



GREAT PLACES WITH TRANSIT



DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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Public Transportation Ridership Continues to Grow

According to the American Public Transportation Association, more Americans are turning to public transportation. For the first quarter of 2001, the nation's transit systems recorded a 2.8 percent increase in ridership over the same period in 2000. This quarterly jump builds on 2000's year-end total of 9.4 billion trips, the highest peak in annual ridership in more than 40 years. In the past five years, ridership has increased by 21 percent. Among the transit modes, light rail showed the largest increase of 6.4 percent, but all modes of transit experienced ridership growth.

About This Newsletter

The Schuylkill Valley Metro (SVM) has provided the region with a natural opportunity to create great places with transit. Under the auspices of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVPRC), a team of planners that includes SEPTA, three counties and a half-dozen local governments and community leaders is working to plan for development at five of the proposed SVM stations.

Planning ahead makes sense, especially because the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has made the transit-land use connection a critical criterion for approving new start transit projects such as the SVM. Therefore, in this issue, we bring you some of the preliminary recommendations for both Douglassville in Berks County and Pottstown in Montgomery County (page 1).

We also focus on successful efforts by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to promote ridership and increase revenues through joint development at its stations (page 3).

Lastly, we report on Fannie Mae's test of a mortgage product known as the Location Efficient Mortgage (page 5). Currently available in four metropolitan markets, this tool is predicated on the idea that some residential areas allow for reduced transportation costs. In a future issue, we will discuss whether the LEM holds promise for the Philadelphia metropolitan area. ■

Community Task Forces Help Shape Plans for Station Areas

Over the past year, the team conducting the two-year SVM Corridor Station Area Planning and Implementation Study has worked to create designs for transit-oriented



Members of the Douglassville CTF and other project team members discuss preliminary plans for the Metro station area.

development (TOD) around five of the station areas (Douglassville, Phoenixville, Port Kennedy, Pottstown and 52nd Street in Philadelphia) on the proposed MetroRail line.

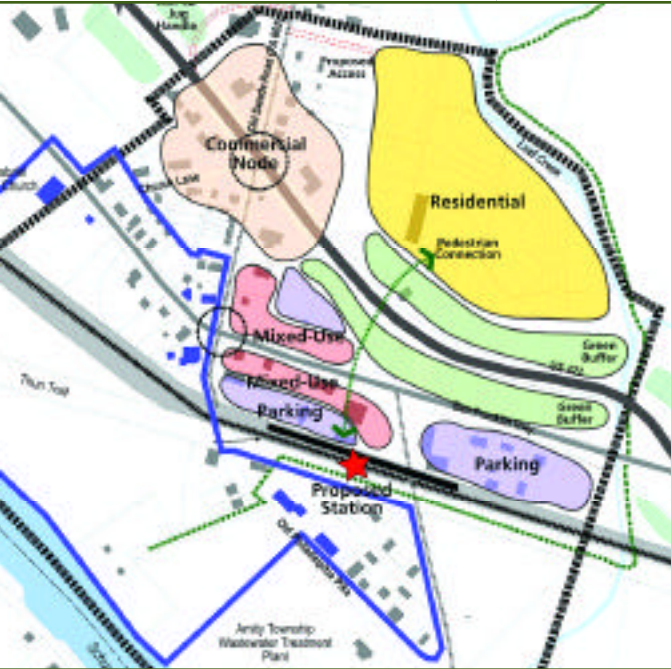
One of the keys to the project's success is the participation of Community Task Forces (CTFs), which bring the community's perspective to the table. The planning and design consulting firm Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC (WRT) is fine-tuning preliminary station area plans, with ongoing input from the CTFs and other team members. CTFs from Douglassville in Berks County and Pottstown in Montgomery County have helped shape the design process for the two proposed stations in those communities.

(CTF, continued from page 1)

Douglasville Station Area

Douglasville is a small village on Route 422 and the Schuylkill River in Amity Township, Berks County. The proposed MetroRail station area, bounded by Leaf Creek to the east, the Schuylkill River to the south, Saint

forecast based on the assumption that certain factors, such as the development of the SVM, demolition of dilapidated structures and improvements to Route 422, could make the station area more attractive to real estate investors and developers. Under the opportunities scenario, there is potential for the development of 100,000 square feet of office space, 150,000 square feet of retail space, 100 multi-family residential units and 150 hotel rooms in the Douglasville TOD over approximately the next 25 years.



