

# STREET collective

## 2021 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

### INTRODUCTION

Just like in 2017 and 2019, the Street Collective wants to know where Des Moines City Council candidates stand on safe streets and active transportation issues. This questionnaire serves to educate and inform the Collective's members and the public. The Collective is an Iowa non-profit corporation and 501(c)(3) organization, so it does not endorse candidates for office. The Collective will, however, encourage all citizens to vote in the city elections held on November 2, 2021.

After the deadline below, the Collective will post these responses on its website ([www.dsmstreetcollective.org](http://www.dsmstreetcollective.org)), Facebook, Twitter, and other online platforms. All responses should be considered public, including a decision not to respond to a particular question or the questionnaire as a whole. We use the terms "walking" and "walkability" as inclusive of people who use mobility devices.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please submit your responses via email to Mike Armstrong at [Mike@dsmstreetcollective.org](mailto:Mike@dsmstreetcollective.org) by September 21, 2021.

### CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Name: Cory McAnelly

Pronouns: He/Him

Ward or At-Large seat: Ward 3

Website: [coryforcouncil.com](http://coryforcouncil.com)

Facebook: [Link Embedded Here](#)

Twitter: n/a

Instagram: [@coryfordesmoines](#)

## PRIORITIES

1. What are three transportation projects you want the City to complete during your term?

- **Neighborhoods in need**. Increase the availability and usage of public transportation in neighborhoods that have the greatest need for transportation. I know we have identified these neighborhoods, we need to prioritize the projects.
- **Suburban partnership**. Strengthen our partnership with our suburban governments to maximize the (safe) use of our rideshare programs which will minimize the wear and tear of commuter traffic on our transportation infrastructure and reduce the per person output of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Downtown restructure**. Expedite the restructuring of our downtown street projects to maximize traffic flow and minimize concerns related to speeding and safety that are hurting the attractiveness of living, working, and playing downtown.

2. Scenario: a proposed street project would add a bike lane, a wider sidewalk, or a bus-only lane, but would remove some on-street parking spaces or a car traffic lane. How would you decide whether to support that project?

- **Public Engagement**: First and foremost, I would engage the City Experts tasked with assessing transportation and traffic flow along with the impacted communities - businesses and neighborhoods - to make sure they are engaged and their expertise and voices are heard from the beginning of the project. All projects that we expect to be successful must start with expert and community engagement.
- **Conflict Assessment**: I would approach this scenario like any other proposed project that has apparently conflicting priorities. The first step is to determine if there is a true conflict. We would do this by collecting data, reviewing that data, assessing the proposed projects, and determining if a conflict exists. Very often we find that there is a perceived conflict where the data and information show that no real conflict exists.
  - **No Conflict**: In the scenario described above, it is highly possible that either the parking spaces or the additional traffic lane are not needed, they are simply “the way it has been.” The scenario assumes that the bike lane, sidewalk, and bus-only lane are needed and, therefore, there is no question that the project should be supported as proposed.
  - **Conflict with Alternatives**: If the facts showed that the proposed project would conflict with either parking needs or traffic flow in the area, we would then need to assess alternatives. Often we find that small compromises or basic alternatives are good solutions

and, in those cases, the main issue is defining those alternatives, communicating those alternatives, and working through the change management process. This could include identifying proximate parking that would cover the parking loss or prioritizing alternate routes for a removed traffic lane. If there are adequate alternatives that are a short-term inconvenience until the public learns the new system, I would support the project as proposed and work hard to personally facilitate the change management.

- **True Conflict:** In the event there is a true conflict - i.e. the traffic and parking will be directly impacted by the project and no alternatives will be available - I will assess the long-term value of the project, the impacted communities (people and businesses), the impact on the environment, the financial impact, and the equitable balance of the proposed outcome vs. the status quo. If the proposed project prioritizes local needs, equitable access to public services, reduces the city impact on the environment, and is financially sound (or some combination of these factors), I would support the project as proposed and I would put myself, as the City Council member, on the front line of any community concerns or complaints to facilitate the more difficult change management associated with true conflicts.

