



I BIKE, I RIDE TRANSIT, I WALK, I VOTE.

CLEVELAND CANDIDATES AND MOBILITY



Candidate Name: Ayat Amin

Office Seeking: Ward 3

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. So much! We have a lot of recreational bike lanes but not enough protected bike lanes for commuting. When bike lanes are safe and protected, it will allow for a larger biking population. We should require bike lanes (preferably protected bike lanes) on every street repaving the city does in the next few years. There are several ways this can be done such as creating an unofficial standard with the planning department, a zoning law or an ordinance. In regards to equity, we should prioritize bike lanes on our east side neighborhoods, which have not seen the same investment in bike lanes as other parts of the city.

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. Creating protected commuting lanes for bikes, especially on streets going East/West. I don't have a car so I bike everywhere or take the bus. The fact that Clark, Lorain, Detroit, Euclid, St. Claire and Superior don't have protected bike lanes is ridiculous. Getting protected bike lanes to make east west travel safer is crucial. I've biked on all these streets during rush hour, and it is terrifying to share the road with the cars.

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! Studies show that a city has successfully implemented safe bike infrastructure when mothers and children are in the bike lanes. Cleveland is not there yet, but protected bike lanes is the form of bike infrastructure that guarantees safety of riders the most. New York made the investment into protected bike lanes and it paid off. We can do it too.

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. We need to expand funding for GCRTA, who has been steadily losing funding. With more funding, GCRTA can expand service on the weekends, which is a gap in the NextGen service. We can also invest in public transit infrastructure such as building more bus shelters! I support local efforts to increase funding to GCRTA through a downtown parking tax, updating our parking meters and allocating casino revenue dollars to GCRTA. We should also work with our state and federal partners to close the remaining funding gap to reach back to 2006 funding levels.

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. Transit advocates have been asking for a downtown bus shelter with a public restroom for years. We should do that. Yet there are other bus stops including mine on Lorain road that could at least use a bench. The first step to getting there is to increase funding to GCRTA. Increasing funding has not been a strong priority for anyone in our local office, but it will be a priority for me.

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, I proudly live car free in Cleveland. I use my bike, the bus (the 22, 51 or redline), or take a scooter. I would love the population of people who live car free in Cleveland by choice to expand.

First, we must increase funding to GCRTA. If you are going far, public transit is still the best way to get around town.

Second, to increase biking, we need more protected bike lanes on streets commonly used for commuting. Our towpath is great, but it's not the same as biking on Euclid to get to the Clinic for work.

Third, we must expand multi-modal forms of transportation. We cannot assume that just because people live in apartment complexes by transit hubs that they will not have a car. To make the decision to live car free easier, we could work with new apartment complexes to offer car sharing services such as zipcar or to include bus passes as part of their rent.

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 would love it if you could reach any place in Cleveland with no more than 2 transfers and in less than an hour. I love the current price of an RTA day pass, but think we should have a low-income version at half the rate.

There are many options for how we can make public transit more equitable for our low income residents, but that won't happen unless we also increase ridership and increase funding to GCRTA overall to expand service.

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, Vision Zero is a priority. Pedestrian and cyclist injuries have been increasing in Cleveland. A lot of people are talking about advancing Vision Zero through traffic calming measures such as adding more speed bumps. While slowing down traffic is a good idea, we need to also have measures to decrease the amount of cars on the road as well as infrastructure to protect pedestrians and transit users: protected bike lanes, accessible sidewalks and more covered bus stops, etc.

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. Great question. When it comes to public safety, I look towards reforms being put forth by the community. In regards to public transit, I am a fan of decriminalizing fare evasion and replacing transit police with transit ambassadors, two reforms being asked for by CPT.

Overall, I have 3 approaches to improve public safety:

1. External to Cleveland Police Department (CPD):

- I've endorsed Citizens for a Safer Cleveland.
- I support creating mental health first responders
- We should integrate more forms of community policing

2. Internal to CPD:

- Increase recruiting police officers who live in Cleveland
- Increase minority and gender representation of CPD

3. Addressing the root causes of crime

- Supporting affordable housing in Cleveland
- Supporting access to mental health services to our vulnerable populations
- Investment in poverty reduction programs

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. Expanding service on weekends.

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. Cleveland's zoning laws are widely outdated. We should prioritize development of denser housing around transit hubs and also incentivize employers to have offices located near public transit. One avenue to do this is ending single family zoning.

Another is through utilizing TIFs better. We give out a lot of tax breaks for TIFs without getting a true public benefit. These tax breaks can require parking lots in a development project, but what if we made them require building a bus shelter or offering a car sharing service instead? We can and should be utilizing these tax breaks to create investment in bike and bus infrastructure.

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. Absolutely!

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

A17. I am one of you! I live car free in Cleveland. When I'm not on the bus, I'm getting places using my blue bike with a blue milk crate basket. That basket is how I bring home my groceries.

I also am a member of Clevelanders for Public Transit and helped them do policy research for Fair Fares 2.0. I'm running as an environmentalist and we cannot fight climate change without equitable public transit.