One of the preliminary SVM design alternatives for the Douglasville station area presented to the CTF. Consultants from WRT are using the input of the CTF and other team members to develop a final design proposal, which will likely contain a mix of commercial, retail and residential space. (Courtesy of WRT)

Gabriel Church to the west and the midway point between Postal Road and Route 422 to the north, has modest development potential. The population is not expected to increase much, according to a market trends analysis for the years 2000 to 2025 performed by Hammer Silver George, Associates (HSGA). Also, current and projected employment in the Douglasville area is low.

However, HSGA also looked at an "opportunities scenario" for 2007 to 2025, a more optimistic market

Based on these forecasts and existing site conditions, the Douglasville CTF, composed of community leaders and municipal officials, worked with county planners, WRT, SEPTA, BARTA and DVRPC to address some of the issues the station area posed. A major CTF concern is that the current configuration of Route 422 causes traffic tie-ups and makes the area dangerous for pedestrians. The busy highway splits into westbound and eastbound arteries in Douglasville as it cuts through the community. Another issue identified is that the site is dominated by a flood plain and contains several wetlands, restricting the type of development that can occur there.

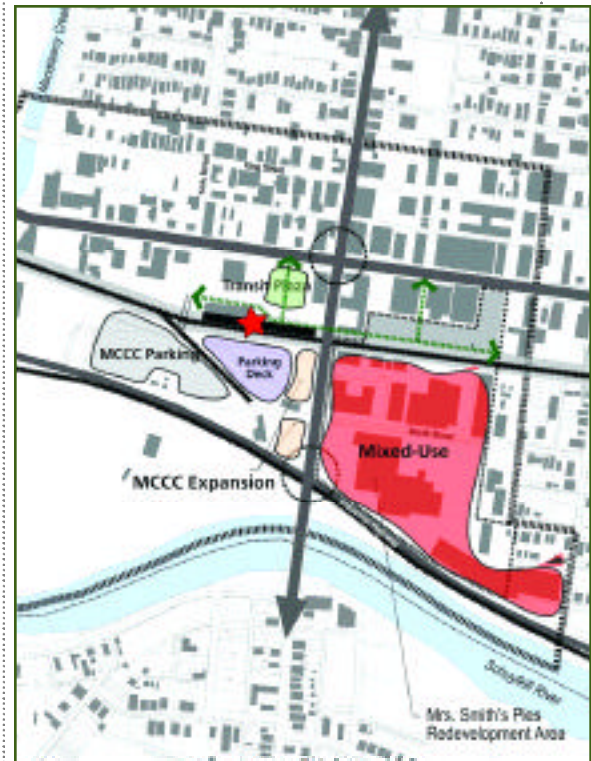
Among the CTF members, there was general support for the MetroRail station's construction and recognition of the importance of TOD as a component of the plan. According to one task force member, George Tindall, Amity Township Manager, "TOD is an integral part of planning for the area around the proposed Metro[Rail] station. Without proper planning, it could be a mess. That's where the task force steps in: The members know the area and can bring a lot of information to the table that helps guide the planning process."

As the design process evolved, the CTF was presented with two alternate plans as a basis for discussion and was asked to choose one or combine elements of both, so that WRT could develop a final proposed station area plan. The alternatives were developed from CTF input given at previous meetings.

Both scenarios included rerouting Route 422 to make one of its branches a local road lined with office or retail space. Both alternatives also featured a center-loaded train station platform and a mix of commercial and retail space. The first proposal featured a medium-density single-family development, separated from Route 422 by a green buffer and connected to the MetroRail station by a pedestrian path. The second proposal replaced the residential component with a large commercial center. The CTF recommended combining the two plans to make the residential area mixed-use.

Pottstown Station Area

Pottstown is an urban, older community in Montgomery County that, like Douglasville, is situated along the Schuylkill River and Route 422. The proposed MetroRail station area, bounded by King Street to the north, the Manatawny Creek to the west, the Schuylkill River to the south and Charlotte Street to the east, has a fair outlook for development



One of the preliminary SVM design alternatives for the Pottstown station area presented to the CTF. The final design, like that for Douglasville, will likely contain a mix of commercial, retail and residential space. (Courtesy of WRT)

potential, according to HSGA's trends analysis. Population and employment are expected to increase steadily between 2000 and 2020, as the borough is located in the path of real estate development that is expected to continue along the Route 422 corridor. Also, the west

(Continued on page 3)

(CTF, continued from page 2)

campus of Montgomery County Community College is slated to expand into the station area, and there is potential for the redevelopment of the former Mrs. Smith's Pies complex, also near the proposed MetroRail station.

