



# North Potomac

CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

## North Potomac Citizens Association (NPCA) 2018 District 1 Candidates Questionnaire on Issues Affecting our Area

District 1 Candidates	Response given
Richard Banach (R)	No response
Bill Cook	No response
Pete Fosselman	Yes
Andrew Freidson	Yes
Ana Sol Gutierrez	No response
Jim McGee	Yes
Reggie Oldak	Yes
Dalbin Osorio	Yes
Meredith Wellington	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.

- **Pete Fosselman:** Zoning laws would first have to be changed to allow the new cell towers to support 5G in Montgomery County. The current plan calls for about 61 cell towers to be installed in the North Potomac area and can be placed as near as 20 feet from homes. The backlash from the community based on the potential health risks and the support from the business community need to both be taken seriously. The incoming County Council will need to reach a consensus to protect neighborhoods from not only the aesthetics of big cell towers but also the health risks associated with the towers and the business community which supports the installation of the towers to help businesses grow. As Mayor of Kensington I was able to obtain quasi-zoning authority from the General Assembly (State Article 28) which had not been granted for decades. If elected I will sit down with supporters and opponents and use my land use and zoning knowledge to reach an agreeable solution for both sides.

- **Andrew Friedson:** Cellular coverage is now part of our infrastructure that we need to function as families, business and a community but I want to make sure that we aren't improving coverage at the expense of safety and quality of life in our residential neighborhoods.
- **Jim McGee:** If the cell phone towers are demonstrated to be harmful to health, then they should be kept away from people.
- **Reggie Oldak:** I do not support deployment of small cell antennas in residential areas at this time. I also do not support the bills that were introduced in the Maryland General Assembly this year (SB1188 and HB1767) that would have prevented public input and limited local government authority.
- **Dalbin Osorio:** While I support improving the cellular coverage in our communities, I would question whether the cell towers would be out of scale in residential areas where we're trying to limit the size of the residential buildings we develop. I would, also, want to explore other areas to erect these towers, so as not to inconvenience current residents.
- **Meredith Wellington:** Although I support advancing our telecommunications infrastructure for public safety and business development purposes, in March I testified in opposition to a recent ZTA that, among other things, relaxed use standards for cell towers in residential neighborhoods. That ZTA was modified, and improved, but it still presents issues with respect to residential neighborhoods and how it will be administered. All residents of the County should be protected from the health, safety and aesthetic impacts of cell towers and antennas through zoning and building permit processes that are transparent and responsive to their welfare. Neither pre-emption concerns nor the telecommunications lobby should drive the Council and Executive to adopt wholesale changes to the zoning code that fail to protect nearby residential communities. Instead, the Council and Executive should conduct a thorough review of the regulatory programs of other local jurisdictions to identify "best practices" for regulation of new and existing telecommunications facilities, and then incorporate those best practices into its own regulatory scheme for these facilities. Only then will the County be ready to balance the need for increased mobile broadband capacity--especially in its urban areas--with the need of its residents for safe roadways; unobstructed private sidewalks, driveways and other rights of way; protected natural environments; and quiet enjoyment of their residential communities.

## **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.**

- **Pete Fosselman:** Before a second bridge is considered, I would like to see the existing Cabin John/American Legion bridge expanded to include more vehicular lanes. This expansion should also include light rail. A good portion of commuters are coming from Bethesda to Tysons or Tysons to Bethesda. A simple light rail (or BRT) connection from the Maryland Red Line to the Virginia Silver Line across the bridge would take many cars off the roads. My concern with a 2nd bridge is the Agricultural Reserve. It's my understanding there is a new plan for a second crossing that does not go through the Agricultural Reserve. I would consider supporting it.
- **Andrew Friedson:** All indications are that Virginia isn't interested in paying for this project and it lacks the political support it requires, so I don't believe a Second Bridge Crossing is financially feasible, leaving aside the political considerations. Alternatively, I strongly support and will fight for an expansion of the American Legion. This is the more fiscally responsible,

environmentally sustainable approach to connecting Montgomery County to Northern Virginia, and it's an approach we know is both doable and effective, as evidenced by the success of a similar project expanding the Woodrow Wilson Bridge on the other side of the Beltway.

- **Jim McGee:** I do not support a "second bridge". I would be open to exploring linking the MARC and VRE trains by way of a railroad bridge.
- **Reggie Oldak:** I do not support a Second Bridge Crossing due to its projected cost and environmental impact.
- **Dalbin Osorio:** I support the construction of a new bridge plus a roadway through Montgomery County because I believe this will ease congestion in a lot of areas of Montgomery County. This new bridge will, also, provide employment opportunities for our local unions. We just have to make sure the transition and construction process is handled smoothly for our residents.
- **Meredith Wellington:** I do not support a second bridge across the Potomac and outer beltway either through the Reserve or adjacent rural zones. This was my position when I served on the Montgomery County Planning Board (1999-2007), and it is still my position.

