

## PART ONE: Introduction

### Purpose

The goal of the Capitol Heights Transit District Development Plan (TDDP) is to provide for transit-oriented development (TOD) within the Capitol Heights Transit District Overlay Zone (TDOZ).

Transit-oriented development is generally defined as development that is located within a ten-minute walk or ½ mile of a commuter rail or rail transit station (*Planning and Urban Design Standards*, American Planning Association, 2006). The 2002 Prince George's County *Approved General Plan* (page 44) further defines TOD as development that actively seeks to increase transit use and decrease automobile dependency by:

- ♦ Locating homes, jobs and shopping closer to transit services
- ♦ Locating the mix of critical land uses (live/work/shop) in closer proximity to one another
- ♦ Establishing land use/transit linkages that make it easier to use transit (rail and bus)

The Capitol Heights TDOZ requires a Capitol Heights TDDP approved by the District Council. The TDDP is defined in the Zoning Ordinance (Section 27-548.02) as the specialized plan that provides both the requirements for development within a specific TDOZ and a flexible forum for





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joint development between the public and private sectors. All development and redevelopment within the TDOZ requires a detailed site plan approved by the Prince George's County Planning Board and shall be undertaken in accordance with the applicable requirements of the Prince George's County Code unless modified by the requirements of the TDDP. All mandatory development requirements and design standards shall apply to all properties within the transit district, except as exempted by the "Administration and Applicability" section of this TDDP. The TDDP shall be binding upon all owners of property within the TDOZ, their heirs, successors and/or assignees. The Capitol Heights TDDP contains development policies and standards that are designed to help create attractive, transit-oriented, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods in the area surrounding the Capitol Heights Metro Station.

A TDOZ is defined as a mapped zone that is superimposed over other zones in a designated area around a Metro station and which may modify certain requirements for development within those underlying zones. This designated area is called a transit district (see Section 27-548.02 of the Zoning Ordinance).

The Capitol Heights TDOZ is intended to ensure that the development of land in the vicinity of the Capitol Heights Metro Station maximizes transit ridership, serves the economic and social goals of the area, and takes advantage of the unique development opportunities that multimodal public transportation provides.

The boundaries of the Capitol Heights TDOZ were developed during a yearlong community-based planning process that included community visioning workshops held in July and August 2005, a pre-charrette workshop held in October 2005, a community planning charrette held in November 2005, and a post-charrette meeting held in January 2006. These boundaries are delineated on Map 1: Capitol Heights TDOZ and Study Area Boundaries.

## Background

### Location

The Capitol Heights Transit District occupies portions of Planning Areas 72 (Landover), 75A (Suitland-District

Heights), and 75B (Town of Capitol Heights) in western Prince George's County directly adjacent to the District of Columbia (see Map 2: Location of Capitol Heights TDOZ within Planning Areas 70, 75A, and 75B). It encompasses approximately 302 acres including the Capitol Heights Metro Station. The Metro station is the first Blue Line Metrorail station in Prince George's County. The next Blue Line station, Addison Road-Seat Pleasant, is approximately one mile east of the Capitol Heights Metro Station. The City of Seat Pleasant borders the Capitol Heights Transit District on the north.

The Blue Line connects to the Metrorail Orange Line at the Stadium-Armory Metro Station, to the Yellow and Green Lines at the L'Enfant Plaza Station, and to the Red Line at the Metro Center Station. The Metrorail system provides rapid transit access from Capitol Heights, Maryland, to the rest of the metropolitan area, as well as Reagan Washington National Airport.