HSGA's opportunities scenario is even more optimistic than the trends analysis. The consultants predict a market for 170,000 square feet of office space, 50,000 square feet of retail space, 150 multi-family residential units and 200 hotel rooms. One of the issues with the proposed station area site is that it is dominated by a flood plain. However, most of the area considered for development lies outside the flood plain. Other considerations for the study area are existing freight railroad tracks, which present a physical barrier for pedestrians, and a large wetland.

In the two design alternatives presented to the Pottstown CTF, mixed-use development and parking were the major elements, aside from the MetroRail train station itself. The first alternative envisions the station area as a transit plaza utilizing the existing train station on the west side of Hanover Street as a focal point. In the second alternative, a new train station would be built on the east side of Hanover Street to provide better access to downtown shopping and the Mrs. Smith's Pies site. The location of the train station was a primary issue discussed by the CTF, as each alternative would have both benefits and drawbacks with regard to vehicle and pedestrian traffic flow. After some discussion, the CTF recommended a station location on the west side of Hanover Street. ■

Joint Development Brings Riders and Revenue to Washington Metro

When looking for examples of the power of transit-friendly design applied on a system-wide basis, one need look no further than Washington, D.C., the "Johnny-come-lately" of big city transit.

These benefits flow from 40 development projects created over the past 20 years by the staff of the WMATA, according to Denton Kent, Planning Director for the operators of the Metro. Twenty-one additional projects are currently in the development pipeline.

The Role of Municipalities

Municipalities in the area have their own aggressive TOD plans. According to James Snyder, Acting Planning Director for Arlington, VA, "Due to Arlington's TOD policies, we have



WMATA-approved joint development projects (stars) are shown along the various Metro lines.

That said, the Metro system is successful, in no small degree due to the aggressive pursuit of development adjacent to and above its stations. The results of that policy are:

- A ridership increase of roughly 100,000 riders per day
- \$10 million in annual net revenues to offset transit operating expenses
- Occasional investment bonanzas that provide capital funds for new equipment purchases
- Improved rider facilities
- A transit system that is inextricably linked to the economic vitality and growth of the region

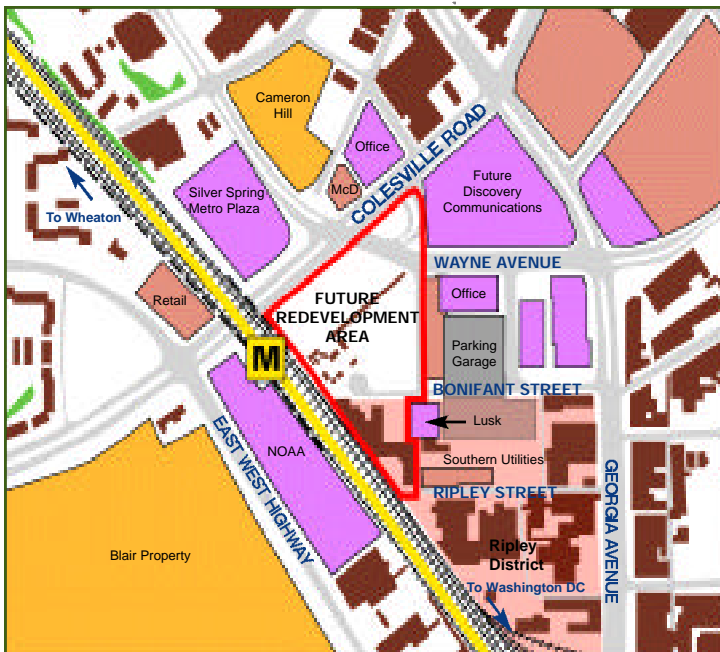
a AAA bond rating — the lowest overall tax rate among local governments in the metro area, and we are investing in new schools, new parkland and affordable housing and have seen our population turn around from a low of 150,000 in 1980 to 189,000 as of the 2000 census."

Arlington is located directly across the Potomac from downtown Washington and is thus comparable to Camden's location with relation to Center City Philadelphia. However, a major difference between Arlington and Camden is that Arlington has capitalized on its location by embracing the Metro and using transit as a magnet for development. Since the 1970s, nearly 30 million square feet of commercial

(Washington Metro, continued from page 3)

development, 25,000 units of housing and 10,000 hotel rooms have been built in the Metro corridor (which is roughly a half-mile wide) in clustered "neighborhoods" created around stations such as Rosslyn, Clarendon, Ballston and Court House on the Orange Line.

Of course, Arlington's community objectives from the outset were ambitious – no less than growing whole new "downtowns" and encouraging outright urbanization of the station areas. "The urban lifestyle is really catching on," says Snyder. "A recent article in the *Post* cited



It is hoped that a new, mixed-use transit center in downtown Silver Spring, a suburb of Washington, D.C., will help to revitalize the community.

