

Growth Management, Transportation, Public Funds..... Orange County, Florida - Fact or Fiction or FRAUD????

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October 21, 2019

Mayor Demings,

Once again you say just "Trust Me". Once again, I say "I cannot trust you". The people CANNOT TRUST our elected representative (aka "leaders) to do the right thing. We CANNOT TRUST you to be RESPONSIBLE OR COMPLETELY HONEST with OUR business. I can easily back-up this statement, but first, let's talk about misrepresentations, fraud AND the TRUTH.

Misrepresentation is an untrue or misleading statement of fact made during negotiations by one party to another, the statement then inducing that other party to enter into a contract. The misled party may normally rescind the contract, and sometimes may be awarded damages as well. The law of misrepresentation is an amalgam of contract

and tort; and its sources are common law, equity and statute. The common law was amended by the Misrepresentation Act 1967.

Fraud is generally defined in the law as an intentional misrepresentation of material existing fact made by one person to another with knowledge of its falsity and for the purpose of inducing the other person to act, and upon which the other person relies with resulting injury or damage.

Truth is most often used to mean being in accord with fact or reality, or fidelity to an original or standard. Truth is also sometimes defined in modern contexts as an idea of "truth to self", or authenticity.

Now on to the purpose of this email.....

Based on the current Orange County growth management model, I cannot justify or support additional taxes that harm the people of Orange County. Let me explain why I believe this transportation sales tax increase is not necessary.

For starters, I was born and raised in Orange County, Florida. Thus, I have personally witnessed the "transformation" of the county I have called home all of my life. I have been actively engaged in the public policy regarding growth, transportation, taxes and environment for 23+ years. I served on the Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District Board. It is very easy for me to say I have witnessed firsthand AND been the victim of the actions (or inactions) of my local elected and non-elected "leaders". I have absolutely no doubt my elected leaders have not been completely honest/truthful with me and the people of Orange County and I am confident I can prove this.

Are you familiar with the expression, ***"The figures don't lie, but the liars do figure."***? If first heard this expression used about public policy, public works projects and other public reporting. This expression is especially true on large public works projects. I would have to say, SunRail is a perfect example of exaggerated/embellished projections of success for a public works project that was always doomed to fail and to become a major financial burden to the taxpayers. Please note – I opposed SunRail and current status of SunRail confirms my opposition was valid.

With that being said, it has been my observations and experience, the vast majority of local leaders frequently misrepresent/distort/twist/manipulate the facts/truths to give a false or unnatural picture or account. Unfortunately, the vast majority of elected and non-elected leaders forget who they work for about 5 minutes after they are sworn into office taking an oath to SERVE THE PEOPLE or are appointed to public service. I have to ask..... Who does the Orange County Commission really work for??? It is very apparent to me; you work for the mega corporations first and then the people. This is upside down. The people should be your first consideration not mega corporations like Universal.

While we are talking/communicating.....You may want to take a closer look at what communism is..... Everything owned in common....."A theory or system of social organization based on the holding of all property in common, actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the state." When government funds the private sector and/or becomes a partner with the private sector, there is no individual, private property or free market. Now think about what it means when tax dollars (the people's money) are used to fund mega corporations like Universal and Tavistock. Think about the true meaning of "Public Private Partnerships". This is the collusion of government and the private sector. It is the beginning of the end of the free market. That is why our state Constitution PROHIBITS PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS. See Article 7 - Section 10. There is a growing segment of our population that supports the destruction of the free market. If you agree with these so-called "Democratic Socialists" values, you will gladly support P3s and public/taxpayer funding for mega corporations. In essence you are supporting the destruction of the free market. What is the role of government in a free society and free market? Why should taxpayers fund Universal's expansion? Universal is worth billions. Why do they need our money? My answer....THEY DON'T!!

To date, I have attended four of your "Orange County Transportation Town Halls". Based on information presented and statements you personally made, it is my personal opinion the information and statements MISREPRESENT THE TRUTH. It is also my opinion some of the statements border being fraudulent and beyond a misrepresentation of the truth/facts. **AND while you stated it is your intention to engage the people of Orange County in this discussion, there can be no doubt the Town Hall game is rigged against the people. My opinion.....It is a ploy to minimize/marginalize public input, meet certain requirements for public meetings and to brainwash the public into supporting your proposed sales tax increase for transportation.** I can easily say this because there is no two-way dialogue or open discussion on these very critical and related issues. The people are treated like peasants/serfs that are granted a whole two minutes to present concerns and solutions - this is a FARCE and an INSULT. This alone proves it is a misrepresentation to say the goal of these Town Halls is to engage the people and to listen to the people's solutions.