### 3. Toll lanes on I-270

- **Pete Fosselman:** Two significant parts of I-270 have never been widened since its original construction in 1960, while the population adjacent to these areas near the Beltway and the northern area into Frederick have increased in population by 300%. The new lanes proposed in the widening would provide much needed capacity and only the new lanes would be tolled. Toll lanes have been wildly successful throughout the Country, especially in Northern Virginia. Options will always exist to avoid toll lanes if that is the driver's choice.
- **Andrew Friedson:** I support and recognize the dire need for capacity improvements on I-270 to relieve congestion, including reversible lanes. I approach all options with an open mind, including toll lanes but would want to ensure that we aren't pricing out the working families who need relief the most.
- **Jim McGee:** I do not support toll lanes or PP3's. Many people live far out because they cannot afford to live closer in. They are already sufficiently penalized.
- **Reggie Oldak:** I am very concerned about high-cost toll lanes, such as those on I-66. While toll lanes can reduce traffic in other lanes, our public roads should not be restricted to the wealthy. When it comes to new road construction, I believe that we need targeted improvements, and we need to tie any new highway construction to transit options wherever feasible. I oppose extensive highway construction that would cause unacceptable environmental and property impacts and promote sprawl development.
- **Dalbin Osorio:** I would much rather see the County utilize different options, like Bus Rapid Transit or Metro expansion where Bethesda is connected to Tyson's through perhaps the Purple Line. I believe the toll lanes on I-270's cons outweigh the pros, and I believe it is my job as a candidate to advocate for the people that elect me.
- **Meredith Wellington:** I support building reversible lanes on I-270, with consideration to make them toll lanes. Studies show that toll lanes free up regular lanes. HOV-2, buses and van pools could use the toll lanes for free. Any highway widening must include transit as part of the widening project.

#### **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.**

- **Pete Fosselman:** The long-promised CCT, originally envisioned as a light rail product has evolved into Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Projected to handle a ridership of 47,000 by 2035, the design for Phase 1 to Metropolitan Grove Road is complete, but there is no funding for its' construction. Additionally, I believe the current plan has not done enough to promote smart growth. However, I believe the Upcounty has been neglected insofar as transportation is concerned and this is just one example. Much of the ROW for this infrastructure project has been acquired and aspects of the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan and the Germantown Master Plan are dependent upon its construction. This is economic development that is needed to support the County's budget and its growing population. Transportation is the key to the kingdom. Continued delay interrupts progress of the much herald Great Seneca Science Corridor, a potential boon to the County's economy in a time where the County is strapped for funds to support burgeoning needs. The community cannot, and should not, continue to be taxed. Thus, economic development, fueled by transportation infrastructure, is vital. We also need to ensure we provide funding to improve road, bike, and pedestrian safety along Quince Orchard road and Travilah Road.
- **Andrew Friedson:** I strongly support the CCT as a bus rapid transit line, which I believe should connect to the future 355 BRT line, which will be part of a modern, multi-modal transportation network that more effectively and efficiently connects residents and workers from where they are to where they are going.
- **Reggie Oldak:** I support the CCT.
- **Dalbin Osorio:** I support Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and believe that it is a viable transportation alternative that would help Montgomery County residents and our environment. I would actually like to see BRT utilized to all parts of Montgomery County, as a way to ensure that our residents have multiple transit options.
- **Jim McGee:** While I would prefer rail, BRT is an acceptable compromise.
- **Meredith Wellington:** I support a fast and efficient CCT as part of a larger BRT system, and I believe that public transit should be funded as part of any proposal to decrease congestion on I-270 and on the Beltway. I believe the County Department of Transportation should revisit the selected route, as it is not necessarily "rapid," and resolve last mile transit that will facilitate access to a dedicated CCT BRT.

