

WALK BIKE QUESTIONNAIRE

2019 NASHVILLE METRO COUNCIL CANDIDATES



In preparation for the 2019 Metropolitan General Elections, Walk Bike Nashville distributed a Walking and Biking Candidate Questionnaire to Metro Council candidates. This questionnaire is intended to help educate the public about the positions and ideas of

each of the candidates. Walk Bike Nashville is a 501c3 non-profit, and as such we do not endorse or support any candidate.

These are the answers as we received them, unedited, from the candidates.

1. What would you do as a council member to promote walking and biking in Nashville?

Robert Nash

General Statement: I support walking and biking as a healthy form of exercise. My wife, our two dogs and I regularly walk a 4-mile path that takes us through our neighborhood to the walkway at Whitfield Park and along trails at the Ellington Agricultural Center. I also see walking and biking as a component of a comprehensive transportation plan. Given the current state of Metro's finances, I will be inclined to give priority to those projects that best fit into a larger transit plan – a sidewalk leading to a bus stop, a bike path that offers a safe commute from a community to an employment center like downtown or Metro Center, for instance.

In the introduction to this question, you speak to both the safety of walking/biking and the health benefits of these activities. Regarding the safety issue, I would advocate for more well-defined crosswalks on major thoroughfares and at other locations where the data indicates such crosswalks are needed. I am also a supporter of expanding Nashville's networks of well-designed sidewalks – sidewalks with good buffers between the walk and the roadway. I support the city's prioritizing of sidewalks and installing them where data indicates the greatest potential use - such as connecting neighborhoods to adjacent schools and areas in which high density housing can be connected to shopping areas. Safe sidewalks and crosswalks that connect people to the places they wish to go will promote walking. I would also advocate for expansion of greenways and the like that provide safe places for walking and biking.

I support bike lanes where such can be installed and not impair the safe flow of traffic. I also believe the bike lanes need to be done in a manner such that they truly connect bike users to something. I find a lot of waste in installing bike lanes for short spans that go nowhere and connect to nothing. In many of

these areas, the installation of a bike lane is not in an area where the bike traffic warrants the expense and the bike lanes do not improve the safety of the few bikers that use them. Our implementation of bike lanes needs to be more strategic.

2. What will you do as a Council Member to reduce pedestrian fatalities and severe injuries in your district and all of Nashville?

Robert Nash

See the answer to question 1. In addition, I support the use of well lighted "safety crossings" (not sure of the exact name) such as the crossing at the bus stop at Nolensville Rd., just north of Harding Place. This crossing site also is part of a high use bus stop. Such coordination between pedestrian traffic and mass transit is to be encouraged. A number of these fatalities involved pedestrians not always using safe practices. Nashville needs to do more training in that area. I see people walking on the edge of roadways where there are sidewalks on the other side of the road. I see pedestrians not facing traffic when they walk along side roadways or failing to wear reflective clothing at night. We need to improve public awareness of safe walking and biking.

A portion of these fatalities involve people who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs that impair their judgment. I don't know that I have a good answer to address this area except for our law enforcement personnel and liquor sellers to watch for these people and take appropriate actions to keep them safe – arrest, not serving someone already intoxicated, etc.

3. What will you do as a council member to enact WalkNBike and expand low-stress bikeways? If a plan for new bikelanes came across your desk that you had the authority to approve and you thought it was the right thing to do, Metro staff agreed, but a vocal minority were strongly opposed, how would you move forward?

Robert Nash

As stated above, I support the expansion of bike lanes where they actually enhance transportation and safe recreation. To just create bike lanes in a willy-nilly fashion undermines support for bikers. No city can ever make progress if its leadership always gives in to every vocal minority. However, those we represent bought property and have invested in our communities with certain expectations and property rights. Their rights should not be gratuitously subjected to the "tyranny of the majority." Since your question is a hypothetical, I cannot

really give you a firm answer. I would do my best to get all interested parties together to share their concerns in the hope of finding consensus or a reasonable compromise. If unable to do so, I would carefully weigh the pros and cons of the given project, consider all the interests of the parties concerned, and make a decision.

4. How can Metro Nashville reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips into downtown in order to ensure that new employees, Nashvillians, and visitors continue to have access to Nashville's urban core?

Robert Nash

As commuting becomes more of a challenge, I believe public pressure will grow for more public and private ride-sharing programs. Metro also needs to re-engage in the planning for making major improvements in our city's mass transit system and that of the larger Metropolitan area.

5. The WalkNBike Plan states that only 19% of Nashville's streets have sidewalks. How can Metro expand our sidewalk network? As a council member, what would you do to support this?

Robert Nash

I support Metro's current requirements that call for those building new developments or those making significant improvements to existing facilities to incorporate sidewalks in their plans or contribute to the sidewalk fund. Unfortunately, sidewalks were not a requirement for many decades. It is going to take time to build out our network of sidewalks. I will support the expansion of sidewalks as described in earlier questions as funding allows.

6. Transportation remains severely underfunded in Nashville and lacks a dedicated, consistent funding source. Which of the follow options would you support? Please explain.

- A. Referendum to raise sales tax, business tax hotel/motel tax, and/or wheel tax
- B. Increasing property taxes and using those funds for transportation
- C. Bonds
- D. Other _____
- E. None of the above

Robert Nash

6. b. Please explain your response to the options above.

Robert Nash

Given the scope and expense of a major transportation project, you may well need a combination of the above funding sources. I am generally not in favor of referendums on complex issues. I also do not favor increasing our sales tax or wheel tax. Both of these taxes are regressive and unduly burden the poorest among us. We need a plan that we can explain to the public and for which we can build support. With the public's support, we hopefully will be able to formulate an appropriate funding plan. Once such a plan has been approved, I suggest that implementation begin in a corridor where it is most needed. As that project is implemented, we can learn from it and incorporate the lessons learned in future stages.

7. What are your thoughts about the Metro Traffic Calming Program? Should speed-management (either lowering speed limits or adding physical traffic calming) be used to slow car speeds? If so on what type of streets?

Robert Nash

I support the Metro Traffic Calming Program. I know my neighbors who live on streets that are connectors between major thoroughfares are all concerned about speeding vehicles and have requested traffic calming. Lowering speed limits is just now being implemented in several neighborhoods. I would like to see how that strategy works. If it proves to be effective, I would support lower speeds in other suitable locations. I also support the use of physical traffic calming measures – rumble strips, chicanes, traffic circles, chokers, bulb outs and the like – where appropriate.