- **Communication and Education:** We would need to develop a communication and education plan to show that prioritizing the alternate mode of transportation on the street (bike, walking, bus) would actually, over time, decrease the need for the removed parking spaces and/or traffic lanes.
- **Ongoing Assessment and Learning:** Regardless of the solution we need to make sure we actively communicate with the public and businesses *after* the project is complete and review the success and failure of the project over time not only to make adjustments as needed, but also to inform future projects of a similar nature.

3. Scenario: a developer proposes a project with affordable housing, but there are no transit lines, grocery stores, or sidewalks nearby. How would you decide whether to support that project?

- **Public Engagement:** Same as answer to #1.
- **Conflict Assessment:** Same as answer to #1.
  - **No Conflict:** In the scenario described above we can remove the conflict by encouraging the developer to invest in the community and show a commitment to the community and taxpayers. That is to say, some developers will have “access to public services” as a part of their development plan and proposal and I think this should be taken into consideration as a relevant data point when communicating city support of a project. For those developers

that come with “access to public services” in mind, but without a clear vision for how that fits into the needs of the community, we should work with the developer and the neighborhood to determine what services are needed and how we might modify the developers plans to address the needs. In these cases, I would support the project.

- **Conflict with Alternatives:** If there is community support for the project and the development is satisfying the need for affordable housing, but is unwilling or unable to remedy the “access to public services” problem, we would need to determine how the city or others could help provide alternatives or fill the gaps. If we can find adequate alternatives to facilitate access to a supported and needed affordable housing project, I would support the project.
- **True Conflict:** If there is a true conflict and no alternatives, I would not support the project. Access to affordable housing is a significant barrier in our community and we need to constantly strive to increase access and availability. But through my own life experience and my work on the Board of Managers at the YMCA Supportive Housing Campus, I know that housing insecurity and homelessness is very often the “symptom” of the underlying problems (lack of job, lack of training, financial insecurity, substance abuse, mental health issues, lack of family and community support, etc.). If affordable housing units don’t have access to these underlying resources and public services, the housing will be a mere band-aid to the underlying systemic issues that require real attention.
- **Communication and Education:** Same as answer to #1 (except as applied to affordable housing).
- **Ongoing Assessment and Learning:** Same as answer to #1.

4. Scenario: a proposed street project would deviate from the MoveDSM and/or Connect Downtown plans for that street. (Note: both were unanimously approved by the City Council and aim to make Des Moines more walkable and bike-friendly.) How would you decide whether to support that project?

- **Public Engagement:** Same as answer to #1 (particularly as applied to changing something that has already received public buy-in).
- **Conflict Assessment:** Same as answer to #1.
  - **No Conflict:** The MoveDSM and Connect Downtown plans, as I understand them, are a 25 year plan to optimize our streets and transportation systems. It is absolutely critical that we have these plans in place and I believe they will help us add predictability to our future financial needs and transportation projects. That said, I read these plans as having both “guiding principles” and specific proposals. It is incredibly difficult to predict with certainty the

needs of our City over the next 5, 10, and 25 years. As such, if a proposed deviation is adapting to evolving and unknown needs and is consistent with the “guiding principles” of these plans (as outlined in the plans), we should consider supporting the deviation. We then turn to the experts who crafted and proposed the MoveDSM and Connect Downtown projects and the impacted communities for input and if they support the proposed deviation, there is no conflict and I would support the proposed street project.

