



**Maryland Chapter**  
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## **House Environmental Matters Committee**

### **HB 1195 - Land Use - Rail Station Overlay Districts**

#### **Position: Support**

**Date: February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012**

Maryland's population is anticipated to continue growing. We need more effective land use policies in order to conserve important natural resources like the Chesapeake Bay while providing people places to live in quality communities. Changing demographics reflect groups who prefer to drive less. Proven transit oriented development principles are one approach to address these issues, but we are not taking full advantage of the opportunity here in Maryland.

House Bill 1195 offers counties increased flexibility in zoning in the vicinity of transit and rail stations. The bill does not require any county to adopt this zoning proposal, and if the county chooses this approach, they still have flexibility based on the specific local situation.

The following language from the Maryland Department of Transportation lays out the state's strategy for Transit Oriented Development here: <http://www.mdot-realestate.org/tod.asp>

*Maryland's TOD strategy is built around several goals:*

- *To ensure that station areas are "market ready" for development;*
- *To build state agencies' and local jurisdictions' understanding of TOD and their ability to carry out TOD projects;*
- *To strengthen public support for TOD throughout the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan areas; and*
- *To enhance the potential for federal funding to expand transit in the Baltimore area by showing that development patterns can support transit.*

*The Maryland Departments of Transportation (MDOT) analyzes the "market readiness" of station areas to identify those with the greatest TOD potential. It evaluates existing land uses and physical characteristics, the perspective of surrounding communities, regulations, market strength and other issues.*

*At the same time, the State is building relationships with local jurisdictions, developers and others with a stake in TOD. In its work with local governments, Maryland hopes to develop work plans tailored to individual communities and station areas.*

And in summary:

*There is no one-size-fits-all mold, and TOD will look different depending on where you find it. The mix of development, its density and how it is designed will differ based on location.*

House Bill 1195 provides mechanisms to help the state realize its Transit Oriented Development strategy in a flexible, market-friendly way. A relatively small investment now should achieve substantial returns over time in increased tax base, more effective use of our existing investments in transit and rail, less congested roads, improved air and water quality, and most importantly, a better quality of life for residents of Maryland. We encourage a favorable report on HB 1995.

Thank you.

David O'Leary  
Chapter Chair  
Sierra Club - Maryland Chapter

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. We encourage our members, individually and collectively, to "Explore, enjoy and protect the planet." We have chapters in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, with more than 1,300,000 members and supporters nationwide, including more than 15,000 members in the Maryland Chapter.