



Candidate Name: Jenny Spencer

Office Seeking: Ward 15

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. Four major infrastructure projects are underway or planned in Ward 15, all of which will impact biking and walkability: West 65th Street improvements (\$4.5M, underway), Lake Avenue improvements (\$3.6M, underway), Franklin Boulevard improvements (\$3.3M, anticipated 2022), and Lorain Avenue improvements (\$11.8M, anticipated 2024). I have found that Council members play a critical role in terms of advocating for design improvements and bicycle and pedestrian safety. While I do not have a background or technical expertise in these areas, I am fortunate that a number of subject matter experts reside in Ward 15. In addition to soliciting community feedback as a whole, I turn to these individuals for feedback and insights. I also call upon Bike Cleveland staff for technical assistance.

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. Ward 15 has just taken a significant leap forward in terms of bike infrastructure: with the recent completion of the Red Line Greenway and the Whiskey Island connector, there are more options for pedestrians and cyclists to safely traverse our Ward. I now have first-hand experience of what a difference these trail connectors can make. The next challenge we face in Ward 15 is the gap between West Boulevard and West 117th Street, and how to create an all ages and abilities connector in that stretch. Cleveland Metroparks has put forward a sidewalk enhancement option for Lake Avenue, and we are deep in a community engagement process around that proposal.

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 absolutely support the installation of protected bike lanes on Cleveland's streets. One solution I believe should be implemented is "swapping" parking lanes with bike lanes: in other words, locating the bike lane directly against the curb, then a buffer lane, and then the parking lane. This allows for on-

street parked cars to naturally create a protected buffer for cyclists, and to calm traffic through the visual narrowing of the roadway. Other cities have implemented this configuration and I think we are overdue to implement it in Cleveland.

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. Ward 15 may have benefited more from NextGen improvements compared with other communities: for example, previously discontinued bus lines on Madison Avenue and West 65th Street returned with the NextGen redesign. In terms of advocacy and closing additional gaps, I would follow the lead of Clevelanders for Public Transit and listen to their recommendations. I am fortunate to have Clevelanders for Public Transit leaders residing in Ward 15.

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. One of the most egregious examples of poor transit waiting environment design are the “artistic bus shelters” that have stood at the intersection of West 65th Street and Detroit Avenue for the past decade. After years of community advocacy and coordination between the Council office, GCRTA and the local community development corporation, these two bus shelters will be relocated to other neighborhood locations to serve as park benches. GCRTA will replace them with protective shelters that improve the transit riders’ experiences along this busy, 24-hour bus line.

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. Until a few years ago, my husband and I were a single-vehicle household, and my husband relied on the #26 bus line or his bike to get to his job downtown. The Detroit-Superior Bridge bike lane additions were a game changer for his commute and safety. In my previous job, I walked to work every day; one of the ways in which I sought to make my community more walkable was by raising awareness and increasing accountability for winter sidewalk snow and ice removal (an ongoing battle but one that's worth the effort). Ward 15 is fortunate because for the most part, our neighborhoods are walkable, accessible and connected via transit. Our single greatest challenge is housing affordability. Since residents do have the option to rely on transit or be car-free, it is even more important to infuse housing equity into our ward. To that end, my top priority as Ward 15 Council representative is to continue to

create and preserve affordable housing, so residents of all incomes and backgrounds can benefit from our connectivity and proximity. My website, jennyspencer.org, has more information about affordable and mixed-income housing.

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 appreciate Clevelanders for Public Transit's ongoing advocacy around these issues. In my own experience, during the years when I relied on public transit to get to work, a \$5 all-day pass was feasible for me (\$5 for unlimited rides and transfers). A 45-minute commute is probably the maximum that is reasonable. In Ward 15, we have explored a "hire local" program, so that more residents can walk to work in their own neighborhood.

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. My predecessor on Cleveland City Council, Matt Zone, was a founder and passionate advocate for Vision Zero, and I am proud that the Ward 15 Council office continues to actively engage and serve on the Vision Zero Task Force. I have a 0.75 FTE staff member dedicated to special projects, and one of their top priorities is Vision Zero and traffic calming. Any pedestrian death in the city of Cleveland is unacceptable. It's essential that we continue to advance the work of the Vision Zero Task Force.

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. No matter what street I visit in Ward 15, residents advocate for traffic calming and increased enforcement to address speeding and unsafe driver behavior. There are not enough resources for consistent, citywide, comprehensive traffic enforcement by police, however. Moreover, such enforcement is problematic because it leaves too much room for implicit bias, human error and targeting of black and brown drivers by police officers. A best case scenario would be to bring back automated traffic enforcement: the speed and red-light cameras that were voted down in 2014. This automated enforcement eliminates bias in policing and is a responsible use of taxpayer dollars. I have not yet done enough research to understand what it would take to bring automated traffic enforcement back in Cleveland, and whether it's even possible. In the meantime, systems and roadway design such as through the Vision Zero Task Force or Complete and Green Streets will continue to serve a critical role in ensuring pedestrian and cyclist safety.

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. I responded "support" to the two questions above because I recognize the need to raise additional revenue. I am wary of the heavy taxpayer burden that is placed on Northeast Ohioans and feel that the state of Ohio does not do enough to fund public transportation. Ohio's transit funding is much lower per resident compared with other states. In terms of spending of new revenue, I would rely on the guidance of GCRTA and Clevelanders for Public Transit to discern priorities; however, fare equity is a top issue that affects the lives of many Ward 15 residents. A portion of funding should certainly be allocated to combat fare increases and infuse equity into fare structures.

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. Vibrant NEO 2040 presents a clear roadmap for future development and collaboration in our region. I have been thrilled by NOACA's recent use of its new policy to decline new suburban highway interchanges. I applaud this leadership and would advocate for such regional policies to continue.

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. Having lived in Ward 15 for 13 years, I am deeply aware of the importance of our ward's walkability and connectivity – especially their implications for equity. Although I am not a subject matter expert when it comes to transportation and mobility, I have a fierce work ethic and a desire to learn. I make myself accessible to advocates with shared values around equity, and I recognize the expertise and value of our advocates doing this work in our community. It is important to have a collaborative relationship between elected officials and citizen advocates, and I am committed to remaining open-minded and thoughtful around the critical issues of walking, biking and transit safety and equity. Finally, I believe that a sense of urgency around climate change must also compel our behaviors and policies to change and move forward.