents had worked with developers of a nearby high-rise building and townhouses to ensure that people who used the station would not have to cross Huntington Avenue and the buildings were oriented in a manner that was safe for walking. He said a pedestrian trail network had been provided and the speed limit around the station had been reduced to 30 miles per hour instead of 35 miles an hour so that cars would have to stop for pedestrians. He said developments provided shuttle service to the station for their residents. Mr. Rhoads explained that construction of a new parking garage would begin soon and at the request of the community it would have 24 hour video surveillance and onsite stormwater detention with infiltration. He said the by-laws of the Huntington Community Station had been amended to allow all other homeowners associations to join. In summary, he said that the Huntington community had embraced Metro and looked at it as a resource to provide safety and walkability.

Ms. Koch commented that development offered an opportunity to protect the environment and the best way to do that was to cluster develop and reduce impervious surface.

Ms. Reyher said protection of lower density areas adjacent to the higher density transit oriented development was needed in order to preserve the environment.

In response to a question from Mark Tipton, Mr. Rhoads said that it was important for communities to take an active role in planning development to ensure a balance of uses.

Mr. Flanagan commented that air rights and density transfer should be part of transit-oriented development. He noted that all of the Arlington County TOD at Roslyn, Clarendon and Ballston Common was developed above Metro transit stations. Commissioner Lawrence said it would be absurd not to seriously consider air rights; however, noise and security were challenges that would have to be addressed.

Mr. Lawrence said looking into the future, it would be absurd not to seriously consider air rights, however, challenges included noise and security.

Mr. Horwatt said that people had to accept economic diversity and housing should be designed in such a way that high end units and affordable units were indistinguishable. He also said noise was a given in high density development.

Dr. Bennett remarked that recently state legislation had been passed which addressed transfer of density rights (TDR) which could impact TOD. Chairman Alcorn said County staff was looking at this issue at the request of the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Selden suggested that anyone interested in this subject should review the legislation carefully.

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Chairman Alcorn said that Mr. Pastorkovich would make a presentation on behalf of Fairfax Citizens for Responsibility Growth, Inc. (www.FairGrowth.org).

Mr. Pastorkovich said FairGrowth had been formed in August 2004 to address concerns about the TOD proposal at the Vienna Metro Station which had been planned without input from residents of surrounding communities. He said transit-oriented development should be planned with community input and density balanced with public infrastructure. He noted that a Brookings Institute study had indicated that TOD should represent an optimal mix of uses to include retail, residential, commercial, and parking, along a transit line as a whole. Mr. Pastorkovich also said that comprehensive planning should include a vision for TOD sites that was compatible with the community's vision. (A copy of his presentation is in the date file.)

Mr. Horwatt explained that he did not object to the philosophical concept presented by Mr. Pastorkovich on behalf of FairGrowth, but that he did have a problem with an attack on the outcome of a specific process because this was not the proper venue.

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Chairman Alcorn noted that a TOD strawman draft had been distributed, a copy of which is in the date file. He said the draft included the elements articulated in the committee meetings and asked attendees to think about which elements should be addressed in the guidelines and what level of detail would be appropriate.

Mr. Horwatt said he thought the guidelines needed to have strong language that established the framework for the vision of transit-oriented development in the County. Chairman Alcorn agreed and said the goal of the committee was to reach a consensus and if that was not possible, he hoped that several ideas could move forward.

Ms. Reyher said guidelines should include the need for affirmative studies, include a process to gather and evaluate data, address the needs of disabled people, protect open space, and prevent density creep.

Commissioner Lawrence said he thought one of the most important guidelines was the designation of boundaries.

Chairman Alcorn requested that resources about the appropriate walkable distance between transit-oriented development and transit stations be forwarded to Leanna Hush, Planning Division, Department of Planning and Zoning.

In response to a question from Ms. Lauretti, Commissioner Lawrence explained that in Virginia development could not be denied because infrastructure was not in place. Ms Cate pointed out, however, that language could be included in the Comprehensive Plan about the need for adequate public facilities.

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Chairman Alcorn noted that another citizen panel would be held on Thursday, September 7, 2006 at 7:30 p.m., at the Franconia Government Center.

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The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.
Walter A. Alcorn, Chairman

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

Minutes by: Linda B. Rodeffer

Approved:

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Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk
Fairfax County Planning Commission

Attachment:
List of attendees

TOD COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE, AUGUST 2, 2006 ATTACHMENT A

Name	Organization
Albert, Deborah	DPZ
Alcorn, Walter	PC
Ali, Irfan	Georgelasgroup.com
Bennett, Jody	Hunter Mill Defense League History
Bouma, Ryan	EDAW
Broyhill, Linda	Reed Smith LLP
Cetron, Ari	Connection Newspapers
Cook, Lauren	Walsh Colucci
De la Fe, Frank	PC
Dentel-Post, Colin	
Diedrich, Roger	Sierra Club
Dorlester, Andrea	FCPA
DuMetz, Lisa	Urban Trans
Edwards, Dave	
Fairfield, Jeff	Launders Trust
Flanagan, Earl	
Green, Greg	Merrifield resident
Grimm, Lewis G.	Franklin Farm Foundation
Harcketts, John	
Harsel, Suzanne	PC
Hooper, Fran	Homeowner
Horn, Loretta	W&M Properties
Horn, Tom	W&M Properties
Horwatt, Michael	Horwatt Law Offices
Hunter, Richard	WCI Communities
Hush, Leanna	DPZ PD
Kraucunas, Paul	VDOT
Lauretti, Keely	Citizen
Lawrence, Bob	Reed Smith
Lawrence, Kenneth	PC
Lippa, Barbara	PC staff
Lusk, Rodney	PC
McKeeby, Elizabeth	Walsh Colucci
Mills, Joel	
Nicoson, Patti	
Ormsby, Sally	FFC Citizens Cmte Land Use/Trans.
Pastorkovich, Steve	Briarwood
Rathbone, Dan	FCDOT
Rhoads, Mack	MVCCA
Riveros Albert	Sleepy Hollow citizen
Rodeffer, Linda	PC Staff
Sargeant, Tim	Mount Vernon
Schwartz, Stewart	Smarter Growth
Selden, Fred	DPZ PD
Smith, Deborah	FairGrowth
Stagg, Inda	Walsh Colucci
Stallman, Sandy	FCPA
Stowers, Joe	
Tejani, Shams	Comstock Companies
Tyahla, Paul	Fx Co. Chamber of Commerce
Ulfelder, John	West*Group