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Neuman proposes Odenton tax district that could pay for MARC parking garage

Funding could pay for long-sought MARC Station parking garage

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County Executive **Laura Neuman** wants to create a special tax district in Odenton that would pay for utilities, parks and other long sought improvements – including a parking garage at the **MARC** station.

The Odenton Town Center Development District would create a fund fueled through tax increment revenue bonds.

County Finance Officer John Hammond described Resolution 42-14 as an enhancement of the development potential for the area.

"We would use the incremental tax revenues to allow us to build infrastructure to serve businesses, customers, residents, anybody in the Odenton tax district," Hammond said.

Under the proposal, the county would issue and sell an undetermined amount of bonds, backed by future property tax revenues from within the district. The bonds would require separate legislation setting the amount and term.

Money from the sale would be used for installation of utilities, construction of parks and playgrounds, roads, parking, lighting, rehabilitation of buildings for government use and other development related costs.

According to the legislation, funds within the district could also be allocated toward land acquisition, construction and development of parking facilities for the Odenton MARC train station.

The council is scheduled to take up the proposal in a work session next month.

The station is one of the busiest on the Penn Line, and as the number of commuters to Fort George G. Meade has grown over the last decade congestion on area roads has become an increasing problem.

The Odenton Town Center is an area bounded by Route 170 north of Route 175, Route 175 between Sappington Station Road and Route 170, Route 170 and Route 32 and north of Route 32 to Reece Road. It has been targeted for commercial and residential development for more than three decades.

Instead, commercial growth has targeted the Arundel Mills area to the north and Odenton and Waugh Chapel to the south in Gambrills.

West County Chamber President Claire Louder said the tax district could provide an incentive for developers interested in the town center.

"We have long advocated for a way for the developers of Odenton to come together in support of the infrastructure needed in the community. This bill appears to provide a way to do that," Louder said.

"There are a lot of needs in the Odenton Town Center. They have not been adequately addressed in the past and this is a responsible way for the county to go about it. At first blush, this looks like a step in the right direction."

This summer, work began on a \$30 million MARC parking garage across the Howard County line, designed to ease gridlock around Fort Meade. The 704-space commuter garage at the Savage MARC station is expected to reduce traffic by encouraging commuters to use rail.

The project is part of a mixed-use, transit oriented development project by Somerset Construction.

Anne Arundel County and the state have applied for a planning grant for a similar project at the Odenton MARC station.

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