

**By Kerry Donley
Mayor, City of Alexandria**

In November, voters in Alexandria will have a chance to do something to relieve some of the region's increasingly serious traffic problems.

A YES vote on the transportation referendum question on the ballot will dedicate \$140 million a year from a new one half-cent sales tax to building specific transit and highway projects across Northern Virginia. Importantly, all of the funds raised will be kept in Northern Virginia and controlled by a new Board made up exclusively of Northern Virginians. And by law, Richmond will not be able to reduce the other transportation funding that Northern Virginia would ordinarily receive. Most people realize that if something is not done, and done soon, our problems will reach a point at which they cannot be fixed. So the time to act is now.

For Alexandrians, I believe there are many reasons we should enthusiastically support the transportation referendum. First, this is a historic opportunity for us to dedicate revenue raised here to be spent on projects in Northern Virginia, forty per cent of which are mass transit oriented. Traditional transportation funding predominately favors road projects, and the strong transit components of the transportation referendum are in keeping with our policy objectives here in Alexandria. We will not road-build our way out of congestion, and mass transit focuses on moving people, not cars. In November we in Alexandria, and Northern Virginia, can emphatically vote yes for mass transit by supporting the referendum.

Second, there are important projects included in the transportation referendum, which directly benefit our city. Substantial funds are provided for Metro capital improvements, which can be dedicated to our increasing local funding share. Funds are identified for transit improvements at Potomac Yard, possibly providing the initial funds for a new Metrorail station, long seen as a plus for the city. Funds are provided for a new DASH bus facility, which will enable us to accommodate our expanding local bus service. Alexandria will also receive a large share of urban road improvements dollars, which could be used for additional traffic calming and intersection improvements within our city limits. Additionally, dollars are set aside for transportation improvements in Eisenhower Valley. These funds could be used for a variety of needs, and I feel compelled to say that they are not dedicated for a new connector road.

Finally, there is a tremendous need for localities throughout the state to diversify their revenue streams. Cities and counties in Virginia are much too reliant on real property taxes, and this new revenue source provides important, and necessary relief. Our transportation needs are not going away, and if we do not dedicate additional revenues, then local tax dollars must go to transportation. We in Alexandria have a variety of other projects in competition for these scarce local dollars. The reconstruction of T. C. Williams High School, which is a priority that quickly comes to mind. The transportation referendum brings additional resources to the table and frees local dollars to be spent on other important local priorities. This indirect benefit to our city should not be overlooked by the voters as they make their decisions to support the referendum.

For all these reasons, on behalf of Citizens for Better Transportation, a coalition of citizens, business leaders, educators and elected officials from both political parties, I urge you to vote “YES” on the transportation referendum November 5th.

Sincerely,

Kerry J. Donley
Mayor