

**2015 Houston City Elections
Transportation Issues Questionnaire
Citizens' Transportation Coalition**

Return to in MS Word format to chair@ctchouston.org; by 25 Sept 2015; Answer at least one question per Topic Group
DEXTER R. HANDY, Chair, Citizens' Transportation Coalition, phone: 832-724-8753 [email: chair@ctchouston.org](mailto:chair@ctchouston.org)



Citizens' Transportation Coalition

PO BOX 66532, HOUSTON TX 77266-6532

Candidate name: Amanda Edwards

Position sought: Houston City Council At-Large Position #4

List briefly what you consider to be the top 3 (or 4) obligations for your position or needs of your district (if applicable)

1. Improving infrastructure and expanding transit options
2. Solving the City's financial challenges
3. Protecting public safety
4. Improving quality of life in all Houston neighborhoods

Topic A: Complete Streets Policy

The Houston Complete Streets Coalition notes that “Streets are a vital part of livable, attractive communities. Everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, race, or ethnicity, ought to have safe, comfortable, and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, or taking public transportation. But too many of our streets are designed only for speeding cars or, worse, creeping traffic jams.” Furthermore, the city policy currently does not adequately address safety.

1.Question: Please explain how you will support the City of Houston’s goal to make the Complete Streets concepts a reality city wide, and particularly, in your specific district’s neighborhoods.

As a resident of Midtown, I see firsthand the positive impact of Complete Streets on the neighborhood. As an At-Large Council Member, I will support expansion of the concept to all areas of Houston. It is critically important that we support Complete Streets in an effort to enhance the quality of life for all Houstonians.

2.Question: How would you achieve the following safety features in Houston’s Complete Street & Plan Zero policies?

- a. Complete, Safe, and Maintained Sidewalk Networks?

We need a comprehensive system that monitors the condition of our sidewalk network, and flags sections for timely repair as needed.

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b. Bike Plan Implementation?

I am supportive of the Houston Bike Plan concept that is currently being developed, and await the plan's release.

c. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) federal compliance?

I will support City government's efforts to achieve full ADA compliance.

d. Lower Speed Limits and/or Speed Calming Features?

I will support expanded use of traffic calming measures where appropriate, particularly in residential areas.

e. Reduction in Traffic Deaths?

Encouraging expanded transit options, a comprehensive network for cycling and increased walkability will get cars off the road, improve mobility and reduce traffic fatalities.

3.Question: How will you pursue the Complete Streets & Transportation Plans to ensure a connected equitable safe multimodal system?

I am an avid supporter of utilizing multimodal transit options. As our City continues to grow, we must be smarter about how we anticipate transporting people from one place to another. A number of cities that I have lived in utilize multimodal transit options, which is essential in order to manage our population growth properly. I support making this a priority and allocating resources, as available, to implement these plans. I also will seek out other agency and governmental collaboration to make such plans come to fruition. Finally, I will be a fearless, vocal advocate on this issue because I feel very strongly about it.

4.Question: Under what circumstances should a developer or utility be granted a variance from sidewalk construction and/or maintenance?

Variations should be granted when there is a clear public purpose that is consistent with public safety needs. If a variations reduces positive public safety outcomes, it should not be granted.

5.Question: Instead of allowing utility poles in the middle of a sidewalk, what other solution would you support to resolve this situation?—e.g. have sidewalk go around; have utility site pole to the side of the sidewalk; use of greenspace; underground utility; city regulations for pole placements, etc.

Sidewalks should not be impeded by utility poles, and the most practicable and cost-effective "work-arounds" should be used to avoid disruption of sidewalks. We must encourage safe pedestrian sidewalk space.

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Preferences for mobility and reducing traffic congestion are rapidly changing.

The April 2015 Kinder Houston Area Study for reducing traffic congestion

(https://kinder.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/Urban_Research_Center/News/2015%20Kinder%20Institute%20HAS_PDF_4by3-1.pdf)

lists the top 3 transportation modes as

- Roadways: 26% in 2015 (down from 33% in 2009)
- Urbanism: 27%
- Transit: 43%

6. Question: Focusing on urbanism and transit, how will you propose to upgrade infrastructure to facilitate citizens' increased preferences for urbanism and transit as noted in the Kinder/Klineberg study?

Houston needs to continue to evolve toward more urban, multimodal transit-oriented development. That means residential building near employment centers and retail options, and increased walkability in neighborhoods. City government should incentivize and assist (through infrastructure upgrades) that development where possible. We must also have policies in place (i.e. parking) that support smarter growth patterns. Mixed used developments that utilize the streetscape with storefronts that are destinations is an enhancement to urban life and a quality of life improvement. We must make our light rail stops beacons for economic vibrancy and urban living.

