

**League of Bicycling Voters
2011 City Council Questionnaire**

1. Do you support the City's Complete Streets policy? What improvements would you recommend to it?

Yes, I support the City's Complete Streets policy. There are too many gaps that prevent true connectivity from our residential neighborhoods into the downtown core. From both a traffic-fighting and public safety perspective, we need to help those who are already commuting by bike do so more easily and safely.

Currently, we tend to complete bicycle projects (lanes, relining) when we're resurfacing streets. This is cost-effective, but it leaves many of our most vulnerable places unfixed or incomplete. That's why I suggest looking for improvements that pose the greatest increase in safety or usage. We need to prioritize not only the cost-effective improvements, but the most dangerous, most traveled gaps, too. These projects – especially when they get choice commuters onto bicycles and out of cars – can also save money in the long term by reducing the need for expensive road repairs.

We have some excellent bicycle infrastructure; we just need to do more to connect the dots. For example, we've done a lot to improve the area around the Red Line station downtown, but there's still a lack of safe connectivity under I-35 to East 5th street. That's a very high traffic, dangerous area that merits improvements now, rather than when we happen to be re-paving it.

2. What does bicycle safety mean to you? Can you suggest aspects of bicycle safety that are more important than helmets?

Bicycle safety means a number of things. It means increased bicycle ridership, because the safest thing for bicyclists is to have more bicycles on the road. In cities like Amsterdam and Stockholm and countries like China where ridership is high, it is safer to cycle because other road users are aware and on the look-out for bicycles.

Bicycle safety also means ordinances like Safe Passing, which I supported, and the ban on texting while driving. Greater driver awareness results in increased safety for all road users. That's why I support driver education about road markings pertaining to cyclists, such as sharrows, the new green bike lanes in dangerous intersections, and advanced stop lines. These markings encourage drivers to be more aware of bicyclists and hopefully all other non-car road users.

As a parent of two young children, I'm also interested in creating bicycle facilities that work for riders at all skill levels, and I support improvements to help more kids bike to school.

Another aspect of bike safety is the safety of the bicycle itself, and the prevention of bike theft. I helped create the Bike Theft Task Force to address the increase in bike thefts in spring 2009. It was a great opportunity to work with leaders in the cycling community to look for solutions to help keep cyclists on the road. Here's a link:

http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/crime/Bicycle_thefts_up_each_year

3. Among the various modes of transportation, how important are bicycling and walking? What percentage of city transportation spending should go to each mode?

In a growing city like Austin, it is crucial that we facilitate multi-modal transportation, to encourage and enable people to use every possible method to navigate our city. I want to foster more options for people who don't want to drive. If an Austinite would rather be biking than sitting in traffic in front of me, I want to make sure they have a safe way to do so. That's why I co-sponsored putting Prop 1 on ballot last fall, and that's why I supported its passage. It was a bond package that provided fixes and improvements for all kinds of road users.

It's also important to take a more comprehensive look at what populations comprise our bike commuting populations. Transportation can amount to up to 30% of a household's budget, and bicycling for many is the only way to get to work and make ends meet. Anything we can do to improve our multi-modal transit options will have a positive impact, not only on mobility, but also on people's pocket books.

Rather than budgeting transit dollars according to usage percentages I support evaluating projects using criteria such as geographic equity, traffic congestion relief, environmental impact, traffic safety, and potential for state and federal grants.

4. Do you support a cyclist's freedom not to use a bike lane or bike path, even when one is available?

I support a bicyclist's right as stated in Texas law to use a traffic lane if needed especially when a bike lane or bike path is unsafe. Safety of the rider needs to be a priority, and due to weather, construction, or poor maintenance, there are areas of Austin where the bike lane is not always a safe option. To foster stronger support for bike lanes, it helps that they be used when it makes sense for cyclists to do so. However, drivers need to be ready for cyclists in their lanes, even when bike lanes exist. We need to do more to promote routes that exist, and we need to work on the relationship between cyclists and drivers, so it is less contentious and not such a big deal when a bicyclist takes a lane.

5. How often do you ride a bicycle on Austin's public roadways?

Not often, and when I do ride it is recreational. With two children – Ethan, age 4 and Emme, age 2 – it is not feasible for this working mom to juggle their schedules, needs,

and stuff all on a bicycle. This is an area of bicycle policy I'd really like to look at – studies show that if you want to increase ridership, work to increase female bicycle ridership, especially female bike commuting.

6. What steps would you take to make Austin's streets less intimidating and more accessible for bicyclists?

I look at this problem from the perspective of a mother of two young children, who I want to be able to ride their bikes and be safe. To help make that a reality for them and for all of our kids, I'd like to see bike infrastructure that helps beginner and entry-level cyclists, children, senior citizens, and anyone who is new to cycling. I'd like Austin to help them feel comfortable riding in our city. The best way to accomplish that is with bike-specific infrastructure, where beginner riders can feel safer and not as if they have to compete or have an adversarial relationship with cars. The Lance Armstrong Bikeway, and now the Pfluger extension bridge (though not bike-specific) help increase connectivity and are also good from an accessibility standpoint.

7. Do you support the recommendations mandated in Austin's 2009 bicycle plan? By what year should they be completed?

Obviously we're in a series of difficult budget cycles. While I support the recommendations, in transportation infrastructure just as in all things, we need to balance community priorities. That's never easy. Things rarely happen as quickly as we would like for them to happen, and in tough times, trade-offs are often necessary. Core city services have been my primary focus. We need to take care of the most basic needs first. Given the scale and intensity of our traffic problems here in Austin and given the fact that citizens spend so much money on transportation every single day, out of necessity, I will continue to support cost-effective measures that give commuters more choices in how they move around our city. In other words, I remain committed to seeing the recommendations completed as quickly as is feasible and fiscally responsible. I'm also a tremendous proponent of public-private partnerships. I'd like to see more non-profits and businesses here help pick up some of the slack, perhaps by installing more bike racks that are open to the public, or coming together to help sponsor a bike-sharing program downtown to provide a new option for people going short distances, either for work or entertainment.

8. What is your position on mandatory bicycle helmet laws? Would you support a sunset review of Austin's current under-18 bicycle helmet law?

I will always make my two children wear helmets. I want them to want to wear their helmets to protect them from other people who may not be on the look-out for bicyclists on the road. However, when they are older if they are not wearing them on the three-block ride down the street to Galaxy Café or Nau's, I don't think they necessarily need to

be cited by the police. I support a sunset review of the under-18 helmet law, and I support further study related to the correlation between helmet laws and getting more bicyclists on the road. I've seen some studies that show mandatory helmet laws create a stigma that cycling is unsafe, and as a result less people ride. I've also been educated by members of the bike community about how mandatory helmet laws seem to put the onus for safety on bicyclists, rather than a shared commitment between all road users. This suggests to me that we don't need a mandatory helmet law as much as we need more education for drivers and cyclists alike, about the need to share our roads, and provide a safe commuting and traveling space for everyone.