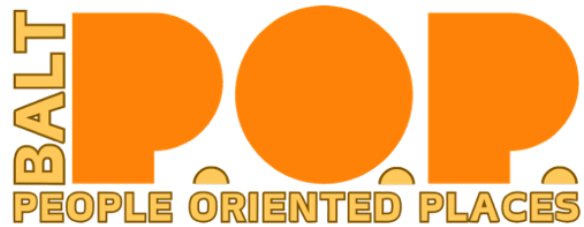


Bill: HB0080

Bill Title: Land Use - Transit-Oriented
Development - Alterations

Position: **Favorable**



Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

As a group which views public transit as a preferred mode of transportation for maximizing the appeal and productivity of Baltimore and its adjacent suburbs - and believes that the land use around public transit should be optimized to take full advantage of it, we feel that HB0080 is a very necessary bill whose time has come.

This bill sits at the nexus of two converging issues:

1. The state of Maryland has made major investments in fixed-line public transit systems in the Baltimore region, systems which have failed to realize their potential, largely because we have not taken advantage of the opportunities to improve land use around their stations.
2. The state of Maryland is experiencing a housing affordability crisis, largely because we are simply not allowing enough housing to be built in functioning communities where people want to live, especially in those areas where greater density makes sense and is long overdue.

We are pleased to see the steps that the state, including the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), has taken as of late to realize that part of the solution to both of these issues lies at the point where they converge. While some people focus solely on the transportation angle and others focus solely on the land use angle, we believe that the answers lie at the intersection of both - transportation **and** land use. It is based on this belief why we cheer measures meant to spur transit-oriented development (TOD).

If we look at the light rail and metro stations located in Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties, we see the results of many decades of inappropriate land use. The light rail stations are surrounded by barely-used parking lots, gas stations, low-density or undeveloped lots, self-storage facilities, and other automobile-centric developments. This is not a good use of public transit assets. In fact, it is a horribly wasteful use of public transit assets.

With the understanding that zoning and land use are powers that the state has historically delegated to the county level, Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties have had decades to better steward these assets. In that, they have clearly failed. As a result, the two issues we highlighted earlier have been allowed to languish, fester, and balloon.

Given the current state of affairs, we feel that it is completely appropriate and justifiable that the state take action to get us un-stuck with regard to these two issues. Encouraging TOD around our already-existing public transit assets, in the way that this bill seeks to, is one way to do that.

We would have preferred to see the counties and communities in which these stations are located take their own bottom-up steps (by shifting their development decisions over the course of the past several decades) to make more appropriate use of these stations. But they have not. And there isn't any reason to believe that they will do so anytime soon.

This bill serves as a completely warranted corrective **action** to address the past several decades of **inaction**. We need to better leverage our public transit assets and we need to build more housing, especially around those assets. This bill will help us accomplish both.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of HB0080**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)