Topic B: Traffic Congestion, Streets, Parking, Signalization, Mobility Studies

Traffic can flow more efficiently if signals are properly synchronized and can reset when they go out. This lessens the time spent in vehicles, reduces the space needed for cars queuing at intersections, and reduces fuel waste and air pollution. Science and modeling have improved since signal syncing was last a major initiative.

Poor signalization is especially a problem on major arterials and freeway access roads around commercial activity centers.

7. Question: Please explain your support (or non-support) for some form of rail, either commuter or light rail, to reduce traffic congestion on major arteries.

I support expanded transit options, including rail, that facilitate Houstonians and visitors getting where they need to go as efficiently as possible. Getting cars off the road is key to improving mobility, and I support comprehensive multimodal options that achieve that goal.

8. Question: What efforts should the city, in cooperation with other agencies, do to make computer controlled intelligent traffic light synchronization?

I need more specific information on this subject, but my inclination is that the City should support modern, cost efficient means to assist with traffic light synchronization.

9. Question: Which measures will you encourage to minimize traffic congestion?

- a. Promotion of smaller vehicles _____ **Yes** _____
- b. Improved Mass Transit _____ **Yes** _____

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- c. More vehicle lane miles _____
- d. More bicycle use Yes _____
- e. Increased gas tax _____

Topic C: Competing Vehicular Passenger Cars-Jitneys, Ride Share, and Others

10. Question: Please express your views on ride share and jitney programs in Houston as substitutes for single passenger vehicles.

I generally support these options, provided there are adequate protections for both consumers and providers. I am an avid Uber user and think it has been a positive for Houstonians. It keeps fewer drunk drivers on the road because of its convenience.

Topic D: Bike Trails and Bayou Greenway Initiatives

Bayou Greenways is an approximately \$480 million project that will be tackled by many public and private stakeholders in several phases over ten to fifteen years.

When complete, the greater Houston area will have added 4,000 acres of new and equitably distributed green spaces that can also serve the function of flood control and storm water quality enhancement.

We will have also completed 300 miles of continuous all-weather hike and bike trails that will meander through those greenways — an amenity unparalleled in the nation.

(Source: <http://www.bayougreenways.org/bayou-greenway-initiative>)

11. Question: Please describe your position on integrating people, walking, hike, and bike pathways into our public transit system (i.e., Metro, Park & Ride, Transit Center, & Neighborhood connectivity).

I am a strong supporter of the Bayou Greenways initiative. These interconnected networks are needed to improve mobility and quality of life across our city. This bold, innovative project is a signal that Houston is ready to really take some forward-thinking steps toward being the City we all deserve.

Topic E: Multi-modal Transit Alternatives (Bus, HOV/HOT, Light Rail, Bikes, Ride Share, Jitney, Park & Ride, Walking)

One in five adult Texans cannot or does not drive.

Houston METRO comprehensively redesigned the city's transit system with implementation, and rolled out the new system in August 2015.

Hard choices were made about reducing expensive service to very small numbers of people, where ridership was low despite bus service being the only choice for transportation in these poor/minority communities.

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The plan devotes 80% of Metro's resources to maximizing ridership, which all of these frequent lines do, and only 20% to providing access to people living in poor/low ridership areas of the city.

12. Question: Please express your views on the need for more transit for the Houston region to serve the one in five adults (plus children) that do not drive.

We need expanded comprehensive transit options for our region to improve mobility, and get Houstonians safely and efficiently to where they need to go. As stated above, the re-imagined bus plan does enhance the overall efficiency of transit, but there are some low-income & elderly riders who have not been provided a solution. We need a transit system that also addresses their needs.

Topic F: Passenger Rail – High Speed Rail & Commuter Rail

13. Question: What is your position on developing high-quality rail connections for passengers between Houston and other major Texas cities?

I support development of viable rail connections between Houston and other cities.

14. Question: How will you as a city official work with constituents to abate the impacts of commuter or High Speed Rail on neighborhoods?

As a Council Member I would work with any potentially affected neighborhoods to address stakeholder concerns before plans are finalized.

Topic G: Shipping - Freight Rail, Heavy Truck Traffic, Port Authority

15. Question: How should the city and other governmental authorities, such as the Gulf Coast Freight Rail District, cooperate with the state legislature to enact statutes that preserve and allow for expansion of freight rail corridors?

We should encourage a transparent, open dialogue and process that allow for the current balance of expansion of freight rail corridors. Community concerns should be a part of this conversation as well.

Topic H: Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy

16. Question: Should it be a protocol for the design manuals established by Public Works & Engineering (eg Chapter 9 Storm water Design) to be incorporated by reference into ordinances and integrated with other design standards to survive political administration turnovers?

Yes. One of the largest complaints I have heard while running for City Council has been the lack of consistency with the Public Works Dept. and uneven application of standards.

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17. Question: Does the city have an independent obligation to oversee compliance with planning requirements in order to avoid complaint driven enforcement (i.e., brought up from below by affected citizens who have the money and time to protest)?

