

BikeKC responses

Katheryn Shields, 4th District at Large

One:

I hope for a City where every resident can *choose* the best mode of transportation for work, education or leisure. That requires sidewalks, streets, parks and trails that are safe and accessible for all. It also means encouraging affordable housing to achieve population density in neighborhoods and communities. In the 1990's as a council member I partnered with the ATA to fund the creation of the Trolley Trail which now stretches from Brush Creek to 110 Street. And as County Executive I presented 12 consecutive budgets that provided the dollars necessary for the expansion of the Jackson County trails system and its linkage to other regional trail systems. I am also a strong supporter of the ATA having served as a mayoral appointment to its board while I served under Mayor Cleaver. This vision can be achieved by a strong, committed voice. I want to continue to be that voice.

Two:

Everyone must learn to respect the rights of others and share our public space. Education and common courtesy would help smooth the way for all of us. Drivers of vehicles sometimes speed or fail to pay sufficient attention; sometimes bicyclists or scooter riders act as if traffic laws do not apply to them; and sometimes pedestrians do not pay the slightest attention to what is going on around them. We all need to wake up, follow the rules which are designed to insure the greatest safety for all, and cut each other some slack when we slip up.

Three:

Kansas City government and its citizens recognizes the need for housing and multiple modes of transportation. But until recently, most city dollars have been focused on transportation. That is why the City continues to propose—and the voters continue to support—a dedicated tax for the ATA bus system. We also use other city dollars (matched with Federal grants) to establish bike lanes on city streets and an expanded trail system. This coupled with the Complete Streets" ordinance provides for the marking of bike lanes on our existing and rebuilt roads. Also the funding of the street car through an additional sales tax and property tax (on property closest to the streetcar route) demonstrate a continued strong commitment of our City and its citizens to the issue of mass transportation.

What we have not had until recently is a dedicated fund of local dollars for affordable housing. The Council has now begun the work to create such a fund. I believe that for most households (especially for most households of moderate means) housing and the attendant utility expenses remains more expensive than transportation, especially given our ATA and streetcar system that provide a cost

effective (in one case free) method for travel within our city. Certainly, as additional demands made by new modes of transportation arise, it is not unreasonable for them to contribute to our inter-related housing/transportation system. That is why using fees from dockless scooters is so appropriate as a source specifically dedicated to affordable housing.

Four:

The demands on our City budget are many, and our public resources limited – especially when it comes to repairing and rebuilding our roads and other infrastructure. Federal retrenchment has both reduced the available funds for even the most desirable purposes while leaving more and more responsibility to the cities. Recognizing these facts, the City Council (I believe with unanimous support) adopted the “Complete Streets” ordinance to insure that as our roads are rebuilt, bike lanes and new sidewalks are a part of every project.

Speaking specifically to the “struggle to deliver funded projects”, I believe, this is directly related to the inability of Public Works staff to competently manage many projects. I believe the next mayor and city manager—with council support—need to demand higher standards of competence from the Public Works management staff. I am certainly willing to be supportive of that effort. It is not just the bike lane projects that suffer from poor management.

Five:

Urban Sprawl is a serious threat to the environment and overall connectivity, economic development and quality of life. “Spot Development” in our City – allowing and encouraging development in non-contiguous “islands” -- is wasteful of resources. Sadly, I am usually the only member of the Council who speaks or votes against such projects, even when they utilize bond funds or other public funds. Mid-America Regional Council needs to be the focus for this discussion, but current KCMO appointed representatives (both council members and city staff) push for sprawl, not fiscally and environmentally responsible development.

We need a mayor and city manager who advocate—and appoint representatives to MARC who advocate—for more environmentally and fiscally sound regional policies on growth and development.

Six:

The present system of sidewalk repair is disorganized and too costly – driven more by politics than good sense. It relies on doing one slab at a time – the most costly way to address the problem -- rather than by doing more cost-efficient large sections such as full streets or neighborhoods. Moreover, since it is based on “who complained first” not “who needs it most”, it discriminates against lower income neighborhoods whose residents are less likely to have complained to City Hall.

I have advocated since the passage of the GO Bonds for a more neighborhood specific model—with local schools acting as the hub for rebuilding of sidewalks. Unfortunately, the majority of the current Council has gone along with the more haphazard approach.

Seven:

As an At-Large Councilmember, I represent the City as a whole. That being said, I favor projects that combine transportation need and population density. I strongly support the Streetcar Extension to UMKC – even though it will increase my own property taxes. It will be a boon to population density, business development and tourism. Moreover, it will strengthen some of our great public institutions of art and education on its path.