



Candidate Name: Chris Ronayne
Office Seeking: Cuyahoga County Executive

Biking and Walking in the County

Q1. The Cuyahoga Greenway Partners have been working to increase mobility options since 2014. In 2019, the County completed the Cuyahoga Greenways Plan, which envisioned a completed, county-wide network of off-road trails and on-road, low-stress pedestrian and bicycle facilities accessible for persons of all ages and abilities for transportation, exercise, and enjoyment. How do you plan to support and implement the Cuyahoga Greenways Plan? Read the plan here:
https://www.countyplanning.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CGW_Report_2020-0107_sm.pdf

A1. For quite some time I've envisioned Cuyahoga County as "Trail County USA" and I believe we are living up to it. The Cuyahoga Greenways Plan is a groundbreaking testament to how we can implement greenways and urban trails throughout Cuyahoga County. During my career, I have fought for trails, bike access, and accessibility. As Chair of Canalway Partners, I oversaw the completion of the 5-mile Cleveland section of the "Towpath Trail" which is a part of a 100 mile four-county trail and as Planning Director, I developed the Cleveland Lakefront Plan to better connect Cleveland neighborhoods to Lake Erie and mandated bike lanes along the Euclid Corridor. As of today, there isn't a single regional or government agency responsible for the Greenways Plan, making coordination difficult. As County Executive, I hope that County government can fulfill that role and can facilitate relationships between regional partners and local governments to create a more coordinated and efficient infrastructure improvement process.

Q2. 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 our roadways safer for all users. Do you support the installation of protected bike lanes on county streets?

A2. Yes, absolutely. Protected bike lanes and complete streets create a safer environment for cyclists and reduce traffic violence. Too many of our streets are designed only for cars, ignoring the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

Q3. Bike Cleveland believes that if a street is designed such that armed officers are required to monitor it for the safety of other drivers, pedestrians, and bike riders, then it is not a well-designed street. How do you envision working toward safe streets while also reducing the dependence on armed officers to enforce traffic laws?

A3. As County Executive, I will partner with the City of Cleveland in its Vision Zero campaign. Traffic deaths and injuries are preventable and with bold, decisive action we can attain zero traffic deaths. Road design is the first step to building safe streets. Narrower lanes, reduced speed limits, roundabouts, and bike lanes all play a role in building safer streets. As County Executive, I will work with communities around the county to build safer streets for all users. In University Circle we implemented design solutions to slow traffic down without adding law enforcement. Better signage, more bump outs, narrower vehicular cartways all led to slower speeds for cars that invited more modes of transportation on streets.

Q4. The county receives funds through the State Motor Fuel Tax, State Highway User Fees, Ohio General & Special Revenue allocations, federal programs, and other sources to support local infrastructure projects. Twelve percent of county residents do not have access to a private automobile. How would you access and use county, state, and federal transportation funds to complete the County Greenways Plan, support other active transportation projects, and improve mobility for the residents without a car?

A4. Over 60% of jobs in Cuyahoga County aren't transit accessible and 12% of households don't have access to a car. Our public transportation system in Cuyahoga County is not sufficiently serving our residents. As we transition to a more sustainable economy and a goal of complete communities, where you don't need to get into a car for your daily needs, this needs to be addressed. First, we need to advocate for more funding from the State of Ohio. As County Executive, I will represent 1.2 million people in Cuyahoga County and I will partner with urban counties around the state to increase funding for local infrastructure and public transportation.

I also plan to introduce a Division of Mobility within county government and will work with regional employers on transit-based support for workers and measures to lower or eliminate the cost of public transportation for low income riders. My policies align with Bike Cleveland's Active Transportation Vision and I will work towards making Cuyahoga County the most pedestrian and cyclist friendly county in the Midwest.

Q5. The City of Cleveland is currently considering an updated Complete & Green Streets Ordinance which would alter the decision-making process and increase transparency around street design to improve the safety of all road users. Over 1,600 Complete Streets policies have been passed nationwide. Would you support a Complete & Green Streets ordinance at the county level? How would you implement this among the municipalities in the county? Read more about Complete Streets here: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>

A5. I support a Complete & Green Streets ordinance at the county level and will incentivize every one of our 59 municipalities to follow suit. A Complete & Green Streets ordinance will bring transparency, community engagement, and equity considerations into our planning processes. At a County level, we will focus on coordination between cities, education for engineers and planners, and project funding to encourage Complete & Green Streets.

Q6. Bike and scooter share services (Bird, Lime, etc.) are currently only available in a few cities in Cuyahoga County. Would you support the expansion of bike and scooter-share services across the county to improve access and mobility?

A6. Absolutely. It's important that Cuyahoga County embraces the integration of bike and scooter shared services to improve mobility and access.