## Demographic Profile

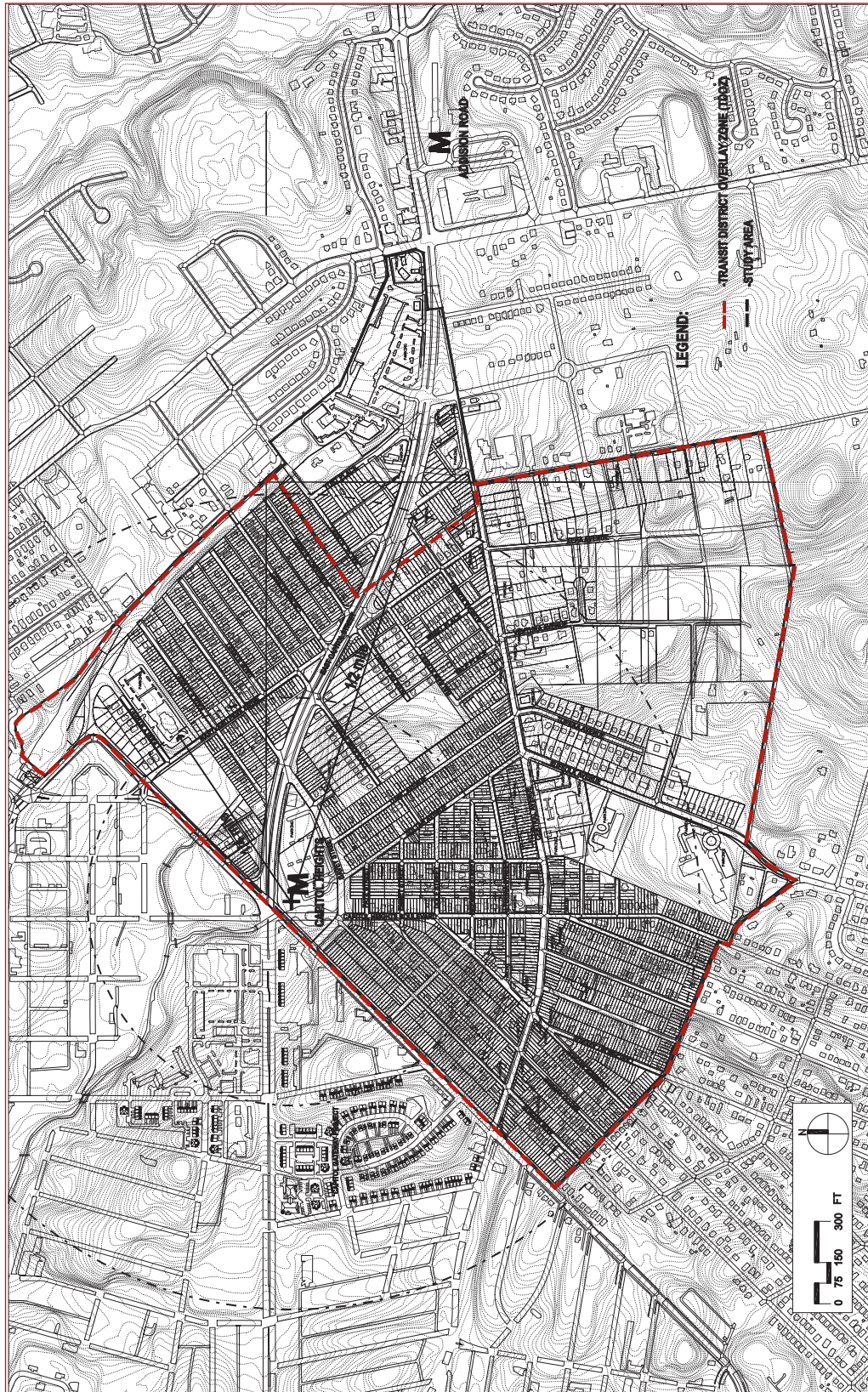
The Capitol Heights Transit District contained 1,764 persons in 2004. The average household size was 2.86 persons, compared to the Prince George's County average household size of 2.79 persons. Median annual household income in the transit district was \$52,273, or 86 percent of the county's median annual household income of \$60,639. Three out of four dwelling units (76 percent) in the Transit District were owner-occupied, compared to 62 percent of all dwelling units within the county. The average age of the study area population was 36 years, slightly above the county average of 34 years.

