



Candidate Name: Kris Harsh

Office Seeking: Ward 13

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. Building up our off-street infrastructure seems like the best way to go. As someone who rode a bike as my primary transportation in the city for a few years, every opportunity to get off the street and onto a non-motorized path is a welcomed one. Bicycle lanes are important and should be maximized at all times but the biggest risk to cyclists on the road are drivers on the road. Getting bikes a separate infrastructure supports the safety that will encourage more people to ride more often. After that, ensuring that bike lanes are intuitive to both cyclists and drivers and building them properly is important.

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. I'm not an expert on this city-wide, I will take input from you on those issues. In Old Brooklyn where I'm running the biggest need is in repaving Fulton Rd. It's currently a 4-lane clusterf*!k and in desperate need of overhaul. If I could wave my magic wand I would make it a 3 lane (one north, one south, one dedicated turn) with bicycle lanes either on both sides or in a protected lane on one side. We could use an east/west connector and Oak Park is probably the best candidate for that.

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. Yes. I am a fan of traffic calming strategies and safe cycling. Protected lanes accomplish both.

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. This is a frustrating question because RTA is, well...regional. Cleveland City Council doesn't get a lot of say in what they do. With that in mind, constant advocacy and support for progressive transportation design is always on the menu. We can support our City Planners and help them when they need us. And again, I'm not running for office because I have all the answers to all the problems. I consider listening to experts a vital part of the job. When people dedicated to understanding these issues and advocating for smart design petition elected leaders I am going to listen.

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. for one, I would never allow a bus stop with holes as part of the design to be built on my watch! Bus shelters are simple, common and expected. They are part of the urban landscape and we should have them. I hesitate to say the city should build them since we can't dictate where the stops are, but we should advocate for them.

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. Yes! for about two years in my mid-20s I did not own a car. I could not afford one after mine broke down. I lived in Tremont and took my bike and buses everywhere. I hitched a trailer to it and did my grocery shopping at Dave's and the West Side market. I put knobbies on during the winter and rode up Murray Hill to go to work. The bike racks on the front of RTA buses were a life saver on bad weather days but a good cyclist can usually beat the bus. Even when I have a car I prefer cycling whenever I can. My vision is probably the same as yours. The vision isn't the issue in my mind, the actual nuts and bolts of implementation is the issue. I will work with our city planning department and streets department to push multimodal options whenever and wherever possible.

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. I lived in Philadelphia for four months in 2004. Their SEPTA pass was \$18/week and got you anywhere in the city in about 30 minutes. It was beautiful. At \$95/month I won't accuse RTA of being too far ahead of inflation (cheaper fares are always preferred, of course) but clearly the service you get

for that price is well below what you can expect in major American cities. This is one reason Cleveland is a "mid-sized" city to begin with. If I could get from my house to City Hall in 30 minutes guaranteed I would consider that success. Currently it takes me about an hour. A friend of mine rides the bus every day from Old Brooklyn to downtown and the commute takes 20 minutes in the morning and up to 60 in the evening. Consistency would be nice.

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. I only have a cursory understanding of the proposal but will happily listen to proponents explain it in detail.

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. Yes

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. demilitarize public transportation and decriminalize usage.

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

A12. Support

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. improve service

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. I'm not sure this question is intended for a Cleveland City Council candidate. I oppose suburban sprawl with every fiber of my body and that's one reason I advocate so much for city living. The planet can not sustain McMansion lifestyles and gated communities beyond gated communities. In Old Brooklyn we are pretty well built out in terms of land usage. I support dense housing development on major roads and want to encourage young people to buy houses in the city when the time comes to have a back yard. I support raising water rates proportionally to your distance from the pump and would love it if RTA just stopped at the city's borders. In Cleveland, we need to build a city people want to live in.

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. I have used public transit and bicycles as my only mode of transportation. I know what it's like to wake up and check the weather report to figure out your commute time and what you can do that day. I haven ridden recreationally for decades and now I take my children on bike paths for family outings. Public transit and cycling are important to me because I know first hand how vital they are in our daily lives.