

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), 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 by September 21, 2021.

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Name: Justyn Lewis

Ward or At-Large seat: Des Moines City Council At-Large

Pronouns: He/Him/His

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PRIORITIES

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

I would like to see the city continue to put in sidewalks to add safe walking routes; improve shared road usage and bike accessibility downtown and throughout Des Moines; and work on traffic calming (road narrowing) by removing lanes to slow down traffic; and last, but not least, finally get Fleur Drive completed! Ha. Ha.

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?

There are a number of factors to consider. Traffic flow in that area, potential congestion, alternative routes and parking, and how those alternative routes and parking may impact local businesses (and if that impact will be offset by the addition of a wider sidewalk, bus-only lane and/or bike lane.)

Generally speaking though, if it increases accessibility without overburdening small businesses, it is something I am inclined to support.

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?

I think the solution is to expand transit lines, address food deserts through targeted investments, and build sidewalks and bike paths in order to prevent this scenario from ever happening.

If a developer wants to build affordable housing, the city should ensure all the proper infrastructure is already in place for such projects.

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?

Unless the proposed project has a similar aim and improves on the MoveDSM and/or Connect Downtown plans, I would not be inclined to support it.

The goal here is to make Des Moines more accessible to those who don't have a car or choose not to drive. So, any proposed deviation would need to increase accessibility or decrease costs in a way that doesn't decrease accessibility.

WALKING

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

There are far too many areas in this city rendered inaccessible to people with disabilities due to a lack of sidewalks and crosswalks, as well as sidewalks that are poorly maintained.

We need to be investing money right away on new sidewalks and crosswalks in high traffic areas that currently don't have them.

We also need to make a point of maintaining existing sidewalks.

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 first two factors to look at are safety and accessibility.

Are there safe biking and walking paths around the school that are easily accessible?

The other factor is the culture. We should, as a city, be encouraging people to walk and bike more in general. We should also encourage teachers to bike or walk to work.

We also need to be encouraging parents to encourage their kids to bike or walk to school.

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?

Yes, aside from the obvious public health and environmental benefits, bike share programs are something a lot of young people are looking for when determining whether or not to move to a particular town.

Accessibility and inclusivity can increase a city's wealth and fuel its growth.

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?

The main infrastructure protections I would want in place would be a wide, clearly demarcated bike lane.

Cities have the dual problem of limited budgets and plenty of worthy places to invest money.

Finances will never "rise above safety concerns" for me, but I do need to be responsible with our limited budget and ensure that money spent to address safety concerns is spent in practical and cost effective ways.

TRANSIT

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

Expand nighttime hours. Many people who would be inclined to use DART to get to and from work simply can't because there isn't a bus available.

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

Des Moines needs to invest in more snow removers, be they people or equipment.

We also need to make a point of ensuring low income areas aren't underserved when it comes to snow removal.

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.?

While police need to be able to enforce traffic law, pretextual traffic stops (sometimes called terry stops) are far too often used to target people of color.

If police are making a traffic stop, they should have probable cause that a crime or infraction was committed.

Furthermore, ordinances banning racial profiling need to be assertively enforced by the city.

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?

There is the concept of Maslow's hammer, "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail."

If all of your zoning and infrastructure accommodates cars, people will naturally be more inclined to drive instead of ride the bus, bike or walk.

Some of this can be addressed through zoning changes that allow higher density housing units to be built and through investing in infrastructure for biking and walking.

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?

Investments, be they directly in infrastructure or in grant programs for things like trees, public gardens and public art.

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?

We should be, whether it comes from the city budget or Federal and State grants, investing in buses that run on alternative energy.

Also, as stated earlier, we need to start promoting and normalizing biking and walking as a formal of transportation in the city.

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? Prior to working from home due to COVID, I would ride my bike to work at least once per week (from NW Des Moines to the capital). YES! I would absolutely accept the challenge.
16. What is your favorite street to walk or bike on in Des Moines? Why do you like it?
Franklin Avenue because it is bike friendly and in a growing area.