

EMPOWER MONTGOMERY
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Questionnaire Answers for Marc Elrich for County Executive

Budget

1. Operating Reserves in the County's annual budget were 6% in 2006. They are now 8.9% -- around \$480 million -- with a goal by the current County Executive of reaching 10%.

Some argue that reserves need to be high to protect the County's AAA Bond Rating. Others argue that since other local counties have AAA bond ratings and reserves are at the 7% level, the annual reserve amount for our County should be lowered. A reserve of 7.9% would produce ~\$50 million, which could be utilized for tax relief or additional spending on capital projects.

Do you support lowering reserves, keeping them at the current level or raising them to 10% of the county's annual budget? If not, what is your position?

The original level of reserves was too low; when we were provided with reserve levels at comparable jurisdictions by county staff, it seemed like 10% was a more typical level than 6%. That said, I'm not sure 10% is necessary; I would like to conduct a comprehensive risk analysis to evaluate what the proper level of reserves should be and would be very open to a discussion on this topic.

If it turns out that it makes sense to reduce the level of reserves, the money we would save should be used to address the county's many unmet needs in areas such as education and transportation, not on tax relief.

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Economic Development

1. What specific programs or policies would you propose for encouraging or expanding job growth and economic development in Montgomery County?

Most job growth comes not from business relocations, and not from small businesses in general, but from new businesses expanding in the location in which they were founded. Surveys also indicate that the quality of life and the quality of public goods in an area – including transportation systems and schools – matter far more when businesses are making their initial location decisions than the taxes and other financial incentives businesses might be offered. While there's a lot about the economy that is beyond our control - there's no silver bullet for job growth - the county can leverage these facts to create the conditions for businesses to start and thrive.

The bus rapid transit (BRT) system proposal that I initiated and have been advocating for during my time on the County Council is one key component of my economic development agenda. If we want people to create startups or expand existing businesses, we need entrepreneurs to feel confident that their employees have a reliable way of getting to and from work, that their customers can get to their stores, and that they will be able to transport the goods and services they need to stay in business. A well-implemented BRT system would satisfy these objectives.

I would also focus on incubating new local-grown businesses and nurturing their growth. Our incubators are not as effective as they can be and I don't think we make the best use of the job training programs we have. Our bio-tech focus has merit, but we must simultaneously do more to encourage light-industrial jobs. Prince George's County has taken a broader look at economic development opportunities, including manufacturing, and I think we'd do well to take a broader look at where opportunities might be in the future.

I supported the creation of the private Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC), but it was not intended to focus as locally as I think we need and I don't want to pull it away from its original mission. I'd like to create a complementary effort and enlarge our economic development programs, attaching staff to regional service centers to enhance the focus on local economic activity. I am also interested in streamlining our regulations to ensure that we are maintaining what's needed while relieving any unnecessary burdens or excessive costs we impose on local businesses.

Lastly, we need to work with the school system, including Montgomery College, to make sure our students are prepared for jobs that don't necessarily require a four-year degree but do require post-high-school education. And we should expand apprenticeship programs in cooperation with the building trades organizations that need the next generation of skilled workers.

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2. The Council passed a raise in the hourly minimum wage from \$11.50/hour to \$15/hour by 2021 for businesses with 51 or more employees, by 2023 for businesses with 11 to 50 employees, and by 2024 for businesses with fewer than 11 employees. The bill also tied future wage increases to inflation beginning in 2022.

Would you have supported this decision to raise County's minimum wage rate to \$15/hour and, if so, by what date and with what proposed exemptions or exceptions?

If not, why and what other alternatives would you prefer for assisting those earning the current minimum wage, such as expanding EITC or job training programs? Also how would you pay for it?

Yes, I supported raising the county's recently passed minimum wage bill - I was the bill's sponsor and brokered the compromise that led to the bill's unanimous passage. I believe strongly that jobs should pay people enough to provide for their families and would have preferred raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour faster than the compromise bill; [research](#) is [clear](#) that minimum wage increases have their intended effect of lifting wages for low-wage workers with little to no effect on employment and Montgomery County has a very high cost of living. Opponents of raising the minimum wage have been making the same inaccurate arguments and dire predictions about its impact for decades, and they have consistently been wrong.

