



denver STREETS PARTNERSHIP

2023 Denver City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Shontel Lewis

What are your top priorities related to transportation as a candidate? How do you expect to address them if elected?

While a Director for RTD, I've built a record of getting things done in transportation, and prioritizing equity, justice and mobility for all, and these values would guide my service on Denver City Council. I believe Denver needs to follow through on its Vision Zero promises, needs to build a city-wide bike network on top of the sidewalk build-out, needs to work with regional partners to speed multi-modal project timelines, and needs to prioritize children and families in getting to and from schools

Since Denver leaders made a commitment in 2017 to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious bodily injuries by 2030 (an initiative known as Vision Zero) over 460 people have been killed in preventable traffic crashes on Denver's streets. Fatalities have increased every year except 2020, when traffic volumes were significantly reduced during the pandemic. Meanwhile, other cities in the U.S. and across the world have succeeded in substantially reducing traffic fatalities. What actions do you think the City should take to ensure we reverse the current trend and actually make meaningful progress toward the goal of zero traffic fatalities here in Denver?

Vision zero is very important to me – I am a working class mom and I worry about the transportation risks that children face when trying to get around Denver. I support traffic calming infrastructure, prioritizing transit, and building more meaningful protections between bikers/pedestrians and cars. Paint isn't protection.

Recently, Denver has started making some limited investments in infrastructure to improve bus service, such as dedicated bus lanes, traffic signals that prioritize buses, and enhanced bus stops. The build out of this infrastructure has been slow, however, and the City has not proactively partnered with RTD to increase service frequency along these routes. What role do you think the City should play in ensuring that Denverites have access to enough frequent, reliable public transit service to make transit a practical option for daily trips and reduce our dependence on driving?

I know firsthand how difficult it can be to work through RTD! But I also know how important it is that the city coordinates with RTD and other agencies on transportation projects. With the joint-jurisdiction between infrastructure and service, it is essential to work together when trying to build strong transit connections throughout the city. The City can lead on infrastructure changes, and should also work with legislative partners to help RTD expand service and speed project timelines that improve our transportation network, such as Bus Rapid Transit and similar projects.

Parking issues inevitably come up in any discussion about modifying our streets to better accommodate people walking, biking, and accessing transit, and can often be a stumbling block that prevents much-needed street safety projects from moving forward. What changes, if any,

would you make to how the City manages parking to ensure we are using our limited street space in the best way possible to achieve our community's goals for providing healthy, safe, and affordable transportation options for everyone?

I believe we should prioritize people over cars, which means that we have to listen to the entire community on which transportation designs are compatible with our collective goals, and build systems that don't leave community groups behind. I support eliminating parking minimums in new development, and commit to listening to all members of the community on how we can equitably address their needs and concerns while also moving forward with deliberation and urgency on important projects.

Denver Streets Partnership sponsored the Denver Deserves Sidewalks ballot measure, which passed in November 2022 with 56% of voter support. How will you ensure that this new sidewalk program is successfully implemented in a timely manner?

Implementation often can get hung up on staffing and contracting – the City should be building up its infrastructure-workforce to carry out these long term projects, either through partnerships with organized labor or building up the budgets and staff of DOTI to carry out projects at scale and speed. We also want to be mindful that our investments in infrastructure, such as sidewalks, are equitably distributed across communities that have been historically under-served.

While funding over time for biking, walking, transit, and Vision Zero has generally increased over the last five years, including the recently established Transportation and Mobility Fund, the City is still well short of what's needed to build and maintain safe, accessible infrastructure citywide. How would you expand funding for these needs?

With the approval of Denver Deserve Sidewalks, it would appear the people of Denver are interested in addressing long standing problems in our infrastructure. The next Council can refer a funding mechanism for other necessary projects like a bike lane network or expanded transit to the voters, and should lead on finding permanent funding solutions which are equitably structured and implemented.

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