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Office Seeking: Ward 7

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. In full disclosure, I reviewed Bike Cleveland's website prior to doing this, and that is the strategy I would follow: listening to stakeholders, listening to experts. As such, I would support updating the Cleveland's Complete & Green Streets ordinance, so that an oversight commission is created to ensure that when road projects are approved, there is advocacy for bike lanes and implementation of a larger city transportation network plan for biking, walking, scooting, and safer driving regulations.

I would also model biking and walking myself (I like to walk if possible, and previous biked to CSU).

I would include more discussion about obesity and raising this as a health issue, and how biking and walking (and scooting, to a degree) are better for our obesity challenge. We need a more honest discussion about obesity - it isn't good.

Anyways, I think the City of Cleveland and its elected officials need to continually revisit our vision of Cleveland offering quality of life amenities: greenspace, walking and biking, a good public transit network, etc. So, I would advocate for building out the bikeway system envisioned on your website, which is what the oversight commission would be tasked with in part. Quality of life is a good message.

In Ward 7, which includes Hough, we have a lot of opportunity to increase biking especially. Finally, I would talk up how the first leg of the Midway Protected Bike Blvd goes right through Ward 7 on Superior! We must take advantage of it.

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. Looking at the map on your website, and in my own opinion, I think the biggest gaps are obviously on the eastside, where there is the highest concentration of majority black neighborhoods, but surprisingly also around University Circle - which is an opportunity. I think we need to be strategic about it, and I must applaud the Midway project for starting on the eastside out to 55th, that may spur more usage. For the eastside, because there are a lot of residential streets, I think we should just focus on filling out the network on the major streets: Chester, 79th, Superior, 105th, Woodland, etc.

I think more of the street rental bikes could help increase usage, and I'd like to see the network connected to as many parks as possible. I think that scooting could really catch on in the eastside.

Finally, for this question and many others - the fight over the Covid-19 Rescue funds is one opportunity to fund bike lanes, some protected, and make the city more pedestrian/biker friendly and connected.

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 do support them. As you say, it is safer and more pedestrian friendly, encouraging more bike riders. It will hopefully reduce traffic accidents, which Vision Zero rightly explains is a problem, with so many preventable deaths and injuries. So it improves quality of life. To be honest, I look forward to the day when we have driverless cars, because I think that will make things a lot safer for all transportation users.

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 NextGen system of increasing frequency and consolidating routes makes a lot of sense conceptually, and I am glad to hear this organization has confidence in it.

I think we made a serious error in the public square redesign when we decided keep the road (Superior) that bisects it. It was due to money (losing fed dollars) and complaints about people needing to walk more... People need to walk more! My point is that we need to make Cleveland pedestrian friendly, and that was a chance to make a point, and it would have been a better outcome in terms of the feel and use of public square.

I (still) believe that we should have pedestrian zones like cities in Europe and some in US (probably). I would support doing this downtown, and somewhere around University Circle, and perhaps around W.25th/Westside Market or W.65th/Detroit. Downtown, private cars should/could be banned on some streets around public square, such as on Prospect and Euclid to E 9th, and perhaps an area in the Warehouse District - or something like that, diverting traffic around these areas. It would encourage people to use public transit to access these pedestrian zones as a matter of practicality. And it would obviously increase walking and biking.

Regarding improving comfort and convenience of public transit: I think consolidating and increasing the frequency by NextGen is important, because the system generally has great reach but it has been dizzyingly hard to use for the average person. The frequent users know the system, but the average person wants nothing to do with the buses b/c it's a maze and a lot of planning is required to use it.

Improving consistency and customer service - like a business - I think would attract more users. Is RTA being held to a high standard of performance? How much oversight does City Council have in effect? To

be perfectly honest, I need to study this more. I know that with our public transit there has been a long-standing struggle to improve ridership, so obviously this has been looked at extensively. I would need to get more info. Pushing for funds would probably - as always, I imagine - be an issue.

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. I would first reach out qualified people (RTA, consultants if possible, other experts) to brainstorm and get recommendations on what the cost is for adequate lighting and covered seating and other related features (perhaps security cameras or emergency communication systems). I like the idea previously raised of light security (similar to downtown ambassadors), which would improve overall environment and attract riders, I believe. Then we would have to find the money, trying to be as cost-effective as possible. In my view, the role of councilperson is partly about trying to make the most out of limited resources to address as many priorities as possible.

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. Not in Cleveland, but I lived in New York City for six months without a car, about 20 years ago. I took the subway from the Bronx to Queens to work in a warehouse.

My vision for public transportation and a more biker-pedestrian-environment friendly transportation system in Cleveland is for the RTA and the County and the City - councilpersons included - and advocacy organizations and vested stakeholders (frankly) to do a better job selling this vision to increase demand for these forms of moving and living. And, these same organizations need to provide leadership and push hard for changes to be made. Money is very important, but also is having a plan and being diligent about holding agencies and each other accountable to these visions. Administration can always be improved, which would improve demand and cut costs.