Public Transit in the County

Q7. Transit service reduces emissions, lowers transportation costs, and improves street safety. Nonetheless, over the past 15 years, GCRTA service has been cut nearly 30% while fares have doubled. Cuyahoga County's 2019 Climate Action Plan states as a goal to "return public transit service and ridership to 2006 levels by 2025" but the county has not taken any action to achieve this. In your opinion, what actions are needed to increase public transit ridership in Cuyahoga County? Read the county 2019 Climate Action Plan here: <https://www.countyplanning.us/projects/climate-action-plan/>

A7. As County Executive, I will work hard to not only prevent future cuts to the GCRTA budget but to grow it. Residents who are transit-dependent need to be able to trust their transportation system. Here are the first steps I would take:

- Subsidize or reduce transit fares for low-income riders.
- Invest in public transportation infrastructure and improvements to improve transit frequency.
- Work with regional employers on more transit-based support for workers (such as commuter advantage), especially in well served areas like downtown Cleveland and University Circle.
- Advocate for the decriminalization of fare evasion.

Q8. The HealthLine on Euclid Avenue is GCRTA's highest-ridership bus route. It is also the only Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route in Northeast Ohio. Opened in 2008, GCRTA originally promoted a 28-minute trip from Public Square to East Cleveland, through University Circle. Due to removal of its proof-of-payment fare system and traffic signal priority, trips now take up to 42 minutes—just as long as the regular bus route it replaced. Will you commit to appointing GCRTA board members to fix the HealthLine and expand faster BRT to more corridors throughout Cuyahoga County? Read more about BRT here:

<https://www.itdp.org/library/standards-and-guides/the-bus-rapid-transit-standard/what-is-brt/>

A8. As Planning Director for the City of Cleveland, I led and finalized the design for the Euclid Corridor Improvement Project, now home to the Healthline, which has since leveraged \$9 billion dollars in community reinvestment. The Healthline is a great asset for our community but has lost its initial purpose: fast and efficient transit. I support restoring the proof-of-payment system and reinstating traffic signal priority. I will appoint GCRTA board members who are focused on these goals.

Q9. Since 1980, Cuyahoga County has been losing population. Suburban sprawl to neighboring counties has eroded the tax base GCRTA needs in order to provide transit service. As the population spreads out, maintaining the same level of transit service becomes more costly and less productive. How will you proactively integrate land use policies into your transportation agenda and direct growth to places where public transit can be successful?

A9. During my 16 year tenure at University Circle Inc, the neighborhood was transformed into a “complete community” where one didn’t have to have a car to reach the basic necessities such as their job, school, grocery store or doctor. We can do the same on the county level. We need to build transit hubs in the first ring suburbs and continue to bring back vitality to our urban and suburban core. We can fight sprawl by investing in public infrastructure and dense housing, supporting our small businesses and encouraging a diverse community and economy.

Q10. The current president of the GCRTA Board of Trustees, and City of Cleveland appointee, Rev. Charles Lucas is a regular paratransit rider and Cuyahoga County’s latest appointee, Roberta Duarte, is a regular bus rider. Will you commit to appointing only public transit riders to the GCRTA board?

A10. I believe that all appointees to the GCRTA Board of Trustees should have lived experience with public transit in Cuyahoga County. Regular riders know the difficulties and deficiencies in our public transit system better than anyone.

Q11. The GCRTA Board of Trustees has the ability to go to the ballot for additional transit funding through an additional sales tax levy or a property tax levy. Do you oppose or support a property tax levy in Cuyahoga County to raise additional funding for GCRTA? Do you oppose or support a sales tax levy in Cuyahoga County to raise additional funding for GCRTA? What should GCRTA's top priority be with any additional funding secured?

A11. GCRTA’s top priority with additional funding should be to increase ridership, improve transit infrastructure to reduce wait times and increase frequency, and evaluate options for reduced fares for low income riders. Taxpayers in Cuyahoga County pay a much higher rate than most in Ohio and our sales tax is the highest in the state. Transportation needs to be prioritized in this community but the case must be made to our elected officials and to the residents of the county. As County Executive I will partner with GCRTA to plan a future for that includes a robust transportation system and will collaborate to support that vision with necessary funding. Once that funding is secured, the first priority should be replacing aging infrastructure, lowering fares for low income riders, and increasing frequency on highly trafficked bus routes.

Q12. There are 940 million square feet of parking in Cuyahoga County, but only 680 million square feet of housing. Just as Cuyahoga County implemented a special sales tax on cigarettes and alcohol to fund sports stadiums and the arts, the county could enact a special property tax on parking lots. This tax could generate over \$60 million annually towards transportation alternatives, such as expanded public transit service, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and discounted transit fares for low-income county residents. Do you support a special tax on parking lots in Cuyahoga County?

A12. The proliferation of surface parking lots has coincided with a dramatic decline in the City of Cleveland’s population. At the same time, public transportation funding has dipped to 1980s levels. A special tax on parking lots would generate the revenue needed to bring back and expand our public transit service. As County Executive, I would partner with organizations such as the Greater Ohio Policy Center, Bike Cleveland and Clevelanders for Public Transit to evaluate a sales tax on parking services.