



# North Potomac

CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

## North Potomac Citizens Association (NPCA) 2018 District 2 Candidates Questionnaire on Issues Affecting our Area

District 2 Candidates	Response Given
Ed Amatetti	Yes
Tom Ferleman (R)	No response
Kyle Sefcik (R)	No response
Tiquia Bennett	No response
Craig Rice	No response

### 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.

- **Ed Amatetti:** The planned deployment of 5G and small towers is an example of how Montgomery County officials make significant policy decisions without input from impacted communities, or even providing the information residents deserve and need. The consensus is that 5G is coming as driverless cars and other wireless demands grow exponentially. However, reliable information on how much capacity, how many cell towers are needed and where, possible health effects, and other issues are not forthcoming. Some claims, such as it is need to extend digital opportunity to all Americans, are disingenuous. Instead of large towers, 5G requires millions of smaller towers placed in neighborhoods approximately 500' apart. They are lower to the ground and close to residences. We want to participate in the future of wireless infrastructure, but residents need a say in how it happens and information that is forthcoming. Unfortunately, Montgomery County has not taken the high road. North Potomac, in particular, has become ground zero with several neighborhoods targeted as early adaptors for initial roll out, without their input or consent. More than 90% of planned towers in these neighborhoods will be near residences with more than dozen within twenty feet of homes,

again without input or compensation for those affected. There are questions that need to be answered. Unfortunately, I attended several community forums sponsored by the county, and advertised to be informative and obtain community input, but seemed more designed to sell decisions already finalized. Inexplicably, answers were not forthcoming to simple questions, such as how and why certain neighborhoods were selected as earliest adaptors, and how the number and locations of towers were chosen. Participants weren't even given straight answers as to what the installed towers would look like, or how the telecom companies were selected and what the financial arrangements between the county and the telecom companies were. My campaign slogan is "Citizens' In the Driver's Seat." I don't want to slow the wheels of progress, but I will call for meaningful input, including citizen's commissions at the county level and within communities that will be initially impacted.

## **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.**

- **Ed Amatetti:** I am strongly against building of a major roadway through North Potomac or mid-Montgomery County, or using Route 28, to connect Northern Virginia to the Intercounty Connector (ICC). It is not needed and would be considerably disruptive and ruinous to established communities in Poolesville, Darnestown, and North Potomac. However, I believe a bridge north will ultimately have to be built to alleviate the bottleneck on the American Legion that will only grow with time, and provide an alternative route in the event of crisis. Traffic across the new bridge can connect to I-270 by running a four-lane roadway (two lanes each way) through northern Montgomery County and/or lower Frederick County to deflect truck and other traffic travelling to points north. Any part of the roadway that might go through the Agricultural Reserve would have little environmental impact as long as development alongside the roadway is not allowed. Such a roadway would also support future commercial and residential development in towns such as Clarksburg, Urbana, and Frederick. It is important that these places become employment centers in order to create jobs and get more commuters travelling in the opposite direction to alleviate traffic each morning and evening.

## **3. Toll lanes on I-270**

- **Ed Amatetti:** I have long been in favor of widening I-1270 through Frederick and the American Legion Bridge, and using reversible lanes. However, I am NOT generally a proponent of toll lanes, although I understand the attraction of private-public partnerships and the potential financial benefits of user fees. The reason is that in most cases where I've observed them implemented, I find the degree of use by commuters and non-commuters does not justify the extra lanes, interchanges, land space they require. I think this includes the Northern Virginia beltway toll lanes, which I remain unconvinced has had the economic benefits claimed by proponents. Because of this, as a member of Council, I would ask the Governor and State of Maryland for an independently audited, thorough economic cost-benefit analysis of toll lanes. I have years of experience conducting such analyses and would use this in my making a policy decision.

