



Doug Duncan Reports

News About Montgomery County, Maryland

April 2004

Urging Action on the ICC and Metrorail Expansion

Area drivers endure some of the longest commutes in the country and traffic congestion is rapidly eroding what makes this region such a wonderful place to live and work. We need a comprehensive, balanced approach to building new roads and expanding transit options.

That's why I recently wrote to both the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), urging them to support two key elements of my Go Montgomery! transportation initiative. Votes for the InterCounty Connector (ICC) and additional trains for Metro's Red Line are crucial if we are to keep this region moving.

I've called on the TPB to approve the next step required to make the ICC a reality by including this vital project in the regional Conformance Analysis model so its effect on air quality can be assessed. This will ensure that the project is eligible for federal funding. In my letter to WMATA, I asked that they honor their original commitment to put 42 new rail cars into service on the Red Line. Other Metro rail lines have already received additional new cars, but Red Line riders need relief from overcrowding, as well.

Saying "No" to Slots

For the past several months I have fought hard against the Governor's plan to expand gambling in Maryland, and I am pleased that the legislature said "no" to slots.

It came down to the question I have repeatedly asked: What kind of community do we want to live in and what kind of State do we want Maryland to be in the future? Do we want one that is grounded in economic and social justice for all, with a world-class educational system from kindergarten through university, and with a flourishing economy based on cutting edge technologies? Or one that is dependent on hundreds of thousands of our neighbors becoming addicted to gambling in order to pay for our schools, health care and transportation needs?

That is the choice before us, and I commend the legislature for not falling prey to the lure of the quick fix of slots. We need to build on our success in technology development and continue to bring high-quality, high-paying jobs into our County, and Maryland as a whole. Let's not gamble our future away.

Promoting Recycling

Montgomery County has had a long-standing goal of recycling 50 percent of the waste stream generated by its residents and businesses. In support of that goal, I included some funding requests in the FY05 budget to help increase our recycling success.

My budget includes funds to crack down on businesses and apartment buildings that fail to meet their obligations under our recycling law, and expand community outreach and education, including a targeted, Spanish-language campaign for multi-family residences. The budget also includes nearly \$2 million to expand the mixed paper recycling program by purchasing 52,000 additional large-capacity wheeled containers that will make it easier to recycle newspapers, magazines and junk mail.

I also recently announced a County-funded study to explore creation of franchised collection districts that would offer collection services to businesses and multi-family properties. This arrangement would help increase the efficiency of haulers, reduce the cost of collection for businesses, and reduce truck traffic.

In an effort to reduce the waste stream and provide a financial incentive for businesses to recycle more, I have proposed increasing the fee that private trash haulers pay when they unload refuse at the County's Solid Waste Transfer Station. Our current fees are among the lowest in the region. Because the cost of trash disposal here in the County is relatively cheap, we are inadvertently providing a disincentive to recycle.



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I value your thoughts and ideas on these and many other crucial issues facing Montgomery County. Please feel free to contact me at douglas.duncan@montgomerycountymd.gov with your comments and concerns.

Getting Rid of Billboards; Gaining Bus Shelters

For the past two years, my staff has been working on an agreement with Clear Channel Outdoors that would end 30 years of litigation and remove all remaining billboards in the County. The result of this effort is what I call a true win-win settlement that will rid the County of these eyesores and place 500 new bus shelters throughout the County for the benefit and comfort of our transit riders.

I appreciate the County Council's support in approving the agreement, and hope the changes they proposed will be approved by Clear Channel. Both the County and Clear Channel must agree to any changes, and ultimately, a judge must approve this settlement agreement.

Establishing a Taxicab Hotline

Montgomery County is committed to ensuring that the companies and individuals providing taxi service to our residents and visitors are rewarded for good service and penalized for poor performance.

That's why I recently announced the creation of a Taxicab Hotline that is designed to provide an opportunity for customers to share concerns about service issues. This feedback should help the companies make meaningful improvements, thereby resulting in more reliable service and easier use.

The Hotline will operate through the cooperation of the Volunteer Center, the Division of Consumer Affairs and the Division of Transit Services. They will compile the information, investigate complaints and enforce the law.

The Taxicab Hotline - 240-777-2625 / TTY 240-777-2630 -- will be answered by staff from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. weekdays; messages can be left at other times. The Hotline can also be reached online by going to the County's website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/taxihotline.