

# Myrtle Beach Sun News

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## ELLIOTT'S FOLLY

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### Article Text:

Sen. Dick Elliott, D-North Myrtle Beach, is not alone among local legislators in opposing more intelligent planning for our communities. When the S.C. House passed the Priority Investment Act back in February, S.C. Reps. Tracy Edge, R-North Myrtle Beach; Nelson Hardwick, R-Surfside Beach; Liston Barfield, R-Aynor; and Billy Witherspoon, R-Conway, voted against it.

But those gentlemen, at least, made their opposition to more intelligent community planning a matter of public record. Elliott, in contrast, has lodged a sneak objection to the bill, preventing easy Senate consideration of the measure. If his objection holds until the end of the 2006 legislative session next week, one of the most intelligent pieces of legislation to come along in years will die.

The bill, which grew from a recommendation of Gov. Mark Sanford's quality-of-life task force, amends the Local Government Planning Act, to require county and municipal councils to include two new elements in their comprehensive plans.

The transportation element would ensure that local planning commissions and councils take transportation impacts into account when approving new development. Over time, this would discourage local government approval of projects that overload local roads.

The second, a priority investment element, would improve planning and development coordination among adjoining local governments. The priority investment approach to local planning also would encourage wise spending of public funds on roads, sewer and water systems and other infrastructure, within the scope of available dollars.

More important - and exciting - the priority investment element would require local councils to create market-based incentives to encourage developers to build affordable housing. As part of that, local governments also would be required to analyze local housing regulations to eliminate requirements that inhibit construction of affordable housing.

The measure seems made to order for Horry and Georgetown counties. Here, lack of coordination among local jurisdictions and virtually nonexistent transportation planning have created - and continue to create - areas of ugly sprawl and gridlock that mar our otherwise beautiful communities. At the same time, the rising cost of housing has rendered it virtually impossible for our communities' hardest working families to buy homes.

Elliott's end-of-session games with bills he doesn't have the courage to oppose openly have caused problems in the past. But this time, he is messing around with the best chance our state has had in years to improve its quality of life without driving up taxes or imposing undue burdens on local government.

Elliott should remove his objection to the bill this week , so the Senate can consider - and pass - the measure. Otherwise, he risks being labeled - and remembered - as the senator whose long political career culminated in a sneak attack on his own North Strand constituents, who have made crystal clear that they want disorderly development and bad planning to end.

Editor's note: S.C. Reps. Alan Clemmons, R-Myrtle Beach; Thad Viers, R-Myrtle Beach; Vida Miller, D-Pawleys Island; and Carl Anderson, D-Georgetown, were part of the majority that wrought House passage of the bill.

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