

Response by Thomas Hardman

Action Committee for Transit
Questionnaire for Candidates for County Council, District 4

1) A) Do you support building the light rail Inner Purple Line from Bethesda to New Carrollton, with a hiker/biker trail running alongside it between Bethesda and Silver Spring?

Generally, yes.

B) For the Purple Line segment between Bethesda and Silver Spring, do you favor proceeding immediately with the design now under study that runs primarily at grade rather than further delaying the project to study more expensive underground options?

Generally, yes. I favor whichever alternative is most durable and least expensive and has lowest maintenance costs, which is also effective at the desired task.

2) All bridges over US 29 have been designed so that light rail could run in the median of the highway. There are several possible routes for a connection from White Oak to the Red Line or Purple Line. Would you support detailed study of running a light rail line that connects White Oak to the Metro system and then runs in the median of US 29 to Burtonsville, as a future project after the Purple Line and Corridor Cities Transitway?

Definitely. Then again, new transportation modes are evolving even as I type. Of course, we don't want to promote station spacing that would tend to turn the Route 29 corridor into just another Rockville Pike.

We should also consider a study about adding a light-rail route to the ICC corridor.

3) What should the county do to increase transit ridership?

It needs to be very much less expensive than carpooling.

4) County master plans have stated a policy of focusing development around mass transit stations. While much development has occurred that has poor transit access, the county's planning deserves much of the credit for the emergence of Bethesda and the revival of Silver Spring as centers of activity. What smart growth projects near Metro stations do you support even though they have had opposition?

I'm not familiar with the specifics of any, these things change from day to day.

That being said, there seem to be problems that arise when you concentrate high-density residential, unless it's pretty upscale. Even then, as upscale high-density ages, it can drift "downscale" very quickly. It might turn out to be a lot better to not overdevelop in the immediate vicinity, and to have a lot of walkability, along with small light electric-hybrid shuttles that circulate from the Metro stations to nearby commercial facilities.

5) Do you believe that the decision by Governors Ehrlich and O'Malley to build the Intercountry Connector was wise or unwise?

As long as it doesn't turn into yet-another overcrowded freeway hemmed in by industrial parks, it's long overdue. Again, I can't understand why it wasn't designed with light-rail integrated from the very beginning.