04-24

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Policy and Planning Administration

MEMORANDUM

TO: Carol Mitten, Chair
DC Zoning Commission

FROM: Kenneth G. Laden
Associate Director

SUBJECT: Rhode Island Avenue Metro Plaza Development

DATE: July 27, 2005

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is in support of the proposed Rhode Island Avenue Metro Plaza development including the proposed reduction in WMATA commuter parking resources.

DDOT supports the project as it embodies the city's policy objectives to support transit-oriented development. Transit-oriented development (TOD) emphasizes pedestrian safety and transit efficiency and access over private automobiles, encourages a mix of uses with a walkable area, and provides an attractive, quality public streetscape environment. By reducing parking on this site, more resources – both land and financial – can be dedicated to locally beneficial uses such as affordable housing and neighborhood-serving retail. Reduced parking associated with transit-accessible development has the additional benefit of reducing vehicle trips and their related air pollutants – a key concern in the Washington metropolitan region.

DDOT further supports the project as an important forward step in reclaiming our local transportation network in service to District residents. The project prioritizes local mobility over commuter accommodation by improving pedestrian networks and emphasizing transit use. The project will not result in a significant negative traffic impact on Rhode Island Avenue or surrounding roadways. Impacts on local parking resources will be minimized through application and enforcement of the Residential Parking Permit program. Reduced parking at this area will encourage commuters presently using the facility to divert to bus, carpooling, or other commuter parking facilities closer to the origin of their trip therefore very modestly reducing commuter traffic within the District.

Presently the Rhode Island Avenue Station attracts a *higher* percentage of "drive and ride" passengers (35%) compared to the system-wide average of just 17% while the share

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of access trips to the station made by foot (20%) is *well below* the system-wide average of 61%. This is highly unusual for an in-town station located in a medium density residential community. (NOTE: The majority of transfers to the station are from buses.)

The proposed development provides a number of benefits to the local community. The project will provide additional high-quality retail within walking distance of residences in the Edgewood, Brentwood and Brookland neighborhoods. The project will provide much needed housing affordable to area workers and allow them to live closer to transit – typically a more affordable transportation mode than private vehicle purchase, maintenance and operation. Finally the additional residential and retail activity on the site will provide more "eyes on the street" in the local community improving personal safety for pedestrians, transit riders, and bicyclists in the area.

The proposed development will also provide a significant benefit to WMATA by increasing both ridership and revenue in the system. The proposed development on the site is conservatively estimated to generate over 9,400 trips per week – many during non-peak periods – compared to the roughly 3,400 trips per week presently attributed to the commuter parking on the site.

It is the recommendation of DDOT that the Rhode Island Avenue joint development project be approved as proposed, including the reduction of WMATA commuter parking, as a model transit-oriented development project in the District of Columbia.