

**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: David W. Robinson

Position sought: Houston City Council, At Large, Position #2

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

1. Safe Neighborhoods
2. Improved Communities
3. Wise Investments
4. Responsive Government

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.

Having met with experts in Complete Streets throughout the country, there is much more Houston can do to facilitate the construction of multi-modal streets, with pedestrian, bicycling, and storefront benefits. The Public Works and Engineering Department needs to update its Infrastructure Design Manual to accommodate a diversity of street and sidewalk designs and construction materials, and then work to implement these standards as infrastructure development and re-development occurs.

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 should consider including sidewalk condition as a factor in street “worst-first” calculations and include sidewalk repair and replacement as a component of the Rebuild Houston program. Also Council should expand the City's existing efforts to offer a pre-negotiated contract for the repair of sidewalks to include a matching

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grant program for Civic Clubs and Super Neighborhoods to target the most needy streets and corridors for improvement.

b. Bike Plan Implementation?

From day one my office has been a major proponent of the Houston Bike Plan; in fact, I contributed a considerable portion of my office budget to fund this endeavor. I will continue to monitor the progress of the Bike Plan. As Vice-Chair of the Quality of Life Committee I have taken an active leadership role in developing the Plan, I look forward to working to bring it to fruition.

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

We need to continue to update the Infrastructure Design Manual to satisfy and exceed ADA standards. In addition, citizens should be educated on ADA compliance to ensure all public facilities are compliant. My office has gathered user-friendly resources to aid citizens in this area.

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

Every local traffic configuration is unique and deserves study and neighborhood input regarding speed limit and speed mitigating devices.

e. Reduction in Traffic Deaths?

We need to ensure all road users, especially pedestrians and bicyclists, have safe access to our roads. This will require raising awareness and educating members of the public on existing ordinances, such as the 3-ft passing ordinance.

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

I will continue to advocate for an updated Infrastructure Design Manual as well as work with the Public Works Department to find a policy solution and infrastructure best practices. This process needs to be coordinated within the City's comprehensive General Plan in order to ensure coordination between Government agencies and utilities.

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

Circumstances should be considered on a case-by-case basis and should consider whether there is an existing network of sidewalks in the neighborhood.

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.

Under no circumstances should a utility pole's placement prevent safe navigation of a sidewalk. While there are already design guidelines to prohibit utility pole placement on pedestrian sidewalks, this is an issue that requires careful monitoring and enforcement as well as cooperation with our partners at Center Point. The Houston General Plan should facilitate greater cooperation on this issue.

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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?

I have been keenly following the developments of Klineberg's work. I am pleased with the success of METRO Reimagined program, and look forward to continuing to advocate for improved METRO bus and light rail service. The City, for its part, needs to continue to fund our Bayou Greenways initiative as well as aggressively pursue new opportunities to expand the City's existing hike/bike network, e.g. through the Center Point utility corridors. These initiatives require careful and coordinated planning. I am an avid proponent of the Houston General Plan and hope that it lives into its promise to coordinate transportation plans and initiatives.

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 very much support the expansion of Light Rail throughout Houston. I am especially active in the campaign to see light rail expanded down the Richmond corridor. This "University" or "Blue Line" was a key component of a transportation plan promised to voters.

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

The City's Public Works Department needs to do more to explore the latest light-synchronization technology. I am spearheading an effort at City Hall to explore viable and affordable options employed by other cities to improve traffic flow and reduce intersection congestion and gridlock.

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

- a. Promotion of smaller vehicles Yes.

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- b. Improved Mass Transit Yes.
- c. More vehicle lane miles Maybe: depending on the context and neighborhood geography.
- d. More bicycle use Yes.
- e. Increased gas tax No.

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 will continue to work with our partners at METRO to ensure convenient access to park and ride facilities. Additionally, I have been supportive of the City opening itself up to well regulated transportation network companies, such as Uber.

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 continue to be a strong advocate for integrated transit options. The City needs to do more to promote the Greenways 2020 program and the City's network of hike/bike trails. We need to utilize opportunities to expand pedestrian trails in Center Point's utility corridors and continue to ensure safe shared use of our public roadways.

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.

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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.

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.

Houston cannot be an automobile-only city, we need to do more to invest in METRO light rail, sidewalks, hike/bike trails. Houston needs to do more to become a multi-modal transit oriented city.

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?

While I am in favor of the premise, I would like to see more developed plans that such a rail network is designed in such a way as to cause minimal disruption to the City neighborhoods that it runs through.

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

I will continue to promote neighborhood involvement in the consideration for any high-speed rail route. The Super Neighborhood Alliance should be at the forefront of ongoing discussions to identify potential rail routes, identifying areas of concern and soliciting neighborhood

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?

I have been active in the City's lobbying efforts at the Legislature and would be interested to find out more about coordinating efforts with the GCFRD. This will be imperative given the forecasted growth in imports and exports from the Port of Houston due to the widening of the Panama Canal.

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?

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While Public Works' design manual standards are changed at the discretion of the Director, I think it's worth exploring options to initiate and/or confirm adjustments to the IDM or Chapter 9 through council action.

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.

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

No. I believe the designated professionals and citizen representatives should be active in neighborhood advocacy. Appointees should have a proven track record of working with citizens in the Built Environment. My own tenure on the Planning Commission was successful because I provided the professional insight of an architect, with the civic awareness of a neighborhood leader (I was at the time serving my term as President of the Super Neighborhood Alliance). We need to find capable citizens with both professional and community experience.

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?

I am not sure arbitrarily reducing the number of variances granted is a solution to irresponsible building. I think we need to design or redesign City ordinances in such a way as to accommodate both neighborhood preservation and development concerns. Variances are used by both residents and commercial developers to meet the unique needs of a given site. The City needs to do more to facilitate communication between neighborhood and residential stakeholders and builders to find common sense solutions to development challenges.

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

We need to ensure that all three components of the permitting process, review, inspection and enforcement, are being followed to the best of the City's ability. I have found through my own professional experience that the enforcement component especially is often lacking. Providing the Permitting Center with the support it needs to deliver good customer service and follow-through has been a priority of my tenure in office.

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

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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
		9c · More vehicle lane miles
		9d · More bicycle use

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	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.
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).
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.
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?
Topic G: Shipping, Freight Rail, Heavy Truck Traffic, Port Authority		
15	Shipping - freight rail, heavy truck traffic, Port Authority	How should the city and other governmental authorities, such as the Gulf Coast Freight Rail District, cooperate to enact statutes that preserve and allows for expansion of freight rail corridors?
Topic H: Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy		
16	Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy	Should it be a protocol for the design manuals established by Public Works & Engineering (eg Chapter 9 Stormwater Design) to be incorporated by reference into ordinances and integrated with other design standards to survive political administration turnovers?
17	Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy	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)?
18	Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy	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,

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		real estate, and construction industry?
19	Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy	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?
20	Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy	How should the city handle the increased infrastructure demands and other cumulative impacts of Chapter 42?