- **Conflict with Alternatives:** If there is a conflict with both the “guiding principles” and the specific proposals of the plans, I would seek deviations and alternatives that re-aligned the project with the plans. Assuming we could find such alternatives and experts and impacted parties were in agreement, I would support the proposed street project.
- **True Conflict:** If there is a true conflict, no alternatives, and no way to find alternatives that are consistent with the “guiding principles” of the plans, I would have to fully understand the underlying premise for the project. If there were strong reasons for the deviation that could not have been predicted or anticipated at the time of the development of the plans and the public supported the deviation, I would consider supporting the deviation. If there was no compelling reason for the deviation that would justify a departure from the plans and their “guiding principles,” I would not support the proposed street project.
- **Communication and Education:** Same as answer to #1 (except as applied to communicating about the deviation from the MoveDSM or Connect Downtown plans).
- **Ongoing Assessment and Learning:** Same as answer to #1.

## **WALKING**

5. What investments, if any, do you support that would make sidewalks and crosswalks easier and safer to use for people with disabilities?

Our sidewalks should be built to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”). I support the use and installation of signage, lighting, security, and drainage systems that allow easier access and mobility along our sidewalks and crosswalks. I support investing in traffic safety and street crossing plans that have differently abled mobility in mind (which includes the timing and cadence of cross-walks). I support the use of high quality materials in the construction of our sidewalks that will increase the lifetime of the sidewalks and slow deterioration, which often has more of an impact on those using mobility assistance devices.

6. In 1969, about 50% of American children walked or biked to school. Today, less than 10% do. What should the City do to reverse this trend?

The City should promote the use of bicycles and other forms of environmentally friendly transportation through personal example, supporting programs that educate and provide access to bikes, and prioritizing projects that have biking and walking in mind (including prioritizing safety). My understanding is that the reduction in biking and walking is not due to any single factor, but has been caused, in part, by a combination of students enrolling in schools that are further from their home, concerns about the safety, a lack of education, inequitable access to bikes (the cost of bikes is increasing), and an increase in participation in before and after school activities (students would be walking and biking in the dark or don't have time to walk or bike to arrive on time). While the City cannot fundamentally impact some of these issues, the City can make sure that if students would like to walk or bike, they have accessible and safe streets and sidewalks to do so. And, again, the City can lead by example.

## **BICYCLING**

7. Many cities have significant public funding for bike share programs. Do you support increased City funding for the BCycle system? Why or why not?

I would look at the data for the usage of the BCycle System and make a decision accordingly. If we have a high volume of usage and it is clear an expansion would satisfy a need, I would support increased City funding for this program. If we have a low volume of usage, I would ask "why?" If the answer is that our locations are not aligned with the need, I would support increased City funding if the increase would prioritize the high use areas or expansion into communities that do not have equitable access to such resources. If we have a low volume of usage in communities with lower property values and incomes, I would ask if our City funding would be better spent on reducing the cost for certain communities as opposed to expanding the services. I would also push for partnerships with local organizations that are prioritizing biking and the biking culture to see if some of the expansion can be achieved through partnerships, philanthropic efforts, or private community investment.

8. Imagine a 10-year old and a 70-year old bicycling on a busy street. What kinds of infrastructure protections would you want in place to ensure their safety and comfort? If there are budget constraints for a street like the one you described, at what point do finances rise above safety concerns for you?

I would turn to the experts on infrastructure! Lauren and I use the bike lanes, trails, and streets quite a bit and I know that what works for us as seasoned cyclists does not always work for others. So, when I see protections in place that protect riders of all skill levels and ages, I am supportive of such

improvements and infrastructure. So, what do the experts say we need to assess when determining bike safety?<sup>1</sup>

- Bicycle lanes
- Parking
- Riding facilities
- Off-road bike trails
- Identifying popular bicycle routes
- Enhanced bicycle lanes and markings at intersections and crosswalks
- Cycling signs and road markings
- Bicycle racks
- Specialized traffic signals
- Curb extensions and paved shoulders
- Buffers and separations

We can achieve safety and comfort by embracing a variety of options, all right-sized for the neighborhood, traffic volume, skill level, and accessibility needs.

