

**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)

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Citizens' Transportation Coalition

PO BOX 66532, HOUSTON TX 77266-6532

Candidate name: Marty McVey

Position sought: Mayor of Houston

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

1. Economic Development
2. Mobility
3. Debt
4. Infrastructure

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.

An ideal Complete Streets policy:

First and foremost to accomplish a Complete Streets concept city wide is a major undertaking. As Mayor, I would take the first step of leading a vision. We would start by establishing a plan going forward with retrofit projects and new projects that would include pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities. This new approach must be integrated into the uses of bus, rail, and automobile and truck traffic.

Achieving a Complete Streets program must be addressed in planning, design and maintenance for the entire right of way. That simply is not possible until we can repair the crumbling streets and infrastructure of Houston currently. I would propose and direct the Planning Department and the Public Works Department to take first steps toward Complete Streets as we retrofit the current crumbling street infrastructure. Houston could put in sidewalks as we repair our streets. This

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alone would provide safe walkable pathways in neighborhoods. I would seek to provide safe bike lanes. I would instruct the Chief of Police to enforce the laws for bike safety.

The City should adopt and enforce compliance standards for all retrofit projects and require the latest and best design criteria for new projects going forward.

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?

The geographical mileage of streets needing repair is overwhelming. As stated above, as we address the retrofit projects moving forward the City should repair current crumbling sidewalks and lay new sidewalks where they did not exist.

b. Bike Plan Implementation?

The Lamar Cycle Track is a highly developed model. The Brays Bayou Trail meanders along Brays Bayou from Gessner to MacGregor Park. This approximately 12-mile trail along the bayou was built by Harris County and is maintained by County Precinct 3, Precinct 1, and Precinct 2. I applaud this initiative by the County. As Mayor I would seek a more "whole of government" approach in areas of mobility. Houstonians pay County taxes and I would first reach out to the Harris County Commissioners to partner with funding to establish future safe bike lanes and tracks. I also would seek federal funding to achieve additional revenues to accomplish this complete streets mobility.

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

Streets in our communities must allow safe and comfortable travel for everyone, including people with disabilities. Yet, they often are difficult to navigate for people who use wheelchairs, have diminished vision, can't hear well, or for people who move more slowly. Nearly one in five Americans faces at least one of these challenges.

As Mayor, I would issue a directive to provide safe and comfortable travel for people with disabilities. Nearly one in five Americans use wheelchairs, have diminished vision, can't hear well or use walkers.

Neighborhoods with deteriorated sidewalks and unpaved surfaces force wheelchair travelers into the street. Lack of a curb ramp can force a pedestrian into the street. Wide intersections designed to quickly move motorized traffic may not provide enough time for someone with a disability to cross safely. Pedestrian signals that use only visual cues can lead to dangerous situations for those with low vision. A recent study found that blind pedestrians waited three times longer to cross the street, and made many more dangerous crossings than sighted pedestrians. Houston is better than this and I would make it a priority to protect our most vulnerable citizens to have a safe avenue of mobility.

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

The City of Houston currently uses some forms of traffic calming initiatives. I would propose expanding the measures to include the best practices for neighborhood specifics:

- Narrower traffic lanes — streets can be narrowed by extending the sidewalk, adding bollards or planters, or adding a bike lane or on-street parking.
- Curb extensions (also called bulbouts) that narrow the width of the roadway at pedestrian crossings
- Chokers, which are curb extensions that narrow the roadway to a single lane at points^[9]
- Road diets: actively remove a lane from the street.
 - Allowing parking on one or both sides of a street to reduce the number of driving lanes.
- Pedestrian refuges or small islands in the middle of the street.
- Converting one-way streets into two-way streets.
- Speed bumps, sometimes split or offset in the middle to help emergency vehicles reduce delay
- Speed humps, parabolic devices that are less aggressive than speed bumps and used on residential streets.
- Speed cushions, two or three small speed humps sitting in a line across the road that slow cars down but allows (wider) emergency vehicles to straddle them so as not to slow emergency response time.
- Speed tables, long flat-topped speed humps that slow cars more gradually than humps
- Raised pedestrian crossings, which act as speed tables, often situated at intersections.
- Changing the surface material or texture (for example, the selective use of brick or cobblestone). Changing in texture may also help. This includes changing color to emphasize to drivers that they are in a pedestrian centric zone.