Still, I listened to concerns from businesses and other stakeholders and worked with them and my colleagues to pass a bill that addressed those concerns. The bill will help over 100,000 Montgomery County residents.

I also support job training programs and expanding the EITC, as these programs are [complements](#), not alternatives, to raising the minimum wage. Low-wage workers are more educated than they were in the past - a [higher percentage](#) have college degrees than are teenagers - and minimum wage jobs won't disappear with job training programs in place, so it's essential to both raise wages at the bottom of the wage scale and ensure that workers have ample opportunities to enhance their skill sets.

In terms of how to pay for such proposals, my general approach to budgeting would be to focus on our desired outcomes - closing the opportunity gap, reducing commute times, making housing more affordable, improving public safety, and more - and make funding decisions based on what helps us achieve them. While we are facing budget constraints, I believe that, by realigning work to reflect best practices, insisting on performance accountability, and creating a culture of teamwork, we can operate existing programs more efficiently and pivot existing human and capital resources to better address the challenges facing us.

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3. A Project Labor Agreement (PLA) on a public project requires all contractors, whether unionized or not, to subject themselves and employees to union collective bargaining terms. Do you support mandated PLAs for all county financed projects? Explain why or why not.

I support PLAs, particularly when they include requirements to hire locally and to include job training. Our public dollars should be invested in people who live in the county, and PLAs ensure that wage and benefit packages will be set at appropriate levels.

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4. Recently, Montgomery County and the State of Maryland supported an economic incentive package to Marriott of \$62 million (for keeping its corporate headquarters and employees in Bethesda), \$22 million of which will be contributed by Montgomery County. Do you support this particular decision and other major economic incentives for enticing major companies to stay or locate in Maryland?

As noted above, tax incentives are ineffective at promoting job growth. I therefore generally oppose them.

While I did not oppose the incentive package for Marriott, it should be the exception and not the rule. Marriott is not committed to adding jobs, we are forgoing revenues, and the real estate taxes paid in Bethesda will come at the loss of taxes from the Rock Spring location.

Even Stephen Fuller, considered a regional economic guru, does not think it wise for local jurisdictions to compete for businesses by giving away large tax incentives. I would would want to work with surrounding jurisdictions to avoid bidding wars and a tax-policy race to the bottom.

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5. The County has a rigorous test that will shut down development in a school cluster if the cluster exceeds 120% of program capacity and will shut down development if there is a deficit exceeding 110 seats at an Elementary School or 180 seats at a Middle School. Do you support this policy? If not, what thresholds would you support?

I support this policy. School overcrowding is a real issue, as Empower Montgomery acknowledges on its website. As the website [notes](#):

- “the County is still \$2.2 billion short solving its capacity shortage
- Since 2000 and projected to 2020, the County will add more than 25,000 new students for a total enrollment of more than 165,000 students
- Since projected enrollment growth is equivalent to 22 elementary schools, as enrollment growth moves into middle and high schools, the growth equates to 4 new middle schools and 3 new high schools”

Unfortunately, Empower Montgomery’s “action plan” does not provide solutions that can keep class size reasonable and ensure that our school system is adequately funded. Instead, it includes vague calls for revitalizing, expanding, and investing in our schools without laying out where the money will come from. Its only concrete proposal is to “ask our State elected leaders to authorize school construction bonds,” but this proposal is remarkably unrealistic: the state has never adequately funded our transportation and school needs and, like the county, has limited capacity to issue new bonds. Moreover, it is curious that, despite your organization’s recognition that our schools need investments, Empower Montgomery opposed the recordation tax increase the County Council passed to pay for school construction. We cannot merely wish for money that the state and county doesn’t have to materialize out of thin air.

