



## John C. Cook Braddock District Supervisor

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### **Supervisor Cook Releases Statement Following Board of Supervisors' Adoption of the FY2013 Budget**

Fairfax- Like most of you I have had the opportunity to talk to a lot of people in my district, especially leading up to last year's election. Given limited funds, when asked what challenges should be tackled, transportation is their overwhelming answer - specifically, road maintenance and congestion. We know we have much work to do in this regard. Our own County staff tells us we need \$3 billion over the next ten years to meet our transportation needs. The State and Federal governments will not provide it. In this budget, despite total County spending increasing by over \$175 million and the average household's County real estate tax and stormwater and sewer fees increasing by roughly \$115, not a penny of those additional funds will support transportation infrastructure.

For that reason, more than any other, I cannot support this budget.

There are a number of positives in this budget. We support strong schools, public safety and core human services. I absolutely am in favor of our compensation increase for our employees and hope next year we will address compensation directly, not require our employees to come asking for what we have already promised to pay them.

But we also have significant infrastructure needs to address. The County owns 180 general fund-supported buildings with over 8 million square feet of space. We have yet to identify funding for \$22 to \$25 million per year in needed facility maintenance. We are responsible for 220 miles of trails, 420 miles of sidewalks, 65 pedestrian bridges and 17 miles of service drives for which our annual maintenance needs are estimated to be \$5 million. In FY2013, we provide \$100,000 in funding. We need a billion dollars over the next decade to start to meet the EPA's stringent stormwater regulations for the Chesapeake Bay and to maintain 1,800 miles of pipes, 45,000 curb and yard inlets, 1,200 publicly maintained stormwater management ponds, numerous dams and other flood protection devices with estimated value in excess of \$1 billion. Our roads are crumbling and cannot handle the increased traffic that an increasing population will bring. But this budget does not begin to fund these needs.

I have previously presented a modest proposal that, if implemented, would have gradually, over the course of three to five years, transferred our vehicle registration fee (about \$24 million per

year) out of the general fund and toward transportation projects. Two main reasons are given by the Board for its opposition to this transfer. First, I am told that we should not “let the State off the hook” for transportation. This is an argument I find curious as we routinely consider State aid to schools in setting the FCPS transfer, and we have committed, correctly, to helping the Community Services Board meet its needs even if the state does not. Moreover, in many years the budget has included a reserve to “make up” for State budget cuts. So, why not do the same for transportation?

Second, Board members have said that setting aside some money for transportation would mean there would be less funding available for other things. Yes, that’s called setting priorities. And I, like many residents of this County, believe transportation should be among our highest priorities, a fact not reflected in this budget.

The budget before us focuses on maintaining a level of government programs built on the economy of the last decade. That economy no longer exists, yet we try to continue the programs built upon it, rather than looking at the challenges of the coming decade. If we continue to increase general fund program expenditures at the rate reflected in this budget, it will become harder and harder to address adequately our unavoidable infrastructure needs, whether they be transportation, stormwater, maintenance, or renovation.

Budgets are about setting priorities. We must be mindful of the tax burden on our residents, and we must make infrastructure, and especially our roads, a significantly higher priority. Because we have not, I will vote no.

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