

**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: **Doug Peterson**

Position sought: **Houston City Council At-Large Position 3**

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

1. **Environmental improvements for clean air and water, and green space development**
2. **Significantly advance public transportation – urban and regional**
3. **Speed up Road Redevelopment & Flood Control**
4. **Advance Houston Economy & Create Jobs**

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.

I am strongly support the Complete Streets initiative. I am in favor of establishing a process for selecting, funding, planning, designing, and building transportation projects that allow safe access to destinations for everyone, regardless of age, ability, income or ethnicity, and no matter how they travel. As a COH Council Member, I will initiate and support resolutions, policies that advance the Complete Streets Coalition’s mission to bring this to reality.

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?

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Work to establish a consistent and reliable funding source, develop transparent prioritization process and track the implementation to make sure the designs take into account the recommendations set forth by the Houston Complete Streets Coalition.

b. Bike Plan Implementation?

As a city council member, I will work to facilitate community meetings that solicit as much public input throughout the planning process including direct meetings with bike community leaders and stakeholders. I will work closely with the City of Houston Planning & Development Department in coordination with the Public Works & Engineering Department and Houston Parks and Recreation Department in leading the update to the plan as well as work with the funding partners, BikeHouston, Houston Parks Board, Houston-Galveston Area Council, FTA, FHWA, and TxDOT to develop the plan.

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

The city of Houston is seriously lagging behind on meeting ADA federal standards and can face some serious repercussions if this issue goes unaddressed. As a council member, I will work the city of Houston ADA coordinator, PWE, etc. to implement the complete streets model, which should address these requirements.

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

Houston streets have often been designed in a large scale conducive to higher speeds than the actual limits. Redesigning t smaller, narrower designs will help slow speeds and make streets more useful for all users and enable more walkable neighborhoods. Another cause of speeding is a lack of sufficient officers patrolling our streets. We have fewer police officers on the force now than we did 10 years ago, although the population has increased. So by placing more officers on the road, this will lead to greater visibility which will serve as a great deterrent to traffic law breakers.

e. Reduction in Traffic Deaths?

There are many actions that can be taken to work toward Vision Zero, which COH should adopt! A key example is enforcing traffic laws through special initiatives, such as a crack down on red light runners who killed nearly 200 people in the last four to five years. There are other hardware systems such as traffic lights that can be seen by all at the intersection that can be effective at decreasing red light runners. Also, the Complete Streets model design will contribute to less pedestrian fatalities as well.

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

The city of Houston is currently on board with moving forward on the complete streets and transportation plan. My goal as council member will be to keep this energy going and focus on bringing this plan to life. Houston is only growing, and as the city of the future, we need to implement plans that take into account all users of the street, not just those in cars, a safe corridor for people traveling by foot,

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bicycle, transit, and car, that is also cost effective because it provides travel options and reduces congestion.

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

Variations should only be given when the variance, because of unique factor(s), is safer and more effective than Complete Streets designs.

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.

Having utility site the pole out of the sidewalk's way is preferable for users, especially those with disabilities. Sidewalk go around might work depending on placement while also important to not use green space areas.

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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?

Traveling now without internet access... I'm unable to review the Kinder Houston study but value Kinder's work in this area. A significant public shift is underway in reaction to increased traffic congestion and many more amenities in the urban core. This is good as urban populations grow and culturally change away from a commuter mentality and adopt more public transit and walking/biking. We surely need to move out on additional light rail lines, at least out Richmond and up 290, and make sure they're sited where people are and where people can get to them easily and quickly. Unless explosive growth outside of Houston slows, regional mass transportation is also going to be developed, even in addition to enlarge Park and Ride systems. And with added light rail lines and regional transit, special effort is needed to connect the many commercial districts around the city. Much needs to be done, and I will help lead the way on Houston City Council.

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.

As stated above Answer 6, I strongly support light rail, regional mass transit. Expanding the current light rail system isa very effective mode of transportation of moving large sums of people. The answer to traffic congestion moving forward is getting more cars off the roads and expanding multi-modal options.

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

In 1994, the City of Houston and Harris County entered into an interlocal agreement that established a regional transportation management program, and more specifically addressed developing a Regional Computerized Traffic Signal System. According to this program, The City may install computerized traffic signals throughout its arterial street system. If the City chooses to utilize State supported software

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for their arterial street system, then the State will design and construct hardware at the controller boxes which are located at the intersections of the arterial streets and frontage roads that are part of the RCTSS to be compatible with the CTMS. If the City chooses not to utilize State supported software for their arterial street system, then the City may design and construct hardware at the controller boxes which are located at the intersection of these roads and the frontage roads and/or design and install interface software for the RCTSS that is compatible with the CTMS constructed by the State.

