



February 23, 2012

**Testimony on HB 1195 -
Land Use - Rail Station Overlay Districts
Environmental Matters**

Position: Favorable

1000 Friends of Maryland supports HB 1195, which would provide another tool for local governments to revitalize communities and provide residents with transportation choices. This bill authorizes local governments to establish these zones, while ensuring that they will be held to key standards and guidelines. This structure is a win for local governments, the State, citizens, and the economy.

Over the decades, our understanding of smart growth and smart zoning has evolved. Overlay districts are a tool commonly used to implement cutting edge ideas and concepts that help reach key smart growth goals, such as mixed use development or transit oriented development. Rail station overlay districts are one of these cutting edge ideas. The area within walking distance of a rail station – generally a mile radius – has unique advantages and can attract a different sort of development than other urban areas. This overlay district takes advantage of the special features of the area and encourages specialized development there, while protecting the very thing that makes it special – a vibrant, walkable, attractive place connected to transit.

Growth centered around transit stops, commonly known as transit oriented development (TOD), is a critical component of a sustainable, prosperous Maryland. TOD is compact development consisting of a mix of uses, especially housing, jobs, stores, restaurants, and entertainment, within easy walking distance of a transit station. Successful TOD creates walkable, sustainable communities where people of all ages and incomes can carry out daily life with choices for transportation, increased physical activity, reduced air pollution, reduced energy consumption and reduced roadway congestion.

There are many policies that can encourage, incentivize, or require more development around transit nodes. HB 1195 is one piece of the solution, and we urge a favorable report.