

The Washington Post

Smart growth bill capitalizes on Maryland transit (print) (web)

The Maryland General Assembly may soon make a really smart move toward achieving really smart growth: It could adopt proposed land-use legislation enabling "State Rail Station Overlay Districts."

House Bill 948 would empower local jurisdictions and the state to plan for and permit increased density and more diverse uses within designated areas around rail stations throughout Maryland.

Maryland pays \$260,900,000 for the annual WMATA deficit.

HB 948 is the intelligent sustainable solution:

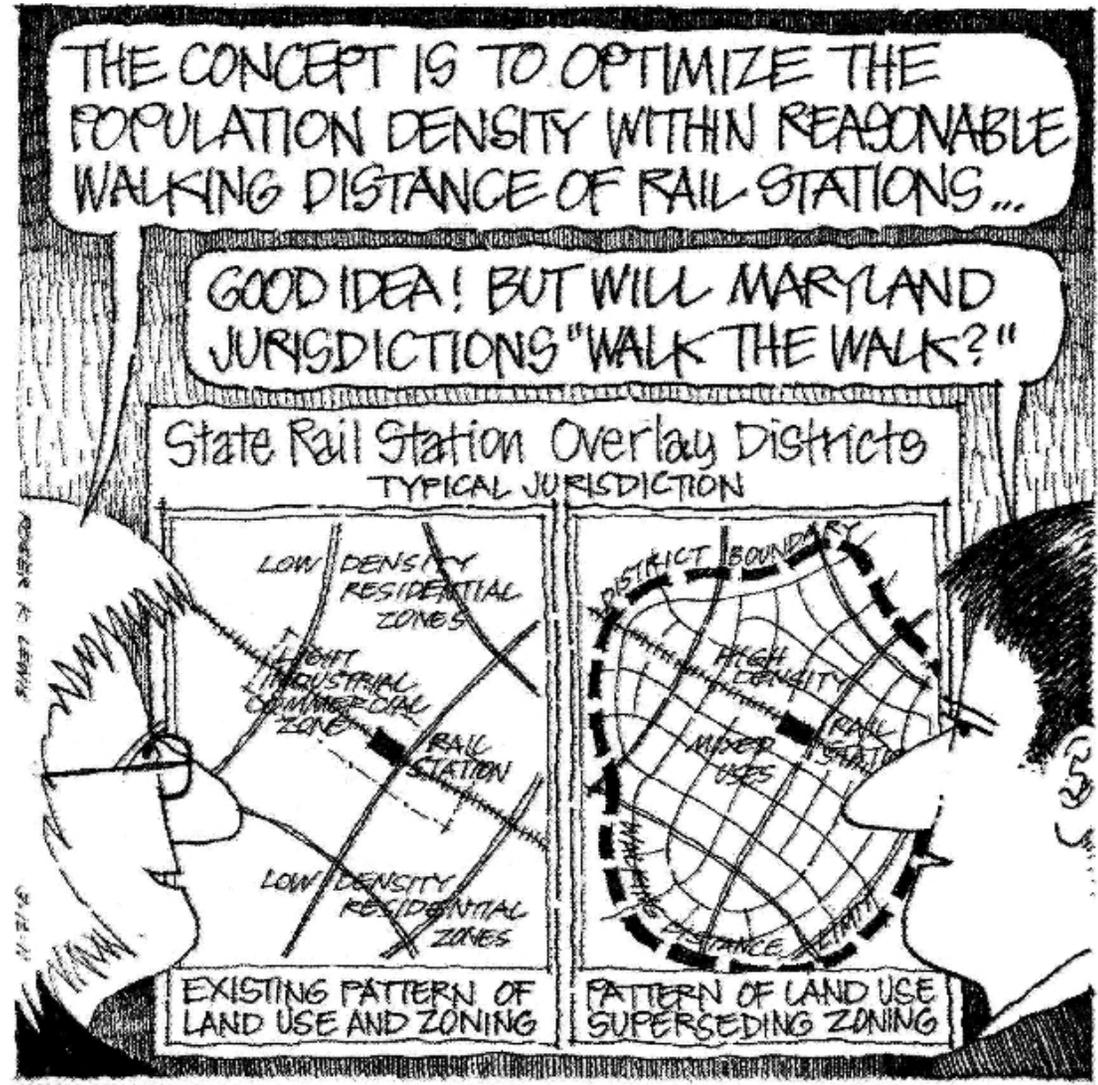
- increase pedestrian-source ridership,
- balance flow (heavy single direction commute peaks bankrupt the system)

If enacted, the Maryland Department of Planning, in consultation with the Department of Transportation, would collaborate with counties and municipalities to delineate rail-station overlay districts and to make new master plans, design guidelines and development regulations for them. The new plans and regulations would supersede existing zoning, replacing out-of-date concepts and regulations that obstruct desirable, sustainable development.

You cannot develop TOD one building at a time.

The context must precede buildings.