The good news is that there is an obvious way to raise this money and address our schools’ needs: impose limits on school overcrowding and ensure that new development pays for necessary infrastructure. Empower Montgomery doesn’t appear to support this solution - perhaps because your organization was founded by developers and land-use attorneys who would prefer not to pay their fair share of taxes - but it is the most commonsense way to ensure that we address the demands of rising school enrollment. Developers who make millions of dollars and reap the benefits of great schools can and should chip in to make sure our education system is in fact “world-class,” as Empower Montgomery says it must remain.

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6. Should the County abolish the Department of Liquor Control and privatize the system? If so, how would you address the claim that the County will lose \$30 million in revenue?

No, the county should not privatize the Department of Liquor Control (DLC). It is a fact, not merely a “claim,” that the county’s budget relies on over \$30 million per year from the DLC. That money supports critical county services, including almost \$11 million for bond payments, and nobody who has proposed privatization has outlined a workable plan to replace these funds, likely because there isn’t one.

Rather than pursuing privatization, we should continue to look for ways to make the DLC more efficient and effective than it has been in the past, and to increase sales so that we can increase the revenue that the DLC generates. We’ve already brought in a new director and warehouse manager who have made important improvements, including introducing lower markups for more expensive items, which I had encouraged. I’ve also supported and will continue to support efforts to help local breweries and wineries sell and distribute their goods, and I look forward to continuing to move the department in the right direction as your next County Executive.

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Housing

1. There are some who advocate for adopting a rent control system for Montgomery County, similar to the ones now operating in Takoma Park or the District of Columbia. What is your position?

My goal is to ensure that we maximize the number of affordable housing units in Montgomery County 20 years from now. Unless we massively subsidize housing costs for tens of thousands of families, rent stabilization is the only approach that can accomplish this goal. It would be great if there were alternatives that could ensure that people had access to affordable housing, and I am always open to hearing ideas, but I've been working on this problem for decades and have yet to see anyone offer another viable solution.

Rob Goldman of the Montgomery Housing Partnership points out that Montgomery County has seen a net reduction in affordable units of 35,000 since 2000; we are losing affordable units faster than we can replace them, and the units we build are not reaching the families who need them most. The number of lower-income households in the county is only expected to grow in future years, so without a policy change, this problem will continue to get worse, not better. One need only look at Arlington, which has lost 95% of its affordable housing since 2000, to see the urgent need to act; we seem to be heading down the same path.

I thus support a moderate rent stabilization program in the county that would:

- 1) exclude new construction from stabilization (putting rent stabilization on new market-rate rents doesn't help the people who need help);
- 2) exclude buildings with moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs), as long as the MPDUs are in place;
- 3) allow rent increases in line with inflation;
- 4) allow larger rent increases when increases in operating costs exceed inflation; and
- 5) allow rent increases for capital improvements meant to maintain the safety and quality of the housing.

I would apply this policy around Metro stations, Purple Line stations, and bus rapid transit (BRT) stations.

Again, I am open to hearing alternative ideas about how to solve the affordable housing crisis. But I have yet to encounter a serious alternative proposal, and simply expecting the market to solve the problem won't cut it.

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2. A recent study of the “Rental Housing Market” shows a significant deficit in housing opportunities, especially for those at the lower end of the economic ladder. What specific policies would you propose to address this issue?

As noted in my answer above, I support rent stabilization as a means to address this problem - I have yet to see an alternative that would be as effective. I would also consider refocusing our MPDU program on those populations for which there is a severe deficit of housing, which might involve deeper subsidies.

I also want to help convert rental housing into home-ownership opportunities for existing tenants, as tenants and homeowners have very different long-term economic prospects. The difference in home-ownership rates and home equity between African-American families and White families is one of the main reasons for the racial wealth gap, for example. That difference means it is easier for the average White family to borrow money to start a business or send their kids to school than it is for the average Black family to do so. It also means the average White person inherits significantly more wealth than the average Black person inherits. Helping people move into home-ownership opportunities can dramatically improve families’ circumstances in both the short run and the long run. I was proud to assist with that when I was a city councilmember in Takoma Park and would like to do more of it as your next County Executive.