1. Conventional Bike Lane<sup>2</sup>
2. Painted Buffer Lanes
3. Off-Street Bike Paths
4. Shared-Use Streets
5. Protected Bike Lanes
6. Contraflow Bike Lanes
7. Redesigned Intersections
8. Traffic Calming Methods

We also need to be willing to experiment, innovate, and adapt as needs change. There are so many available solutions because all of these ideas have worked **in the right environment**. We can't just assume a solution that works somewhere else will work in Des Moines and we can't assume a solution that works in one part of the City will work in others.

I struggle to think that finances would ever rise above safety concerns for me. That said, I would go back to my assessment of whether there is a true conflict between the finances and the safety concerns. We should never wait until after tragedy strikes for safety to become a priority, but we also need to make sure we are educating riders on the appropriate locations and safe routes to ride. We can't deploy every safety measure on every road, but we can make sure that there are priority routes throughout our City that accommodate riders of different skill levels and needs. If, after looking at all of the alternatives, there is a true

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.advocacyadvance.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.advocacyadvance.org/2021/06/bicycle-infrastructure-eight-different-approaches-to-cyclist-safety/>

conflict between keeping our citizens safe and finances, we need to prioritize keeping people safe.

## TRANSIT

9. How can the City help DART improve its bus system and attract more riders?

Our DART system can attract more riders through brand, outreach, and marketing campaigns. I know this sounds like a simple answer compared to the other items we have discussed, but our public transportation system is safe and robust. We can always expand the services, but if people aren't using the existing services, having more doesn't solve the problem of usage. I would challenge community leaders, influencers, and other prominent community figures to use the DART system and run social media and other campaigns to increase ridership. Our world is experiencing the full force of social media trends and impact. We see this with Tik-Tok trends going viral (which is why we have bathrooms in schools being destroyed). Why can't we as a City tap into the power of influence for productive and impactful behaviors, like using our public transportation systems?

We also need to continue to make sure our bus system is equitable and available to those who need it the most - those who can't afford other forms of transportation. So, as much as I want to make ridership go up through brand campaigns, we need to make sure we are hitting the ground in neighborhoods that have a greater need and meeting all members of our community where they are to make sure they have access to the transportation that they need.

10. We consistently see DART stops blocked by snow and unreachable by sidewalks. How can the City address this?

We can prioritize sidewalks at and around DART stops. My understanding is that the plans mentioned before (MoveDSM and Connect Downtown) do, in fact, prioritize sidewalk access to DART stops on major traffic channels. We need to keep this moving forward. As far as snow removal, we need to make sure that our City Staff are trained to take particular care at these locations to avoid snow build up and provide a mechanism by which community members can request services should this be a problem.

## EQUITY

11. What should the role of the police be in traffic enforcement? What is the best way to hold drivers accountable for speeding, blocking bike lanes and crosswalks, failing to stop or yield, etc.?

I know there are extensive studies completed on the role of police in traffic enforcement. You see many of these mechanisms deployed around Des Moines including, but not limited to, active traffic enforcement, passive traffic mitigation



(police vehicles parked), mobile speed traps, mobile speed signs, stationary speed signs, and others. We need to continue to deploy these techniques across our city as appropriate in each location.

Our police should also be involved in education programs that help drivers understand the impact of their driving behaviors on the pedestrian and biking community around them. We can do this through behavioral modification programs that are both educational and, when necessary, punitive. While I will hold out hope that proactive, positive education and reinforcement will change the safety mindset in our community, we should not be shy to use law enforcement to enforce these laws and issue fines as appropriate.

12. Much of Des Moines is zoned for low-density uses like detached single-family homes and commercial properties that require many car parking spaces. What impacts, if any, does this have on the transportation system? What policies, if any, do you support to combat those impacts?

High volume parking needs impact our transportation system by creating conflict between the prioritization and usage of space and real estate.

I support any policies and principles (including those embodied by MoveDSM and Connect Downtown) that reduce the conflict between parking spaces, the public transportation system, and the biking community. At times we will need to sacrifice parking for safety and accessibility, but often the conflict between the two only exists because of limits on our creativity and innovation. We need to make sure that all neighborhoods and communities within our City have designated and accessible transportation routes. While we can't prioritize all forms of transportation on every street, we should look at each neighborhood and traffic corridor to make sure that the various transportation needs are being satisfied.