The estimated median value of a home within the TDOZ was \$200,000, virtually identical with the county's median home value of \$208,000. Average home values in the TDOZ appreciated 40 percent between 2000 and 2004, somewhat behind countywide home value appreciation rates of 45–50 percent during the same period.

## Development Pattern

The existing land use pattern in the Capitol Heights Transit District is predominantly residential (71 percent of the land area). Sixteen percent of the land is occupied by commercial uses, with parks and other public uses covering another 11 percent of the land. Industrial and other uses occupy the

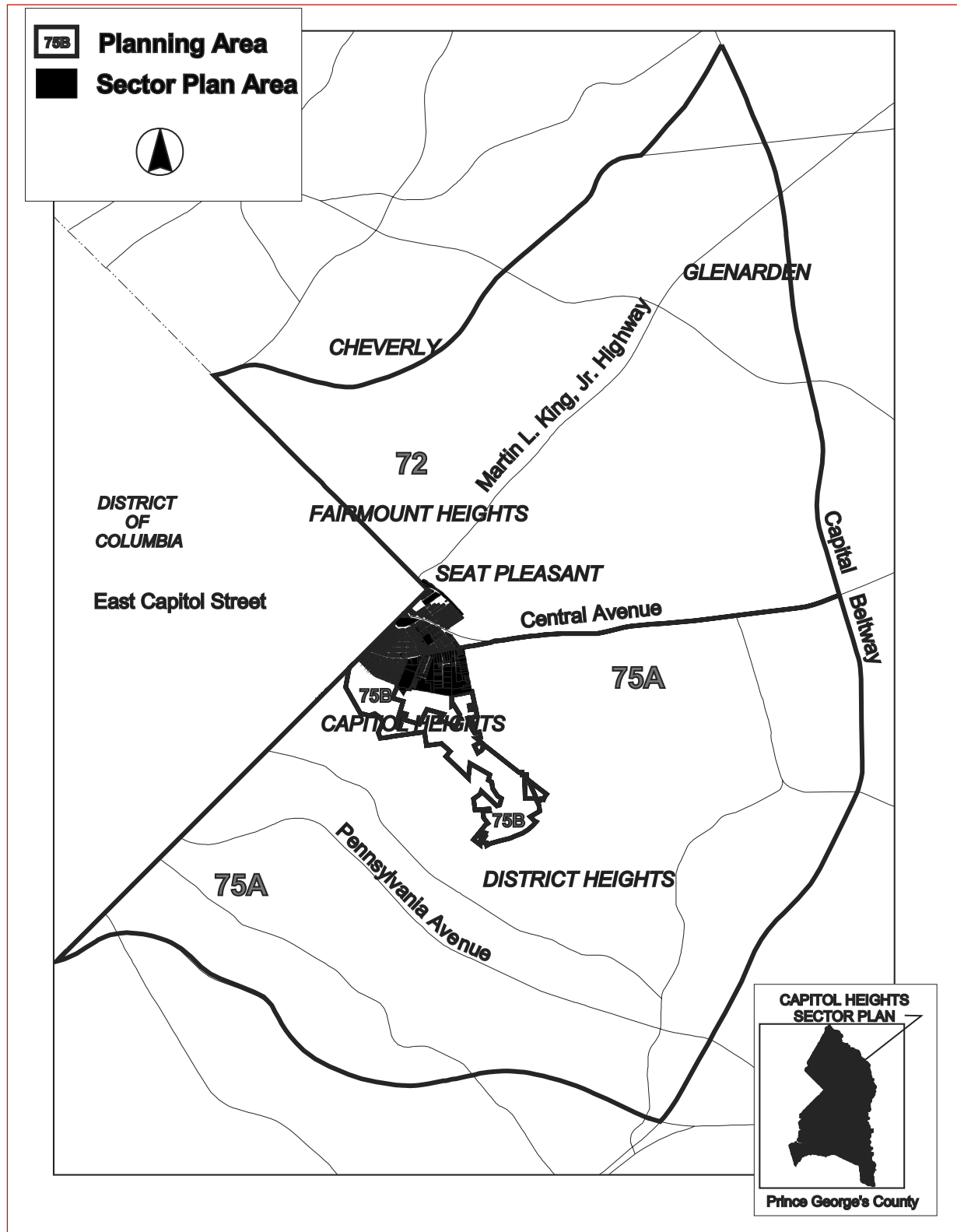




Map 1 Capitol Heights TDOZ and Study Area Boundaries



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Map 2 Location of Capitol Heights TDOZ within Planning Areas 70, 75A and 75B