I would like Cleveland to have - as mentioned elsewhere - more bikeways and protected bikeways, safer driving and lower speeds (I support making texting a primary offense, as your website suggests), increased public transit use on a system that is more frequent, consistent, and customer service oriented (with light security), and I also think we need to have pedestrian zones where private driving is prohibited (downtown, university circle, westside market, W 65th as possibilities). I support having an oversight commission that advances these objectives when road projects are being approved.

Keeping this functional year round requires, in my view, making enough money in peak periods of the year to pay for down periods, and adjusting supply (lowering it but not stopping it) as needed. There are plenty of hearty outdoors people in Cleveland that would use this with the proper infrastructure, and as this question suggests 25% of Cleveland households don't have their own cars, so they must use it. I don't pretend to have all the answers, to be honest, and I would need more information.

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. \$100 a month would be my upper limit at the moment. Ideally, door-to-door would be definitely under 30 minutes as a rule of thumb. Years ago I lived on Clifton in Lakewood for a year, and I stepped outside and took the bus to work (entry-level job) downtown. It was great.

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. As your website indicates, 37 Clevelanders die annually from traffic accidents, and that is only the worst manifestation of our traffic. It reflects roadways with lots of speeding and reckless driving, all of which deters bikers and pedestrians. (I think cars are impersonal and lead to isolation and lack of community, whereas biking, public trans, scooting, and walking are the opposite - so lets not forget about those probable mental health / wellbeing impacts.) Vision Zero is a priority because quality of life is a top priority, and this is part of getting there. It's part of a sustainable, healthy future Cleveland.

Advancing Vision Zero means pushing for its recommendation on city council, pushing for the recommended ordinance to create an oversight committee on road projects (and other improvements) and state law making texting a primary offense (I would hope it is not an offense when the car is stopped at a light), and other sensible measures. It requires buy-in from police. Police have their hands full, there is no doubt. An important part of my platform is more - not less - police that performs at a much higher level (no brutality, harassment). In my platform I am calling for a sales tax increase to address crime; this would help enforcement of safer roads.

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. I don't think we should reduce police, as stated previously. We need more and better police. My platform calls for police reform that empowers police leadership to achieve a high standard of excellence for our cops. That is the way to do it, in my view, which means eliminating union and civilian oversight board interference in a swift, decisive disciplinary system managed by police leaders. (The civilian board then holds the police leadership - but not frontline cops - accountable after the fact for mistakes in discipline, freeing officers to focus on their jobs and allowing them to get the immediate punishment/reward they need. It is important to remember I think police leadership should have great authority to hold officers accountable. Police are pulling back and it's a cause in rising crime; it's a very serious problem.)

Anyways, the oversight commission of road projects would be quite important in laying down the transportation network we need for safer streets.

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. Cleveland is one of the poorest large cities in America. Free fares would be amazing if it could be done. Game-changer potentially.

Perhaps more realistically, the top priority should be striving towards almost constant service on the highest demand routes and times - so more frequency. (I would like to know if studies decisively indicate what is more important for increasing ridership: safety and comfort v. frequency v. fare cost - and if so, that would determine my top priority.)

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. As your website led me to research, the public transportation system needs to be flexible to a changing economic landscape, and the economy is always changing. In areas that have thinned out, public transit needs to - in my view - reinforce the main arteries of public transit, wherever they may be or shift to, so disburserd peoples have reliable transit lanes they can be sure of and develop plans around. Then public transit needs to get creative in attracting those disburserd citizens to the public transit arteries. All of this involves land use transformation (property that can be affordably obtained and/or converted) in reinforcing the main arteries and in creating biking, scooting, walking, and park-n-ride infrastructure that connects to the main arteries. I don't know if that made sense! but the idea is that economic development planning is important and needs to be creative. (One idea could be smaller vehicles - vans essentially - that cover the disburserd areas and bring people to and from the main arteries, like park-n-ride.) This requires collaboration and leadership.

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, it increases credibility of the board and gives a very important perspective. In addition to knowing the system firsthand, I would hope the appointees are diverse in terms of expertise, including views of key stakeholders.

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

A17. Because I understand that increasing the quality of life in Cleveland is directly related to these issues, and I will articulate them and advocate for them. I am very focused on crime, particularly gun violence. Changing the culture means, in part, changing the environment of our community. Better streets for biking and walking, increased street safety, cleaner streets, a larger cross-section of society using public transit - these will change the feel of Cleveland, increase quality of life, and help to lower crime, I believe, and help protect the climate. We need to be more of a community.

I would take the time to listen and educate myself, and work with people and advocate for these issues in the most effective manner available.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss and learn about these issues.