The proposed changes to the White Flint taxing district are complex. The changes will affect property owners in different ways, depending on whether or not they have redeveloped their properties.

Friends of White Flint understands the need for a tax increase in the White Flint taxing district. According to the Office of Management and Budget, if the 10 percent cap is not lifted to enable general obligation bonds to be used to fund the Western Workaround, the funding for transportation improvements would have to be taken from the general fund, something that everyone would like to avoid, if possible, in this economic climate. We support the use of GO bonds to fund infrastructure improvements in the White Flint area.

Friends of White Flint strongly urges the county to work with the stakeholders to solve these funding issues as true private-public partners in the redevelopment of the Pike District. Timely and honest communication a year ago about these funding issues would have given the stakeholders and county the ability to thoughtfully discuss solutions. Instead, there is a rushed process that has not reflected the spirit of the White Flint sector plan. Giving notice to owners only one month ahead of such a dramatic change in future tax burdens is not adequate. We suggest it would be prudent to add an additional 90-180 days for owners to work with county staff to ensure a mutually agreeable solution is found.

Although we realize everyone in the county government is working as diligently and as quickly as possible to move infrastructure projects forward, when a project like the Western Workaround is delayed by years and incurs significant additional costs, property owners are asked to pay the bill yet have no voice in the project.

Also, a discussion that allows property owners, residents, businesses, and the county to come to consensus about the timing of infrastructure projects and the priority of these projects is essential. An emphasis must be placed on ensuring that all the other improvements outlined in the 2010 sector plan will be implemented by the special taxing district.

Friends of White Flint asks the county to consider delaying any proposed increases and as many changes to the White Flint taxing district as possible to enable the county and stakeholders to work together to develop solutions that enhance the White Flint area. Infrastructure improvements are critical to laying the path toward a vibrant Pike District/White Flint area; thoughtful communication in a true private-public partnership will be critical to building and funding these improvements today and tomorrow.