

**MCPB**

Item No. 12

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## BRIEFING ON APPLICATION FOR STATE-DESIGNATED TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

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### Summary

Staff will brief the Planning Board on the intent to request that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) designate areas around the Metro stations in Bethesda, Silver Spring, Wheaton, and Friendship Heights as official State Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) locations. These designations will unlock opportunities for State support, including MDOT’s TOD Capital Grant and Revolving Loan Fund. The designations do not impact existing zoning or local development approval processes. This staff report summarizes the purpose of the designation, the application process, and next steps. Staff is requesting approval from the Board to pursue this designation in conjunction with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT).

### Background

Established in 2008 and administered by MDOT, the [Maryland State TOD Designation Program](#) provides state recognition and support for local governments that are planning for and advancing TOD at local and regional transit stations. Currently, there are 18 designated TOD stations in the state. Two station areas are state-designated TOD locations in Montgomery County: North Bethesda (designated in March 2012) and the [Rockville Metro Station](#) (designated in March 2026). The

recent discussions with MDOT regarding TOD sparked considerable interest by Staff, especially around master plan efforts where state owned property could be incorporated into our recommendations.

Originally, the program focused on promoting development of state-owned properties near transit stations. Over the past couple of years, MDOT has worked in partnership with the Maryland Sustainable Growth Subcabinet (SGSC) to enhance and better promote the program through a new application process and new incentives such as MDOT's TOD Capital Grant and Revolving Loan Fund. The grant is being used to fund community engagement, land use planning, and conceptual design to integrate transit infrastructure with the TOD plan. MDOT recently awarded Montgomery County (MCDOT) \$250,000 in FY25 for Project Connect in North Bethesda. The grant is from the TOD Capital Grant Fund, and the county contributed 10% (\$25,000) as a match.

### **Benefits of TOD designation**

State TOD Designation comes with several benefits, including:

- [Eligibility to apply for MDOT's TOD Capital Grant and Revolving Loan Fund.](#) This program supports the public sector with funds for public infrastructure and the private sector with gap funding for development within and eligible TOD.
- Projects located in State TODs receive additional points in competitive application rounds for the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) [Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.](#)
- The Maryland Department of General Services (MDGS) and MDOT give additional points to sites located within State-designated TODs when evaluating requests for proposals to lease or purchase office or laboratory space.
- Priority advocacy with MDOT and associate modes in supporting development.

### **Application Process**

MDOT requested that Montgomery Planning and MCDOT provide a draft boundary and mapping of the proposed TOD areas, along with a brief narrative of the area. Staff is currently waiting for feedback on the draft submittal; however we intend to proceed with the application process with MDOT incorporating any feedback we receive from the Planning Board.

The process for obtaining state TOD designation for an area is as follows:

#### **1. Local Government Request**

Montgomery County (Montgomery Planning and Montgomery County Department of Transportation) submits a formal request with County Council support in the form of a resolution to MDOT, identifying the proposed TOD locations and demonstrating:

- Existing and planned transit assets

- Land-use conditions supportive of TOD
- Redevelopment opportunities
- Local commitment to compact, mixed-use development
- Alignment with state transportation, climate, and economic development goals

## 2. MDOT Review and Interagency Coordination

MDOT evaluates the request in consultation with:

- Maryland Department of Planning
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- Maryland Transit Administration
- Other relevant state agencies

The review focuses on transit infrastructure, redevelopment feasibility, multimodal access, and consistency with state priorities.

## 3. Designation Recommendation

If MDOT determines that the proposed locations meet the criteria, the agency prepares a recommendation for designation.

