

III. CIRCULATION

CRITIQUE

The coordination of County efforts with the development of the rapid transit system is proceeding as called for in the General Plan by virtue of County representation on WMATA. However, it should be noted that the system now adopted is not the system proposed in the General Plan. The system which has been adopted by the Transit Authority and the County government has also been adopted by the Planning Commission, but the land use pattern, predicated upon the original transit system, has not been revised accordingly. Also, due to difficulties in securing federal funds, the system will be constructed later than previously anticipated. These facts suggest that the aspect of development staging and the general development pattern should be re-evaluated, since major transportation facilities of this kind are obviously one of the principal determinants of urban form, especially the location of high intensity activity areas.

The goal of an efficient transportation system, stated in the General Plan, should be broadened to emphasize the function of transportation as a unifying and supportive feature of the urban structure. There is also a need for additional objectives and some have been enunciated in the process of developing area master plans. For example, the Germantown master plan spells out the need for accessibility not only within the corridor city itself but also between it and other parts of the County and metropolitan area. Other plans stress the need to make the transportation system harmonious with the land use pattern. The Kensington-Wheaton Plan (not yet adopted) calls for the coordination of highway facilities with rail transit, and for the beautification of major roads.

One aspect of circulation that is not discussed is pedestrian circulation; it is mentioned only in passing, where the General Plan calls for walkways in conservation and park areas and where there are no streets. The integrated pedestrian circulation system which is now an essential element of any urban design does not appear to have been considered.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Studies undertaken in the past year indicate that the General Plan pattern of development will generate congestion on major

segments of the proposed highway system if the nature of development continues to be auto-oriented. Initial tests of other urban configurations show that there are possibilities for reduction of traffic congestion through adjustments in corridor densities and the provision of additional highway capacity. However, the real answer to highway overcrowding lies in the reduction of peak hour auto travel demand.

The Bi-County Transportation Study, which is expected to be completed in final report form in the Spring of 1970, indicates that the satisfaction of highway demand for the year 1990 based on present travel trends will require capital expenditures for new and improved highways of approximately \$450 million. This figure holds relatively constant for the four different patterns of land development, including the General Plan, which were tested. The conclusion may be drawn that, on a long range basis, policies should be pursued to enhance the demand for rail and bus transit, including such policies as coordinated rail and bus transit service; residential densities sufficient to economically support transit; and location of future employment centers accessible by transit as well as by car. However, it is recognized that, on a short range basis, decisions on land development and new and improved highways must be strongly influenced by current public attitudes and habits. These decisions should be made with the ultimate goal of developing a pattern and density of travel demands which, over time, will economically support transit service.

In the I-70S corridor, it is doubtful whether sufficient transportation facilities can be provided to accommodate the ultimate planned capacity of development unless firm policies are established and measures taken to encourage the location and scale of development conducive to rail and bus transit service.

Administrative control must be developed and exercised to tie together rail transit, bus transit routes and fares, and parking facilities and fees and to relate such service and user charges to the highway system. Proposed legislation to empower WMATA to acquire private bus companies and to empower the State Roads Commission to construct parking lots are evidence of the need for such administrative control. Such measures, if implemented, would provide opportunities to develop stronger direct relationships between transportation and land development policy.

The routing of a rail transit line to Glenmont has implications for Georgia Avenue, regardless of whether the area is considered a "corridor". The mere presence of the Glenmont line will increase accessibility to land in the vicinity of Georgia Avenue, both in absolute and in relative terms. The Glenmont line, together with the Northern Freeway, can be expected to increase land values enough that normal market pressures to convert some single family residential uses to higher-density residential or to non-residential urban uses will develop. The degree to which these pressures develop will be a function of the relative supply and demand for accessible urban space at the time the Glenmont line and Northern Freeway are built.

Route 29 and the construction of I-95 in Prince George's County will increase the marketability of land in the Route 29 corridor in Montgomery County. Pressures for more intensive land development will result, and, considering the radial corridor pattern, such pressures should probably be accommodated through the provision of necessary public facilities and appropriate land development policies. The Fairland-Beltsville Master Plan was adopted in recognition of this logical development. The one element which is missing in the development of Route 29 as a corridor of activity in Montgomery County is rapid transit. Because of decisions which have already been made on the alignment and construction timing of the College Park transit line, it appears doubtful that the rail transit extension as called for in the Fairland-Beltsville Plan will be provided as a rail facility in the foreseeable future.

In the urban ring, transportation studies undertaken for the development of the Silver Spring and Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plans and for assessment of the General Plan indicate clearly that there will be greatly increased demands for capacity of movement through these areas into Washington. A combination of rail transit, bus transit, sophisticated traffic engineering technology, and new internal transportation modes will be needed if the livability of the urban ring is to be retained.

The basic underlying problem of achieving the transportation goal of the General Plan remains implementation. Public funds must be made available, facilities constructed and transportation service provided with particular attention to the timing of these facilities and service to other public improvements and market conditions.

IV. CONSERVATION

CRITIQUE

In addition to the rather limited aspect of conservation covered by the policy statements in the General Plan, a number of other aspects have not received adequate attention. Among these are the protection of streams and stream valley corridors as interrelated systems involving water supply, flood protection, and ecological features; the preservation of historic and scenic areas; and the use of clustered development and park dedication as one means of soil and water conservation. Especially important is the preservation of natural features during the development of urban and suburban areas, so that nature is brought close to the people where it may enhance the environment and be appreciated daily. Additional guidelines are needed for the accomplishment of these purposes.

Another aspect of conservation involves the general quality of the living environment, a subject which is treated further in the "environmental" section of this report but which can also be viewed as a matter of preserving natural features which contribute to health, diversity, and beauty. The General Plan contains some limited comments with respect to the preservation of the environment in the rural areas, but it is of equal importance that this sort of conservation be practiced in urban areas as well, integrating development with conservation, and man with nature.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The preservation of natural features and the effectuation of good conservation practices are essential to the provision of a desirable living environment for residents of Montgomery County.

The 1964 General Plan did not include a major conservation element. An assessment of the Plan shows that this was a serious omission. Conservation values are an essential element in the planning procedure and must be a part of the decision-making process along with economic and other criteria.

When maps of streams, floodplains, wetlands, plants, wildlife, and scenic and historic areas are combined, a pattern of regional conservation values becomes apparent. The stream valley corridors form the matrix of natural values in the County and thus the backbone of the conservation pattern.

Stream valleys containing surface water, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, wildlife and botanical features provide a natural setting for conservation and natural beauty for human enjoyment