



Name: Michael Polensek

Ward: Ward 8

Do you agree with the goals outlined in the active transportation vision?

Yes

What components of the vision would you make a priority and how would you implement them?

Since I am assuming the overwhelming number of council members are supportive of an active transportation vision along with the Administration, I believe that the most important component in your goals section is #5 - to prioritize through improved coordination and decision-making. We must do a much better job in planning, funding and implementation. It is about setting real priorities specifically in our neighborhoods. Every road or highway reconstructed should be looked at for bike lanes where possible. We need to identify funding resources and move forward. It takes far too long to get things done in this city.

Bicycling/walking and safe bike/pedestrian infrastructure enhances quality of life and addresses issues such as affordability, equity, access, health, and the safety of our streets. In your view, what can the City of Cleveland and you as a member of city council do to actively encourage more people to bike and walk?

The City does a terrible job regarding enforcement of hazardous and dangerous sidewalks. Enforcement is non-existent. That is the first thing the Administration needs to address. Secondly, we need a 50/50 sidewalk program that is clear, concise and easy to manage. Again, that is missing. I don't have to tell you about the condition of many of our main, secondaries and residential side streets. If we are to encourage more cycling our streets have to be safe and clean of debris ie monthly street sweeping would help as it once was in the day. I do believe that if we sit down and come up with a clear and concise maintenance plan for sidewalks and streets we could see a tremendous uptick in people walking/biking.

About 25 percent of Cleveland households have no access to an automobile, and are dependent on affordable transportation like biking and walking in addition to transit. Have you ever been transit-dependent or car-free? How do you understand the experiences of residents who don't have the option to drive, particularly children, seniors, and people with a disability? Please describe your vision for non-motorized transportation.

I am keenly aware of the folks who don't have access to own vehicles. I have the largest concentration of seniors and disabled folks in Ward 8 at the Euclid Beach and Beachcrest apartments on Lakeshore

Boulevard. Therefore, sidewalk maintenance and upkeep is critical. In addition, Lakeshore Blvd and St Clair Avenue have historically been access routes for public transportation, which again, has declined as a result of RTA cutbacks. We need a much more state wide lobbying effort to address public transportation issues. Again, if you want folks to bike/walk there has to be clear and maintained pathways to encourage and allow this. The City needs to do a much better job of coordinating new bike lanes with construction projects.

We are at the point now where increasing on-street infrastructure like bike lanes will require some difficult decisions, which will not please everyone. A classic example is the struggle between installing bike lanes, sometimes at the expense of on-street parking. Give us some insight into your decision making process and how you plan to balance the opinions of residents who may be at odds.

As of this point, we have not really had that problem in Ward 8. Lakeshore Boulevard could have been coordinated much better had bike lanes been incorporated into the original design when the street was rebuilt and resurfaced. The bike lanes were installed after that project and as a result have caused some minor conflict. We got through it and are moving forward.

The UHBikes Bike Share program, launched in 2016, is a low-cost transportation solution for trips that are too far to walk, yet too short to take transit or drive. Have you used this service and what are your thoughts? What ideas do you have to help increase the accessibility of bike share, especially in lower income communities?

I have not used it and am not knowledgeable about it. I support bike share initiatives in general where they are feasible and make sense. The question is funding. If the private sector steps up it is much more feasible to implement these types of programs.

People bike when it's safe, comfortable, and connects to the places they need to go. Cleveland's bike infrastructure, while it's come a long way, is still disjointed. In your opinion, what steps do we need to take to close these gaps?

As I said before, a lot of this has to do with roadway maintenance and design when projects are initiated. It is one thing to talk about bike access and another thing to maintain it and to implement designs and routes that make sense, safe for all, and maintained.

Do you have a biking or walking related story you'd like to tell? Tell us your favorite bike ride or walk through the community?

I walk everyday when I can with my dog in the MetroParks at Villa Angela, Euclid Beach and Wildwood parks. I don't bike as much as I would like to - for I just don't have the time.

Are you aware of the Midway Protected Bike Lane plan recently completed by the Cleveland City Planning Commission? Are you supportive of the plan?

No. I don't know what is in the plan so I cannot say if I would support it or not.

Would you as an elected official hold those making decisions about street design, engineering and construction engineering, accountable for the way they design roadways for all road users?

By all means. This has been the historic problem in the city. Residents, businesses and all road users are far too often left out of the planning and design process. Lakeshore Boulevard was a classic case.

Bike Cleveland supports Vision Zero, the principle that transportation should focus on safety of all road users (cyclists, pedestrians and motorists) as a foundation, and that the only acceptable number of deaths on the road is zero. 2015 was a very dangerous year for Ohio cyclists, with more deaths than in the last 40 years. Do you agree with Vision Zero and prioritizing safety over speed? How would you implement Vision Zero as an elected official?

I support any effort that makes our road ways safer for all involved. Case in point, I myself was pulling out of the Collinwood Recreation Center when a cyclist ran into the side of my car. He indicated that he become distracted by a motorist who swerved into the bike lane. Thank goodness he wasn't hurt. However, at the end of the day, we all have to be much more careful whether it be biking, driving or walking due to the increased distractions and the increased number of bicyclists. We need better striping where bath paths are implemented and improved signage. In addition, there needs to be police enforcement, for this is an ongoing issue with motorists driving in designated bike lanes, I see it all the time.

Why do you think people who care about street safety and/or bicycling and walking issues should vote for you?

Because my position has been clear. I support bike lanes were feasible and safe. I have incorporated the community into the decision making process. Lakeshore Boulevard was a good example where I solicited the citizens for their input and actually took a vote of various options for the roadway. After the bike lanes were implemented. I don't believe in jamming ideas down people's throats. We need citizen input in whatever we do and there has to be a more proactive planning approach to bike and walking implementation and/or paths. I am committed to that; in fact, i would like to see the Euclid Creek Greenway / bikepath implemented from Euclid Avenue to the lakefront. The Administration keeps pushing it back but I am committed to seeing it a reality. This is why I seek the endorsement from BikeCleveland.