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3. County funding for below-market-housing 10 years ago was nearly \$24 million out of a \$3.5 billion budget; today it is roughly \$36.5 million out of a \$5.5 billion budget. Would you support increasing the amount the County spends for below- market-housing and, if so, how would you pay for it?

Assuming your numbers are right, spending on below-market housing as a proportion of the budget has held fairly constant over the last ten years. It's certainly worth considering spending more money on below-market housing, but I also think we should consider other strategies for increasing the stock of this housing. It may be possible, for example, for us to better leverage the money we're currently spending, and I am interested in examining how we've been spending this money and how we might be able to spend it more effectively.

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4. Councilmember Hans Riemer introduced a bill which would require that the minimum Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) requirement be 15% in any development in an MCPS High School Service area with an eligibility rate for free and reduced meals (FARMS) of 15% or less at the time the applicant submits a preliminary plan of approval. The MPDU requirement Countywide would remain at 12.5% under the bill. The affected High School Service today would be BCC, Churchill, Walter Johnson, Whitman, and Wootton. Would you support the bill? If not, how would you address the growing need for affordable housing in areas such as Bethesda?

This bill is unlikely to help integrate Montgomery County's schools, which is supposed to be its purpose. Planning Board staff has told me that, in a typical development in Bethesda, about 80% of the units are one-bedroom units and most of the rest are two-bedroom units and studios; there are virtually no three-bedroom units. Even if we require a higher percentage of MPDUs, lower-income people won't be able to move into affordable units that are too small to house their families.

A better solution, which I hope Empower Montgomery will support, would be to require a more diverse mix of affordable unit types in new developments.

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Schools

1. Montgomery College turns away approximately 3,000 people each year due to financial need. Would you support making Montgomery College tuition free, as some other jurisdictions have done? If yes, how would you pay for it? If not, how would you address this issue of expanding advance college and employment opportunities for more residents in need?

It would be great to reduce or eliminate tuition - I support the concept and it is a good long-term goal - but we do not currently have the resources at the county level (and probably not at the state level, either) to fund free college. In the near future, I want to explore creative ways to make college more affordable. I would like to consider, for example, programs that give residents with a degree in a profession like teaching – provided they use that degree to work in our county – a chance to have their debt forgiven.

I also support the county's current proposal to allow Montgomery County citizens to refinance their student debt through the county government, and I would support a state-level proposal along the same lines. We may have opportunities to leverage other states' programs as well. Rhode Island, for instance, has a proposal that allows students to refinance debt regardless of where they live or get a degree. I would encourage Montgomery County residents to make use of that program, from the Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RISLA), right now.

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2. According to the most recent data available from the State of Maryland, roughly 75% of MCPS High School graduates attend a 2-4 year college within 1 year of graduation.

What would you do to specifically assist the 25% of MCPS graduates that do not attend college become career ready – for example, expanding apprenticeship programs, creating or expanding workforce development programs in specific sectors? And how would you pay for it?

I support expanding apprenticeships and expanding career and technical education programs (such as the one offered at Edison High School). I would also like to explore ways to provide students with more access to dual-degree programs, already in place at a few schools, wherein they can leave high school with both a diploma and a two-year community college certificate in specialized areas. Prince George's Community College is looking at these programs and we should be doing so, too.

We also need to make our job training more robust and forge more partnerships with potential employers. As noted above, I plan to implement budget practices that help ensure that we can fund our top priorities.

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Taxes

1. The County Council enacted 8.7% increase in property taxes in 2016. Do you support this increase? If not, what increase, if any, would you have supported? If not, what reductions in proposed spending would you have recommended?

Yes, I supported this increase. While I would prefer not to have to raise property taxes, we had many funding needs that the increase was meant to address. The money was used to:

- reduce class size and fund programming that the school system said was going to be targeted at closing the achievement gap;
- restore library services;
- meet rising demands for the health care services that the county provides to many residents;
- prevent cutbacks in fire and rescue services that would have led to increased response times;
- expand the number of police officers in response to public safety needs; and
- shore up our reserves.