## 4. Approval and Formal Designation

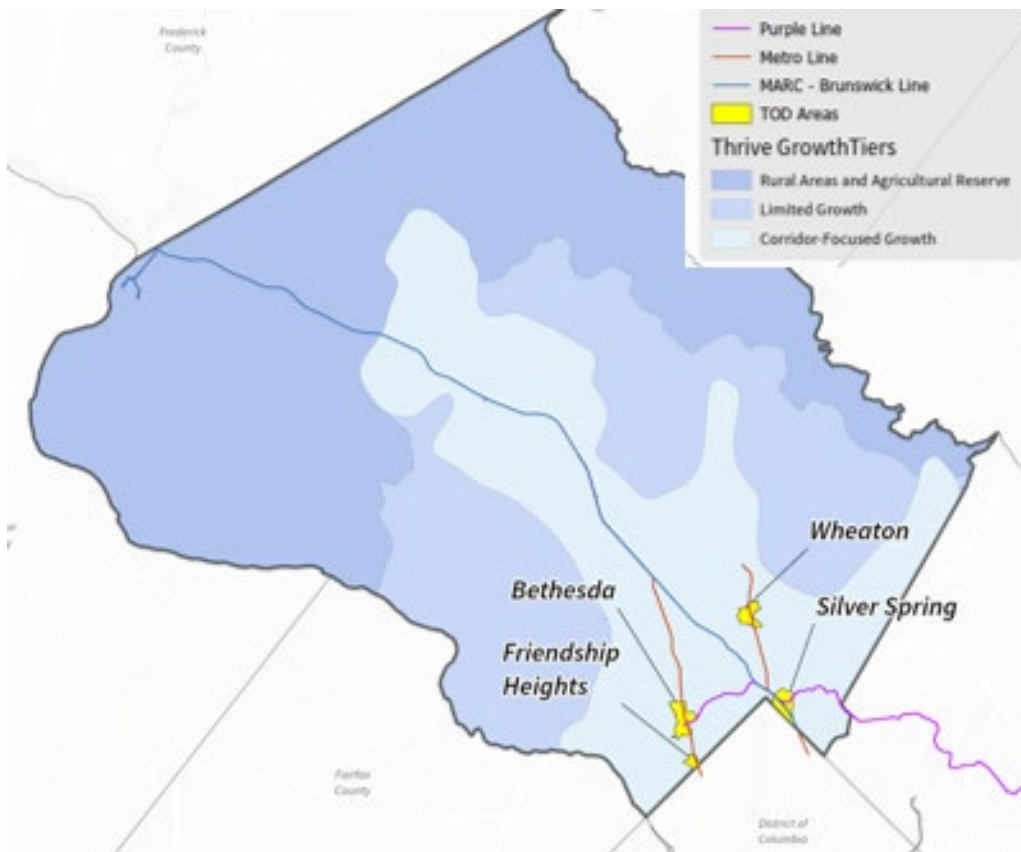
Final designation is made by the Secretary of Transportation. Designated TODs are then added to the state's official TOD portfolio.

## Selection Criteria

At this time, Montgomery Planning and MCDOT staff propose requesting designation for the following four station areas: Bethesda, Silver Spring, Wheaton, and Friendship Heights. These areas were selected as priorities given their status as Large Activity Centers per the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* growth map and county Central Business Districts. These are places where existing infrastructure, high-capacity transit service, and significant redevelopment potential converge to support Maryland's long-term economic, environmental, and mobility goals. All four of these station areas are either currently under a comprehensive master plan review or have recently been through the process.

- **Bethesda** – the boundaries are consistent with the *2017 Bethesda Downtown Plan* and *2025 Minor Master Plan Amendment*.
- **Silver Spring** – the boundaries are consistent with the Silver Spring Central Business District. The update to the *Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan* was approved in 2022.

- **Wheaton** – the boundaries are defined based on the Wheaton Central Business District and *2012 Wheaton Sector Plan*, adjusted to focus on commercial and mixed-use areas. The Wheaton Downtown Study was completed in 2023, and the Planning Department is currently launching an update to the Downtown Wheaton Plan, as its first in an anticipated series of Georgia Avenue Corridor plans following the adoption of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*.
- **Friendship Heights** – the boundaries are generally consistent with the *1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan*. The 2025 Friendship Heights Sector Plan is in the final stages of public comment, review and Council approval. The boundaries exclude the Brookdale neighborhood, which is all single-family detached housing.



Map showing the four geographies proposed for state-designated TOD status, overlaid on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Growth Tiers and transit lines in Montgomery County.

Maps for the proposed areas are included on the following pages. Narrative descriptions of each station area, including justification for inclusion, are attached to the end of this report.

Planning staff also thought that four applications were a reasonable number to submit at this time, given the work required to compile them. Additional applications for TOD designations may

be submitted in the future and could include areas around Purple Line and MARC stations. We have identified with MDOT the following areas and corridors for future consideration:

- Purple Line Corridor
  - Chevy Chase Lake
  - Greater Lyttonsville
  - Long Branch
- Forest Glen Metro
- Germantown
- Kensington
- White Oak
- White Flint/North Bethesda

Once Staff moves forward with the four downtown area sites, they will assess which area designations we can pursue with the Board's direction. Future considerations will be based upon staff capacity and resources, scheduling with Council Staff, and coordination with other stakeholders. Messaging of the benefits and potential designations will need to be considered in greater detail as we learn from this process.