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

- **Pete Fosselman:** In addition to building the ICC and widening the existing bridge, we need to increase commuter benefits such as transit vouchers and encourage employers to provide incentives to workers who utilize public transportation. Making Metro more reliable through dedicated funding and funding BRT with dedicated lanes will encourage the use of public transportation. Additionally, development in Clarksburg, which is the fastest growing area in the County has been sorely impacted by the lack of an effective road system (including no M83) in the northern portion of the County. One-third of our residents live in the northern half of the County, and most of them contribute to the traffic congestion in North Potomac, Rockville, & Gaithersburg. M83 should be constructed.
- **Andrew Friedson:** I am running for County Council to Ease the Squeeze on our congested roads. We need and I am committed to smart and balanced land-use policies, but in order for them to work as needed, we need a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation network that

incorporates transit like Metro and a fully-integrated bus rapid transit network that connects to local bus lines, so we can connect workers to their jobs and communities to each other. We also need to expand the American Legion Bridge, support capacity improvements to I-270, and employ new technologies like smart signals that can improve traffic flow by 15 percent. It's the only way to build a county that attracts businesses and residents well into the future, and does so in a way that doesn't choke our potential economic growth with traffic congestion. Relieving congestion isn't only about infrastructure; it's all about creating jobs in more parts of the county so more residents work closer to where they live. If we can cut down on the 40 percent of our current workforce that leaves the county each day for work, and increase our economic development beyond Bethesda, we will reduce traffic congestion and carbon emissions, improve our business climate by creating a better day-time economy, and make Montgomery County a more attractive place to live and work, so we can further invest in the infrastructure we need to build towards our future.

- **Jim McGee:** We need to change the way we design our communities and work to adapt existing communities to current needs. Old design parameters kept shopping, living and work separate. New needs require us to co-locate housing shopping and work to reduce trip demand and trip distance. Co-locating does not have to mean on the same property, but closer to each other than what was normal in the past. Old design parameters limited automobile access to residential neighborhoods by dead ends areas. A 300 yard distance to a school through private property might require a one mile trip by car. A house next to a shopping center might not be able to access the shopping center by car without being required to enter an already congested main artery because there is no rear access to the shopping center. New needs require us to connect neighborhoods, and neighborhoods with other amenities. We also need to develop shorter more frequent bus routes that match how people actually travel.
- **Reggie Oldak:** To combat road congestion, we need to create a transportation system that gives commuters a reliable system of alternatives to driving. WMATA is the backbone of a strong transportation system in this region. I strongly support a dedicated funding source for WMATA, and I am pleased that the General Assembly passed legislation this session that would dedicate additional funding to WMATA from Maryland's Transportation Trust Fund. But a dedicated funding source isn't sufficient. It's also critical that the Council continue to provide oversight of WMATA's governance and service to ensure that any additional dollars given to WMATA are spent wisely. While ridership has mostly recovered in the peak hours, it continues to remain low in the off-peak hours. Train frequencies remain insufficient to provide a reliable service. As Councilmember, I will work with WMATA and use the Council's oversight role to ensure that WMATA's Board of Directors provides real supervision at all levels of the organization in order to pursue sustainable funding strategies and provide a system that people want to use. I support completion of the Purple Line and a significant expansion of the MARC train schedule. We also need an enhanced bus service that works for more people by providing frequent and reliable service. I strongly support BRT, including the 355 BRT that is currently in development. For our roads, we need to implement technology-based strategies that will both reduce congestion and facilitate reliable transit options. I support reversible lanes on 270 and smart traffic signals with real-time response to actual traffic that can result in 26% lower travel time and a 21% reduction in emissions.
- **Dalbin Osorio:** I would like to utilize optimized traffic lights, like Northern Virginia has used, extend residential parking zones, implement Bus Rapid Transit on a larger scale, refine park and ride options, expand the Metro to areas not currently serviced by more than one option, and expand cycling infrastructure to accommodate a growing cycling community.
- **Meredith Wellington:** If elected, I will approach traffic congestion relief with Cost-Effective, Multi-Modal Transportation Solutions. I support complete streets with sidewalks, bike lanes, accessible pedestrian signals—streets that respond to the community context and create a

non-auto option for local trips. Studies show that one of the most impactful ways to reduce traffic is to promote telecommuting. As a councilmember, I will support creation of more telecommuting centers and incentives for companies that increase telecommuting. In general, our roads must be streamlined through state of the art signalization, intersection improvements and widening where it will enhance the success and viability of transit. I support the State's initiative to make relatively small improvements on I-270, most at on and off ramps, to ease certain bottlenecks. I support the County's proposal to widen I-270 by two lanes that are reversible during rush hour, and will watch how the State approaches options now that the Governor is planning a public private partnership to reduce congestion. It takes an "all of the above" approach to seriously cut congestion in a way that will support economic development and support job growth in our region. I would expand Ride On's ExtRa Express routes now, while we wait for BRT to be designed and launched. If funding were available, I would support free Ride On to increase ridership. I support the County's BRT initiative on routes where the buses can travel in dedicated lanes, with the caveat that the County must purchase electric buses to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Buses are the most flexible, robust public transit option – the roads become the "track," and can reach pockets of naturally occurring affordable housing and make jobs more accessible to residents. We need to put a concerted effort into improving bus schedules and image, and working with the private sector to provide "last mile" transportation. With respect to M-83, the County has already allowed a lot of residential development in the M-83 area with the promise that those residents would have a road for vehicular and transit access. I understand there are environmental concerns, various routes proposed for M-83, and intense feelings on either side of the issue. M-83 is not in District 1, but if elected, I will study the proposals carefully through the lens of environmental protection and supporting public transit.