It is my opinion and concern, there are excessive misrepresentations, errors, omissions, falsehoods, etc. around the following public issues:

- **Many statements being touted at these meetings about growth are simply not accurate.**

Yes. A lot of people are moving to Orange County, but you never share the facts as to WHY they are moving here? Why are so many people moving to Orange County, Florida? Primarily because of MANUFACTURED GROWTH but there is some "natural growth" too. Government abuses its powers to induce mega corporations to move into the area. These mega corporations are given "sweetheart deals", tax breaks and incentives that are never afforded the people. Then the people are expected to pick-up the tab to fix all the problems created by the reckless manufactured growth. This is not right!!!

Depending on the time of day and the election cycle, elected leaders will tout that growth pays for itself and other times they cry for more taxpayer money because of the growth. If managed correctly, the financial impact of growth should be substantially less. Unfortunately, local leaders refuse to take full account of the financial impact of excessive growth over a short period of time. It is more fun to tout/boast about being "the fastest growing county/city in the nation". Then they cry because they cannot manage the growth. INSANE!!!

The Villages proves the big Florida lie: Growth does not pay for itself – Editorial

"If growth pays for itself, as we've so often heard in Central Florida, then local governments like Sumter County — the epicenter of The Villages' development — must be swimming in cash."

"Instead, it's acting like a government drowning in the costs of growth."

Sumter is so desperate for money that its five Republican county commissioners look ready to vote next week for a whopping 25.6% increase in the current property tax rate."

"The county concedes in its own budget documents that the main culprit for this tax increase is the breakneck rate of growth tied to The Villages' success."

<https://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/editorials/os-op-the-villages-growth-tax-increase-20190918-iyqc2cy3mnhzfmwskfm7s6a35e-story.html>

- **Failure to discuss "root cause" for our situation.**

Reckless - Out-of-Control growth is the #1 reason for the issues we face in the areas of affordable house, increasing cost of living, traffic gridlock, mass transit, water resources, destruction of wetlands, local flooding, etc. etc. Our leaders create these problems and then cry and whine to the people for more money while acting like they

do a good job and it is not their fault. Reckless growth, traffic gridlock, failed mass-transit program, destruction of wetlands, local flooding.....the failed leadership in these areas is the root cause. Accept responsibility for your actions!!!

- **Omission of critical financial facts.**

In general, the Orange County Transportation Town Hall Meetings do not properly address the financial facts for the county. Some examples: Lost revenues due to "sweetheart deals" via multiple tax breaks, reduced impact fees, etc. What about the increased revenues due to growth via permitting, new auto registration, property taxes, etc. What about the increase in tourist taxes due to the increase in travelers? What about the taxes already paid for transportation including the excessive toll taxes Orange County residents pay today? The toll road authorities may be "State Agencies", but the residents of Orange County AND TOURISTS are paying these excessive taxes. Toll taxes remove/rob household income from the local economy this results in lost sales tax revenues. Toll taxes are the most expensive ways to raise transportation funds. Yes. Toll collection authorities hire people (aka create jobs), but why should residents have to pay higher transportation taxes and increased cost of living for someone to take their money???

At the same time.....There are two stories being told to Orange County residents.... Orange County is fiscally strong, but we still want/need more of your money!!

The Orange County, Florida, 2020 adopted budget reports:

*"The overall fiscal and economic **health of the county is extremely strong**. Taxable value in Orange County is estimated to be \$143.9billion in 2019, and will generate countywide property tax proceeds of \$638million, which is a 10.23% increase over 2018. Local unemployment is at a record low at 3% and new construction valued at over \$4 billion will be included on the tax rolls in 2019."* <http://www.orangecountyfl.net/Portals/0/resource%20library/open%20government/Orange%20County%20Adopted%20Fiscal%20Year%202020%20Budget.pdf>

