



**Candidate Name:** Michael Hardy

**Office Seeking:** Ward 11

**Q1. Bicycling/walking and bike/pedestrian infrastructure enhances quality of life and addresses issues such as affordability, equity, access, health, and the safety of our streets. What can the City of Cleveland and you as an elected official do to actively encourage more people to bike and walk?**

**A1.** We can lead by example. As a youth, I was an avid cyclist. At times, I stop and look at bikes. Although I haven't been on a bike in some, health and wellness are my hobbies. Also, the word, health, is in my platform. At City Hall, providing that Covid levels allow it, I would like to participate in or lead team-building activities that deal with health, wellness, and exercise. This can be promoted on social media and regular media. We could issue challenges with City Halls in other cities. This has the potential to be very big and transformative, not just from a health and wellness perspective but also a public-awareness and networking perspective. We would get to know each other better and could accomplish a lot.

**Q2. People bike and walk when it's safe, comfortable, and connects to the places they need to go. Cleveland's bike infrastructure is still disjointed. In your opinion, where are the most urgent gaps in our bike network and what steps do we need to take to close these gaps?**

**A2.** In my opinion, there are information gaps in terms of just how disconnected the bike lanes are and which streets are less accessible and more accessible. We could use more public service announcements and reminders that not everyone drives a car or rides a bus. Many are cyclists who deserve to be safe on the roads just like everyone else. The information needs to be out in public more. Therefore, it can be shared and exchanged more. This in turn will lead to more productive communication between the residents, merchants, political leaders, and visitors.

**Q3. Cities across the country are installing protected bike lanes, bike lanes with physical separation between bike and automobile traffic, to encourage more people to ride and make roadways safer for all users. Do you support the installation of protected bike lanes on Cleveland's streets? Please explain why.**

**A3.** I support physical bike lanes where it is feasible. The safer we can make it for the cyclists, the better. A street would have to be wide enough to do that. Also, parking for businesses and their customers would have to be considered. If it's feasible to construct physical lanes, it should be done but I believe circumstances, the impact on businesses, and what streets are possibilities. Community forums should take place before funding and construction happens.

**Q4. People take public transit when it's frequent, fast, reliable, safe, clean, and comfortable. The NextGen bus system redesign goes a long way to improving on this, but there is still much to be done. In your opinion, what steps do we need to take to close these gaps?**

**A4.** I addressed some of this in The Plain Dealer interview. It might be one of the reasons I was endorsed. In my opinion, and from what riders have said to me and on the news, there needs to be more coverage and frequency for the areas, especially for those who work odd hours. A recent NextGen meeting discussed funding cuts at the state level. There seems to be a very big disconnect in terms of what's needed here regionally and what they are doing in Columbus. Infrastructure is something I believe must be reimagined. Transportation, including all public transportations and Community Responsive Transit, is part of the infrastructure because it enables people to live the quality of life they deserve, regardless of their economic status and material possessions. It also helps us deal with our local food deserts. The food desert issue and public transit, or lack thereof, are strongly connected, as is the digital divide, which is needed to view bus schedules. We need more local leaders to realize that we need to reimagine what infrastructure is. It is not just roads and bridges, it's also public transportation and internet service. I am ready to go to City Hall to build and lead alliances with like-minded Council Members who are dedicated to moving Cleveland forward to a better and stronger future.

**Q5. Public transportation riders want a safe and comfortable place to wait for their bus or train and easy access to get there. Yet, often a bus stop is little more than a sign and pole stuck in the middle of a treelawn. How would you work to improve bus shelters and train stations and the sidewalks and pathways to get there?**

**A5.** A lot of improvements would be most productive if led from within. This means that leaders must lead via engagement with the public. Forums are great because the question-and-answer period would provide valuable details. This way leaders will get the full picture because the comments and people would be out front. Therefore, I signed on for Public Comment right away (I was a very early if not the earliest of signers...). If it is an Ordinance (not a Resolution), it would have staying power and could help our city and region. From the forums, funding should take center stage. Yes, I agree the shelters, stations and the areas around them need to be visible, safe (including mobility), and obstruction free. The forums would add a spotlight (of all kinds) that could yield lots of solutions.

