

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

Return to in MS Word format to [chair@ctchouston.org](mailto: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: [Georgia D. Provost](#)

Position sought: [Houston City Council Position 1](#)

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

1. [Establish a regional governance model](#)
2. [Create a collaboration model for 32 Law Enforcement Agencies affecting Houston](#)
3. [Effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Transportation Solutions](#)
4. [Economic Development for Underserved 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.

[First, I will support the Complete Streets goals of making our streets safe and livable/walkable by working with neighbors and merchants to enhance our sidewalks, crossing lanes and bike lanes. Second, I will search for funds to get better lighting and more user friendly walkways.](#)

**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?

[First, I will push for a city wide ordinance against texting while driving. This enhances safety for drivers and pedestrians and bicyclists. Second, I will work to update our design manuals to mandate new minimum standards for sidewalk widths, as the current standard is outdated for the amount of pedestrian traffic we experience. Third, I will get the city planning department to work with the design](#)

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engineers, the traffic safety engineers, and the Houston Police to integrate their approach to building safety into all streets.

b. Bike Plan Implementation?

I plan to vote for the approval of the new bike plan once it is completed.

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

Sidewalks and street crossings which are not ADA compliant will be prioritized and modified to meet the standards. I will look for a fee sharing process to assist homeowners in making their sidewalks compliant.

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

I support accelerated traffic analysis studies in our neighborhoods. The current process takes too much time, and should be sub-contracted out to allow neighborhoods to review and recommend options which will work for their areas.

e. Reduction in Traffic Deaths?

I will work to update our infrastructure design manuals to mandate new minimum standards for sidewalk widths, as the current standard is outdated for the amount of pedestrian traffic we experience. I will get the city planning department to work with the design engineers, the traffic safety engineers, and the Houston Police to integrate their approach to building safety into all streets. And, I will push for a ban on texting while driving.

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

I will work to execute the initiatives described in question 2. And then I will demand quarterly status reports from the planning, traffic safety, and police department with metrics to see how the city is meeting the complete streets goals.

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

Variations should be few and far, and the last resort, not the first resort. They should only be granted if they do not hinder traffic and/or pedestrian safety.

**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.

Utility companies will be required to relocate their infrastructure underground, with permeable sidewalks installed to reduce the chances of flooding.

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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](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 will push for more rail and transit systems throughout Houston. In addition, I will work to get more bus routes to and from places of work as well as the supermarkets, stores, and parks.**

**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 strongly support a Metro Rail system for Houston. The system needs to integrate with our bus lines and also take us to/from the airports to.**

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

**Houston needs to integrated intelligent traffic light synchronization city wide, with an integrated traffic control center in place to monitor and dynamically adjust lights for peak traffic/pedestrian periods. I will push for this.**

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

- a. Promotion of smaller vehicles **Yes**
- b. Improved Mass Transit **Yes**
- c. More vehicle lane miles **No**
- d. More bicycle use **Yes**
- e. Increased gas tax **No**

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**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.

Ride share and Jitney programs are an integral part of our transportation system, and should be allowed. However, the drivers must pass the same procedural actions as do Taxi Drivers (including vehicle safety inspections, City Commercial Driving Licenses, Commercial Driving Insurance, and Criminal Background Checks)

**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 strongly support the integration of bikeways and expanded walking pathways into our neighborhoods. I am a supporter of the Bayou Greenways Initiative.

**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.

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**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.

The bus system must provide an accessible, affordable, and reliable service to all Houstonians. This means more frequent buses on the routes, with bus stops at convenient locations throughout the 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?

I support high speed rail between Texas and other cities. However, it must be affordable, reliable, and safe. I want to see the construction and maintenance/service contracts for this service to go to Houston companies first!

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

Transparency of the design and environmental impacts is tantamount. All planning meetings must include representatives from the affected neighborhoods via Civic Clubs and Superneighborhood Associations.

**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 need to continue the City of Houston's representation on the Port Authority as well as other transportation oversight panels (including the Airport Authority, the Gulf Coast Rail District, etc.)

**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.

**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.

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**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?

Yes.

**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 will request a quarterly review of all variances requested/approved, with the goal of less than 5% granted per units under construction. Variances should be the exception, not the rule.

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

First, the access to permits needs to be streamlined to a one stop shop for the developers. I have heard from a number of contractors that the permitting process is cumbersome and duplicative. Second, we need a better pool of inspectors to thoroughly certify projects after they are completed.

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

Question #	Category	Questions for Candidates
<b>Topic A: Complete Streets Policy</b>		
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?
<b>Topic B: Traffic Congestion, Streets, Parking</b>		
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
<b>Topic C: Competing Vehicular Passenger Cars - Jitneys, Ride Share, and Others</b>		
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.
<b>Topic D: Bike Trails and Bayou Greenway Initiatives</b>		
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).
<b>Topic E: Multi-modal Transit Alternatives (bus, HOV/HOT, Light Rail, Bikes, Ride Share, Jitney, Park &amp; Ride, Walking)</b>		
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.
<b>Topic F: Passenger Rail – High Speed Rail &amp; Commuter Rail</b>		
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?
<b>Topic G: Shipping, Freight Rail, Heavy Truck Traffic, Port Authority</b>		
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?
<b>Topic H: Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy</b>		
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)?

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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?