



North Potomac

CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

North Potomac Citizens Association (NPCA) 2018 County Executive Candidates Questionnaire on Issues Affecting our Area

County Executive Candidates Responses	Response Given
Roger Berliner	Yes
David Blair	Yes
Marc Elrich	Yes
Robin Ficker (R)	Yes
Bill Frick	No response
Rose Krasnow	Yes
George Leventhal	Yes

Candidate were asked to provide their views on the following issues:

1. Cell towers in residential neighborhoods to support 5G.
2. A new bridge across the Potomac River north of the American Legion Bridge plus a roadway through Montgomery County to link the new bridge with Route 370 and the ICC. In the past, this proposed project has been identified as The Truckway, Techway, or the second bridge.
3. Toll lanes on I-270
4. A bus rapid transit line (The Corridor Cities Transitway or CCT) along a 15 mile route from the Shady Grove Metro Station to Clarksburg or any part therein.
5. How would you propose to alleviate traffic congestion in North Potomac, Rockville & Gaithersburg?
6. School overcrowding and the forecast for 2020.

Responses:

1. Cell towers in residential neighborhoods to support 5G.

- **Roger Berliner:** The Council has concluded that more thought must go into this issue. We have had testimony that claims that other jurisdictions have found ways to accommodate this technology and simultaneously meet the needs of concerned citizens. That is certainly my goal. I want the opportunity to look at those other models before we act.
- **David Blair:** 5G is an emerging technology that has the potential to increase internet speeds for residential communities that implement them, however, I have been seeing some concerns raised by our residents. As County Executive, I want to speak with technology experts, community members, and government officials about how implementing this technology will affect our residents. We need transparency and community involvement on issues like this that concern our citizens. We also need better communication, collaboration, and strategic planning. A common

theme I have been hearing as I talk to business owners, environmentalists, and community leaders is that they feel they are not being heard. I will provide a fresh perspective to the voters and an alternative to the status quo through innovative policy solutions that look at best practices from around the world. I am looking to convey a message to the voters that a good county government should work for everyone. Montgomery County residents are raising their voices about many important issues, and I will listen and provide leadership – throughout this campaign and after I'm elected.

- **Marc Elrich:** We do not need “small cell towers” in residential communities at this time (at the very least). I was very pleased to work with Councilmember Sidney Katz and members of the community to make sure that existing protections for residential communities remain and the recently passed Zoning Text Amendment 18-02 maintains current protections. During the County Council’s deliberation of the ZTA, I laid out 4 important next steps for dealing with cell towers. They are as follows:
 - a. Consider raising the fees for the applications for cell towers. These fees have not been raised since 2003 and should reflect the costs of processing the applications. We should not be subsidizing the telecommunications industry with fees that do not cover costs.
 - b. Non-compliance and enforcement. I have met with residents who have shared applications and photos that do not match. Cell towers are placed in the wrong place and nothing is done.
 - c. Fees for use of the public Right-of-Way (ROW). The ROW is owned by the public and private entities should be paying for the use.
 - d. The entire process needs to be examined. Too many residents feel that the issues are not seriously considered and their questions and concerns go unanswered. I was assured by executive and council staff that steps to address all four of these issues are underway; some of the proposed fixes may come in June and some may be later. I will continue to monitor this situation. I will also continue to work with members of the North Potomac community, including Donna Baron and Lisa Cline, as well as other residents around the county, to ensure that we respect the rights of residents in neighborhoods and maintain - and possibly implement - important protections regarding cell tower placement.
- **Robin Ficker:** Towers should not be placed in residential neighborhoods unless the neighborhoods consent. Keep away from homes. The problem with putting them on telephone poles is that poles near roadways should be breakaway poles for safety and the cell towers cannot be put on breakaway poles for safety.
- **Rose Krasnow:** The county council enacted ZTA 18-02 earlier this month and in doing so struck a balance between the desire to expand broadband access and many residential concerns about aesthetics and health risks. I agree with this action and believe the current county executive, county council and planning board all reached a reasonable conclusion. It’s important to remember that if the County had not adopted legislation regarding these new cell towers, the Federal Communications Commission could have simply required the County to allow them. The ZTA enabled the county to ensure that some protections had been put in place.
- **George Leventhal:** I will seek to protect neighborhoods from unwanted cell towers to the best of my ability, although there is a risk that local government's ability to limit such installation will be preempted by the Federal Communications Commission.

2. A new bridge across the Potomac River north of the American Legion Bridge plus a roadway through Montgomery County to link the new bridge with Route 370 and the ICC. In the past, this proposed project has been identified as The Truckway, Techway, or the second bridge.