Still, we have yet to fully restore the funding reductions we made during the Great Recession. The county continues to face rising needs and it will be a challenge to meet them, which is why, as your next County Executive, I want to restructure the county government in partnership with our employees to determine how to use our resources as efficiently as possible.

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2. The County Council, in 2016, enacted a roughly 48% increase in the recordation tax premium and a 125% increase in the school increment base rate designed to raise \$200 million over the next six years, \$125 million of which will be used to fund additional school construction needs.

Would you have supported this increase? If not, what increase, if any, would you have supported and, if not, would you have increased the school construction budget and how would you have accomplished this?

Yes, I supported increasing taxes, with a focus on those with the greatest ability to pay, to ensure that we could meet the needs of our schools. As I noted above, Empower Montgomery acknowledges that our pace of school enrollment is outstripping our schools' capacity. New development does not pay the full cost of necessary classroom construction and operating costs, so we needed some way to prevent overcrowding. The alternative, if you're opposed to raising money to provide capacity, would be to simply impose a moratorium on new construction to ensure that class-size increases aren't allowed to jeopardize the quality education that all of us agree is important.

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3. The County energy tax has increased over 700% in the last 10 years and commercial property energy customers are taxed at a higher rate and, thus, account for 65% of the County's total energy tax revenue.

What is your position regarding the county's current energy tax – its purpose, its rates and rate structure, and the amount of revenue it raises? Do you think the Council was correct in slightly cutting the energy tax and why? If not, what would you do?

The energy tax was increased because of the recession - it has helped us avoid drastic cuts to schools and services. Recovery from the recession has been slow, the county is facing a major revenue shortfall, and the bond markets have put tighter financial controls on our budgets; money that would otherwise have been available to restore services has not been available, as is alluded to in this questionnaire's opening question about the county's increased reserve requirements. In addition, the energy tax also carries an environmental benefit, as it encourages reduced energy use.

I therefore think our approach to the energy tax has been appropriate.

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4. School impact taxes account for 12% of all school construction revenues. Transportation impact taxes account for 4.5% of all transportation construction revenues. These taxes help fund capital projects. The impact tax on a single-family detached house ranges from \$30,134 in Metro areas to \$45,159 in other areas. This impact tax on high-rise residential units ranges from \$10,004 per unit in Metro areas to \$16,833. For commercial office buildings, the impact tax ranges from \$645,000 in a 100,000 sq. ft. building to \$2,020,000 in other areas.

- a. Do you support increasing overall impact taxes and, if so, by how much?

I'd support an increase in the school impact tax to 100% of the cost of construction (including buildout and equipping the school). That change would help us address our backlog of school projects.

- b. Do you support increasing impact taxes in Metro Station Policy Areas and, if so, by how much?

In general, I think impact taxes should make it possible to fund the infrastructure needed to support the growth we've planned. I would want to evaluate the county's infrastructure needs and costs and would support raising impact taxes around Metro stations if doing so is necessary to help us meet our needs.

- c. If no to (a) and (b), do you support increased funding for school construction and transportation? And, if so, how would you obtain the revenues?

One idea is to make more use of special taxing districts to fund transportation. When developers build around Metro stations, for example, the proximity of public transportation - which was built and is operated with public resources - benefits them greatly: it adds density and greatly increases property values. It is only fair to ask developers to contribute more in taxes in exchange for these benefits. Funding transportation projects with a higher tax on commercial development in these areas would help free up other parts of the budget to address the county's unmet needs in schools, affordable housing, and other domains.

I have been interested, in general, in looking more at well-constructed development districts that can help us repay long-term bonds (for transportation projects in particular). We've had some less-than-optimal experiences with development districts, but I think those experiences have more to do with how they were constructed, rather than with the concept itself. The key is to make sure infrastructure construction keeps pace with development.

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5. Developers in Enterprise Zones, such as Wheaton and Gaithersburg, pay no school or transportation impact taxes on new commercial or residential projects. The Silver Spring Enterprise Zone expired in 2006, yet developers still pay no impact taxes. Do you support continuing the Silver Spring exemption?