Houston elected to not support red-light cameras and I would assume would resist speed cameras. Enforcement falls to recruit more police officers on the street.

I would launch an educational awareness campaign by soliciting PSA's from local radio and television stations to promote awareness of safety.

e. Reduction in Traffic Deaths?

I would work to implement all of the initiatives listed above with planning.

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

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I would start with the Smart Growth America Study Outline:

- Designate a lead person or agency to oversee implementation
- Create broad based committees to oversee the process or make project-level decisions •
- Write a formal implementation plan
- Require public annual reports that include Complete Streets progress
- Conduct an inventory of documents that need to be changed to bring them in alignment with a Complete Streets approach

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

Never. I know there could possibly be an exception but it should be a very rare circumstance.

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.

Currently, the City has an agreement with the utility companies that they can be placed anywhere. I personally would advocate for underground utilities. This of course would be very expensive and would take a longer period of time. I would advocate placement be a cooperative effort with the utility companies and the city Planning Department. Sidewalks promote safe mobility in neighborhoods. There should be city regulations that protect sidewalks.

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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? Bike, to pedestrian to transit and cars using connectivity task force to look for new urbanism

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.

To be a world class economic hub for business, Houston must complete an efficient light rail system. I also support hard rail for commuter from outside of Houston. I would advocate through HGAC a regional plan for hard rail supported and maintained by HGAC with transportation funding from the federal and state government. As this region grows, we have got to address alternative forms of transportation to achieve a competent mobility plan.

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

My approach to governance is a "whole of government" approach and this is a perfect example where the region would benefit from inter-governmental cooperation between county, TxDOT, other municipalities.

- a. Promotion of smaller vehicles _____
- b. Improved Mass Transit strongly support
- c. More vehicle lane miles yes if they are planned and constructions as complete street models
- d. More bicycle use strongly support
- e. Increased gas tax city has no ability to levy a gas tax

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

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

I strongly support ride share and jitney programs. I would advocate jitney programs in neighborhoods

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).

Connectivity is the key to successful mobility. Houston has launched a bike pathway initiative. As Mayor I would launch safe pedestrian pathways which promote urbanism. Livable centers are a key to promoting neighborhood participation. Safe walkable pathways and bike lane to commuter stations promote neighborhood connectivity as seen in most major cities in the U.S. and in Europe. This is essential to Houston's growth.

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. There are a number of low income neighborhoods where service has recently been expanded.

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.

METRO's redesigned city transit system addressed increased ridership by offering opportunities for more frequent bus ridership and they also increased the level of service. This was a step to promote more alternative transportation to attract the most riders. I do support finding solutions to the

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underserved neighborhoods. I would start with a task force working with super neighborhoods to find solutions for the underserved neighborhoods.

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 it. Moving people from point A to point B efficiently safely reduces congestion on highways and roads, and will be more ecologically sound.

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

With the expansion of light rail, commuter rail, and development of High Speed Rail, I would call stakeholder meetings within neighborhoods. I would work with TxDOT, the Federal and State governments to erect concrete sound barriers to abate the impact of the rail development.

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?

Currently there are no rules. With the expansion of the Panama Canal, more intermodal freight will be imported through the Port of Houston. I support projects such as the Grand Parkway, taking freight around Houston to point of destination, by rail or by truck. The Union Pacific Railroad is now double-tracking its lines, from West Junction to Rosenberg and through Sugar Land has already been double-tracked.

Topic H: Public Infrastructure Ordinances and Policy

16. Question: Should it be a protocol for the design manuals established by Public Works & Engineering (e.g. Chapter 9 Stormwater 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 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 believe all Commissions should be representative of Houston. There should be learned professionals and neighborhood representatives. I support balanced representation. Commissions should not be weighted towards a certain segment of the population but representative of Houston as a whole.

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 should be an exception rather than an activity in the normal course of business. City codes are designed for safety and the public good. I would strongly look at a presentation of variance to a City Council Committee that would evaluate the variance request and the recommendation from the Planning Commission or City Engineer. As elected representatives, they would have oversight.

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

The Planning Department needs to be modernized to 2015 standards with a matrix and evaluation by council. Permitting should be customer responsive. Chapter 42 created universal standards for all of Houston. This should simplify the process.

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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?
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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?