



North Potomac

CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

North Potomac Citizens Association (NPCA) 2018 District 3 Candidates Questionnaire on Issues Affecting our Area

District 3 Candidates	Response Given
Sidney Katz	Yes
Ben Shnider	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.

- **Sidney Katz:** I am opposed to having 5G cell towers in residential neighborhoods.
- **Ben Shnider:** We must do everything in our power to maintain local control over where such facilities are placed. I am not satisfied with our current County leadership's lack of action on this front. At a minimum, the County must retain the ultimate authority to authorize or deny the placement of any specific 5G facility in any location, especially residential areas. Also, the County zoning ordinance must provide that any 5G facilities, especially those proposed for residential areas, are fully evaluated for their potential impact on public health and whether they are needed at an individual location. The burden of proof must rest upon the applicant for such facilities, not residents. As a County Councilmember, I will proactively collaborate with community associations, including NPCA, along with individual residents, when advocating for any specific changes in local law required and to fight any challenge to local authority by the State and/or Federal Government.

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.

- **Sidney Katz:** Regarding a second crossing, I do not support it going through the Ag Reserve, and I do not believe we should be thinking this is a way to solve our transportation problems when it is in great doubt if this would ever happen.
- **Ben Shnider:** I oppose the proposed new bridge and related roadway between Virginia and Montgomery County.

3. Toll lanes on I-270

- **Sidney Katz:** If we do build additional capacity on I-270, I support reversible lanes.
- **Ben Shnider:** The keys to improving traffic congestion throughout Montgomery County, including along I-270, are alternatives to driving along the Corridor and related mixed-use redevelopment of underused land (i.e. failing shopping malls). As a County Councilmember, I will advocate for a focus on bidirectional, week-long MARC commuter rail service on MARC's Brunswick Line, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for Routes 355 and 586 and increased express RideOn offerings — modeled after the new RideOn Extra Route 101. If I-270 itself is expanded, that expansion should be limited to two lanes that reverse with the flow of traffic and give priority to buses and carpools.

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.

- **Sidney Katz:** I support the CCT, but the alignment must be changed. I've been meeting with stakeholders to develop a better alignment.
- **Ben Shnider:** We should prioritize express RideOn service from our Corridor Cities to Metro and other commercial centers, as this can provide more residents with more commuter options more quickly at a lesser cost. I support the CCT in concept, though our development patterns have changed considerably since the project was first envisioned. I would therefore draw on my background as a community organizer to identify and advocate for any adjustments to the CCT's proposed alignment that may improve its effectiveness and minimize any disruptions.

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

- **Sidney Katz:** We need to have a multi-modal approach to transportation solutions. When I was Mayor of Gaithersburg, I worked with MARC to get them to run the noon train. Today, we need the MARC train to run all day to Frederick and beyond. Unfortunately, MARC has not been pursuing the idea of additional trains with urgency, but I will continue to engage with them on this. We must also improve our bus infrastructure. The CCT is an important project, but the alignment must be changed. I've been meeting with stakeholders to develop a better alignment.

I also supported the new Ride On Extra bus. We need improved bike lines and better incentives to use alternative transportation modes. We also must keep in mind that autonomous cars are becoming a reality and we need to have them in the equation as part of our improvements. They will have a big impact on traffic, as well as how existing roads are used and how new roads are built. I will continue to work with MCDOT and other agencies to ensure autonomous cars are included in their long and short-term planning.

- **Ben Shnider:** As alluded to in my prior answers, proactively advocating for multimodal improvements to our transportation infrastructure is essential for addressing traffic congestion countywide, including North Potomac, Rockville (where my wife and I reside) and Gaithersburg. This includes the aforementioned improvements to MARC service, BRT on Route 355, enhanced express Ride-On bus service and smart signals on our roads. My personal frustration with our County leaders' lack of urgency to modernize our transportation infrastructure is a major reason I decided to run.

6. School overcrowding and the forecast for 2020.

- **Sidney Katz:** I've always been a champion for Montgomery County Public Schools. I attended Montgomery County Public Schools, went to Montgomery College, and graduated from the University of Maryland. Both of our daughters graduated from Quince Orchard High School. My wife Sally is a retired MCPS employee and one of our daughters works for MCPS. My top priority is ensuring that today's children receive the same great education that I received and that my family received. As Councilmember, I have been a strong advocate for additional school funding. We need to receive more funding from the state, and I will continue to be a staunch advocate on behalf of our schools to work with our state legislators to achieve that goal. We need to maintain our record of strong academics, but in today's world that's not enough. We need to provide students with an education that starts in pre-K, and ends in college and career. An important component of the performance gap in Montgomery County is the lack of universal pre-K. I support universal pre-K, and the Council is currently considering proposals for how we fund that. We also need to increase our career education opportunities. I have been working with MCPS, Montgomery College, the Chambers of Commerce, Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, and our community and nonprofit partners as well as my colleagues to see how we can accomplish what we need to be doing to further the goal of career education.
- **Ben Shnider:** The County must insist that developers pay their fair share for MCPS infrastructure improvements. This requires proactive collaboration with the municipal governments in Rockville and Gaithersburg, who retain land use authority within their borders. MCPS must also periodically reexamine cluster boundaries to ensure we're using our existing space efficiently and equitably. In addition, MCPS must reclaim closed schools as needed and explore creative approaches to additional capacity, like using vacant office space. As someone who is planning to start a family in our community, I have a personal stake in tackling this crisis -- and my commitment to doing so is a major reason our campaign was endorsed by our County's teachers.