

Candidate name: Nikki Hudson

Ward: 11

1. In 2024, more than 600 people walking or biking in the city were struck by drivers. In 2022, the City adopted Vision Zero, committing to eliminate traffic fatalities by 2032—yet there is still no dedicated annual budget for traffic calming. During budget season, would you advocate for increased funding for street safety improvements?

Yes. I would also like to consider dedicating an amount of annual funding to deploy quick-build, physical traffic calming and mobility pilots with a second tranche of funds earmarked to make the pilot permanent if it is successful.

2. Last year, the City adopted Cleveland Moves (our city's new Mobility Plan) and, with that, committed to building 50 miles of low-stress bike facilities over the next 3 years. Protected bike lanes are a proven safety countermeasure for not just bike riders, but people walking and driving as well. Will you support upgrading existing bike lanes in your ward to be physically separated from car lanes?

Yes, I would support all street improvements identified in Cleveland Moves to be implemented as City resources allow and as soon as possible during street resurfacing and other planned maintenance. To do this, I would push for coordination between organizations like water, sewer, power, or forestry, so that a capital project being undertaken by one can be leveraged as a chance to implement more street projects if they fit reasonably within the scope.

3. In 2022, City Council changed the name of its Transportation Committee to the Transportation and Mobility Committee. Still, the vast majority of legislation that this committee sees is related to the airports and the Port of Cleveland. What role do you see this committee playing going forward?

I see the Transportation and Mobility Committee having an important role in making sure that Cleveland residents are able to move around the City in a safe, reliable, and efficient manner regardless of their preferred mode of transportation. Personally, traffic calming, bike and pedestrian safety, and the City's Complete and Green Streets initiatives are things that I am interested in and intend to focus on as a City Councilmember.

4. Last summer, the city upgraded coin-operated parking meters to accept online payments and has continued adding new on-street paid parking zones in Ohio City, Downtown, University Circle, and Detroit-Shoreway—creating a new revenue stream for the city. Surface parking lots in Downtown and other neighborhoods are also taxed, with much of that revenue currently directed toward stadium funding. Would you support dedicating this money to mobility and safety improvements instead? Why or why not?

Yes, I would support dedicating this money to mobility and safety improvements because currently not enough of the City's budget is dedicated towards what is a very important and serious Citywide issue. The new Ward 11 encompasses many different neighborhoods with various issues and needs, but something that repeatedly came up when talking to residents while canvassing is the need for traffic calming and pedestrian and bike safety measures. Often, Councilmembers are left to use their discretionary funds to help fill in the gaps, which is also not a sustainable source of making these improvements nor is it enough to actually tackle the amount of work that needs to be done.

5. Historically, community engagement around street projects starts after design is well underway, leaving little room for meaningful feedback. Even now, public meetings often happen on short notice and promotion for these meetings is limited. How do you plan to collect feedback from constituents and ensure they know about opportunities for input on projects?

A key focus area of my campaign is finding ways to bring community members together, including by helping to create and foster neighborhood block clubs and other grassroots community groups in the new Ward 11. I would like to promote neighborhood connections like these so that neighborhood partners can act as eyes on the ground, helping inform my policy making decisions as well as get the word out about opportunities for input on neighborhood projects. It would be great to use a pilot street project as a way to build community engagement, for example by building a temporary bump-out and then using it to draw in neighbors. People would then be able to experience and understand a project, provide feedback on it, and it can easily be undone if it doesn't work and/or everyone dislikes it.

6. Cleveland's ability to deliver safer streets is limited by staffing levels that fall short of many peer cities. Would you commit to support funding additional mobility positions – including a dedicated crew for installing traffic-calming measures like speed tables and more engineers – to bring Cleveland in line with similar cities and accelerate street safety improvements?

Yes, and I would also commit to working with unions to create meaningful and relevant work opportunities as a way to engage and empower more residents in dignified work.

7. What is your experience with public transit? Do you ride the RTA?

While I have ridden the RTA to get to the airport or when I do not want to deal with parking downtown, I do not use it as my primary mode of transportation. Despite the infrequency of my ridership, I see the value and need for reliable public transit as part of a functioning, modern City.

8. The 2025 Cleveland Health Survey found that unreliable transportation prevented 20% of residents citywide from getting to medical appointments, work, or other essential needs over the past year – with even higher rates in some wards. What role should public transit play in ensuring residents can meet their daily needs, and how would you support RTA in making that happen?

Unreliable transportation is unfortunately one of the many burdens the working class faces, and I see a reliable public transit system as a step in the right direction towards helping to relieve that burden. Mobility is central to the social and economic health of communities, and access to safe and reliable public transit is a core component of an accessible and well-functioning region. Acknowledging that improvements in state-level support may be unrealistic in the short term, it is crucial that the City of Cleveland lead the region in increasing local support for public transit through new revenue streams such as taxing parking or other measures and drive increased ridership by improving frequency and route coverage, ensuring that public transit is the mode of choice and not a last resort.

9. GCRTA will be broke in a couple years once they run out of federal COVID relief dollars. If that happens without finding new sources of operating funds, the transit authority will be forced to drastically cut service and raise fares. We are already seeing this happen across the country. As a legislator in a city where 20% of the population doesn't have access to a car, how will you ensure we don't face the same fate? Do you support a countywide sales or property tax levy to fund public transit? What other local funding opportunities would you explore to fund transit?

