

Action Committee for Transit

Questionnaire for Candidates for County Council, District 4

1) **How do we transform the auto-oriented suburbs of District 4 into liveable and walkable communities?**

The concept of a “livable and walkable community” is incongruent with the idea of a “High Density Urban development”. We do not need to live in urban settings in order for our communities to be livable or walkable. I believe that all communities are livable, and many are walkable to various degrees, depending on whether the community is found in an urban, suburban, or rural environment.

As the Action for Transit Committee has previously indicated, District 4 was designed as an automobile-oriented suburb. This pattern of development stems from the “Wedges and Corridors Plan”, which was readopted in 1993 in the General Plan Refinement. (See http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/info/resident_guides/documents/landuse_masterplan_02_2007.pdf).

Initially, there were to be two transportation and job corridors: the I-270 corridor and the I-95 corridor. These transportation corridors were to cater to seven satellite cities. However, the Montgomery County Council withdrew their support for the two corridors, and only promoted I-270. This course of action has created many problems, as there has not been a balance of jobs and housing, and most residents of district four are experiencing severe congestion as they commute south or west on their daily commutes to work.

The last White Oak Master Plan focused growth at the former Naval Surface Weapons Lab, and was able to entice the FDA to relocate to that site. In turn, this provided more jobs to our district, although not to the extent seen along I-270.

I am pleased that Marilyn Praisner worked with the East County Master Plan Committee, and was successful in preserving the semi-rural/suburban mix that we enjoy in the eastern part of Montgomery County. District four may have an opportunity to encourage urban development, but the scale and scope of that development should be left to the communities that have invested in their neighborhoods.

As a Councilmember, I will promote T.O.D.’s where there is cooperation with the residents, businesses, and non-profits of the county in an effort to promote a comprehensive and orderly development pattern. However, I feel that this growth should be consistent with the overall General Plan of the county. This development should be balanced with the infrastructure that is necessary to alleviate our congestion. Furthermore, I will promote a priority system, whereby growth occurs in an orderly fashion with funding from both the government and the development community. I wholeheartedly believe that the development community **MUST** pay their fair share. I

also pledge to protect the character and vision of existing Master Plans until such time as they are changed while working with the area communities as partners.

2) Do you support building the light rail Inner Purple Line from Bethesda to New Carrollton, as recommended by County Executive Leggett and the County Council?

Yes. In fact, I understand that the environmental impact statement has been issued for the purple line.

3) 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?

I believe that a study to look into transit from White Oak to Silver Spring would be acceptable, but I will not commit to a mode at this time. I would like to see studies done which analyzes the possibility of a Bus Rapid Transit and expanded Ride On, along with a comparison to the costs of the creation of a light rail, the projected ridership, et cetera. Until such time, I defer any discussion about the light rail until it has been properly analyzed with the current Master Plan Advisory Committee.

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

I believe that the price of gas is a major driving force which promotes transit. It is inevitable that gas prices will go up, and as they go up we must be prepared to promote ridership via environmentally friendly transit. We must also make riding the public-transit system easy and convenient.

I feel that the Ride-On system should follow the grid system, which is the ridership method promoted by Dan Wilhelm. It is commuter friendly, simple, and has proven successful throughout Europe.

5) County master plans have stated a policy of focusing development around mass transit stations. Much development has occurred that has poor transit access, yet the county's planning also deserves much of the credit for the emergence of Bethesda and the revival of Silver Spring as centers of activity.

A) What smart growth projects near Metro stations do you support even though they have had opposition?

The Silver Spring Transit Oriented Development is an example how T.O.D.'s can work within the confines of existing growth while still promoting a livable and vibrant community. I feel that it is a wonderful asset to the urban areas of our county.

While I feel that the Silver Spring Transit Oriented Development was a relative success, I led some of the opposition to the Glenmont Sector Plan because I felt that there was not enough vehicular capacity on our roads to handle existing traffic. Additionally, there was an extreme lack of consensus with commercial property owners as how best to promote the revitalization of Glenmont.

I worked with Marilyn Praisner and the developers of Glenmont to remedy this problem, and we reached a consensus by balancing and staging growth regarding vehicular capacity. We currently provide discounts on transportation capacity at our Metro station policy areas. We should continue to do this, but we must be vigilant with respect to our suburban and rural areas. Our automobile-centered culture is simply not going away anytime soon.

We must also do more with the Park & Ride and transit area stations in our suburban areas in order to promote their use. Specifically, we must utilize the Park & Ride system so that the residents of this county use it to travel to area Metro Stations, thereby avoiding the major impediment to ridership that our current Metro system suffers from: parking. Additionally, we must increase the capacity of metro trains that we possess, so that the access to downstream trains does not become oversaturated.

B) Do you support a requirement that development described as "transit-oriented," such as the proposed Germantown and Gaithersburg West master plans, may only be constructed after rail transit access is built?

I have stated my position of relying on community participation, which involves working with the businesses and non-profits of the county in order to create a comprehensive Master Plan. Until such a Master Plan is developed and adopted, it is not appropriate for council-members to speculate on the correct course of action.

I have also promoted a growth policy which focuses on a system of priority growth areas. In these areas, investment is focused by both government and developer investors in order to achieve comprehensive development with balanced infrastructure, thereby enhancing the quality of life in these areas while making them rich with economic opportunities.

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

I have opposed the ICC for decades, and still do today. It is a 3.8 billion dollar project which is sapping an incredible amount of investments which could be better-spent on increasing the capacity of and making improvements to our existing infrastructure. I

believe that this project destabilizes communities and is environmentally insensitive. Part of the wetlands mitigation program moves the wetlands to the western farmlands of Montgomery County, thereby turning cornfields into wetlands. Also, our pristine Class-four stream valleys in District four, the Northwest branch of the county, and the Paint-Branch areas, as well as other areas of our county could be harmed permanently. I also believe that terminating this major freeway onto a two-lane roadway such as Norbeck Road for 18 months is reckless, and has the potential for harming the health, safety, and welfare of county residents living along Norbeck Road, as well as the communities lying to the east of the ICC terminus.

Name of Candidate Cary Lamari

Signature Date: March 17, 2009

Please return by March 24, 2009, to Action Committee for Transit, P. O. Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907.

