GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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Office of the Director

Memorandum

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TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: JLS for
Ellen McCarthy, Director
Office of Planning

DATE: March 4, 2005

SUBJECT: Preliminary Report and Prehearing Statement– ZC 05-09
WMATA Light Rail Maintenance Facility
District of Columbia Office of Planning
Zoning Map Amendment

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 05-09
Exhibit 1

APPLICATION

This report serves as the District of Columbia Office of Planning's (DCOP) petition for a map amendment to unzoned property located in Parcel 239 Lot 2 and Parcel 234 Lot 2 to zone the property C-M-1

OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION-IN-BRIEF

The Office of Planning recommends that the Zoning Commission **setdown** the proposed map amendment as it is not inconsistent with the recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan The proposed amendment will allow a WMATA light rail maintenance facility on the property that will be of significant benefit to the community and the District of Columbia.

DESCRIPTION AND ZONING OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The subject property is in the southeast quadrant of Washington DC near the Barry Farms neighborhood at the intersection of South Capitol Street and Firth Sterling Avenue The site is currently undeveloped and has frontages on Firth Sterling Avenue to the north, South Capitol Street to the west, and the CSX rail line to the south and east. A portion of the site lies under the Anacostia Freeway (I-295) overpass. The topography of the site is relatively level

To the east of the property across the freeway is the Barry Farms neighborhood zoned R-5-A. To the west is Bolling Air Force Base on unzoned government property To the northeast are industrial uses zoned C-M-1

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.05-09
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Figure 1: Area Map

PROPOSAL

The application proposes to rezone the property from unzoned GOV to the C-M-1 Industrial District. The C-M-1 District is designed to provide sites for heavy commercial and light manufacturing activities employing large numbers of people and/or requiring heavy machinery under controls that minimize any adverse effect on other nearby, more restrictive districts.

The proposed rezoning of the site is to accommodate a building for the maintenance of rail cars for the Anacostia Light Rail system. The site will be owned and operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority and will serve the currently proposed light rail system.

The proposed building will be 127 feet long by 64 feet wide and 40 feet in height. The building will house two repair bays for train cars. The remainder of the lot will contain parking that will extend under the I-295 overpass. A gated entrance will be located off of South Capitol Street approximately 200 feet south of the intersection of South Capitol and Firth Sterling Avenue.

PROPOSED ZONING

The proposed C-M-1 District is designed to provide sites for heavy commercial and light manufacturing activities employing large numbers of people and/or requiring heavy machinery under controls that minimize any adverse effect on other nearby, more restrictive districts. The area in the general vicinity of the site is largely unzoned with Bolling Air Force Base being the nearest use. R-5-A and C-M-1 districts are located in the vicinity to the east The C-M-1 District permits as a matter-of-right the proposed use per §801 9 which reads "*Yards, buildings, and structures for the repair, maintenance, and storage of equipment related to a fixed right-of-way mass transit system shall be permitted as a matter of right in a C-M district*"

Section 5-413 of the Zoning Act sets out the criteria that the Zoning Commission must apply in adopting zoning regulations The underlying purpose of the regulations is "to promote the health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity, or general welfare of the District of Columbia and its planning and orderly development as the national capital" It further requires that zoning should not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan

Designating the C-M-1 District on the subject property would be consistent with the production and technical employment designation of the Generalized Land Use Map and is compatible with both the surrounding zoning and land use The C-M-1 District on the property will allow for a development whose permitted height, density and lot occupancy are compatible with the surrounding area and uses Therefore, the scale and intensity of the proposed building will not negatively impact residential uses in the vicinity of the site

The proposed use on the site will also not be detrimental to the surrounding property Nearby residential uses will be largely shielded from view of the proposed site The proposed maintenance building will be separated from the nearby residential and industrial uses by the Anacostia Freeway The building will be separated from the Air Force base by South Capitol Street and faces the rear of the nearest structure 200 feet away

The proposed use and zoning designation will further the health, safety, and welfare of the District as it will permit the construction of a facility that is necessary for the operation of the District's proposed light rail system. The system has the strong support and encouragement of nearby residents and will be a boon to the area. This site appears to be the ideal location for the necessary support facilities that will be required for the system.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE APPLICATION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Generalized Land Use Map recommends "production and technical employment" uses for the property The C-M-1 District is not inconsistent with the Generalized Land Use Map and the C-M-1 District allows mass transit support uses in addition to industrial and commercial uses The proposed zoning to the C-M-1 District is therefore not inconsistent with this classification

The proposed zoning and development is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan Element that address land use The Plan states that the production and technical employment areas are "*intended to encourage growth industries and industries with a high ratio of employees to land area occupied, such as office support services, communications, printing and*

*publishing, wholesaling, **transportation services**, food services, and tourism support services"*(emphasis added) Further, the Ward 8 Plan that looks at a smaller geographic area outlining more specific recommendations for the area around the subject site

The transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan specifically discusses mass transit as a priority for the District. The "*extension of mass transit service*" is called out in §503 2 as a policy for increasing the use of mass transit in the city and improving the overall transportation system.

The Ward 8 Plan outlines further elements that support the proposed zoning and use In the Objectives for Transportation, Section 1914, the Plan states that one of the ward's objectives for transportation is to "*provide a balanced transportation network incorporating all modes of transportation including **mass transit**, private automobiles, bicycling and walking*" (emphasis added) The proposed use is vital and integral to the proposed mass transit system serving this ward.

Further, Chapter 19 discusses land use objectives that relate to the proposed project §1929 1 discusses minimizing the existing and potential conflicts between transportation facilities and adjacent land uses The planners for the light rail system have found an ideal spot for the necessary maintenance facility that minimizes any impact on surrounding uses by its separation and distance and should have no additional impacts on the nearest residential area because of the distance, vegetation, and interstate highway separating them.

The proposed zoning on the site will accommodate a facility that is a requirement of the popularly supported plan and cannot be feasibly provided elsewhere with as little impact All of the surrounding uses, government, industrial and residential, will benefit from the mass transit system that will be serviced by the proposed building There will be a stop at the Barry Farms neighborhood that will also serve the industrial use to the northeast There will also be a stop that can be used by workers and visitors to Bolling Air Force Base The project allowed by this rezoning will allow for a much needed and desired transportation system for the surrounding area and beyond.

As demonstrated, the elements of the Comprehensive Plan encourage the creation of mass transit opportunities and facilities. In addition, the Plan supports the location of such uses in areas such as this that have little impact on residential uses This area of the District is in need of more non-auto related transportation options and the facility proposed by this rezoning locates the support for such a mass transit system in a location that is otherwise undesirable and undevelopable The C-M-1 District on the subject site is appropriate as it will enable an action towards fulfilling the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan Therefore, the proposed designation is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The District and WMATA have worked with the Barry Farms neighborhood, ANC 8C and Bolling Air Force Base throughout the planning process for the light rail system. All have provided their support and encouragement toward completion of the project Bolling Air Force Base has been made aware of plans for this building and has responded with full support and no objections. ANC 8C has also been made aware of this project and has expressed an interest in continuing their involvement in the planning for the rail system.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends that the Zoning Commission setdown this application to zone the currently unzoned property to the C-M-1 Zone for a public hearing Based on preliminary review, the proposal is in conformance with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan as an industrial site and will make a significant contribution towards the goal of improving the transportation system in Ward 8 and the District

EM/tp