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Re: PROGRESS REPORT: State Rail Station Overlay Districts "ToolKit" Project

To all SRSOD Supporters:

I write to bring you all up to date on progress with the proposal to prepare and test a State Rail Station Overlay Districts (SRSOD) Toolkit. This progress report is being circulated to active participants in the SRSOD Toolkit project as well as to persons who have indicated their interest in it.

BACKGROUND

In the Spring of 2011, Maryland House Bill 948 (the proposed SRSOD legislation) received significant support in some highly credible quarters, including the *Washington Post* and the *Baltimore Sun*, whose op-ed supporting it was picked up by several prominent websites, such as that of the magazine **NEXT AMERICAN CITY**. In the House Environmental Matters Committee the level of political support achieved was remarkable for such a bold initiative to re-engineer a long-established system of land-use regulations applying to the areas surrounding rail stations. The vote on 3/10/11 was 10 aye, 13 nay.

Upon examining the bill and determining that it contained much merit as a potential new direction for urban planning policy both locally and nationally, I agreed to play a lead role in enabling this bill to be tested by preparing the SRSOD Toolkit (with the team's participation as will be defined in item 2 below), and applying it in three scenarios while engaging state and local officials, professional staff, and citizens to broaden and deepen understanding. This requires two steps:

- first, by securing the willingness of an appropriate academic entity to carry out a "SRSOD Toolkit" analysis and scenario modeling study of the bill's ideas, and
- second, by creating a funding proposal to be used in pursuing grant funds to pay for the SRSOD Toolkit work.

HOST ORGANIZATION

The first of the above two aims was achieved when I secured the willingness of Gerrit Knaap, Executive Director of the **National Center for Smart Growth** at the **University of Maryland**, to host and manage the study at the Center as well as to work with me in pursuing grant funding, assisted by Matt Bell, AIA, at the University of Maryland. Since the success of grant funding is significantly influenced by the credentials of the host organization designated to manage a study, this is an excellent step forward. The National Center for Smart Growth possesses most distinguished and highly relevant credentials.

The second of the two initial actions to which I committed, namely the creation of a professionally motivated funding proposal to be used in pursuing grant funds to pay for the SRSOD Toolkit work, is well under way.

RATIONALE

The rationale of the SRSOD ToolKit project is, as its name suggests, to provide the intellectual and operational tools necessary to enable legislators, policymakers, professional staff, and citizens to understand how the SRSOD bill will work in practice. It will do so by providing real-world, practical examples and analyses, meaningfully supplementing the conceptual spirit and intent of the 2010 bill. The “SRSOD ToolKit experiment” will produce models and simulations that demonstrate the economic, environmental, transportation and lifestyle effects that SRSOD implementation would have on districts near three of Maryland’s Metro stations, including, in particular, the Green Line Metro Station at West Hyattsville. The SRSOD ToolKit experiment would also demonstrate effects upon State, local, and private programs for acquiring and preserving open space for conservation, recreation, and farming.

TOOLKIT PROJECT BUDGET

The ToolKit work is budgeted at \$200,000. This will be sought from a combination of foundations, private contributors, and State and County government agencies. It is my opinion that this project presents an opportunity with considerable appeal for a wide array of groups with an interest in transforming the future of America’s land use and real estate development patterns, using real estate value capture as a primary means for financing regional and station-area community infrastructure. This will further facilitate more people to walk and ride rail more often than they can now.

There is particular fertility in the potential that exists for the SRSOD ToolKit to contribute to national policy, since the proposed Maryland study models will undoubtedly have relevance to communities, local economies, and transportation systems throughout the United States.

FUNDING PROPOSAL BUDGET AND STATUS

I anticipate completing a draft of the funding proposal for internal review by the end of July. Upon completion of the review and discussion regarding potential funding sources, I anticipate that the National Center for Smart Growth will submit the proposal to the potential funding sources during August.

I wrote an introductory letter to Dr. Judith Rodin, President of The Rockefeller Foundation, one of the potential funding sources, on June 6, 2011. Jay Hellman has begun to discuss this SRSOD ToolKit experiment with a number of government officials in Prince George’s County, suggesting that this tool, if it tests as successfully as we believe it will, would be a major asset in enabling the County to efficiently and affordably achieve the economic development objectives and quality of life objectives so clearly expressed in the [Envision Prince George’s](#) unprecedented citizen engagement effort begun in Fall 2009.

Please send me any requests and comments you may have regarding the SRSOD ToolKit project.

Sincerely,



Terry S. Wendt