I do not support continuing the Silver Spring exemption. The exemption was designed for certain developing areas of the county, but Silver Spring is doing well and the Enterprise Zone expired long ago. Additionally, while the exemption was supposed to be targeted for commercial development, it has generally been supporting residential development. The exemption has created an undue burden on the budget and reduced the amount of money available to other parts of the county with similar needs for schools and transportation.

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Transportation

1. Do you support or oppose funding the M83 highway?

I support addressing Clarksburg's transportation needs in an environmentally responsible and cost-effective way, which is why I oppose M-83. I've explained my general philosophy on how to solve our transit problems in [commentary](#) on Governor Hogan's transportation proposals.

As an alternative to M-83, I would widen the two-lane segment of 355 just south of Clarksburg and add two reversible lanes, one for automobiles and one for BRT. I would also add two reversible lanes to I-270, as the County Council proposed several years ago, one for high-occupancy vehicles and one for BRT. These ideas would use the highly directional nature of traffic in Montgomery County to our advantage and reduce congestion coming to and from Clarksburg.

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2. Programs which encourage commuters for not driving to work are just over \$4 million (out of a \$5.5 billion budget). If elected, will you support an increase in this budget item and, if so, by how much and how would you pay for it?

While it is unrealistic to expect commuter incentives to play a central role in getting people to rely less on cars for commuting, I'd certainly like to see more telecommuting. It is in employers' interest to promote telecommuting: if employers can effectively manage a remote workforce, telecommuting can reduce both the subsidies they spend on transportation and their rent costs.

I am focused primarily on "mode share," or a combination of improved transit and policies that support transit, including comprehensive parking policies. I developed the plan for the BRT network and have pushed it for a decade because our current transportation infrastructure is unable to provide adequate service from locations where people live to where they work. As a recent study by the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) confirmed, the policy shift in mode share towards transit, which I've been the leading proponent of on both the County Council and Council of Governments (COG), is a highly effective and cost-effective way to reduce congestion through increased transit use.

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3. In 2012, the State of Maryland identified the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) as a high-quality bus rapid transit line operating along a 9-mile corridor from the Metropolitan Grove MARC station to the Shady Grove Metro Station with the potential for a 6-mile extension from Metropolitan Grove to the COMSAT facility near Clarksburg.

If you support funding the CCT, how will you get it funded? If not, what would you do to help ease traffic in this upper region of the County and how would you pay for it?

I support the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), which is a critical component of the BRT network. It's important for both the development of job opportunities associated with the Life Sciences Center and for commuters. The CCT would finally provide the transportation infrastructure that was promised when Clarksburg was developed.

However, I think the current design of the CCT is inadequate and that Governor Hogan's office was right when they said it was not a truly rapid transit project. I believe the CCT can and should be redesigned to significantly reduce costs without affecting service. My hope is that a better and more cost-effective design will help us re-engage the state on this project. Places like Eugene, Oregon, where they designed an affordable BRT (about \$6 million per lane mile) and it came in on budget and on time, can provide a possible model.

In terms of paying for the CCT, commercial property owners near the CCT have supported a special taxing district and I think that option makes sense. I would also try to obtain as much funding as possible from the state and federal government.

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4. The County Executive and Council have funded BRT from Burtonsville to White Oak. Do you support or oppose extending the Route 29 BRT from White Oak to downtown Silver Spring? If so, how do you propose doing it, such as taking a lane of traffic, reversible lanes, or other alternatives?

Yes, I think BRT should extend into downtown Silver Spring. We should also work with Howard County, as they have previously expressed interest in bringing BRT as far as Ellicott City, where they would expect serious ridership. I have attended several meetings with county officials and the state and believe extending BRT would bring a significant benefit for Montgomery County; today, much of our traffic along Route 29 originates north of the county line.