**Q6. About 25 percent of Cleveland households have no access to an automobile, and are dependent on public transportation/biking/walking. Peer cities are advancing multimodal transportation to improve safety, access to jobs, community health, the environment, and attract population. Have you ever been transit-dependent or car-free? What's your vision for public transportation and increased active transportation in Cleveland, how will you advance it, and how will you keep it functional year around?**

**A6.** Except for one rental (hours), I was car-free the entire time I lived in Asia. I took public transit and taxis in South Korea. When I didn't use the taxi in Taiwan, I rode a scooter and a motorcycle.

In The Plain Dealer endorsement interview, I mentioned that we need to reimagine and rethink economic development, education and job training, and job opportunities. I mentioned how other cities did this and thrived. We didn't. We cannot be left behind again. Like I said in the interview we must prepare our region for jobs of the future—the digital age. Most high-paying and skilled jobs all require the internet. Since 31-32% of the city lacks access, it puts them and the area at a disadvantage. Economic conditions impact everything mentioned in the above question: ...safety, access to jobs, community health, the environment, and attract population. Our economy and trained workforce connects the dots to everything. The problems are: We need leaders to realize what happened before and the fact this is a critical time in (my ward) and the city's history; and we need leaders who are determined to solve the issues that you mentioned. In other talks I mentioned communicating with, researching, analyzing peer cities' successes. Therefore, I am eager to go to Cleveland City Hall to build and lead alliances with like-minded council members who are dedicated to moving Cleveland to a better and stronger future. The Plain Dealer recognized this and endorsed me over the incumbent.

**Q7. Fare revenue makes up about 10% of all funding for GCRTA while the agency spends \$1.8 million on police fare enforcement. Meanwhile, agencies like LA Metro and Kansas City are exploring free fares and other systems such as in Pittsburgh have introduced low-income fare discount programs. How much would you personally pay to ride public transit to work? How fast would you expect the trip to be door-to-door?**

**A7.** You'll hear me mention public forums a lot. That's because I believe public feedback is very important. I have visited countries where there is little-to-no public feedback. This was a reason for signing on for Public Comment right away. People from each ward should have more input in the funding and that will help guide and determine matters.

I know the monthly fare is \$95-to-\$105. Looking at a Council Member's income, if I personally had to pay a little more than that, I would be okay with it.

I have a ten-minute drive to the rapid station. When I worked downtown, I drove to the station, parked, and used the train. If I drove to the rapid station and took the train downtown and briskly walked to City Hall, that would take about 25-to-30 minutes. If I had to take the bus, it would take longer. The bus doesn't pass my house, so I would have a 15-minute walk to the bus stop. From there, I would have a 40-to-45-minutes. The entire trip from the walk to the bus stop to City Hall would be 60-to-65 minutes.

In my case, there's an inconvenience because of a lack of bus access near my house. There used to be a bus stop near my house. That was convenient. If I had to take the bus now, the long walk would be inconvenient.

There has to be continual comment and engagement with the community to see where the services can be improved. When it comes to public transportation, frequency and coverage are issues.

**Q8. Vision Zero is the principle that transportation should focus on safety of all road users (cyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and motorists) as a foundation, and that the only acceptable number of deaths on the road is zero. The City of Cleveland is in the process of creating a Vision Zero Action Plan and committing to eliminating all serious injury and fatal crashes in the City. Do you see Vision Zero as a priority and how will you advance it?**

**A8.** Yes, I see Vision Zero as a priority. Those who are most vulnerable on the road (cyclists, pedestrians, transit users) must be protected because they are very exposed. The humane thing to do is to work toward protecting residents who are the most vulnerable. At the moment, Vision Zero is a Resolution and falls short of granting full protections. I would seek to advance it as an Ordinance, thus giving it more strength.