## Next Steps

If the Planning Board concurs with Staff's approach, the following steps will occur:

1. **Obtain County Council Resolution** to move forward with the process.
2. **Coordinate with MDOT** during the review process and provide supplemental materials as needed.
3. **Return to the Planning Board** with updates as MDOT advances its evaluation.
4. **Reach out to additional partners** such as Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP), Friendship Heights Alliance, Regional Service Centers, etc. to inform them of the initiative and potential benefits.

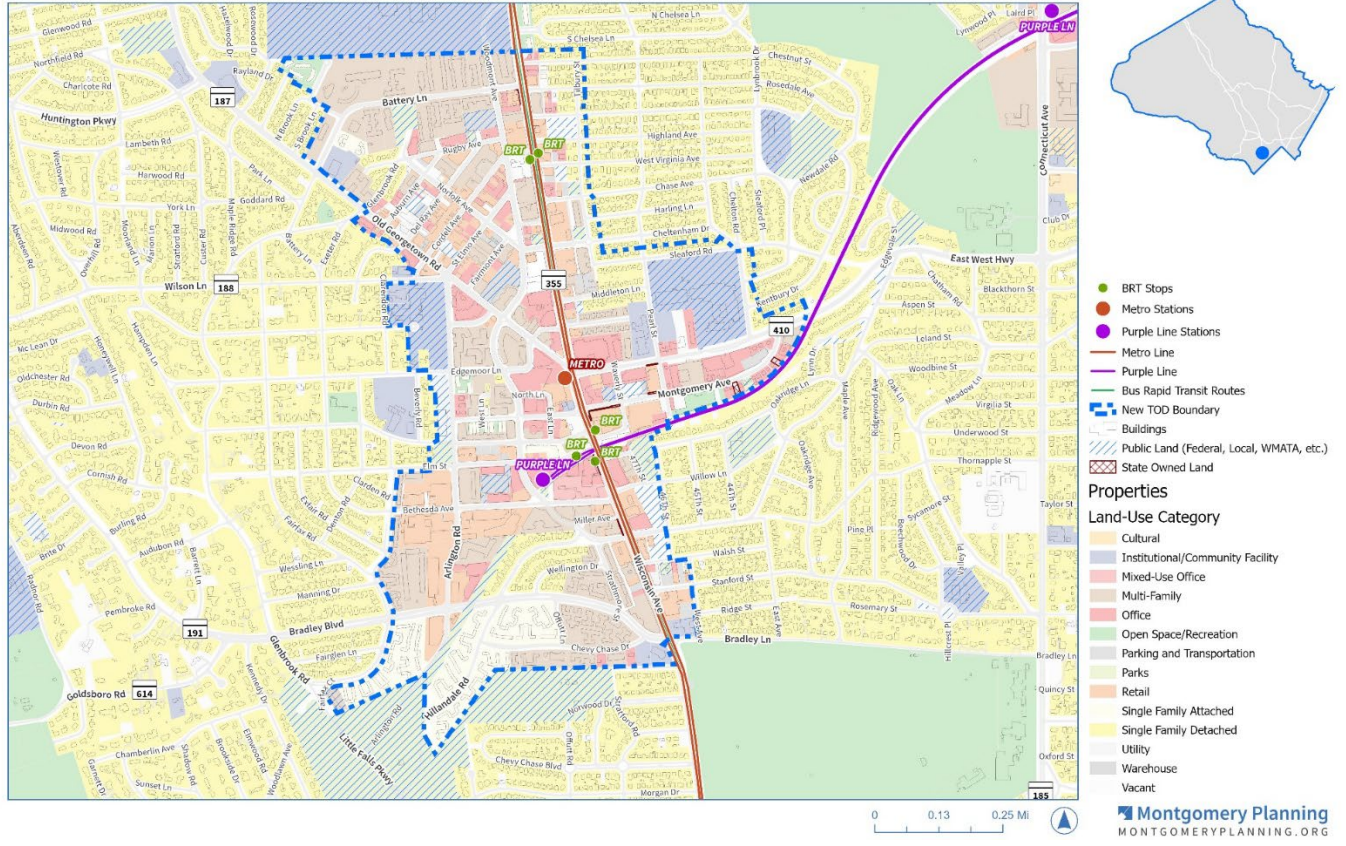
## Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Board vote to proceed with seeking a County Council resolution on the proposed TOD designation request prior to transmittal to MDOT.