Yes. The City should work to make sure that its departments are applying standards and rules that keep Houstonians safe. Abuses that seem to be prevalent that relate to the planning and permitting processes should be reduced as they do not promote the overall well-being and growth of our city.

18. Question: Do you support designating seats for representatives who are active in neighborhood organizations such as the Super Neighborhood Alliance instead of having a significant number of planning commission seats filled by professionals in the building, real estate, and construction industry?

I support including a broad range of stakeholders on boards and commissions. We need as many voices at the table to shed light on the broad implications our neighborhood organization decisions have.

19. Question: The Planning Commission and/or City Engineer can grant variances to almost any City Building/Construction Ordinance. How will you reduce the number of variances granted?

Variances are very prevalent in the Houston community as there is a lot of pressure connected to property rights. The public notice and opportunity for a public comment should be more than procedural so that a variance truly becomes an exception to the rule rather gutting the rule entirely. It is now closer to a perfunctory act rather than its intended purpose.

20. Question: How should the city handle the increased infrastructure demands and other cumulative impacts of Chapter 42?

Recent updates to Chapter 42 were made with many of these demands and impacts in mind, but further updates will likely be required in the future. In the interim, I believe we need to push for the infrastructure support needed for the increased density inside the City's core now permitted by Chapter 42.

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Here is an overview of the CTC transportation topics and questions.

Question #	Category	Questions for Candidates
Topic A: Complete Streets Policy		
1	Complete Streets Policy	Please explain how you will support the City of Houston's goal to make the Complete Streets concepts a reality city wide, and particularly, in your specific district's neighborhoods.
2	Complete Streets Policy	How would you achieve these safety features in Houston's Complete Street & Plan Zero policies?
		2a Complete, Safe, and Maintained Sidewalk Networks?
		2b Bike Plan Implementation?
		2c Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) federal compliance?
		2d Lower Speed Limits and/or Speed Calming Features?
		2e Reduction in Traffic Deaths?
3	Complete Streets Policy	How will you pursue the Complete Streets & Transportation Plans to ensure a connected equitable safe multimodal system?
4	Complete Streets Policy	Under what circumstances should a developer or utility be granted a variance from sidewalk construction and/or maintenance?
5	Complete Streets Policy	Instead of allowing utility poles in the middle of a sidewalk, what other solution would you support to resolve this situation?—e.g. have sidewalk go around; have utility site pole to the side of the sidewalk; use of greenspace; underground utility; city regulations for pole placements, etc.
6	Traffic Congestion, Streets, Parking, Signalization, Mobility Studies	Focusing on urbanism and transit, how will you propose to upgrade infrastructure to facilitate citizens' increased preferences for urbanism and transit as noted in the Kinder/Klineberg study?
Topic B: Traffic Congestion, Streets, Parking		
7	Traffic Congestion, Streets, Parking, Signalization, Mobility Studies	Please explain your support (or non-support) for some form of rail, either commuter or light rail, to reduce traffic congestion on major arteries.
8	Traffic Congestion, Streets, Parking, Signalization, Mobility Studies	What efforts should the city, in cooperation with other agencies, do to make computer controlled intelligent traffic light synchronization?
9	Traffic Congestion, Streets, Parking, Signalization, Mobility Studies	Which measures will you encourage to minimize traffic congestion?
		9a · Promotion of smaller vehicles
		9b · Improved Mass Transit

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	9c	· More vehicle lane miles
	9d	· More bicycle use
	9e	· Increased gas tax

Topic C: Competing Vehicular Passenger Cars - Jitneys, Ride Share, and Others

10	Competing vehicular passenger cars-Jitneys, Ride Share, & others	Please express your views on ride share and jitney programs in Houston as substitutes for single passenger vehicles.
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Topic D: Bike Trails and Bayou Greenway Initiatives

11	Bike Trails and Bayou Greenway Initiatives	Please describe your position on integrating people, walking, hike, and bike pathways into our public transit system (i.e., Metro, Park & Ride, Transit Center, & Neighborhood connectivity).
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Topic E: Multi-modal Transit Alternatives (bus, HOV/HOT, Light Rail, Bikes, Ride Share, Jitney, Park & Ride, Walking)

12	Multi-modal Transit Alternatives (bus, HOV/HOT, light rail, bikes, ride share, jitney, park and ride, walking)	Please express your views on the need for more transit for the Houston region to serve the one in five adults (plus children) that do not drive.
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Topic F: Passenger Rail – High Speed Rail & Commuter Rail

13	Passenger rail - HSR, commuter rail	What is your position on developing high-quality rail connections for passengers between Houston and other major Texas cities?
14	Passenger rail - HSR, commuter rail	How will you as a city official work with constituents to abate the impacts of commuter or High Speed Rail on neighborhoods?

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