- **Roger Berliner:** I do not support a second bridge crossing and led the fight last year against a revived proposal for such a bridge and highway corridor that was fueled by those in the Northern Virginia development community. We need to do everything that we can to protect our Agricultural Reserve and our established neighborhoods. This project could cut through part of the Ag Reserve and our neighborhoods. And even if there were a way to avoid our neighborhoods, it would create such demand for growth so close to the Ag Reserve that it could threaten its very existence. We also do not want to be promoting sprawl, which this second crossing would do by creating new traffic that does not exist today. I am a smart growth advocate who believes that one of the important ways we can go about protecting our established neighborhoods and our environment is pushing for development around urban centers, close to public transit, so that we give people viable alternative options for getting around.
- **David Blair:** Our economic growth depends on an efficient and reliable transportation system. Right now, lack of easy mobility stifles job creation and retention, and leaves too many residents stuck in traffic and long commutes. Our priority should be addressing the traffic strain on our North-South modes of transport. To do so, we must look at new technologies and promising alternatives, like reversible lanes, that will accelerate traffic and reduce congestion and commuting times – up and down county. For the future, we need to expand our mass transit systems and promote jobs and smart growth here in Montgomery County – to help ease traffic congestion for the half-million commuters in Montgomery County, and reduce the number of commuters going to Virginia or DC for work.
- **Marc Elrich:** As the council’s representative on the Transportation Planning Board (TPB), I have led the fight to oppose a second bridge crossing, which would be environmentally destructive and encourage sprawl. The TPB just completed a study that concluded that the Second Crossing did not provide any significant benefits and it was not included in a package of high priority transportation projects. I am glad the state and county are united in their opposition to it.
- **Robin Ficker:** Opposed.
- **Rose Krasnow:** This issue is a non-starter. The county has other more immediate transportation needs to which I will dedicate my energy.
- **George Leventhal:** I oppose a second bridge across the Potomac in Montgomery County. It would be harmful to our Agricultural Reserve and would funnel jobs away from Montgomery County and into northern Virginia.

3. Toll lanes on I-270

- **Roger Berliner:** I support creating two peak-direction and reversible high-occupancy toll lanes on I-270 that would also include bus service. Whether creating these two lanes could be done in the existing I-270 right-of-way or require some physical widening of the highway would need to be figured out in planning for the project. I do not support adding more all-vehicle travel lanes to I-270, because it will simply induce new traffic congestion.
- **David Blair:** I am very skeptical of the feasibility of Governor Hogan’s plan to add four tolled express lanes to I-270, I-495 in Maryland, and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Not only do toll roads exacerbate inequalities among the rich and poor, I do not see this project working for Montgomery

County because of the lack of land available surrounding I-270 and I-495 for expansion. Montgomery County residents would ultimately pay the price should this project move forward. Governor Hogan and MDOT will eventually have to work with Montgomery County to make this project happen, and as County Executive, I will stand up against this project and ensure that there is open communication between the public and our government, as is tradition in the Montgomery County planning process.

- **Marc Elrich:** I oppose toll lanes on I-270. Instead, I support the proposal from the County Council several years ago to add two reversible lanes, which is the most effective way to add capacity given that the traffic is only heavy in one direction during rush hour. The most efficient approach that could address I-270's bottlenecks would be to make one reversible lane for bus rapid transit (BRT) and one for other high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs). That would be less expensive and less destructive than 4 non-reversible lanes while addressing the highway's congestion bottlenecks.
- **Robin Ficker:** Prefer new reversible lanes but any improvement is an improvement. I plan to be in the office of MD. Transportation Secretary Rahn at 8 am the day after the election to discuss improving I-270 ASAP.
- **Rose Krasnow:** Current conditions on I-270 are unacceptable. Residents are spending far too much time stuck in traffic. I am not opposed to looking at toll lanes as part of a comprehensive gridlock relief package. If some commuters choose to pay the toll and, therefore, are not in the regular lanes, all commuters will benefit.
- **George Leventhal:** I support expanded capacity on I-270, including toll lanes, although I would like any plan for increased capacity to include a dedicated transitway.

4. A bus rapid transit line (The Corridor Cities Transitway or CCT) along a 15 mile route from the Shady Grove Metro Station to Clarksburg or any part therein.