Mayor Bill White moved forward on this agreement in 2004 and was able to adequately synchronize the traffic lights in downtown Houston. If this can effectively be done downtown, it can be done in other segments of the city.

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

- a. Promotion of smaller vehicles No, because that will contribute to more cars on the road
- b. Improved Mass Transit Yes absolutely. The goal is to reduce traffic congestion.
- c. More vehicle lane miles No, we need to slow down on more lane miles, shifting to public transit
- d. More bicycle use Yes absolutely! Fewer cars on the road.
- e. Increased gas tax That would help but isn't currently viable.

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 believe that any step towards transporting larger numbers of people in one vehicle is a step in the right direction, while enabling ride sharing is good by multiplying the number of people in some commuter cars. Both ways reduce carbon emissions, spend less money, and reduce traffic congestion.

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>)

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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).

All infrastructure projects should properly balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, the disabled, automobile drivers, freight operators, transit, and local businesses along the street, which is why I'm a strong advocate for Houston Complete Streets Coalition.

The City of Houston should lead this charge by adopting a policy of using Complete Streets design in all projects under the ReBuild Houston initiative. Where appropriate, when the streets are dug up, they should be redesigned with wide sidewalks, ADA compliant intersections, and safe and clear bike lanes, as well as adequate, safe travel lanes for automobiles, transit, and freight operators.

Complete streets will enable environments for pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, and residents, while attracting residential and commercial real estate investment. Complete streets increase connectivity, and have great synergy with the ped/bike network and the "Bayou Greenways" program.

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.

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.

I realize that approximately 40% of Houstonians do not drive, and, as such, rely on public transit to get around. I believe that the test of our progress is judged by not how much we provide to the abundance of those who have much, but whether we provide enough to those who have little and fewer options for mobility. I do realize that Metro's resources are limited, but I believe that there are some alternative options to maximizing ridership while accommodating everyone.

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?

As mentioned earlier, Commuter Rail will definitely be needed unless Houston stops mushrooming at the outward, which it probably won't. There are good freight rail corridor, and Houston leaders need to

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work strategically and collaboratively with all layers of government and private RRs to get moving on developments Developing inter-city high-speed rail will likely be the next stage of development after meeting inner city and commuter needs. Houston is growing at an exponential rate and we need to make sure that we have a transportation system that will meet growing demands.

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

First, I will get involved early and often with the communities that are already organizing to control impact on neighborhoods and communities. A very effective method is to bring all stakeholders including public community groups, to the table in the decision making process to discuss any potential development that will impact them. There's generally greater success when public and stakeholders are involved and see their concerns taken into account early.

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?

A great majority of the goods in this country are still transported via freight rail so I understand just how important its investment is. The state senate has the intergovernmental relations committee whose purpose is to review the types of support state government can provide to assist local government consolidations with county governments. Evaluate budget implications for city and county government consolidations. Research the appropriateness and cost savings of eliminating duplicity between city and county governments in different regions of the state. Must have a mechanism in place to pull the stakeholders to work together.

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, this should be the case and protocol to ensure consistency of governance over short and longer periods of time. This will enable better connection of higher level ordinances to more directed design manuals, thus improving integration of the different levels and greater clarity of guidance. While this will improve that connection, it will likely require for greater transparency and oversight of development and approval of the design manuals by the City Council. Ultimately this will be worthwhile and may also trigger greater value and support of a Houston General Plan.

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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)?

If I understand the question correctly, yes, the city has oversight authority and responsibility via Public Works and Engineering and Planning and Development departments. And complaint driven enforcement should be considered a part of community participation in the overall process.

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?

I believe that it's important and incumbent upon us to have community representatives and technical professionals sitting on commissions that require technical and practical knowledge and community input. As a consensus builder, what I would like to see is greater collaboration between the two groups to meet our city needs.

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?

By looking at the weekly agendas with great detail to come across these variances on the front end to make sure that by being granted that they serve the collective interest of the city. It's important to build a solid relationship with the mayor's administration to affectively serve the citizens of Houston.

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

As the city of Houston grows in density, emphasis on the type of development becomes more and more important. Recently the city extended the boundary for Chapter 42 from the loop to the beltway. I believe that this is a step in the right direction. There are a number of architectural organizations that have begun coordinating community meetings to ask address this very issue and this also is a step in the right direction. I believe that it is all a matter of bringing all the players to the table to collectively decide the best steps moving forward.

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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.
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?
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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, 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?