"With the 2023 expected completion of a \$605 million capital improvement plan, the Convention Center's North/South buildings will add a Grand Concourse, including an 80,000 square foot ballroom and 60,000 square feet of meeting space. The new multi-purpose venue will add an additional 200,000 square feet of space projected to accommodate 20,000 attendees"

*"The goal is to **reduce the overall number of automobiles on the roadway** and reduce traffic congestion, including safely supporting our pedestrians and bicyclists. We will continue to have dialogue with our community stakeholders to better define long-term transportation solutions."*

Orange County Convention Center Expansion - Orange County is manufacturing growth that will result in increased traffic with no new funds for

infrastructure or mass transit??? This is what I call reckless growth management. Local leaders apparently take the attitude we must use the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) dollars even if it creates more infrastructure and transit problems. We (Orange County Community) will have to deal with those problems later. We will just go for more of the people's money and increase taxes to pay for our reckless management.

There needs to be serious reform of the TDT rules. As it stands today, the TDT is just a slush fund for the politicians. These funds must address the impact and cost of increased TOURISM created by these types of projects. **IT IS UP TO THE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY LEADERS TO LEAD THE CHARGE FOR STATE CHANGES WITH THE TDT.** This is where the tourist should help pay for infrastructure – not increasing the county sales tax. Additionally, there is no need for government to provide these types of mega-size venues. That is what the private sector is for! The private sector will provide gladly these services if given the opportunity. This is wasteful, reckless spending of Florida tax dollars. Yes. At one point in time there was a need for the Orlando Municipal Auditorium – now known as the Bob Carr Center, but not today. Stop wasting our money on public venues.

“Reduce the overall number of automobiles on the roadway”. This statement sounds wonderful, but it supports my opinion about reckless growth management and a lack of understanding about the needs of local commuters. It is silly/foolish to compare the needs of Orange County, Florida commuters with those in New York City or Chicago. They are completely different situations. Are you saying you want Orange County to be the next NYC or Chicago? If yes, that too is a silly/foolish thought. Please provide a copy of your “Orange County Commuter Study” that supports Orange County, Florida should follow the model of these two cities. Such a study should compare various conditions and determine the impact on commuting (ie. Snow, rain, lightning, environment, safety, family, etc). We need to be honest about commuting in Orange County and all of Florida. I remember all too well what motorists were saying about the proposed “SunRail”. Not an exact quote, but the attitude was....*It will be great – it will get all those commuters off of I-4 and then I can drive.* Many of us knew this was nothing but a pipedream/fantasy. We did not believe the report projecting massive success – back to “The figures don’t lie, but the liars do figure”. SunRail was all about “FREE” federal dollars regardless of the net impact. This is another example of WASTEFUL, RECKLESS SPENDING. AND HERE WE ARE 2019 WITH NO MONEY TO FUND SUNRAIL IN 2021. Now you are coming to the taxpayers expecting us to pay for this mess you made! Lots of wasted tax dollars that has resulted in a totally ineffective mass-transit system. Orange County should have spent TAXPAYER money on an extensive bus-hub system – that would have improved mass-transit and allowed the private sector to participate in providing this needed service. It is 2019 and we still need to develop an extensive bus-hub system, but Orange County will continue to WASTE TAXDOLLARS on SunRail (aka ScamRail). The benefits of a bus-hub system greatly outweigh the limited service provided by SunRail. THERE IS NO MONEY TO CREATE AN EXTENSIVE, EFFECTIVE RAIL SYSTEM. Even if there were tax dollars to waste, there is absolutely no guarantee commuters would use it enough to justify this expense. If so many commuters favor mass transit over personal travel, the private sector would be all over it.

Additionally, politicians love to talk about the transportation and the environment, but they never ever practice what they preach. They never commit to using mass transit as their primary method of travel, but they expect everyone else to use it. There are many reasons why commuters favor the personal automobile over mass-transit. You need to understand this if you want to improve local travel in Orange County. As you should know by now, the primary users of mass-transit use it because they do not have the option of using a personal automobile.

Affordable Housing

The topic of "Affordable Housing" has been mentioned during the transportation town hall meetings. However, you never share the facts about legislative changes that have a negative impact on local municipalities for affordable housing. As our county leader, you need to share the truth about the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund that is being robbed. This so-called "trust fund" was supposed to help with affordable housing. Once again, our tax dollars allocated to a specific purpose – affordable housing is diverted to the general fund. This amounts to perpetrating a FRAUD against the people. The people need to know that we are being robbed of these funds. Unfortunately, this fact is never part of the transportation discussion. Instead, we are being warned (or threatened) the county has no money for affordable housing and the county is crying for more of our money. This is not right!!!

