



Testimony before the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
regarding:

Support for Proposed Changes to WMATA Facilities at Takoma Metro Station (Docket R14-01)

By Cheryl Cort
Policy Director
June 18, 2014

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization in the Washington, D.C. region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We ask that WMATA approve the proposed changes to the WMATA facilities at the Takoma Metro station and advance the joint development agreement. Having closely followed this issue since 2000, I am gratified that we have come to such a good compromise – addressing all the key issues raised with the previous proposal.

We support the proposed facility changes and joint development agreement with EYA to construct at least 200 housing units in a mid-rise apartment building. This new proposal addresses all the key concerns raised by opponents of the previous plan. Most significantly, the plan preserves the large open space in front of the station – something many people believed to be important. The plan will add bus capacity, retain the bus loop and future expansion potential – again major issues raised in the past. The proposal will enhance pedestrian pathways, replace underutilized Metro parking, offer less parking to new residents, and bring drop off and disabled parking closer to the elevator entrance. And by 2014, we are enthusiastic to see the construction of a bike station for more than 100 bicycles.

While addressing all the key objections and concerns raised about the original proposal, the new plan offers more than double the housing opportunities of the townhouse proposal. This means more than twice the number of households will have the opportunity to live more sustainable, low-carbon, transit-oriented lives.

We commend the revised proposal for offering a more appropriate multifamily format, which is a significant improvement over the townhouse layout. A multifamily building is more flexible, better shares parking, and greatly increases the amount of housing offered on a smaller footprint. Providing more transit-oriented housing options to meet surging demand is a benefit to the neighborhood, city, and region. The neighborhood will benefit from the presence of more people living at the Metro station because it fosters greater safety for transit patrons, more customers to walk to local businesses, and fewer cars on the road as new residents will have the most convenient access to transit in the community. More people living at Metro and walking to nearby stores reduces the region's air pollution and CO2 emissions.

We appreciate that the revised plan was changed to address a number of concerns. The project replaces Metro parking offering a supply that matches utilization. We recommend that Metro parking in the future be managed by pricing to ensure a few spaces are always available. This would be a far more efficient approach to ensuring availability, than the current time limit approach.

We are pleased to see the residential parking ratio come down to about 0.7 spaces per unit, though this could be lower still. In addition to a lower parking ratio, we suggest requiring the developer to implement a robust transportation demand management (TDM) plan that includes transit passes and other measures to reduce driving and car ownership, and increased transit use. This approach furthers WMATA's goals to maximize transit ridership from the type of development it undertakes at its Metro stations.

Regarding affordability, we ask WMATA honor the D.C. Council's resolution report adopting the Takoma Central District Plan which stated that this project provide 20% of the total housing units as affordable, specifically: 5% at 30% AMI, 5% at 60% AMI, 10% at 80% AMI (see: Attached excerpt from Committee report for PR 14-614, "Takoma Central District Plan Approval Resolution of 2002").

We urge WMATA to approve these proposed changes so the project can advance to the DC Zoning Commission as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) for detailed design and transportation review. We recognize that the proposal will be refined at the PUD process where ample input from all concerned stakeholders and city agencies can occur.

We are enthusiastic to see this project through to completion because it will help foster a more walkable and vibrant central district for Takoma, support Sustainable DC's ambitious goals, and contribute to the region's climate protection strategy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Council of the District of Columbia Report

John A. Wilson Building 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20004

To: All Councilmembers

From: Linda W. Cropp, Chairperson, Committee of the Whole

Date: June 4, 2002

Subject: PR 14-614, "Takoma Central District Plan Approval Resolution of 2002"

The Committee of the Whole, to which PR 14-614, the "Takoma Central District Plan Approval Resolution of 2002," was referred, reports favorably on the resolution and recommends its adoption by the Council of the District of Columbia...

< Affordable housing requirements (in a similar proportion as those included within the Mayor's proposed convention center Request for Proposals) should be incorporated within the residential development on the site, as follows:

(i) Not less than five percent of the rentable square footage of the residential portion of the site shall be affordable to households earning under 30 percent of the Washington, DC Area Median Income (AMI);

(ii) Not less than five percent of the rentable square footage of the residential portion of the site shall be affordable to households earning under 60 percent of AMI; and

(iii) Not less than 10 percent of the rentable square footage of the residential portion of the site shall be affordable to households earning under 80 percent of AMI; and

X More emphasis should be placed on the importance of the recreational, transportation and environmental benefits of the Metropolitan Branch Trail as an integral part of Takoma's revitalization...