

For Immediate Release: October 31, 2018

This responds to some of the statements made in the press release from the Habersham County Republican and Democratic parties.

We were disappointed and shocked to read the recent joint press release by the Habersham County Republican and Democratic Chairs in opposition to the Roads & Bridges SPLOST appearing as a ballot referendum on the upcoming Nov. 6th ballot. Some news outlets have reported this as though this was the sentiment of the entire Republican and Democrats party members. Upon further conversation with Republican Chair Carl Blackburn it has come to light that is not the case. No formal poll of registered members was taken at any time. According to Blackburn he has the complete authority to speak on behalf of the members of his party. So when you hear that two political parties have opposed the R&B SPLOST that is NOT accurate. 2 individuals have expressed their personal views while using their respective party's platform and logos. We find this disingenuous and frankly dirty politics. It is sad to see representatives of both parties coming out and condemning local citizens (taxpayers) for merely advocating for improvement of the local roads and bridges via an additional 1-cent sales tax.

Here are a few other questions or accusations in the joint press release that we would like to address:

1. Questioning/doubting the validity of the 25-40% sales tax collections by non-residents.

Fact: While there is not a definitive method in place to track and quantify the exact ratio of County Resident vs. Non-County Resident sales tax revenue, this range is based on a number of data points. Percentages used in the current Roads & Bridges SPLOST campaign are estimates based on multiple factors: 1) 2016 Direct Tourist Spending of \$52.5MM generating \$1.38MM in local taxes according to the Ga. Dept of Economic Development; 2) Population data which shows 147,418 total population and 54,829 households located within a 20 mile radius of the Wal-Mart shopping center – primary retail corridor; and 3) Estimates from other counties/communities. But we feel comfortable with the range stated in the article.

2. Denying that 1/3 of the 56 bridges in Habersham County are not in need of repair and replacement.

Fact: This is just simple math. The County currently is responsible for maintaining 56 bridges. Of those 56 bridges, 11 have a sufficiency rating between 50 and 80 and are deemed in need of repair. 5 bridges have a sufficiency rating of less than 50 and are deemed in need of replacement. 2 bridges are deemed structurally deficient and are in need of replacement. 18 bridges in need of repair/replacement out of 56 total bridges equals 32%! That's pretty straightforward math. Including the other 6 that are deemed functionally obsolete brings the percentage up to 43%.

3. Using double speak to address the current 40 year re-paving cycle.

Fact: Again this is very simple math that anyone can understand. The County alone maintains roughly 500 miles of road. They are currently paving 10-11 miles per year. The additional sales tax revenue and matching Federal and State grants lower the re-paving cycle to 20 years by doubling the number of miles paved each year.

4. Citing articles that claim the State of Georgia has the best roads in the country.

Fact: These articles refer to the State and Federal highway system and make NO mention nor even pertain to our local roads or infrastructure. Posting these links as proof is disingenuous at best and downright deceitful at worst.

5. Stoking fear in voters that a passage of the Roads & Bridges SPLOST will impair the ability to build a new jail in upcoming SPLOSTS (which they claim they would support).

Fact: We, too, support the need for building a new jail. How that is done and financed is going to be a decision made by current or future county commissions. However, the cost of a new jail could possibly exceed the entire collections of a SPLOST over 5 or 6 years. Regardless, that is a separate decision and has no bearing on the current Roads and Bridges SPLOST. Frankly, we need both and further supports the need for passage of the R&B SPLOST. And in terms of support of future SPLOST's, the Republican Party Chair and prior Chair have opposed and spent money on advertising to defeat the last 2 SPLOST's. Even when they were brought into the discussions of the SPLOST VI in 2014 and agreed to the list of projects, they went back on their word and advocated against it. Thankfully it passed. Prior behavior is the best predictor of future behavior.

6. Pretending that “Do Nothing” is an option.

Fact: Roads and Bridges will have to be repaired and replaced plain and simple. Habersham County is in the 8th percentile in lowest taxes levied per capita out of 159 counties in the State. There are few counties in GA with a lower cost of living in regards to property taxes than right here. A vote against the sales tax will lead to at least a 3-4 mil increase. That's roughly \$270 per year increase on a \$150K home.

‘Investing in Habersham’ is a PAC comprised of local citizens. It is required by law that a PAC be formed and registered whenever campaign donations are received and used to advocate for a candidate or an initiative on the ballot. We are local business people, parents, and church members working to find a solution to an evident problem. Regardless of your personal opinion, the most important thing is that YOUR voice is heard. Go Vote. I'm voting YES for R&B SPLOST!

Brian Horton, Member
Investing in Habersham