- **Roger Berliner:** I support the Corridor Cities Transitway and will push to make it a reality so that those living in these areas have a real alternative transportation option. Building more lanes or more roads will not solve our traffic congestion issues. We need to provide fast, convenient, reliable and attractive transit services such as what is envisioned with the Corridor Cities Transitway.
- **David Blair:** A study published in February 2017 found that both the M83 and the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) together would be beneficial as a transportation solution. I support this project because it will provide transit to major centers of commerce, residential, and education, such as: Metropolitan Grove, Kentlands, The Universities at Shady Grove, Life Sciences Center (LSC), Crown Farm, and King Farm. The CCT will also foster job and economic growth upcounty. As County Executive, I will review the CCT proposal to see if we can reduce the costs. Additionally, the State of Maryland should recognize that an investment in Montgomery County is an investment in Maryland. In order to pay for this service, we need to work with the state and expand our tax base to increase the county's borrowing capacity.
- **Marc Elrich:** I support the CCT, which is a critical component of the BRT network. It's important for both the development of job opportunities associated with the Life Sciences Center and for commuters. The CCT would finally provide the transportation infrastructure that was promised when Clarksburg was developed. However, I think the current design and the southern portion of the route of the CCT is not right and that Governor Hogan's office was right when they said it was not a truly rapid transit project. I believe the CCT can and should be redesigned to significantly reduce costs without affecting service, and Sidney Katz and I have worked with residents to develop alternatives that make better sense. My hope is that a better and more cost-effective design will help us re-engage the state on this project.

- **Robin Ficker:** Improve I-270 first.
- **Rose Krasnow:** I fully support the CCT, since we need transit options for the whole I-270 corridor – in Montgomery County and beyond into Frederick County. This project has been on the books for many years, and the growth allowed in several master plans was predicated on its construction. I understand that bus rapid transit seems to carry a negative connotation, and many commuters claim they don't see themselves riding buses. That is a challenge we will need to overcome. Recently, I was briefed on the potential to build a monorail system as another piece in our gridlock relief package. I would be willing to study this option to see if it is affordable and better for the environment. In other words, I will aggressively pursue traffic relief options.
- **George Leventhal:** I support the Corridor Cities Transitway.

5. How would you propose to alleviate traffic congestion in North Potomac, Rockville & Gaithersburg?

- **Roger Berliner:** The Corridor Cities Transitway and the Bus Rapid Transit corridor along Route 355 are important transit components to alleviating traffic congestion. So is providing more housing options around Metro stations so people have more opportunities to live near major transit. But it is also important to make the most efficient use of the roads we do have. I would look to scale up the county's "smart traffic signal" pilot on Montrose Parkway, which I lead the way for on the County Council. These signals can detect real-time congestion levels on each leg of an intersection and make signal timing changes instantly to help relieve bottlenecks. This technology has been shown to cut off between 10% and 15% of drivers' time on the road. I would also look to expand our use of reversible lanes on roads where traffic is much heavier in the peak-hour direction than in the non-peak hour direction. The use of this extra, reversible lane makes sense if we are going to utilize the infrastructure we do have in the most efficient manner possible to move more people.
- **David Blair:** In the short-term, I support innovative technology solutions that will reduce travel times and emissions, like smart traffic lights, programs that encourage telecommuting, creating a local emergency quick action response unit to manage traffic accidents, and reversible lanes on 270. I firmly support bus rapid transit (BRT) but believe that dedicated lanes are needed to make it successful. I would make BRT free to incentivize public transportation use. I will support public transportation, safe bicycle use, and pedestrian accessibility programs because it will lead to a lower impact on our environment and infrastructure. Long-term solutions include following through on our transportation Master Plans and creating new transit options for Clarksburg residents who drive through areas North Potomac, Rockville & Gaithersburg on either I-270 or 355. These residents have been struggling with severe traffic due to the county's inability to follow through. For the future, we need to promote jobs and smart growth here in Montgomery County – to help ease traffic congestion by reducing the number of out-of-county commuters.
- **Marc Elrich:** I think the BRT network, which I have led the effort to implement for years, is a big part of the solution. We must give residents attractive transit options if we want to take cars off the road. That means we need transit that is fast, frequent, and reliable. As BRT routes are implemented, we should reconfigure Ride On to better serve the neighborhoods as a direct feeder to BRT and MARC, connecting neighborhoods to higher-capacity direct BRT service instead of providing wandering bus trips in traffic over longer distances. As noted above, I think we need to add two reversible lanes to I-270, one for BRT and one for other high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs). I also think we need to add two reversible lanes to 355 from Clarksburg to Montgomery Village Avenue. This would provide relief to the east side of I-270 and, coupled with the planned BRT on 355, it should provide a significant increase in transportation capacity.

- **Robin Ficker:** Build Montrose Easy Parkway. Widen Goshen road. Build M-83. Complete the county's 144 road projects. New reversible I-270 lanes. Keep Metro funded.
- **Rose Krasnow:** There are small things to pursue, such as intersection improvements and changing the timing of traffic lights, and larger, long term fixes, such as the completion of the Watkins Mill-I-270 interchange, additional I-270 improvements and better transit options. We could also try to get more businesses to locate in Germantown and Clarksburg, so that people could either live closer to where they work or be able to reverse commute.
- **George Leventhal:** By adding capacity on I-270, building the Corridor Cities Transitway, and Bus Rapid Transit on 355.