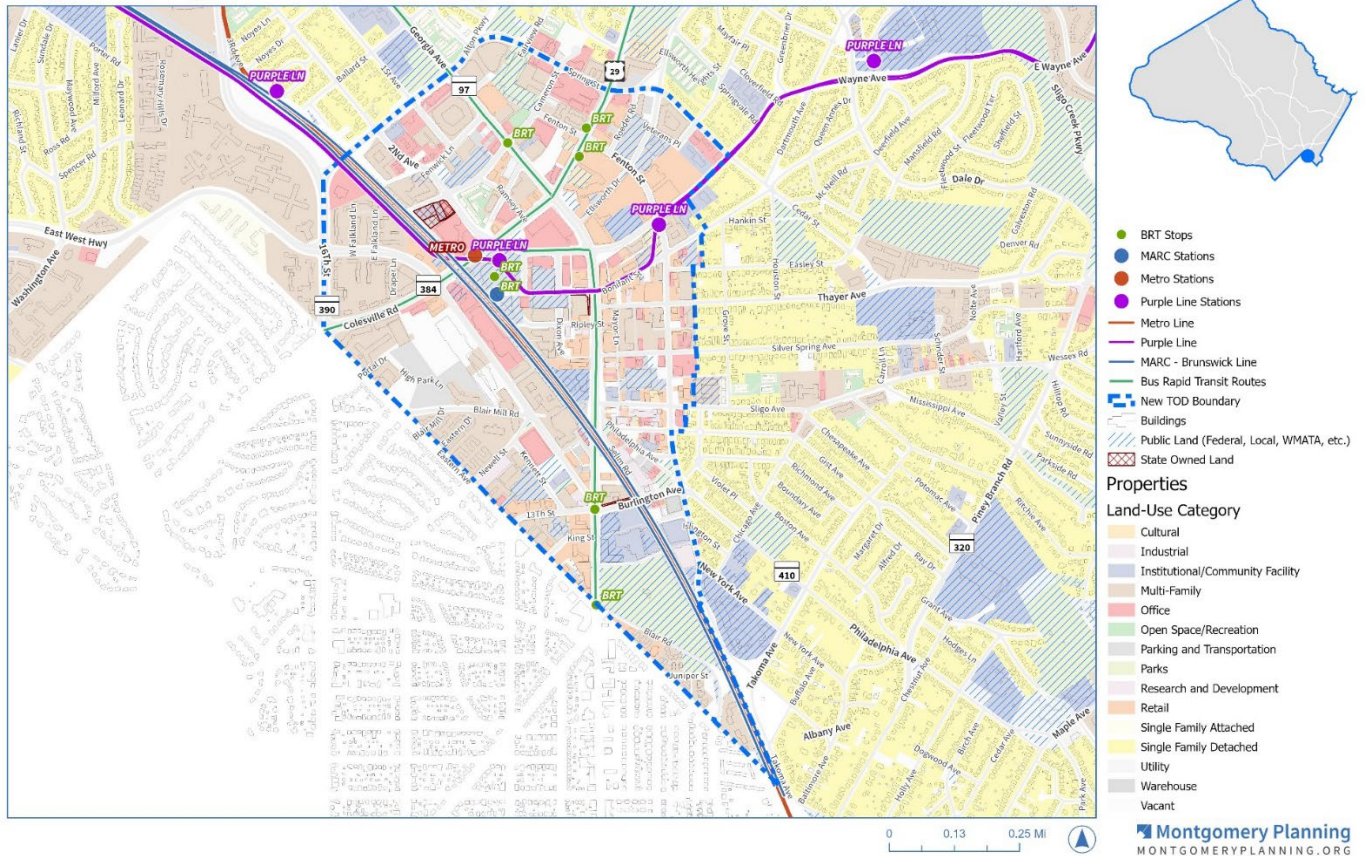
## Attachments

1. Descriptive narratives for each proposed TOD station area
2. Application form

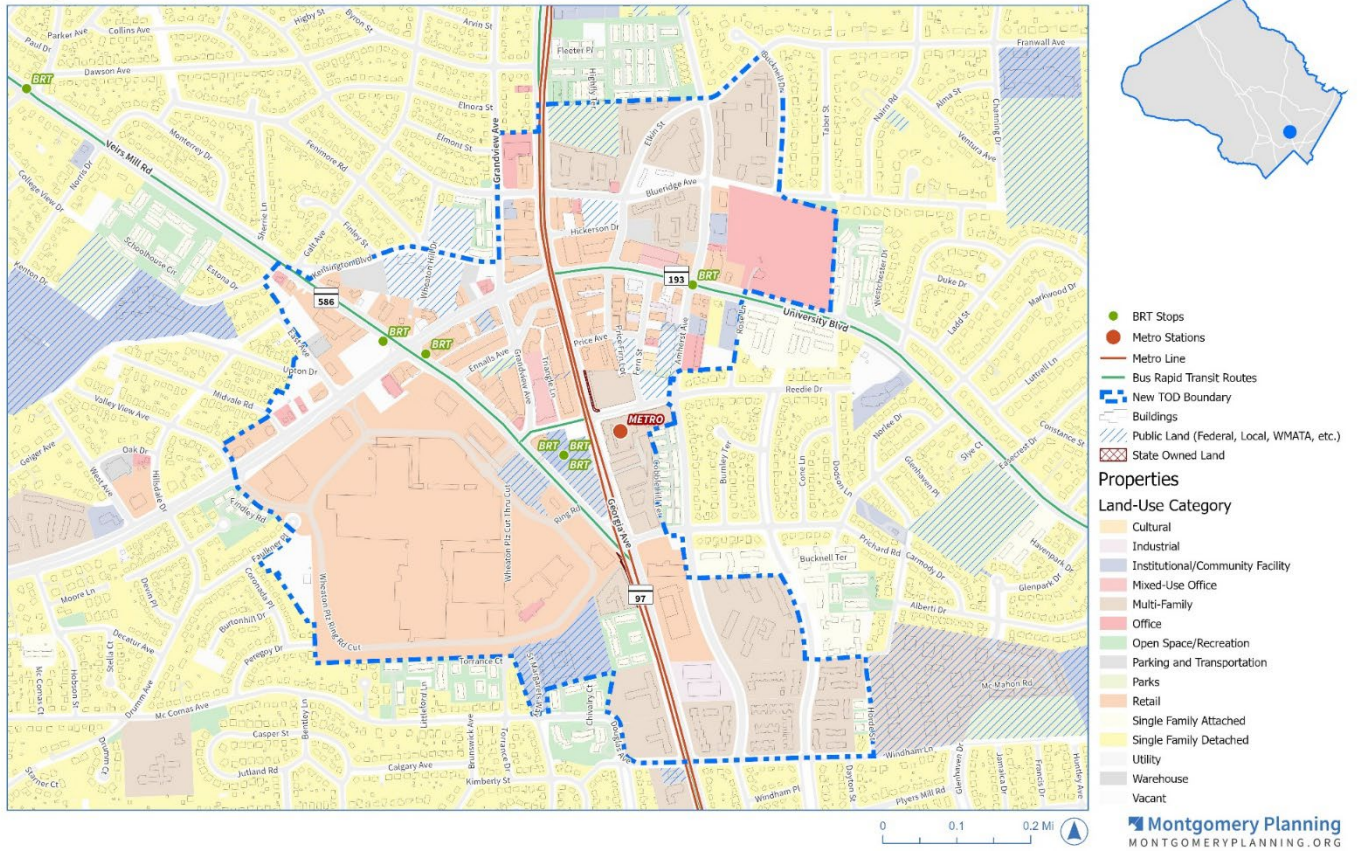
# Proposed Maryland State TOD Designation Area: Bethesda



# Proposed Maryland State TOD Designation Area: Silver Spring



# Proposed Maryland State TOD Designation Area: Wheaton



- BRT Stops
  - Metro Stations
  - Metro Line
  - Bus Rapid Transit Routes
  - New TOD Boundary
  - ▨ Buildings
  - ▨ Public Land (Federal, Local, WMATA, etc.)
  - ▨ State Owned Land
- Properties**
- Land-Use Category**
- Cultural
  - Industrial
  - Institutional/Community Facility
  - Mixed-Use Office
  - Multi-Family
  - Office
  - Open Space/Recreation
  - Parking and Transportation
  - Parks
  - Retail
  - Single Family Attached
  - Single Family Detached
  - Utility
  - Warehouse
  - Vacant

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# Proposed Maryland State TOD Designation Area: Friendship Heights