**Q9. The HealthLine, as originally planned and operated, used what's called a "proof-of-payment" fare collection system, which GCRTA enforced with armed police until the practice was declared unconstitutional in 2017. In response, CPT has called for the creation of a transit ambassador program consisting of unarmed, non-deputized civilians to conduct fare enforcement but also to serve as another set of eyes on the ground and a smiling face to help guide riders, similar to the Downtown Cleveland Alliance Ambassadors. Do you support the creation of a transit ambassador program as CPT has proposed?**

**A9.** Yes

**Q10. Fare evasion is currently a 4th degree criminal misdemeanor, punishable up to 30 days in jail and up to \$250 fine while parking tickets are treated as civil offenses, not criminal offenses, with a small fee and no jail time. Do you support decriminalizing fare evasion?**

**A10.** No

**Q11. There was a racial reckoning in 2020. How do you envision working toward safe streets for biking, walking and public transportation users while also reducing the dependence on armed officers to enforce traffic laws?**

**A11.** Security problems are complex. Some people want that strong law enforcement response. Needs differ from ward to ward and neighborhood to neighborhood. Therefore, I believe in community forums. Feedback and engagement are great indicators in terms of how to create and form policy. I believe in safe streets for biking, walking and public transportation but I think we must address what areas need. My vision is to seek input from the ward, encourage my colleagues to do the same, reconvene at City Hall to discuss how we move forward regarding the aforementioned.

I will add that safety is tied to economic development. We know if the economy improves safety improves as well. Therefore, we must reimagine and rethink education, job training, and economic

development which was done by peer cities. By taking the addressing and retooling our economic plans we will solve many issues.

**Q12. Do you oppose or support a property tax levy in Cuyahoga County to raise additional funding for GCRTA?**

**A12.** Oppose

**Q13. Do you oppose or support a sales tax levy in Cuyahoga County to raise additional funding for GCRTA?**

**A13.** Support

**Q14. What should GCRTA's top priority be with any additional funding secured?**

**A14.** This should be preceded by a public forum within the wards and/or surveys and questionnaires. Since I am answering now, I will go by what I have found out via conversations with riders. From what I have learned is frequency and area coverage are big issues. Some people have unique work hours and require better frequency and coverage.

**Q15. Suburban sprawl has been a major theme in greater Cleveland's decades of decline, and as the population spreads out, maintaining transit service becomes less efficient. How will you proactively integrate land use policies into your transportation agenda?**

**A15.** Information that would come from a public forum would reveal valuable information. I would look at the data and the information. The major point and direction that must be considered is how well we are serving our residents. In Ward 11, along with the community development corporation, I would look at areas where residential housing could be remodeled and rebranded. I would look for areas where businesses could see the increased traffic. There are population increases in some areas and declines in others. A lot would be revealed via public forums and meeting with neighborhood community development corporations.

**Q16. The current GCRTA board president and city of Cleveland appointee, Rev. Charles Lucas, is a regular paratransit rider and the newest member of the board and Cuyahoga County appointee, Roberta Duarte, is a regular bus rider. CPT believes it is important that these voices are represented on the board of trustees and would like to see more riders appointed to the board. The city of Cleveland has the largest share (4) of appointments to the 10-member board. Will you commit to appointing more riders to the GCRTA board?**

**A16.** Yes

**Q17. People care about street safety and bicycling, transit and walking issues. Why should these voters vote for you?**

**A17.** The voters should choose me because I am the only candidate for Ward 11 that was born and raised in the Ward. Except for the years I lived overseas, Cleveland has been my home. I am the only candidate who knows the entire ward as a resident and volunteer, not as a politician or political candidate.

“Transparent government, advocate for safety & justice, and supports health & recreation needs” are part (not the entire...but part) of my platform. Those three points are congruent with some of Bike Cleveland’s focus and needs.

My entire platform addresses Ward 11’s issues and challenges but it also addresses the city of Cleveland’s critical issues as well. The Plain Dealer noticed this in our recent interview. It is the only interview where every candidate had to answer questions (some of them different) for more than an hour.

This is a critical moment in the city’s history. The newspaper endorsed me because they said, “The ward also needs a representative on City Council open to citywide reforms to achieve greater transparency and engagement with citizens and improved police accountability -- and effectiveness.”

The Plain Dealer piece went on to say that my “resume demonstrates a range of skills and a familiarity with the fact that Ward 11, like Cleveland itself, is at a critical point in its history. His fresher ideas would serve Ward 11’s residents well by meeting the future.”

Again, this is the only time, we (the three candidates) answered questions for over an hour. None of us knew what questions they would ask and I don’t think anyone knew the interviewers.

If your organization is interested in supporting a candidate who’s determined to improve Ward 11 and beyond, I am the candidate. I am ready to go to City Hall, build, and lead strong alliances that are dedicated to making sure the city is prepared now and for the future.

Send me to City Hall and let’s make these things happen!