remaining two percent of the transit district's land. This development pattern typifies the single-use Euclidean zone pattern of development that has dominated Prince George's County for many years.

New development in the transit district has been very limited. Yet, Capitol Heights has a historic sense of place. It is a "real" town with a grid of streets, a mix of old and new residential structures, rolling topography, wooded stream areas, public parks, and a town hall. Many of the town's residents have lived there for many years. In addition, younger households are moving into the area to take advantage of its lower housing prices and convenient access to downtown Washington and other major activity centers.

Two state highways provide direct access to the District of Columbia on the west: East Capitol Street Extended (MD 214) and Old Central Avenue (MD 332). The two roads merge at Addison Road to become Central Avenue (MD 214). Central Avenue provides access to points east of the Capitol Heights Transit District, particularly the Capital Beltway (I-95/495). Capitol Heights Boulevard links the Metro station with the town's civic area.

Limited commercial development is concentrated along Old Central Avenue, Capitol Heights' historic "main street." Many of these uses are vacant or underutilized, and some of them are visually unattractive or incompatible with adjacent residential uses. The lack of quality commercial services in the transit district forces residents to travel outside the area to shop. The Old Central Avenue commercial strip includes the town hall, a U.S. Postal Service office, a fire station, and headquarters for the Capitol Heights police department.

The housing stock in the study area is composed almost entirely of single-family units that predate the construction of the Metro station. Detached bungalows, cottages and small cape cods compose most of the neighborhoods and give Capitol Heights much of its distinct town character. The single-family-dominated density, however, poses challenges for planning efforts intended to encourage mixed-use TOD within the TDOZ. Nor does the current residential development pattern offer the variety of housing types and living options for potential residents that are attracted to TOD.

## Development Potential

There has been no major new development in this transit district since the Capitol Heights Metro Station opened to the public in 1981. However, the development market for Prince George's County's undeveloped Metrorail stations is improving. Undeveloped land at the county's Metrorail stations has become more attractive for development opportunities as similar sites in other metropolitan jurisdictions are built out. In 2006, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) included the Capitol Heights Metro Station in its joint development solicitation package for the first time.

Another indication of improving development potential is new development appearing along Central Avenue east of the transit district and the District of Columbia's new Capitol Gateway project under construction at Southern Avenue and East Capitol Street just across the District line.

## Relationship to the Underlying Zones

The District Council created the transit district overlay zone (TDOZ) in 1984 to address the problems of sprawl, traffic congestion, depletion of environmental resources, and the growing demand for housing opportunities. Development that is designed to respond to these issues is defined as transit-oriented design (TOD).

The TDOZ is superimposed over the zoning map for the subject area and thereby modifies specific requirements of those underlying zones. The TDDP for a TDOZ can change the underlying zoning of the property within the transit district by following the procedures set forth in the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, Part 10A, Section 27-548.02 to 27-548.09.

The main purpose of this plan is to maximize the public benefits from the Capitol Heights Metro Station and from land owned by the Town of Capitol Heights, Prince George's County, and WMATA. The plan sets out a development vision for the Capitol Heights Transit District that emphasizes character areas, environmental infrastructure, transportation systems, and low-impact development (LID) features. This vision emphasizes:



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- TOD near the Metro station and a sense of place consistent with the neighborhood character areas defined in the plan.
- Pedestrian-oriented (re)development in the transit district.
- Protected environmentally sensitive areas, minimal impacts of development, and expanded recreational opportunities and trail/bikeway connections.
- Maximum residential development opportunities within walking distance of the Metro station.