In terms of implementation, dedicated lanes for the buses are important. We can't rededicate lanes of auto traffic unless we can carry at least the same volume of traffic with BRT in the rededicated lanes, but if we couple a meaningful parking policy with BRT, we should be able to generate the transit ridership for repurposed lanes. My preference, however, and what I designed, was based on using median strips; if we slightly narrow six lanes across a stretch of highway, we should be able to create space for one reversible BRT lane without losing a car lane.

Reversible lanes were a lynchpin of my original proposal and I continue to support them; they reflect space availability limitations and, as alluded to above, take advantage of the fact that traffic runs north/south and east/west in the morning and south/north and west/east at night. We can run buses back on the roadways in the non-peak direction during rush hour without sacrificing speed or the ability to maintain on-time service. This approach can address two critical issues by providing peak-direction traffic relief while greatly reducing the cost of building the system.

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5. Governor Hogan recently announced major plans to add new lanes on I-270 from Montgomery County to Frederick, as well as widen the Beltway and BWI parkway. The cost is estimated at \$9 billion and it proposed to be paid by the use of dedicated toll lanes, similar to those now in Virginia.

Some have argued that such funds would be better spent on mass transit projects, such as the CCT and Route 29 Bus Rapid Transit. Do you prefer investing in major road expansion as proposed by Governor Hogan, or prefer investing in transit projects, or support a combination of both?

I support adding lanes where necessary, but building them within the existing footprint of the roadways and minimizing new construction by, as mentioned elsewhere in this questionnaire, making use of the highly directional nature of traffic in the county. My [commentary](#) on Governor Hogan's proposals, which delves into this topic in detail, notes that it makes neither environmental nor economic sense to use a sledgehammer where a scalpel will suffice. In short, I support the proposal from the County Council several years ago to add two reversible lanes to I-270. Those lanes should continue onto the part of the Beltway that leads to the American Legion Bridge, but I do not think it feasible to widen the Beltway from I-95 to the Beltway spur (the BW Parkway is not an issue the county examined).

In general, while there are some necessary road improvements that are needed, our overcrowded roadways are a consequence of a woefully inadequate transit system that cannot satisfactorily move people from where they live to where they work. Putting a successful transit system in place will reduce some of the pressure on our roadways, which is why BRT and a shift in mode share towards transit are key elements of the solution.

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6. What is your position on pursuing a Second Bridge Crossing, North of the American Legion Bridge, connecting the I-270 Corridor in Maryland and the Dulles Corridor in Virginia?

I am opposed to a second bridge crossing, which would be environmentally destructive and encourage sprawl. The state and county are united in opposition to this crossing. The COG's TPB created a task force (I was not on it) and began a study two years ago to evaluate projects that might have regional significance and to then make recommendations as to which projects should go forward as regional priorities. A second bridge crossing was studied and was not recommended as a priority project in the task force's just-completed review, a decision which all but one member of the entire COG's TPB supported. It is not the best use of our scarce resources.

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7. Do you support a 1 cent increase in the State sales tax for Montgomery and Prince George's Counties to provide dedicated funding for Metro? If not, how do you propose to increase Metro funding?

My preferred method for providing dedicated funding for Metro is to address "value capture." Developers have made millions - if not billions - of dollars off of the benefits this publicly funded and operated asset has brought to nearby commercial property. I believe that developers need to share in the costs as well as the benefits by paying a Metro station policy tax on commercial development around the stations. This idea is not new and has had support in the past from Metro leaders.

I also believe Governor Hogan should be pressed to prioritize fixing Metro - if he believes the state has the money to make a massive investment in toll lanes on three highways, the state has the money to invest in the Metro system. I would be willing to support a sales tax increase only if these other methods and measures were implemented and Metro's needs still required additional revenues.

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Elections

1. For Maryland, do you support the proposal to “Open Primary Elections” which would allow independent and other non-aligned voters to cast their votes?

Rather than opening primary elections, I would prefer same-day registration for primaries. Same-day registration achieves the same benefit as open primary elections - people do not need to take additional action outside of showing up to vote on the day of the primary to participate - while still requiring those who want to vote in a primary to declare at least a temporary affiliation with the party whose primary they want to participate in.