Clarendon as being one of the most desirable neighborhoods for young singles in the Washington metro area. And we are getting a lot of refugees from outside the beltway who figure their time is worth something – they are selling their single family homes for Arlington condos."

A Tougher Case: Silver Spring

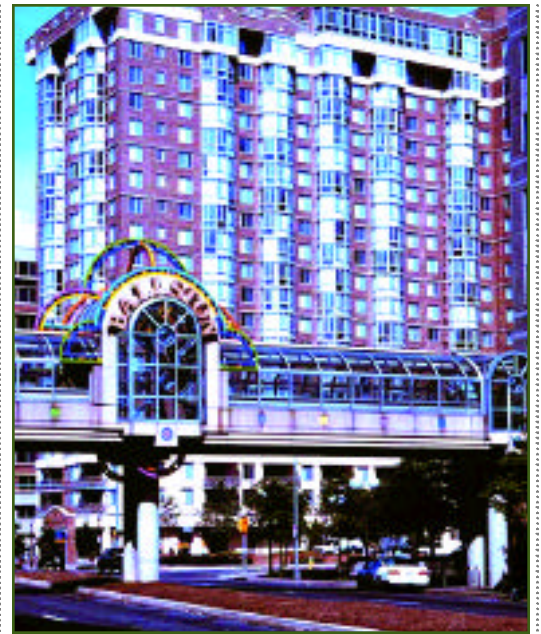
Silver Spring, in Maryland's Montgomery County, is a very different story that illustrates that TOD isn't always easy. For years, Silver Spring didn't live up to its potential for livability and development. After the Metro arrived, the town sprouted many parking garages, functioning as an "end-of-the-line" Metro station; some limited commercial office space also appeared, but sections of the older retail area remained blighted and continued to decline.

For Silver Spring to achieve its potential, a 21-acre redevelopment area was created "involving land condemnation and consolidation." Dubbed the Downtown Silver Spring Project, this area already sports a new Fresh Fields market and soon will boast a 24-screen multiplex cinema. Adjacent to this site, the Discovery Channel is building a 500,000-square-foot headquarters. In

addition, WMATA was going to construct a simple "kiss & ride" drop-off and a bus transfer facility, but instead, at the behest of the municipality, has bid out a joint development using its parking lot and air rights to developers Foulger-Pratt. Foulger-Pratt will construct a mixed-use facility with 260,000 square feet of office space, 50,000 square feet of retail space, 250 residential units and a 150-room Residence Inn, along with two levels of below-grade

parking, a new "kiss & ride" drop-off, a bike trail connector and the new bus transfer facility.

The moral of the story is twofold: Joint development will result in greatly enhanced commuter facilities that WMATA itself would have had to build, and the location of development (which might have gone elsewhere), adjacent to and on top of the Metro station, will guarantee increased transit ridership. The Silver Spring station is as inter-modal as possible – serving autos, bikes, pedestrians and MARC (commuter rail) and WMATA (buses and metro heavy rail) riders.



A mixed-use development at downtown Washington, D.C.'s Ballston Metro station.

Already roughly 30 percent of commuter trips are by transit (25 percent) or bike/pedestrian (5 percent), and planners are aiming even higher to a 50 percent non-auto "split." Projections call for an increase from 57,000 to 97,000 daily ons and offs at the Silver Spring transit center once it and related development are completed.

Because the Silver Spring redevelopment is transit-friendly and revitalizing a struggling area, both Maryland and federal agencies have favored it with funding. It is exemplary of similar projects that make sense as a focus for federal and state transportation and infrastructure dollars.

The benefit of these locations for the private development market is access. Many of the firms locating in Washington-area TODs need to be able to meet with colleagues and clients downtown as well as in far-flung suburbs. Locating at a TOD with reliable and frequent transit access to downtown makes good business sense. Additionally, access to workers is greatly enhanced, allowing both suburban and inner-city employees to easily reach job sites.

"The development that we encourage at WMATA's stations doesn't really siphon off development from downtown D.C.," says Kent. "Businesses that want to relocate will do that anyway, but by creating viable business locations at Metro stations, we help to reinforce the centrality of the downtown and enhance its business climate too." ■

Homebuyers Are Turning Transit Use Into Mortgage Dollars

When shopping for a home, many hidden costs and unanticipated lifestyle factors can affect the type and location of the home purchased. A new mortgage product, the Location Efficient MortgageSM (LEM), was developed based on the notion that some places to live are more "efficient" than others, resulting in reduced transportation costs; i.e., easy access to shops, restaurants, work, school and other amenities allows residents to walk, bike or take public transportation rather than always driving. These lower transportation costs allow LEM borrowers to qualify for higher mortgage loans.

