



My Thoughts on the Stormwater Bond and Express Lanes

- **My Thoughts on the Stormwater Bond:** Fairfax County is bumping up against its self-imposed bond debt ceiling; it's time to make the tough decisions before we're under water.
- **Express Lanes to Open November 17th:** My thoughts on why the Express Lanes are already a huge success.
- **Community Meeting on the Express Lanes:** In order to make sure you are prepared when they open, I am hosting a community meeting with the 495 Express Lanes team on November 14th at 7 PM the West Springfield Community Room to give you an overview of the Express Lanes and answer your questions.
- **Remember to Check Your Polling Location and Vote Tuesday November 6th:** Many polling places have been changed due to the recent redistricting. Below are polling hours and a link to verify your polling location before you go to vote.
- **A Note on the Aftermath of the Storm:** Fairfax County was shaken but not stirred by Hurricane Sandy.

My Thoughts On The Stormwater Bond

On November 6th voters will be asked to decide on 4 different bonds which total \$185 million. These include Storm Drainage Improvement Bond which asks voters to take on \$30 million in debt for drainage facilities to benefit the Huntington area of the county. There are several reasons I do not support the Storm Drainage Improvement Bond.

Prior to authorizing this bond to be placed on the ballot, county staff claimed that the county was approaching its self-imposed debt ceiling. Early in the year when FCPS requested \$50M in bonds to accelerate construction and renovation of school facilities, county staff indicated that this would put us over our self-imposed limits and threaten our AAA bond rating.

Subsequently, the Board (on a motion from the dais) authorized this \$30 million bond. This was in addition to adding \$25M to the Park bond for a total of an additional \$55 M. Not sure how an additional \$50 M in school bonds puts us over our ceilings when we add \$55M in county bonds and it does not. I do not believe approving the Stormwater Bond is fiscally responsible.

In addition to bumping up against our self-imposed debt limit (instilled to keep our AAA bond rating), I oppose this bond because:

- there are public-private alternatives to building a levee that were not explored by the county,
- the staff is uncertain the levee will work,
- it benefits a small number of homeowners, and
- the bond issue was not what staff recommended as the solution.

I recommend voting against this bond. The county needs to examine all alternatives prior to acquiring \$30 million in additional debt, pushing us even closer to our self-imposed debt ceilings, especially given the pending "fiscal cliff".

Express Lanes to Open November 17th

November 17th will be a great day for anyone using the Beltway - one of the County's main streets- on a regular basis. Transurban, Fluor and the Virginia Department of Transportation have announced that the 495 Express Lanes are going to be open November 17th. I have been a strong advocate of the 495 Express Lanes, and HOT lanes before there was a project because they provide transportation choices, demonstrate the ingenuity of the private sector and provide additional capacity.

Transportation Choices. The 495 Express Lanes provide commuters with choices including for the first time in this corridor HOV and mass transit:

- You can now choose to take a bus and get a quicker trip to work in lanes guaranteed to run at 55 mph. Currently no bus routes use the ever congested 495.
- You now can choose to join a carpool or slug (HOV-3), use the Express Lanes and get a quicker trip (55 mph) to work without a toll.
- If you are late for a job interview or to relieve a baby sitter or are a plumber that bills by the hour you can now choose to make a financial decision to pay the toll to drive at 55 mph. Prices will vary.
- If you prefer you can also choose to continue to ride in the free lanes. However these lanes will be significantly less congested because of the capacity of the new Express Lanes.

Private Sector Ingenuity. When the initial plans for 495 were first announced the planned project was for two barrier separated HOV lanes. The project cost was \$3.6B

dollars and took 1,800 homes and part of the Capital One parking garage. There was not and still would not be a way to find the funding.

Private sector ingenuity reduced the cost of the project by more than half to \$1.6B including the reconstruction of all of the overpasses. They created a funding mechanism (the tolls) to pay for the project and then completed the project in record time and ahead of schedule.

Additional Capacity. Not only have we added two lanes in each direction that should be high capacity lanes with mass transit and HOV, the project also added several different entrances into Tysons Corner hopefully putting Express Lane riders right into Tysons at Jones Branch Drive and Westpark Drive relieving some of the congestion at Route 7 and 123.

I believe these projects are one way we can add capacity in these times of fiscal constraint. I have been working with local elected officials, VDOT and the Secretary of Transportation to make them a reality in the I-66 corridor where we need significant congestion relief. I also believe there is the opportunity to connect these into Maryland and up the HOV corridor on I-270, creating a network of semi dedicated lanes where carpools and mass transit could provide a time advantage commute and attract riders.

Express Lanes Community Meeting. In order to make sure you are prepared when they open, I am hosting a community meeting with the 495 Express Lanes team on November 14th at 7 PM to give you an overview of the Express Lanes and answer your questions. Get information on:

- How the 495 Express Lanes will work
- Rules of the road
- Where to get on and where to get off
- What you need to know before you use the Express Lanes
- About Express Lanes signage
- How the new [E-ZPass Flex](#) works

The Virginia E-ZPass team will also be at the meeting to answer your E-ZPass questions, exchange standard E-ZPass for E-ZPass Flex, or to sign you up for a new E-ZPass account. I hope you can attend.

Date: November 14th

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: West Springfield Government Center, 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield

Remember to Check Your Polling Location and Vote Tuesday November 6th

Many polling places have been changed due to the recent redistricting. Please verify your polling location using [this link](#) today before you head out to vote tomorrow. Polls are open from 6 AM to 7 PM.

A Note on the Aftermath of the Storm

It looks like we dodged a bullet when you see the scenes on T.V. from farther north in New York and New Jersey. The effects of Sandy here were comparatively minimal unless yours was one of the over 50 homes to be hit by trees.

I would like to again thank our first responders, our county and state agencies that prepared and staged people before impact, and our utility companies that were also ready. Preparation played a big role in lessening the impact. I also think to some degree we can thank a little "tree Darwinism" that occurred when the Derecho wiped out a lot of the weaker and dead trees a few months back.

All County residents should by now have power, cable, and phone service - if any of you are still experiencing problems please contact my office at 703-451-8873, or springfield@fairfaxcounty.gov