"As every Florida county struggles with an affordable housing problem, Gov. Rick Scott signaled Tuesday he is poised to engage again in the annual real estate bait and switch on taxpayers."

"In the last budget proposal of his term, the governor wants to sweep money from the affordable housing trust funds and use \$92 million of it for other priorities. If the Legislature agrees, it will be the 17th time since 1992 that millions of dollars intended to lower the cost of housing in Florida will be swept into the general revenue account to fund pet projects, other spending priorities and tax breaks."

Read more here: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article184618553.html#storylink=cpy> ##

SunRail was all about FREE Federal Dollars – not a viable Mass-Transit solution for Central Florida.

SunRail eventually will Fail

"SunRail will eventually fail because, in a few years, when local communities begin bearing the high costs of transporting a small number of people, outraged constituents will demand their current crop of politicians pulls the plug on this ill-conceived transportation system. It was never going to fulfill the fantasies of the previous bunch, who so eagerly climbed aboard the SunRail boondoggle because it made them look like progressives who favored mass transportation, and the dollars that paid for the system were almost all federal." <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/os-ed-letter-sunrail-will-fail-20180824-story.html>

Note – Volusia County has backed out and will NOT support or fund SunRail

(aka ScamRail). SunRail was always about the FEDERAL DOLLARS – NEVER A SERIOUS TRANSPORTATION SOLUTION!!!

Corporate Welfare – Crony Capitalism – Political Hypocrisy

Another “Trust” issue.....Politicians frequently complain about all the breaks corporations get while they are on the campaign trail. This political propaganda goes down the toilet once they get into office. This hypocrisy is disgusting and shameful. Who do you really work for???

Excessive financial breaks and tax dollars for mega corporation like Universal and Tavistock. The most recent includes \$141 million for the new Universal theme park. Then millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent for Universal pedestrian bridges when around the same time, Orange County rejected a pedestrian bridge for UCF where multiple students have died.

There is another “sweetheart” in the making for Tavistock and the Split Oak Forest CONSERVATION AREA. I can provide additional documentation if needed.

Bottomline on Corporate Welfare and Crony Capitalism.....Mega corporations get served while the residents/taxpayers are sold-out. Just for clarification; “Crony Capitalism” *an economic system in which family members and friends of government officials and business leaders are given unfair advantages in the form of jobs, loans, etc.. This behavior is unethical and harmful to the people.*

“Florida’s botched SunPass rollout last year could cost the state more than \$50 million in unpaid tolls, the new head of the state’s Turnpike Enterprise told lawmakers Wednesday.”

“She said the state is sending about \$120 million in unpaid bills during the 12-month span after the rollout to bill collectors, and she expects them to recoup between 50 percent and 60 percent of it.” <https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2019/09/19/floridas-sunpass-debacle-could-cost-more-than-50-million/>## The corporation that created this crisis has not been held accountable for these losses – Why not?

Public-Private Projects Where the Public Pays and Pays

“The 75-year lease provided a big upfront cash payment for the state in return for the consortium’s right to collect toll revenue. But the project to upgrade the antiquated 157-mile roadway ran into trouble as the consortium took on too much bank debt, and ridership on the highway dropped during the Great Recession as fewer people were driving to and from work.”

“Eventually the investment consortium had to file for bankruptcy in 2015.”

"Now, most of that \$3.8 billion has been spent, and the new operator of the toll road is continuing to collect fees from drivers. In June, tolls more than doubled for many drivers after a state subsidy that was put in place when the lease deal was signed expired in May." <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/06/business/dealbook/trump-infrastructure-plan-privatized-taxpayers.html>

"And just this week another road project in Indiana fell into disarray, with state officials announcing on Monday that Indiana was trying to take control of the job from a public-private partnership that led by a Spanish company."