6. School overcrowding and the forecast for 2020.

- **Roger Berliner:** For far too many communities in our county, the issue of school overcrowding is an everyday reality. And notwithstanding the Council's actions to increase revenues to reduce class sizes, more needs to be done. Neither of these conditions are acceptable. We must find the necessary funding to reduce the backlog of capital projects that our school system is facing. As County Executive, I will partner even more closely with our State delegation to ensure that the State of Maryland pays its fair share of school construction funding. Currently, our county's school system accounts for 18 percent of the state's school population, yet we only receive 12 percent of state capital funding. Under a Berliner administration, I will be in Annapolis regularly working to change this ratio.
- **David Blair:** Education serves as the foundation for sustainable economic growth. Our schools are what attract businesses to Montgomery County and why others choose to stay. That's why I'll put in place strong economic policies to grow our tax base so that we have more revenue to build schools, to expand programs and services that help close the achievement gap, and to reward our educators for their dedication and service. Public education is one of the best investments we can make for our community's future and I believe budgets are about priorities. In 2000, when we reduced class sizes in Title I schools for students in kindergarten through second grade, it was because we made it a priority. I will make it a priority to address school overcrowding. As County Executive, I'll work to close the achievement gap by increasing funding for students in low-income areas. I support pre-K in all our Title One schools, putting programs in place for kids ages 0-4 to better prepare them for kindergarten, expanding afterschool programs, creating more summer learning programs, and providing more apprenticeship and internship programs. I believe it's a moral imperative that every high school student graduates career- or college-ready so that all Montgomery County high school graduates are on sustainable pathways to economic success. I'll ensure we receive our fair share of state education dollars and that we're not being shortchanged. But how will we pay for this if increased State funding never materializes? Our economy is stagnant. Our county leaders have created an unfriendly business environment. We've only added six net new business establishments over the last five years. Fairfax County had more than 3,000. We've added fewer than 4,000 private sector jobs over the past 15 years while our population has increased by 150,000 – that's one job for every 38 people. It is no wonder that 200,000 of our residents' commute to places like DC and Virginia for work. I am concerned that many of our young residents leave for college and then don't come back – they are finding employment and more affordable living elsewhere. There's no greater urgency facing our county now than our economy. I'm the only candidate to have put forth a comprehensive Jobs and Economic Plan to address this challenge. The plan incorporates discussions with hundreds of employers, government officials, community groups and residents; best practices from around the country; as well as my own business experiences with one goal in mind: to identify the best ideas to move Montgomery County forward.

- **Marc Elrich:** I have been the one councilmember who has consistently stood with residents against master plans that exacerbate school overcrowding. I have often voted against plans that don't provide the school and transportation infrastructure to support new development because we can and should make sure that our plans actually balance. As County Executive, I will lead on this issue and ask my staff to be clear on the obstacles of planning without infrastructure. I have worked with North Potomac residents to try to address the overcrowding and traffic issues posed by the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan. I also was the strongest voice urging that money allocated to Montrose Parkway East be repurposed to fund the Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS') request for school construction. And I've advocated against the use of placeholders, which are make-believe schools for real students, because they let new development proceed without a plan for schools in place and, as a result, exacerbate overcrowding as well. Placeholders also wind up pushing back school projects for communities that have sometimes waited decades to get school improvements and relief from overcrowding. The placeholder we put in Bethesda will jump to the front of the queue and use money that had been intended for projects that had waited in the queue much longer. Even if MCPS had its full funding request fulfilled, that money still would have produced fewer new seats than the number of students we're currently likely to add over the next six years. So the forecast for 2020 isn't great - unless we change the way we plan and grow. I am running for County Executive so I can lead the way in making the changes we need to make to address this issue.
- **Robin Ficker:** Montgomery County has not been getting a fair share of state school construction funds because our state legislators have not been doing their jobs. Over the past 10 years we have gotten only 12% of the state school construction money while we have 18% of the state's students and now 40% of the state's new students. I work well with Governor Hogan having been friends with him and his Dad. I'll get a fair share from him after giving our state legislative delegation a pep talk.
- **Rose Krasnow:** I strongly believe that MCPS is one of our County's greatest assets and a key reason why so many families want to live here and companies decide to locate here. Having the best teachers in every classroom will continue to be a goal of my administration. I will also work with the MCPS Board of Education on a facilities solution that meets the needs of our students and families. The Board shifted its approach to school capacity projects and is currently working on a new facility policy. I look forward to seeing the outcome. Boundary studies understandably create strong emotion, but they are likely to be part of the proposed solution – especially when the new high school at Crown Farm becomes a reality. We need a new approach to modernizing existing schools and building needed new capacity needed. Part of that approach should be to seek a significant increase in state funds for school construction, since we are not getting our fair share.
- **George Leventhal:** School construction will be the top priority in the capital budgets I will submit to the County Council. I will work collaboratively with our state legislative delegation and whomever is elected Governor to get a fairer share of state dollars for school construction as well.