



# No Sprawl Tax Coalition

For Immediate Release:  
October 1, 2002

For More Information, Contact:  
Laura Olsen, 202/588-5570 ext 4#  
202/320-4578 (cell)

## Sales Tax is Highway Robbery

### Developers Own at least 65,000 acres along Proposed New Roads

Today, a coalition of smart growers, environmental groups and civic activists took the media on a tour of thousands of rural acres – the setting for new highway corridors proposed for funding by the sales tax increase. They also released a map showing over 65,000 acres owned for speculative development along proposed new highway corridors found in the proposed sales tax package for Northern Virginia.

“The Route 234 Bypass/Route 659 Relocated and the Tri-County Parkway do nothing to help 99 percent of the drivers in our region,” said Joe Maio of Voters to Stop Sprawl. “This tax increase isn’t about solving congestion, it’s about suckering the taxpayers into building more roads for developers, nothing more.”

Cars were few and open fields aplenty as the Coalition took reporters on quiet country byways and even a one-lane gravel road optimistically called the Loudoun County Parkway. Rising out of the countryside and a short distance from that gravel road, a symbol of speculative exuberance, MCI/Worldcom, sat amid the hundreds of acres it has for sale. The company, or its successor, would be a direct beneficiary of any funds expended to build the Tri-County Parkway from Route 7 down to Prince William County.

“This is why we call this tax increase a Trojan Horse,” said Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. “While they talk about transit, the real reason for this tax is to have taxpayers subsidize these new highway corridors and open up thousands of acres for sprawl development. Why else would the real estate, construction, and development industries pour hundreds of thousands of dollars into the proponents’ campaign. This is nothing more than Highway Robbery, and we urge the voters to reject this tax package.”

Farther west, the Route 234 Bypass/Route 659 relocated would slice between historic Manassas Battlefield and Conway Robinson State Forest, before running north past Beaverdam Reservoir – the drinking water supply for City of Fairfax and part of Loudoun County – and hitting Route 7. This road would follow the alignment for the Western Bypass pushed by developers and the Virginia Department of Transportation. “Nothing is sacred out here anymore,” said Jolly DeGive of Piedmont Environmental Council. “They want to surround this hallowed ground with highways and sprawl.”

“Going back to 1981, the same people who pushed the Fairfax County Parkway, who pushed through the last ½ cent sales tax for roads, and have been pushing for the Western Bypass and Techway, are the ones who stand to profit,” said Chris Miller, President of the Piedmont Environmental Council. “In the early 1990’s they made Route 28 into a speculative development corridor. Today, when they haven’t even completed Route 28 with proposed interchanges, and haven’t come close to developing that corridor, they insist that taxpayers must pay for two more highway development corridors.”

---more---

He noted that the early speculative expansion of Route 28 has already cost northern Virginia approximately \$36 million in road funds to cover shortfalls in promised contributions from landowners in the corridor. “Their goal is to use the sales tax subsidy to fuel the next round of suburban sprawl, which will generate yet more traffic,” said Miller.

There is a long history to the campaign by leading developer John “Til” Hazel and the development industry of Northern Virginia for new bypass highways. Til Hazel was instrumental in coordinating construction of the Fairfax County Parkway with his land speculation and development of parcels adjacent to the highway. In 1981, a business partner, William Wrench, was forced to resign from the state transportation board following efforts to route the Fairfax County Parkway past land that he owned and parcels owned by Hazel.

“While this tax does nothing to reduce the daily traffic volumes on roads like Route 123 in Vienna, or Route 236 and 123 in Fairfax City, or Georgetown Pike, the development industry would siphon off tax-dollars to build new highways that benefit absolutely no one stuck in traffic today,” said Roger Diedrich of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and a Fairfax resident.

\*\*\*\*\*

The map is available at: [www.NoSprawlTax.org](http://www.NoSprawlTax.org) or from Laura Olsen at Coalition for Smarter Growth or Mike DeHart or Jolly DeGive at the Piedmont Environmental Council. Land parcels within a five mile radius of the road projects in the sales tax referendum were analyzed with a focus on Loudoun and Prince William County. The approximately 68,000 acres shown on the map represent a minimum amount of land that has been speculatively assembled for development.

For a recommended route to view the areas described, please contact Laura Olsen, 202/588-5570. A member of our coalition can be made available to accompany members of the press on a tour.

*The members of the No Sprawl Tax Coalition -- Audubon Naturalist Society, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Fairfax Coalition for Smarter Growth, Friends of the Earth, Piedmont Environmental Council, Sierra Club – Virginia Chapter, Virginia Bicycling Federation, Virginia League of Conservation Voters, Voters to Stop Sprawl, and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association -- base their opposition to the referendum on more than three decades of research, involvement, and analysis of transportation policy and its effect on communities in the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

---end---

---end---