"Private money is beginning to line up to take advantage of new deals now that Mr. Trump appears to throwing his backing behind such arrangements."##

Private Roads, Public Costs

The Facts About Toll Road Privatization and How to Protect the Public

"Though these privatization deals seem to offer state officials a "quick fix," they often pose long-term threats to the public interest. By privatizing roadways, officials hand over significant control over regional transportation policy to individuals who are accountable to their shareholders rather than the public. Additionally, the economics of these deals are such that the upfront concession payments are unlikely to match the long-term value of the higher tolls that will be paid by future generations and not collected for public uses.

"Public officials, therefore, should approach the idea of private toll roads with great caution, knowing that the short-term benefits are unlikely to outweigh the long-term costs" https://uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/Private-Roads-Public-Costs-Updated_1.pdf

Gentrification created by Orange County via reckless growth management.

Orange County is actively destroying minority communities and their history. Gentrification destroys the "affordable housing" you claim to care so much about. Why is this being done?? As I see it, ALL FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY!! It has absolutely nothing to do with protecting the community or following the will of the people of the community. Most of the Paramore community and history has been destroyed. **Now the Tangelo Park community and history will be lost too. Why is this happening? Once again appears to be the love of money and political friends like Universal – John McReynolds.**

Gentrification the process of repairing and rebuilding homes and businesses in a deteriorating area (such as an urban neighborhood) accompanied by an influx of middle-class or affluent people and that often results in the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents

Environmental impact is totally ignored.

It seems like many politicians worry about plastic straws while ignoring the destruction of life-sustaining wetlands. I do not understand this logic (or lack of). We need to focus on protecting our Wetlands. And yes, we can and should do a better job of recycling plastic straws and all recyclable products. Please explain why plastic straws are more important and critical to our environment than our wetlands and water resources? This makes no sense to me.

It appears the Orange County Commission has some false notion that humans have the power and control over "Mother Nature". The engineer simply says we will "mitigate the wetlands" and all is well. Well....This simple is not the truth. Flooding in Orange County is getting worse and it a direct result of RECKLESS GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND DESTRUCTION OF CRITICAL WETLANDS. As stated by a Gotha resident....."The water has to go somewhere".

Per the County Charter, the county is obligated to protect the environment. Instead, of protecting our wetlands and environment, the county leaders make sweetheart deals with developers and corporations REGARDLESS of the negative impact it has on the community. They refuse to address the true impact of "mitigating" our wetlands.

The people of Orange County are now starting to pay big time for this reckless growth management. The flooding is getting worse. Baldwin Park now has Flood Warning signs and the Gotha Lake area is underwater – literally.

Where are our County Commission Leaders?

Then there is the water quality and supply that also needs to be addressed along with the impact on plant life, animal life and quality of life. Orange County seems to reject/ignore these things. Why??? As I see it.....ALL FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY. Orange County pretends (or is in denial) there is no limit to how many people can live here and still have a sustainable community and high quality of life. The attitude is we can destroy it now and let someone else deal with it AFTER I am out of office. This approach will never ever make Orange County, Florida a "world class community".

Gotha lake flooding deserves more than a shoulder shrug from Orange County
*"Residents have been complaining about flooding since the 1990s. Back then, Gotha was a quaint little spot about a dozen miles west of downtown Orlando. It retains much of that country charm, **but the population has boomed.**"*

*"That means a **lot of concrete and asphalt has been laid for roads and housing developments. That means a lot of stormwater has to go somewhere.***

Residents say an excessive amount is going into four small lakes. An engineering study they commissioned backs that up." Gotha lake flooding

deserves more than a shoulder shrug from Orange County | Editorial



Gotha lake flooding des...s
more than ...

Then there is the ongoing battle to STOP THE FLOODING AND DESTRUCTION OF THE WETLANDS on Lake Underhill near Chickasaw Trail. Who will the Orange County Commission protect? The developers or the residents of Orange County? PLEASE NOTE THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS FOR HOMES THAT WILL SELL FOR \$400K+ – THAT IS NOT AFFORDABLE HOUSING. Additionally, in this case, there is no room to widen the roads. No room for emergency vehicles and no option for mass transit. Orange County Commission should designate this property as conservation area – they can do this if they have the will and care more about the community than their political friends and more property taxes at the expense of transportation, water resources, wetlands, quality of life, etc etc. This is another example where **Orange County leaders continue to create UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING, FLOODING, TRAFFIC GRIDLOCK, UNSAFE CONDITIONS FOR PEDESTRIANS, ETC ETC ETC.** Why would they do this? Not because they want Orange County to be a “World Class Community”. That is nothing but political rhetoric and brainwashing. That is the political Kool-Aid they want the taxpayers to drink.

