

**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: Manuel (Manny) Barrera

Position sought: City Council District J

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

1. Redevelopment, numerous apartment complexes and all the problems associated with that.
2. Transportation as many of the residents are not vehicle owners.
3. Neighborhood problems associated with parking on grass, too many vehicles on street.
4. After school programs, should be provided by the schools with partnership with the City.

**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.

*The plan is very general, so no opinion.*

**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?

*Metro should be responsible for sidewalks leading to its bus stops.*

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b. Bike Plan Implementation?

There is insufficient money for a comprehensive bike plan, other than using the bayous.

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

The city is not in compliance in most places as the sidewalks are not fit for walking much less for persons with disabilities who rely on wheelchairs or other such devices.

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

The problem is not the speed limits the problem is that people do not travel the posted speed limit.

e. Reduction in Traffic Deaths?

I don't believe there is a cure for stupid, I did have a person once suggest that we should have a stupid tax. People drive while drunk. People drive while texting. People drive while high. People don't know better than to slow down when the streets are wet. Education may be the best way to decrease traffic deaths.

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

The plan is too general or vague to properly make a valid decision.

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

In regards to major thoroughfares never, in residential areas the amount of traffic needs to be taken into consideration.

**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.

I think that what occurred is that the pole came before the sidewalk, the majority of the times. Lines are better underground but the cost to place on ground has to come from somewhere.

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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))

**Bad Link**, 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?

The study has what people perceive to be problems, and suggests that it will involve long studies especially since we don't have zoning in Houston. What we do have is rail that is built with the anticipation that the density will follow it. We need to consider apps that allow car pooling as is presently being done in Israel and other places. Need creative solutions, not an area of my expertise.

**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.

Metro rail is a problem as to the lights in downtown Houston. Moving north and south using Louisiana and Smith is a good example of how it should work. Try going east and west and you will find a good example of how it should not work. The monorail would have prevented that. If Medellin Colombia can have a monorail running the length of the city, not sure why Houston could not have done the same.

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

Other than Metro, not sure what other agencies there are unless one is thinking about the commercial trains.

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

- a. Promotion of smaller vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- b. **Improved Mass Transit** ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
- c. More vehicle lane miles \_\_\_\_\_
- d. More bicycle use \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Increased gas tax \_\_\_\_\_

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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.

Discussed it above, ride shares and jitneys are good programs, there have been attempts at jitneys before, either because of problems with the city or other they were not successful. A friend of mine, Alfredo Santos, did have a jitney service for a while in the 90s.

**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).

The neighborhood that I live in is unique in that those of us that have property adjacent to the bayou own the property to the middle of the bayou. A hike and bike trail as presently designed would increase my concerns for crime as well as flooding as the trails are 10 feet wide and made of concrete. I personally think that it does not make sense to place so much concrete without corresponding water retention ponds. White Oak Bayou flooding became worse after the hike and bike trails were built. Coincidence who know, but it something that needs to be looked at.

**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.

The metro rail was overly expensive and the traffic is only at the medical center. I took a bus to work for 10 years. If transportation is what we want to concern ourselves with than we need to consider what is best for the people using the transportation not for the engineers and developers. Do you know why engineers don't like buses, no money for them. Know why inner loop developers like rail, look at what is happening along the north south rail line. Transportation was secondary if that.

**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?

Is there a need? Where would the people who ride come from? Not sure.

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

Not a problem in District J.

**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?

Was not aware that freight rail was expanding, but it is a better alternative to 18 wheelers.

**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?

Not sure what the question is asking for, it seems to say that we keep reinventing the wheel. Of course that is true, if that is what it means. One must reward the persons that keep us in office.

**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)?

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Not sure what the question is asking for.

**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?

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?

If I were mayor, yes. The council member is one vote among 16. One big gorilla (mayor) and 16 little monkeys.

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

The question is overly broad/vague. The chapter is exceedingly long.

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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

**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?

**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?
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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?