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**Statement of the  
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
at the  
Pennsylvania Senate  
Transportation Committee Hearing  
on  
SB 1210: TRID Amendments  
Senator John C. Rafferty, Jr., Chair**

**Tuesday, April 22, 2014  
10:30 AM  
Upper Darby Township Building**

**Chairman Rafferty and Members of the Committee:**

My name is Richard G. Bickel, FAICP, Director of Planning at the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). DVRPC is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the nine-county, Philadelphia-Camden-Trenton region. In addition to preparing a long-range plan with a 20-year horizon, maintaining a capital program of multi-modal transportation improvements and certifying the region for air quality conformity, DVRPC staff works cooperatively with our member governments and operating agencies to prepare technical studies on a variety of socio-economic, land use, transportation, environmental and economic development topics. I offer this statement for the record of this hearing, and will be pleased to respond to any questions that you or the Committee members may have.

**Perspective and Background**

The southeastern Pennsylvania region has an extensive rail and transit system (SEPTA, PATCO, NJ Transit and AMTRAK) that is often taken for granted by both daily riders and the public, in spite of the multiple benefits created by having this transit system in place. A major focus of DVRPC's recommended policies and plans is to link land use policies and transportation systems as a means to curtail continued sprawl; emphasize revitalization of core cities and older suburban places and shape growth in developing suburban communities. One of the key strategies to accomplish this goal is to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD).

TOD is defined as *compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-scale development, oriented around or to a rail or transit station, usually within a ¼ to ½-mile radius, that promotes transit ridership*. The benefits of TOD planning and implementation include reinforcing community identity, supporting environmental goals (air quality and energy savings) and promoting development patterns that can increase transit ridership and reduced auto use. The Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) Act, enacted in 2004, is intended to help achieve TODs.

**DVRPC's Role in TOD**

DVRPC has been working on TOD since 2000, including advocacy, education, partnerships and funding. The DVRPC TOD Program includes:

- (1) Preparing a regionwide assessment of TOD potential at 45 stations in the region, followed by more detailed station area plans, working with city and county planners and local officials.
- (2) Providing educational information for municipal officials through a brochure describing TOD planning and zoning concepts.
- (3) Providing grant funding to local governments to prepare TOD plans and zoning districts through our Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) program.
- (4) Participating on several task forces in Washington, DC for national TOD studies through the Transportation Research Board's Transit Cooperative Research Program.
- (5) Assisting in drafting and helping to enact the TRID Act.

### **Overall Position**

DVRPC is a strong proponent of TOD as a key component of short-term and long-term planning for the Greater Philadelphia region.

1. TOD can help communities and neighborhoods achieve both development and mobility benefits, while helping implement regional, county and local plans; supporting public transit agencies; promoting transit ridership; and benefiting the environment.
2. TODs and the TRID Act also promote the "power of partnerships." Whether they involve local governments, a county, a public transit agency or a developer, partnerships create the formal and informal linkages that enable (and facilitate) TOD to occur. In the absence of such partnerships, successful TOD becomes difficult if not impossible.
3. The TRID Act is intended to encourage TOD planning and implementation throughout the Commonwealth. However, there has been a mixed record of TRID implementation over the decade since its enactment. Given this fact and a more recent goal of seeking alternative implementation financing, we believe it is timely to consider TRID Act amendments as proposed in SB 1210. We hope that the Committee will respond favorably to the proposed amendments, and stand ready to assist this effort where we can.

### **What the TRID Act Does**

The TRID Act provides a "how to do it" approach for interested municipalities, working in partnership with public transit agencies and the development community to plan for and implement TOD to accomplish the following purposes:

- Promote local economic development and revitalization through transit improvements.
- Stimulate multi-municipal cooperation, public-private partnerships and community participation in transit-oriented development projects.
- Increase transit ridership and revenues to support transit services, facilities and maintenance.
- Establish a mechanism to capture the increase in the real estate tax base from new development, using these funds to reinvest in transit facilities and communities.
- TRID also provides benefits related to plan implementation, community involvement, creating innovative partnerships and enhanced funding for TODs.

The required TRID planning study, prepared through a partnership between the local government(s) and a public transit agency, defines the TRID boundaries. The designated TRID also serves as the value capture area where real estate or other taxes can be shared for up to 20 years by the municipality, school district and the transit agency for specified capital improvements and maintenance activities. A management entity must also be designated to coordinate the implementation process.

I believe at least 15 TRID planning studies are either completed, underway or being considered around the Commonwealth, including seven in southeastern Pennsylvania. These projects were funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and DVRPC. However, to date, only the East Liberty TRID in Allegheny County has advanced to the implementation phase. A key obstacle has been the reluctance of school districts to forego property tax revenues that are essential to finance TRID improvements. Alternative funding approaches would mitigate this obstacle to TRID implementation.

### **Conclusion**

SB 1210 offers amendments to the TRID Act that will enhance opportunities to implement TODs with benefits to communities and the Commonwealth. Thank you for the opportunity to offer this statement for the record of this hearing. I will be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have.