### Relationship to the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance

The Capitol Heights TDDP standards and guidelines shall apply to all proposed new development submitted for approval on or after the TDDP's effective date of enactment by the District Council. For development standards not covered by the Capitol Heights TDDP, the other applicable sections of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance shall serve as the requirement. All development shall likewise comply with all relevant federal, state, county and local regulations and ordinances.

### Relationship to Applicable Master Plans

The Capitol Heights TDDP is the first small-area plan completed for the Capitol Heights area since completion of the 1986 *Approved Master Plan and Adopted Sectional Map Amendment for Suitland-District Heights and Vicinity*. Because the Capitol Heights Transit District includes a portion of Planning Area 72 (Landover), the TDDP amends the 1993 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Landover and Vicinity* as well as the Suitland-District Heights master plan.

### Relationship to the General Plan

The General Plan provides the county with guidance on future physical and economic development. This guidance is given through countywide land utilization policies such as economic development, the environment, transportation,

housing, public facilities, and design. These policies offer extensive guidance on the need to concentrate future development, balance environmental concerns with economic development, create Metro centers that serve both existing and future communities, encourage a greater range of housing types, maintain adequate public facilities and service levels, and articulate a vision and standards for the design of the physical environment.

The General Plan delineates three growth management areas known as tiers: the Developed Tier, the Developing Tier, and the Rural Tier. The Capitol Heights Transit District is within the Developed Tier. Within the Developed Tier, four policies govern land development:

- Policy 1—Encourage medium to high-density, mixed-use, transit- and pedestrian-oriented development.
- Policy 2—Preserve, restore and enhance environmental features and green infrastructure elements.
- Policy 3—Provide a transportation system that is integrated with and promotes development and revitalization.
- Policy 4—Plan and provide public facilities to support and fit into the Developed Tier's development pattern.

The General Plan specifically targets growth at a limited number of designated centers and within the Developed Tier oriented to direct service by Metrorail. The Capitol Heights Metro Station area is defined as a community center where concentrations of activities, services and land uses serve the immediate community. These centers include a variety of public facilities and services, and integrated commercial, office and residential development. They can also include mixed-use and higher-intensity redevelopment, particularly when served by mass transit.

This plan retains the General Plan designation of the Capitol Heights Metro Station area as a community center.

### Relationship to the State Planning Act

The TDDP for Capitol Heights seeks to implement the visions of the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act, which was enacted in 1992 to establish consistent general land use policies to be implemented locally



throughout the state. These policies are stated as the following eight visions:

1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas.
2. Sensitive areas are protected.
3. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected.
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.
5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced.
6. To assure the achievement of 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined.
7. Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the county or municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur.
8. Funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these visions.

These visions have been adopted as official state policy. The eight visions constitute a comprehensive set of guiding principles that describe how and where growth and development should occur and also call for a land and water stewardship ethic to guide individual and group action.

## Transportation Demand Management

The 2002 General Plan envisions quality TOD at Developed Tier centers at Metrorail stations such as Capitol Heights. Implementing this General Plan vision for the Developed Tier poses a major policy challenge in the Capitol Heights TDOZ: balancing the optimum mix and densities of land uses with the transportation infrastructure and services that are needed to efficiently accommodate them. To this end, the TDDP seeks to ensure the overall operational integrity of all components (modes) in the transportation network in and near the Capitol Heights Transit District. The TDDP also seeks to protect the adjoining residential neighborhoods from added traffic.

This TDDP is premised on the assumption that, at buildout, the preferred development pattern in the Capitol Heights

Transit District may generate levels of automotive congestion that are somewhat higher than would result from less intense levels of development. However, the TDDP is also predicated on the parallel assumption that greater vehicular congestion within the TDOZ can be mitigated by (1) improvements to other components of the transportation network—particularly transit and transportation demand management initiatives—and (2) ensuring that new development is designed to be both pedestrian- and transit-friendly. Doing this will encourage significantly higher use of transit and make it desirable and safe to use bicycles or walk to and within the TDOZ.