HB 948 creates the tool-kit.



The SRSOD bill's most basic goal is to foster vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, energy-efficient communities centered on transit. Overlay district development, at appropriately higher densities with mixed uses, would be located within reasonable walking distance of Maryland's rail stations. Of course, what constitutes reasonable walking distance will depend on the agreeability of the walk.

Another laudable goal articulated in the bill is to improve public services and the aesthetic quality of the public realm - streetscapes, open space, civic amenities, architecture - within overlay districts.

The bill sets forth urban design aspirations and outlines strategies for financing them. It envisions establishment of dedicated county or municipal amenity funds with revenues derived from state and local allocation of density rights; from taxing private transfers of density rights, and from special SRSOD taxing districts and bonds that would be paid off by new sales tax revenue.

A jurisdiction's amenity fund could pay for improving storm water management infrastructure, street landscaping and lighting, underground utilities, parks, plazas and playgrounds. Funds also could be used for preserving unique structures or protecting valuable natural features.

The SRSOD bill wisely recognizes that each rail station site is unique and that a statewide "one size fits all" planning approach would not work. Sites vary in historic and cultural character, surrounding physical and demographic conditions, vehicle access, topography, climate and economic potential, so planning and regulatory flexibility is essential. The legislation contains no prescriptive standards or quantitative criteria, only the requirement that jurisdictions establish them for each designated SRSOD site.

The legislation anticipates that jurisdictions will implement an efficient design review and development entitlement process. Qualified planning officials and design professionals would evaluate the functional, technical and, equally important, aesthetic quality of proposed projects.

HB 1195 ~~HB 948~~ Fiscal Note corrected:

\$260,900,000	Maryland's share of WMATA annual deficit. <i>HB 948 will eliminate this over time.</i>
\$5.1 Billion	Cost of Auto crashes, DC Metro area, 2005 (see tab 33a thru 33c). <i>HB 948 will significantly reduce this.</i>
\$2.3 Billion	Cost of congestion, DC Metro area, 2005 (see tab 33a 33b). <i>HB 948 will significantly reduce this.</i>
\$1.8 Billion	Maryland's cost of Medicaid. Obesity and resulting complications is #1 problem in US. Just walk more is cheapest remedy. (see tab 29a thru 29e). <i>HB 948 will significantly reduce this.</i>

HB 1195

Why ~~HB 948~~ is needed now:

Study calls Md. smart growth a flop, (see tab 45).
Lisa Rein, Washington Post
Nov. 2, 2009, B1

HB 1195 ~~HB 948~~ empowers local gov't

- **plan and develop the pedestrian-fabric public realm**
HB 948 creates financing tools based on logic and common-sense: 1) Selling density ("TDR" done right !) 2) Front Foot Benefit charges; 3) TIF assisted w/ 50% of increases in Sales Taxes contrib. by state (Priority Place funding.)
- **much support:** many letters from leaders in real world experience (see tabs 49a thru 49j).

Woodmont Triangle webpage on www.VirtualAdjacency.com

Rational analysis and informed value judgments about urban design, architecture and engineering would guide development - instead of conventional zoning regulations that typically are mute about aesthetics. In fact, a rigorous- but fair and expeditious - review and permitting process motivates project sponsors and architects to strive harder to achieve design excellence.

It seems fitting - and long overdue - for Maryland to enact this smart-growth legislation. After all, the term "smart growth" was first coined in Maryland. Neither a fad nor a political ideology, smart growth is simply shorthand for prudent, sustainable land use and transportation planning guided by principles that planners today universally embrace:

- Concentrating growth to take advantage of existing infrastructure;
- Creating compact, mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods with a sense of place and including affordable housing;
- Providing a full range of transportation choices, including walking, biking and transit, as well as driving;
- Preserving historic and other valuable structures, including entire neighborhoods;
- Protecting watersheds, streams, rivers, lakes and bays, along with properly managing stormwater runoff from urbanized areas;
- Protecting agrarian and other ecologically sensitive landscapes;
- Reducing energy consumption, carbon emissions and air pollution.

The SRSOD bill embodies all these principles and would help achieve Maryland's smart growth goals. It would serve as an antidote to the inefficient and expensive sprawl that threatens the state's valuable open spaces and parkland.

SRSOD land in Montgomery and Prince George's counties comprise less than 0.5% of all the land in Maryland

People working or living in rail-station districts would be able to leave their cars at home and walk, bike or use public transit. Just a few less car trips per household per day would mean less driving and measurably less congestion, reduced greenhouse-gas emissions and fewer traffic accidents with their attendant human and property costs.

This is what LEED ND is all about; also
• CDC healthy places

The SRSOD legislation is politically astute. It fairly allocates development and investment responsibilities through non-adversarial cooperation among all concerned parties: state, county and municipal officials; public planning agencies; property owners; private developers, civic organizations and individuals.

Without such collaboration, innovative land use and redevelopment legislation, no matter how visionary, cannot succeed.

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