## 6. School overcrowding and the forecast for 2020.

- **Pete Fosselman:** I have been knocking on doors since last August. And a significant concern voters have shared is their frustration with overcrowded and underfunded schools. If I'm elected to the District 1 County Council Seat, I will introduce my school funding program called LERN (Local Education Resource Needs). Here's how it works: At the community master plan stage, the number of new students generated from future development is estimated. The cost of the improvements (construction of new schools, additions, general costs) needed to mitigate student enrollment is determined. Take the improvement costs (numerator) and the number of new students (denominator) to arrive at a per student fee. A builder would then pay the County this fee BEFORE the occupancy permit is granted. For example, if a new residential complex in Bethesda is expected to generate 100 new students, a check is written for 100 times the per student fee. This is a win-win formula because the County/MCPS would have the funds UPFRONT to make needed improvements (not years later when the overcrowding exists), the cost is spread across the entire master plan area, and builders may do their fiscal analysis with more accuracy. This formula will work and the County taxpayers will bare zero new cost to implement it.
- **Andrew Friedson:** I am also running to Ease the Squeeze on our overcrowded schools. The County Council doesn't set school boundaries (the School Board does), so there is only one way to relieve school overcrowding – funding school construction. Our school's are our most indispensable social and economic resource – and as a County Councilmember, I will fund them accordingly as my first, second and third priority in the Capital Budget. As a former top advisor at the Board of Public Works which where I helped oversee the State of Maryland's public school construction program, I am uniquely positioned to leverage my relationships at the state level to fight for our fair share of school construction funds from the State and to

scrutinize the way taxpayer dollars are invested to ensure we maximize our investments in our public schools. As the son of a former Montgomery County public school teacher and PTA president, I support strong standards to ensure that our schools aren't overrun and overcrowded, including dedicating impact taxes and other fees to school construction to ensure that the revenue generated is actually going towards solving our significant needs.

- **Jim McGee:** Classroom construction needs to keep pace with development or development needs to be paused.
- **Reggie Oldak:** Many of our schools are overcrowded, and classes are too large. This is a problem in secondary schools as well as elementary schools, as teachers need the time to give proper feedback to high school students. Our most important priority in the capital budget is school facilities. The Council must work closely with the Board of Education and Superintendent Jack Smith to ensure that communities have the necessary school capacity as development goes forward, with decisions made before construction. We need to build new schools, reopen closed schools, and consider innovative approaches such as using existing, vacant building stock.
- **Dalbin Osorio:** I would propose halting new residential development (the number one reason schools become overcrowded) until we are able to adequately balance the County budget and are able to use the land space we have to create new schools that can then accommodate the number of school aged children coming to the County. An influx of new schools will allow for us to retain quality educators and recruit new teachers so our students have a fair shot at being successful in an ever-changing world.
- **Meredith Wellington:** Excellent schools are a vital part of our economy, affecting property values and the county's ability to attract new businesses. We need to maintain the quality and reputation of our schools, and this council is failing to do that. In the last decade or so, the council has relaxed the measurements for school overcrowding, and now we are seeing the results. As a member of the Planning Board from 1999 to 2007, I voted against the relaxing of those measurements, but the Council thought differently. If you elect me, one of my top priorities in straightening out our planning process will be to realistically address school needs, and then to align the budget accordingly. Please read my policy paper (<https://www.meredithwellington.com/overcrowded-schools>) on overcrowded schools. In summary, we can do better:
  - a. MCPS must do a better job predicting future enrollment. MCPS has consistently underestimated enrollment with the consequence that new schools/additions fill up almost as soon as they are completed.
  - b. Land for new schools – elementary, middle, high – should be specifically identified in master and sector plans.
  - c. Any ideas MCPS has for redrawing boundaries should be part of any master or sector plan and discussed publicly in that context.
  - d. Montgomery County should reclaim school properties that have been leased to other parties.
  - e. There should be no placeholders—phantom projects—that further delay new school construction while allowing development that generates new students to proceed.
  - f. For budgeting purposes, let's continue to include funding to identify and develop ways to increase school capacity, but let's not pretend that imaginary classrooms (placeholders) are real, allowing construction to move forward regardless.