There are few options to add or expand roads to accommodate the additional vehicular traffic that may result from new development within the Capitol Heights TDOZ. The arterials and major collector roads in the transit district are already built out to their master plan rights-of-way and alignments. Further, the street networks in adjoining neighborhoods are not envisioned in the plan as playing a significant role in accommodating future through traffic in the TDOZ. Therefore, a multimodal transportation network that integrates the development pattern with expanded public transportation, pedestrian/bicycle pathways, and transportation demand management (TDM) initiatives will be needed to accommodate the desired development and to help ensure the operational integrity of all components of the transportation network within the Capitol Heights TDOZ.

Transportation demand management is defined in Section 20A-201 of Title 20A, Transportation, of the Prince George's County Code as "... a process or procedure intended to reduce vehicle trips during specified periods of the day. This includes, but is not limited to, such strategies as car and van pools, transit use incentives, parking fees and disincentives, improved pedestrian and bicycle access and facilities." Title 20A contains guidelines for implementing TDM strategies, including the establishment and operation of designated transportation demand management districts (TDMD).

The Capitol Heights TDDP authorizes the establishment of a TDMD for the transit district through petition to the Council in accordance with Section 20A-204 of the Prince George's County Code. Upon receipt of the petition, the Council shall direct the Planning Board to conduct a transportation system capacity analysis to determine whether or not transportation system imbalances will require the establishment of a TDMD. Any TDMD thus established will help implement



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the General Plan policy (Developed Tier Policy 3, page 35) that recommends transportation systems be both multimodal and integrated with the preferred development patterns in intensive, higher-density, mixed-use areas such as the Capitol Heights TDOZ.

The TDMD is intended to:

1. Ensure that the preferred development pattern can be achieved in the Capitol Heights TDOZ while preserving or enhancing the overall operational integrity of the transportation network in the transit district and in this part of Prince George's County.
2. Reduce, or divert to other modes, the vehicle trips generated by the proposed development and redevelopment in the Capitol Heights Transit District, particularly single-occupant vehicle trips, during peak traffic periods.
3. Provide and maintain adequate, multimodal transportation and mobility options for the transit district's residents, workers and visitors.
4. Establish and maintain a multimodal network of transportation services and facilities that supports:
  - a. The development pattern recommendations for Capitol Heights as a General Plan community center.
  - b. All other provisions of the Capitol Heights TDDP.
  - c. Goals, objectives and policies of the 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan* (General Plan).
  - d. Upon its adoption and approval, the applicable provisions of the Prince George's County Countywide Master Plan of Transportation.

The TDDP also establishes a transportation demand management technical advisory committee (TDMTAC) to analyze, recommend and implement the policies required to achieve the Capitol Heights TDDP's transportation goals, policies and objectives.

The TDMTAC will evaluate, analyze and manage the transportation demand generated by new development and redevelopment in the transit district as provided for by Title 20A, Subdivisions 2 and 3. It will also coordinate the transportation services needed to accommodate that development, particularly feeder and commuter intercept bus

services and demand management programs for employers in the Capitol Heights Transit District. TDMTAC will also assist the District Council in determining transportation adequacy in the transit district in accordance with the procedures and guidelines of Title 20A and any other guidance or directives that the Prince George's County Planning Board or the District Council provides in adopting and approving this TDDP. Initial staff support for the TDMTAC will be provided by the Transportation Planning Section, Countywide Planning Division, M-NCPPC.

## Amendment Procedures

The Capitol Heights TDDP/TDOZ has been formulated in accordance with the requirements of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, as stipulated in Section 27-213.02 through 27-213.05. The specific steps are graphically illustrated in Appendix A: TDOZ/TDDP Approval Sequence Chart. The District Council may amend the TDOZ as stipulated in Section 27-548.09.01, Amendment of Approved Transit District Overlay Zone.