I would support a property tax levy to fund public transit if that tax is focused on the wealthiest property owners. Many homeowners in Cleveland are already struggling with paying their ever-increasing property taxes and the last thing they need is another increase. I would encourage the City to look at parking taxes or even red light/traffic cameras in school zones to also help fund public transit. I would also like to see standard community benefits agreements with large developments be used as long-term funding sources for public transit, especially if the project is a transportation-oriented development (TOD) .

10. Public transit infrastructure, from shelters to bus lanes, can conflict with the desires of motorists and real estate and business owners. How will you approach the needs of public transit riders to conveniently get where they need to go in the face of opposition to new or existing public transit infrastructure?

It is important to include residents and business owners in the decision making process for new public transit infrastructure. I plan to help create merchants associations in areas where none currently exist and these groups can and should be part of a steering committee convened for the project. This will help ensure that the end product benefits both the broader community and the local residents and businesses and will help give buy-in to everyone who participated in the process, helping to ward off any opposition.

To make lasting, important changes such as what GCRTA is trying to do across the City, it is important to build a coalition of invested partners and work together to achieve that goal. Being a coalition builder is one of the strengths that I am bringing to City Council.

11. What does being a good partner with GCRTA look like to you as a city councilor?

I think being a good partner with GCRT means having an open-door policy to always hear their concerns and how the Council office can help in addition to assistance reaching out to residents to let them know about upcoming meetings, projects, news, etc. and proactively helping them build support so they can go after more funding. It also means being an advocate on behalf of Cleveland at the state level when possible.

12. How would you ensure that the needs of all citizens are represented on the city council?

I will make sure that I have an open line of communication between my office and residents and, since I live in the Cudell neighborhood in the northern part of the new Ward 11, I will maintain an office in the southern part of the new Ward 11 at Estabrook Recreation Center, to make sure I have a presence in the whole Ward. In addition, I will promote citizen involvement through a robust community engagement program.

13. How do you stay informed about current events and issues affecting the city?

I will maintain constant contact with residents and businesses through community groups and merchants associations that I will help create, and I will keep up to date through local media sources like Signal Cleveland and The Land community journalism in addition to larger publications.

In addition, much like with my campaign for City Council, I will continue to be surrounded by a diverse coalition of subject matter and lived experience experts who I will go to and who I will encourage to come to me when relevant issues come up.

14. What will you do to increase the availability of affordable, integrated, safe, and accessible housing for people with disabilities?

I would encourage the development of accessible housing that is near transit corridors and has a direct connection to reliable, frequent, and safe transit. I would support requiring a greater percentage of accessible apartments in all newly constructed buildings than is currently required or asked for. Instead of the usual 10-20%, I would like to see 25-30% of apartments in newly constructed buildings be accessible, working towards the higher 30% goal as time goes on. In addition, I would like to see tax abatements available for building accessible homes or for retrofitting existing homes to be accessible similar to the abatements offered for homes built or remodeled using green building standards.

15. What do you know about the crisis facing the disabled community in regard to availability of transportation and employment opportunities? And what will you do to mitigate these barriers?

The cost of specialized transportation services is becoming prohibitively high for the disabled community, who may rely on these services for daily mobility. In addition, disabled folks who are able to own and operate their own personal vehicle face challenges such as finding suitable parking spaces which can limit their activities. The overall effect of these transportation challenges can exacerbate social isolation, restrict employment opportunities, and hinder access to healthcare and education.

RTA is soon launching the PASS mobile app aimed at improving paratransit riders' experience. After it has been up and running for a few months, I would support convening a group of regular paratransit riders, along with members of RTA's Community Advisory Committee to see how effective this new technology is and to hear from the riders themselves what can be done to improve their mobility. I would also promote community-based initiatives to address the transportation needs of people with disabilities, such as volunteer driver programs and ridesharing partnerships.

16. How do you see the impending changes to both State and Federal programs impacting your community? And what solutions can you offer in your community to combat the loss of these programs and funding?

There are unfortunately a number of ways that changes to both State and Federal programs are going to affect our communities in Cleveland, including by making health insurance more expensive for some folks and taking it away from others, in addition to limiting the availability of Federal and State money for essentials like housing and food. We need to be creative and community minded when dealing with these issues to try and close the gaps that the Federal and State government is leaving wide open. One way of doing this is to turn our city's recreation centers into community resource hubs where residents can get linked to necessary services by an on-site social worker that each rec center would have on staff full-time.

17. Why does Cleveland not currently have contracts with Uber and Lyft to provide wheelchair accessible vans options at a fixed rate like larger cities such as Chicago and New York? Can you assist with this?

Currently, only major metropolitan areas have Uber and Lyft WAV services due to the costs to operate and the technical expertise required of the driver. Neither Uber or Lyft are unionized, while GCRTA is part of the Amalgamated Transit Union. For these reasons, I support adequately funding GCRTA so that it is able to fully meet the needs of constituents and will work with my council colleagues and relevant subject matter experts in making sure paratransit programs in Cleveland are sufficiently funded to provide the level of utility required.

18. Cleveland will be hosting the Special Olympics in 2030, bringing more than 5,500 athletes and coaches and over 125,000 fans and family members to our city. How will you work to ensure Cleveland is a welcoming, accessible place for people with diverse disabilities, not only through trained

volunteers, but also by encouraging accessibility across restaurants, stores, rideshares, museums, casinos, theaters, and other public spaces?

In order to make Cleveland a more welcoming and accessible place for people with diverse disabilities, we need to improve City infrastructure by focusing on making it safe for pedestrians and people not in cars, expanding inclusive programming, and by strengthening community partnerships by involving government, community organizations, as well as the citizens and visitors who will be affected.