As I see it, they really just want the MONEY and to help their political friends regardless of the negative impact it has on the community they claim to care about. **QUESTION....Where will Orange County Leaders be when Lake Underhill is flooded?** Trexler is already flooded. The Alta Underhill project proved there are corrupt games being played to change a flood zone designation to a non-flood zone area. It was blatantly obvious this was done to allow more RECKLESS GROWTH regardless of the harm it will create. What would have happened if the people did not get fully engaged and oppose this change? My guess.... The Orange County Commission would have “rubber stamped” this change without hesitation. Based on the current Gotha flooding situation, Orange County will simply look the other way and assume no responsibility for the flooding they created via reckless growth management.

Transportation Analysis and Solutions

There are Solutions to our transportation “quagmire”, but let’s be honest; the Orange County Commission does not really want to hear solutions from the public. If they were serious about solutions, they would have real Town Halls or Forums that are more than 2 hours and allow for an open and honest discussion on the current transportation conditions and what needs to be done to correct and/or improve them. Like it or not, the first thing is to reign in RECKLESS OUT-OF-CONTROL growth. Regardless of the political consequences that it creates for your next campaign. Can you do this?

There needs to be "Community Boards" where citizens have a real opportunity to participate and have a say in the future of Orange County. There needs to be open, honest public debate on the transportation system we want and need. Can you do this?

Here are a few questions that must have HONEST answers – not more of the status-quo of "we must build it now and figure it out later" or "we can mitigate all the wetlands" or "Build SunRail and hope it will work" and "mass transit is the answer for all of Orange County". We must be honest about our problems if we ever expect to develop a viable solution. This is the only way we can ever hope to improve Life in Orange County, Florida. We know Orange County is a worldwide destination for travelers, but we seem confused as to what makes a "World Class Community".

- **How is Orange County protecting our environment and water resources?** Identify ALL Orange County wetlands that must be protected to ensure proper water resources, plant life, animal habitat and prevent more flooding. We must increase the protection of our Wetlands and environment.

- **What is the quality of life we want for the people of Orange County?** What type of housing is needed for Orange County? What percent of Orange County residents need "affordable housing"? Why is affordable housing vanishing in Orange County – reckless growth management? Does Orange County believe in the American Dream of home ownership or should everyone live in public housing or apartments where a few get rich off of the lower income households? What standard of living and quality of life do WE want for Orange County, Florida residents?

- **Orange County Gentrification.** Are we going to simply "relocate" low income communities and destroy their history for a newer higher priced community? Is that what local leaders think of these communities and their residents? This is disgraceful. This also contributes to the destruction and/or elimination of affordable housing.

- **What is the maximum population for Orange County that is sustainable and will support the quality of life the residents want?** Like it or not, there is a limit to how many people can live in Orange County.

- **Who should pay for infrastructure? Who should pay for NEW infrastructure?** To answer these questions is to answer the question, what is the role of government and the PRIVATE sector? Should government/taxpayers be the bank for the mega corporations that get rich off of low paying jobs and high service fees? Universal should pay for their expansion – this includes the new public roads that will be required for their expansion. The state and/or county should maintain the road.

- **What are the best options for funding infrastructure?** There are many options. The best option(s) will be affordable, effective, accessible and manageable. Like it or not, the gas tax is the most effective and least expensive option for highway funding. However, it should not be the only source of funding. Highways/Roadways impact everyone regardless

of their use of a personal automobile. We know electric cars reduce gas tax revenues. Thus, electric vehicles should pay an additional highway tax at the time of registration. However, government elected to give tax breaks for electric car usage and penalize the rest of the motorists. No tax breaks for the majority of automobile commuters. The option of a dedicated annual highway tax accessed at the time of registration should be considered. This would yield a net profit of 99%. There is virtually no overhead cost to this revenue stream. Do the math. What would the annual revenues be if every FL registered motorcycle paid \$5, compact cars paid \$8, larger cars and SUVs paid \$10? This option will require close oversight to ensure these taxes are used strictly for highways/roadway and not diverted like other "Trust Funds" are today.