The LEM, developed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) and its partners, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), is offered in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle as part of a Fannie Mae-sponsored \$100 million product test. As part of the DVRPC-led effort to promote TOD in southeastern Pennsylvania, the Delaware Valley Community Reinvestment Fund is working to bring the LEM to the Philadelphia region.

When developing the LEM, the CNT, NRDC and STPP conducted research into the driving habits of people living in metropolitan areas. They found that in Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco, the average number of miles driven each year for households in areas with excellent

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public transportation is less than half that required to live in sprawling suburban or exurban areas, where little or nothing is within walking distance and there is inadequate or no public transit. And, contrary to popular belief, most suburban driving does not involve commuting to work — only about a fourth of car trips people take each month are job related. What's more, most people in "location efficient" areas own fewer cars per household than do residents of less efficient regions.

In addition to owning more cars and spending more time behind the wheel, people who live in sprawling areas commonly devote a larger share of their income to driving. According to Scott Bernstein, founder of the CNT, "The number one household expense in America is housing, but the number two household expense is transportation, over 90 percent of which is for driving around." The CNT found that most residents of location efficient places spend about a fifth as much money on transportation as people living in sprawling areas.



That's where the LEM comes in: When household size and income, combined with neighborhood features (e.g., availability of public transit, how "pedestrian-friendly" an area is, access to local amenities), are factored into mortgage calculations, the difference between urban and suburban car ownership and use is clear: Households in location efficient areas save several hundred dollars each month and can reallocate that savings to meet other needs.

Because the LEM takes these savings into account, it allows location efficient homebuyers to get a larger mortgage than with other products and also opens the door to homeownership to some who might not qualify for a conventional mortgage. Depending on the home's location, household size and number of vehicles owned, a LEM borrower could reasonably be expected to manage a

mortgage \$15,000 to \$50,000 higher than with other products. In Seattle and San Francisco, LEM borrowers are also given a discount on transit passes for a year, and in Seattle, LEM customers get credits toward a car-sharing program.

Aside from increasing a homeowner's buying power, the LEM has other important benefits to both the homebuyer and the community. These include increasing urban home ownership, boosting transit ridership, supporting local consumer services and cultural amenities, reducing energy consumption, demonstrating that there are real costs of sprawl and improving local and regional air quality.

According to Wim Wievel, Dean of the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois-Chicago, "One of the interesting things about the LEM is that it is one of the few policies that specifically tries to change the way people live and where people live. And it makes it clear what the cost is that we really pay for being such an automobile-dependent society. So, [the fact

that the LEM] allows more people to buy homes is good. And, if along with that, it sends a symbolic message about the costs of sprawl and the possible societal advantages of more concentrated living, that's all to the good."

For more information, visit the LEM web site at www.locationefficiency.com. ■

Has the LEM Made a Difference? The Chicago Story

So far, 26 LEMs have been issued in the Chicago area since the LEM's inception in March of 2000. The CNT surveyed LEM borrowers to find out whether they have embraced a more "location efficient lifestyle" since purchasing their homes. Here are some of the findings:

- Most LEM borrowers lived in urban areas before buying; the LEM made urban homeownership possible for them.
- Some LEM users have gotten rid of cars, reduced vehicle miles traveled and used public transportation more; however, the results have been modest. In other words, while the LEM can help in reducing car use and boosting transit ridership, it's just one piece of the puzzle and needs to be used in conjunction with other strategies.



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Coming Soon!

SVM Station Area Planning and Implementation Web Site

A web site is set to be launched to enable the partners of the SVM Station Area Planning and Implementation Study and the public to follow the project's progress.

Features of the site include Study background, downloadable copies of the *Great Places with Transit* newsletters and a comments page.

Visitors may click on any one of five station area links to read Community Task Force meeting notes and documents and plans for each station area. Visitors will also be able to give station-specific feedback that will be integrated and incorporated into ongoing work on the Study.

To access the web page, go to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission web site (www.dvrpc.org) and click on the SVM link. ■

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Great Places With Transit is produced by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) under contract with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and is a component of DVRPC's project "Implementing Transit-Oriented Development in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area," which is being advanced through a partnership of Berks, Chester and Montgomery Counties, the City of Philadelphia, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), Berks Area Reading Transportation Authority (BARTA), PEC and the Delaware Valley Community Reinvestment Fund.

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DVRPC is an interstate, inter-county and inter-city agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning for the orderly growth and development of the Delaware Valley region. It serves the southeastern Pennsylvania counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia and the southern New Jersey counties of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer.

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