#### **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.**

- **Ed Amatetti:** I appreciate transit, having grown up in the New York metropolitan area, but I also know that transit investments are expensive and have to be implemented properly in order to realize a good return on investment. I also deeply appreciate that improved transportation connections from Upper County to points south and east is critically needed. Therefore, I have reservations about the CCT as is currently devised. I recognize considerable analysis has been conducted on the CCT, and I have spoken to people closely involved with the project. The positives are that the proposed CCT is designed to interfere with current road traffic as little as possible (unlike the 355 BRT), and connects key employment centers. It would seem to be the best single route that could have been chosen. However, additional economic analysis is needed. Specifically I will recommend the following:
  - a. First, the possibility of incorporating multiple CCT routes (possibly beginning at the same Comsat starting point) needs to be analyzed, instead of only the currently proposed single, winding route that may not reach all of the proposed destinations quickly enough to attract commuters;
  - b. More broadly, CCT needs to be analyzed 1) as part of a long-term regional transportation plan; and 2) taking into consideration emerging transportation technologies that will upend the status quo in transportation in the near future. Specifically, it needs to be further analyzed: Under the assumption of building M-83; • Including the possibility monorail options, extensions into Frederick County, and connections to MARC in the analysis; • Under assumptions related the emerging transportation innovations: 1) future use of driverless cars and busses; 2) emerging micro-transit technologies; and 3) use of emerging “private enterprise carpooling.”
  - c. Without these analyses, we again run the risk of misplaced spending.

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

- **Ed Amatetti:** Traffic is a problem throughout Montgomery County, in part because of its continued growth, but also because transportation policy is based too much on political agendas instead of objective analysis. This is a great disservice to residents of the county. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is one example. Consultants advising the citizen’s commission tasked with developing a transportation strategy didn’t even include BRT among its top 8 recommendations; the Civics Federation found BRT to be the most costly and least effective among the strategies considered for alleviating traffic; and the Institute For Transportation and Policy Development (ITPD) 2012 report concluded that “there is not sufficient ridership for a BRT-level of service for any of the eleven proposed routes.” But, BRT rose to the top of the list, against considerable dissent, due to political considerations and maneuverings. Transit has an important role, but projects must pass cost-benefit analysis. My transportation priorities are as follows:
  - a. Implement real time traffic signalization control and adaptive signal technology on major roads, which according to MD DOT would reduce travel times upwards of 15%. This would greatly improve traffic flow on Quince Orchard Road, Route 28, among other roadways throughout the county;
  - b. Perform a study to optimize bus routes and expand low-cost Ride-On service to promote use. Currently, there are few riders on our buses. At the same time we need

- to promote private micro-transit services to promote innovation and better meet the service demands of residents;
- c. Place greater priority on road construction. This would include: 1) widening of I-270; 2) M-83 Clarksburg to the Shady Grove metro and the ICC in order to relieve I-270 and provide Damascus/Clarksburg residents passage to points south and east; and 3) the Montrose Parkway East extension, among others that should be studied.
  - d. Further study the economics of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) – as discussed in Question 4 above.
  - e. Prepare for autonomous vehicles and include its potential impact on the economics of competing transportation solutions, so we don't move forward on projects that will soon be obsolete.
  - f. Begin development of a long-term/regional transportation plan for the Montgomery-PG-Frederick-NOVA region, which is long overdue. Our current transportation policies are piecemeal, too short-term, and treat Montgomery County as unconnected to neighboring jurisdictions. This could include serious study of the potential of a significant light rail network and MARC train extensions throughout suburban Maryland, with the objective to build it inexpensively in order to maximize its reach and connections.
  - g. Place a hold on BRT routes with the exception of Route 29.

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

- **Ed Amatetti:** School overcrowding has been a significant problem for many years. There are currently more than 400 portable classrooms in use, and an \$800 million backlog in school maintenance and construction projects. As a member of Council, I will pursue the following strategies to alleviate this:
  - a. Reduce per square foot and per pupil construction costs by 30% or more, primarily by reducing costs related to storm water abatement and related actions (which alone increase costs by 15% or more according to the Office of Legislative Oversight), and revisions in land and building size criteria, and design-build criteria which add to costs, but do not contribute to better academic outcomes. We currently build schools at nearly twice the cost per square foot (even more on a per pupil basis) as the Houston, TX area. The county's leading builder of schools wants to build school for less. All we need is the political will and integrity.
  - b. Assess the possibility of utilizing underused commercial space for lower cost options for meeting the needs of MCPS;
  - c. Promoting educational alternatives, such as public charter schools, which are often able to build or lease buildings and property for less than traditional schools.