Will the Orange County community ever embrace mass-transit? If yes, why? If no, why not? It is not practical or logical or realistic to compare Orange County, Florida to New York City or Chicago. We need a viable bus-hub system to have any chance of increasing the use of mass-transit. Mass-transit must be convenient, easily accessible, safe and cost effective in order to encourage motorists to leave their cars home. Let's be honest, standing out in the heat facing a lightning storm is not what most commuters would choose. The current SunRail/Lynx systems are extremely ineffective and costly. Discontinue SunRail and fix Lynx. First things first for mass-transit.

Why is SunRail failing? The answer is simple... SunRail is NOT convenient, easily accessible, safe and cost effective. It really is not "rocket science". Bottom Line.... How much of the people's money has already been wasted on SunRail? What price has Lynx and their commuters paid for SunRail?

Just imagine....What would our Lynx mass-transit system look like today if we would have used SunRail money differently – more responsible like on a bus-hub system? How much more taxpayer money should be wasted on SunRail or what will it take to make SunRail a viable option? Is it realistic that SunRail can be viable within the next 10 years? 20 years? I cannot see SunRail being a viable option with the current bus system.

Why do elected leaders insist on taking so-called "FREE" federal dollars for useless projects (aka boondoggles) like SunRail that are guaranteed to result in massive debt and financial hardship for the taxpayers. There is no justification for the tax dollars spent/wasted on SunRail. **The SunRail program needs to be derailed until the bus system can support it.**

Bottom line about the Orange County Transportation Town Hall Meetings – as I see it.....These meetings are really more about promoting and justifying a sales tax increase and less about real solutions for local travel/commuting. The information I have seen and heard is questionable/suspect. Simply put, I do not trust a lot of what is said at these meetings. Some have said they amount to a "dog and pony show" with the intent to convince/persuade/brainwash why the public should support this tax hike with very basic incomplete data/information. I also noticed the Commissioners participate very little in the discussion. This concerns me. Why do they not share concerns and suggestions they hear from their constituents?

Thus, I have to ask.....Are the misrepresentations, errors, omissions, falsehoods, etc “intentional”? I cannot help but believe in some cases, the answer is YES! Thus, how can I TRUST my County Commission on these issues? The history does not support the “Just Trust Me” answer to transportation and quality of life in Orange County, Florida.

Please understand, I have not listed all of my concerns for transportation, but I will leave it here for now. I have identified some key points, but there is much more that should be addressed in an open public forum.

Speaking of Trust Mayor Demings

Since you brought up “life and death decisions” at these Transportation Town Hall Meetings, I need to chime in here.

At these Town Hall meetings you like to tout/hype/flaunt about your time as Orange County Sherriff and how you had to make life and death decisions. I have no doubt you did that. In fact, you made such a decision about an elderly lady by the name of Miriam Elizabeth Lancaster. I know this because I was there. I was there fighting for Miriam’s rights including the right to live and well, sad to say; the Orange County Sheriff basically did NOTHING to protect this lady’s life. For those of us who were there standing by Miriam’s side; we witnessed first-hand what happened to Miriam, we know her death was premature. We know she was denied her most basic rights. We know she was tortured. Many of us called the Orange County Sheriff and begged for help, but got none. As the Sheriff – the highest law enforcement officer in the land, you had options to help. You could have requested/obtained medical records and interviewed people to determine if Miriam was in fact being abused, but you, the Orange County Sheriff elected to walk away and do nothing. Miriam was 101, but she was too young to die. Let me know if you would like to see videos of Miriam at 101 and then maybe you can explain to me why you, the Orange County Sheriff, did nothing to protect her life. This is another reason I do not trust your decision making. I will gladly have an open and honest discussion about the life and death of Miriam E. Lancaster. It is still my opinion it was murder, but since she was 101, who cared about her life? Definitely not the Orange County Sheriff. That is exactly the way I saw it and I was a witness to it. With that being said and with the recent case of Orange County Professional Guardian Rebecca Fierle, I have to ask you Mayor Demings.....Are you going to attend the Nov 4th Orlando Guardianship Town Hall that addresses guardianship abuse or will you ignore this growing crime against the elderly that is happening right here in Orange County, Florida?

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Sally Baptiste

Resident and Taxpayer of Orange County, Florida.

*Thank you,
Sally Baptiste*



Mayor Demings Open House.pdf
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