13. Neighborhoods where fewer people can afford a car (i.e., those that are poorer and have a higher proportion of people of color) are also those lacking good transit, safe walking and biking, and quality streetscapes (e.g., trees, benches, trash cans, public art, etc.). How would you address these inequities?

I will prioritize access and education in those areas with the greater need to make sure public transportation resources are aligned with the communities that need them the most. For some, public transportation, bike routes, and other street beautification projects are a luxury. For others, as you note, access to these services is an imperative and can have life changing effects. If there is a question of whether we spend finances to prioritize needs in communities that have a higher percentage of persons who cannot afford their own vehicle or spending those finances on projects in neighborhoods that have a population without those same concerns, the answer is clear to me - we prioritize our

funding to those with the greatest need. And we must prioritize the fundamentals over the “nice to haves.” We shouldn’t be focused on spending our money on luxury projects when our neighbors don’t have the ability to get to their jobs and make money to feed their families. Fortunately, with the right prioritization and proactive approach, I am hopeful that we can achieve both.

14. The largest source of climate change-causing greenhouse gases in America is from transportation. What role should the City have in cutting these pollutants?

1. The City should support projects that encourage and provide access to transportation methods that do not contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. This includes providing access to bikes and biking corridors, walking and running avenues, and encouraging a culture of mobility without the use of motor-vehicles.
2. The City should prioritize zoning efforts that put all critical services within walking distance in each of our neighborhoods. Doing so will increase the likelihood that our neighbors will choose alternate modes of transportation to access those services.
3. The City should invest in no/low greenhouse gas emitting modes of transportation. Electric vehicles are a good start but they don’t solve the problem.
4. The City should partner with private organizations, businesses, and our suburban neighbors to strengthen our (Covid safe) ride-share programs to reduce the per person output of greenhouse gas emissions for transportation.

### YOU PERSONALLY

15. How often do you walk, ride a bike, or ride transit for your daily needs? Would you accept the Street Collective’s challenge to live without driving for a week?

Every day! Lauren and I live in the Drake neighborhood and we access Des Moines using our bikes and our legs on a regular basis. We chose to live in the Drake neighborhood, in part, because of the proximity to our work (Principal and Meredith) and the accessibility to downtown. On almost a daily basis we walk to our favorite stores and restaurants in the Drake neighborhood and on Ingersoll or use our bikes or running shoes to access Downtown, the East Village, Gray’s Lake, Water Works Park, and the great parks and businesses located along our trails and corridors. Lauren walks with Daphne and Dexter twice a day and you can often see her out and about in the neighborhood.

When our families come to town we explore the 100s of miles of bike trails in and around Des Moines. Lauren and I are also active triathletes and use our biking to raise money for causes that are near and dear to us (Scenic Shore 150 - Leukemia/Lymphoma Society).

One way we can absolutely improve is to increase our use of our public transportation system. To that end, we are willing to accept the Street Collective's challenge to live without driving for a week and I am willing to commit to using our public transportation system on an ongoing basis for my work and play in Des Moines.

16. What is your favorite street to walk or bike on in Des Moines? Why do you like it?

Well this is the first question I consider to be unfair. Ha! I run Kingman Blvd almost every day and I have multiple loops for different distances (including my famous "Mjolnir" loop around Waveland Golf Course). I love Kingman because running from 24th to Polk Blvd is like traveling in a time machine that highlights the beauty of our community dating all the way back to the 1880s. I also prefer to run in the parking lane when I can (particularly to give people safe space during Covid) and Kingman gives me that chance with only having to face a single direction of traffic. But, I also love running down MLK and across to Gray's Lake. I love being able to see the picturesque views of downtown and see all of the new development that is helping our downtown thrive. If I had to pick, I would pick...[error: word limit reached].

