



**Candidate Name:** Charles Slife

**Office Seeking:** Ward 17

**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.** As a current member of Cleveland City Council, I support passage of Ord. No. 676-20, the updated Complete and Green Streets Ordinance. The most practical way to enhance bike/pedestrian infrastructure is to incorporate it into larger capital projects.

Specifically to pedestrians, I also support the city taking a larger role in sidewalk repair costs, especially in low-income census tracts. Even with the 50/50 Sidewalk Program, the cost of sidewalk repairs is burdensome for low-income households. The result is uneven sidewalks that create tripping hazards and are impassible for residents in wheelchairs, with vision challenges, etc.

As an official, I believe in leading by example. I often ride my bike or take transit to work or around the neighborhood and have done so for many years prior to serving on Council. Given the visibility of my current role, I have made a point of sharing my experience riding my bike and using transit to demonstrate to West Park residents and others that there are options outside of driving.

**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.** Compared to a decade ago, Cleveland's bike infrastructure has improved immensely. But still, there are numerous infrastructure gaps throughout the city. I believe these corridors specifically should be targeted for consistent bike infrastructure across Cleveland: Lorain, Pearl, Broadway, Kinsman, St. Clair.

I also am an advocate for off-road infrastructure, as it meets the need of both cyclists and walkers. Importantly, off-road infrastructure greatly increases the likelihood that woman, children, and less-confident cyclists will opt to ride their bike.

**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.** As a cyclist, there are still streets where unprotected bike lanes don't fully erase my anxiety about riding in the roadway. Protected bike lanes are becoming standard practice across the United States. I support installing protected bike lanes in Cleveland and I reject arguments that winter weather or any other condition precludes Cleveland from installing this infrastructure.

**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.** The introduction of mobile fares by RTA has increased convenience for riders. Yet many riders continue to pay fares with hard currency, which delays boardings. RTA must continue to pursue smartcard technology and transition riders away from currency.

RTA must also take a more active role in economic development and push for development on its property, adjacent to Rapid stations. For example, the Triskett, West Park, Puritas, and Brookpark Stations are all located on large properties that are well-suited for transit-oriented development. Bringing people closer to rail transit would help to boost ridership.

Lastly, there are a number of locations in Cleveland, like Riverside Park, that are within one mile of a transit station. Even though bus service is available and has increased with NextGen, RTA and the City must partner to simplify connections to the RTA rail system. One way to accomplish this would be through electric scooter companies that have, to date, written off the far west side.

**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.** As the owner of treelawns, the City of Cleveland has the right to install concrete pads on treelawns where transit riders could wait more comfortably. Additionally, Cleveland bus stops typically only have benches if they're incorporated within a shelter. In cases where a shelter isn't practical, the City and RTA can still partner together and install a bench for riders to sit on while waiting.

**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.**

**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 Washington, D.C. without a car. While living on the near west side and attending graduate school, there were many periods where I relied solely on RTA due to an inability to afford expensive car repairs.

I believe that leadership-by-example is the most impactful way to advance public transportation and active transportation in our community. My hectic schedule does not always allow for it, but I do make an effort to take RTA and ride my bike to work and around the neighborhood. I am very pleased with the NextGen schedule changes, as the increased frequency of buses make it easier to incorporate transit into my personal/professional/childcare schedule.

As for making public transportation/biking/walking functional all year around, the City of Cleveland must make a deeper effort to 1) plow bike infrastructure, especially off-road infrastructure as it comes online and 2) enforce existing regulations that require property owners to clear sidewalks and transit waiting environments.

**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.** Vision Zero is a critical initiative, especially in an over-built/low congestion city. Cleveland's road network caters to dangerous driving, which jeopardizes the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and other drivers.

I am advancing this initiative by working with other members of Council and the administration to pilot speed humps in our neighborhood. I'm supportive of off-road and protected bike infrastructure to increase safety for cyclists.

I also believe that implementing Vision Zero requires a culture shift in the city. Slowing speed limits, installing humps and chicanes, and allowing parking on both sides of side streets are all practical ways to force traffic to move more slowly. It will be a shift for Clevelanders to accept the benefits of slower travel times, but the tradeoff is worth it.

**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.** In addition to biking, walking, and public transportation infrastructure being in place, the large urban environment must feel welcoming and safe for users to choose these transportation modes. This can be accomplished through improved lighting, repairs to broken sidewalks, the demolition or rehabilitation of vacant structures, etc. We must also push for dense development in areas that are not automobile dependent, with the goal of increasing safety by activating urban spaces.

**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.** GCRTA's priorities once additional funding is secured should be to invest in repairs to existing rail infrastructure, purchase new rail cars, and implement smartrip or other non-cash fare payment options.

**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 am actively working on redevelopment and rezoning projects with the goal of creating new development sites in portions of the West Park neighborhood that are transit accessible and where opportunities for increased cycling infrastructure exists. In particular, these opportunities are along Lorain Avenue, Rocky River Drive, and near the West Park Rapid Station.

**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.** I support transit riders being appointed to the GCRTA board. Yet, because appointments are made by the mayor and not by council, I cannot commit to making these appointments.

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

**A17.** In addition to all of the answers within this questionnaire, I'll simply underscore that I am also a cyclist, transit rider, and walker. My wife and I chose our home based on our ability to live a lifestyle that is not reliant on cars. In all parts of my life I try to lead by example. Street safety, cycling, transit, and walking being a notable illustration of this.