

# OPINIONS & VIEWS

## The Federation Corner

The Sentinel Newspapers have offered the Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF) [www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org) an opportunity to present the issues and opinions of affiliated community organizations. The viewpoints expressed may not necessarily be those adopted by the Federation. Any resident who would like to contribute to or respond to this column should contact Federation Delegate Alyce Ortuzar at (301)774-6617. The following articles are excerpts from the January 2004 Civic Federation Newsletter.

### Proposed Resolution on Transportation Funding

By Dan Wilhelm, MCCF Transportation Committee Chair

The State of Maryland Transportation Task Force held a number of hearings in November to gather public opinion about how much to increase taxes for transportation and what sources should be used. The Task Force asked for comments on their proposal to increase taxes by \$300M per year, which would cover only 2/3 of the State capital needs for transportation. At the last session at Blair High School on Nov. 24, most speakers said the \$300M was too low. Most speakers also indicated that funds are needed for both roads and transit.

MCCF supported and the County Council recently passed transportation impact taxes that will provide much, but not all, of the funds needed for County supplied transportation. We have not taken a position about funds needed for State supplied transportation.

I am proposing a resolution that supports raising taxes statewide for projects throughout the state. The increased taxes would be added to the Transportation Trust Fund and used by the State Department of Transportation (DOT). This resolution does not change MCCF's opposition to increasing state taxes solely in Montgomery County and providing the increase to the County Government.

Roads within Montgomery County are very congested and the last County election demonstrated that county residents want congestion relief. No citizen likes paying more taxes, but many feel that congestion has reached the level that additional taxes for transportation are needed.

Montgomery County needs the Maryland Department of Transportation (DOT) to spend \$200M to \$300M per year for new transportation projects in the County just to address projected growth (1 percent to 1.5 percent growth).

The annual Maryland DOT program levels between FY 2007 and FY 2010 are 50 percent of the FY 2003 program level which translates to a projected statewide \$10.5B unfunded program for FY 2005 through FY 2010 (\$17B need vs. \$6.5B funded). A total of \$2.8B is expected from the federal government and other sources, which leaves a state shortfall of \$7.6B or \$1.3B per year.

MCCF opposes the ICC, MCCF opposes widening the Beltway.

The state DOT has a plan for paying for the ICC, should it be built, that uses toll revenue and Garvee/MdTA bonds that will be retired by using tolls and future federal funds.

Long-term solutions need to focus on transit since the county is largely built-out, except in the Clarksburg

area, thus limiting most road improvements to widening of existing roads and intersection improvements. Montgomery County recently significantly increased the transportation impact tax on new development to help pay for county transportation infrastructure.

Some 85 percent to 90 percent of the transportation needs in Montgomery County are a state responsibility. Congestion exists not just within Montgomery County but throughout much of the state of Maryland.

I would like MCCF to support increasing state taxes on existing residents to complement the county impact tax on developers in order to keep congestion from increasing and to start the long process of reducing congestion. Increases in taxes statewide should be conditional upon the following:

- No Maryland Transportation Trust Funds will be used for any part of the ICC construction.
- At least 50 percent of the funds would be used for transit.
- The increased funds will be used solely for SHA, MTA, MVA and WMATA projects and programs.
- Montgomery County will receive, in terms of projects, a significant and fair share of the funds its citizens pay via increased taxes.

I want MCCF to support an increase of \$650M per year plus new tolls. MCCF is not supporting specific tax increases but I suggest the following:

- Increase vehicle registration by \$30 per vehicle per year (\$150M state-wide)
- Increase Motor Fuel Tax by 5 cents per gallon and indexed for inflation (\$203M state-wide)
- Increase sales taxes so as to procure \$292M statewide.

I want MCCF to support using tolls on new lanes for freeways to fund these road improvements, should they be built. Within Montgomery County the freeways are the ICC,

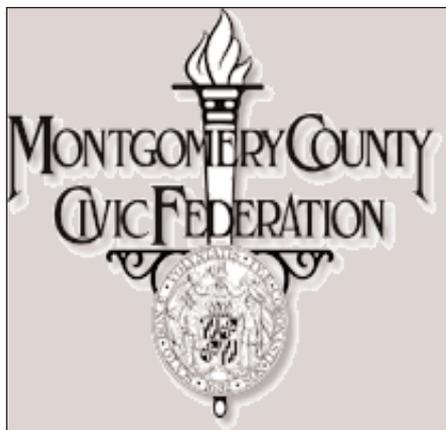
Beltway (\$2B) and I-270 (\$2B). MCCF opposes the use Garvee funding for the ICC, which uses future federal funds to repay bonds. Use of such funding would mortgage future federal funds for just one project.

### Forum on Housing for a Livable City: Vienna, Austria As a Model

The Civic Federation has agreed to join with the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Sierra Club and other groups to co-sponsor a public forum featuring Wolfgang Forster from the Department of Housing Development and Renovation of the City of Vienna, Austria.

Mr. Forster's presentation will include Vienna's housing and other innovative programs and projects of interest to environmentalists, transit advocates and proponents of Smart Growth. A panel of local officials and development industry representatives will respond. When: Tuesday, Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m. Probable location: Montgomery County Planning Board Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring.

For more information call Pam Lindstrom, 301-869-7139 or Laura Olsen of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, 202-588-5570, ext. 4.



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Warm up from winter's chill with The Sentinel's **SOUP** RECIPE CONTEST

Send us your favorite "SOUP" recipe and you could win a gift certificate to a local dining establishment! Winner's recipe and name credit will be published.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Recipe title \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please include recipe with entry

Mail to: The Sentinel Newspapers "SOUP" Recipe Contest, 9458 Lanham-Seabrook MD 20706. Contest deadline: January 23, 2004. Recipes must be original and previously unpublished. Winners from the last 6 months are not eligible for prizes. Winners have two weeks to claim prize and must have proper I.D.