

2017 League of Women Voters/Bike BloNo Bloomington Candidate Questionnaire - Mboka Mwilambwe (candidate for Ward 3)

1. U.S. Census figures show that more than 10,000 of Bloomington-Normal's 97,000 workers 16 years or older did not use a car as their primary mode of transportation to work from 2011 to 2015. Which of the following methods have you or a member of your immediate family regularly used in the last six months to get to work or school? *(select all that apply)*

Car, truck, or van	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I do	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Public transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Taxicab	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Bicycle	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Walked	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Other means	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Worked at home	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does

Comments: In the past, I have used my bicycle to get to work in the summertime where my schedule lent itself to it. I have been unable to do so in the past few years due to sports injuries, however it is something that I enjoyed doing and found very healthy. I continue to bike for recreational purposes with my family when my schedule allows.

2. Both Bloomington and Normal voted in 2016 to adopt Complete Streets policies. These policies instruct engineering staff to consider all modes of transportation (i.e., ensuring that pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users of all ages and abilities feel safe and comfortable using the facility) when reconstructing or resurfacing streets. Would you have voted/did you vote to adopt a Complete Streets policy?

- Yes
 No

Comments:

3. Both Bloomington and Normal voted in 2016 to send a portion of revenue from a 1-percentage point increase in the sales tax to Connect Transit. From both communities that new funding totals \$1 million, which allowed Connect Transit to begin offering service on Sundays. In FY 2016, Connect Transit provided more than 2.5 million rides to passengers and about 75,000 rides on paratransit service for people with special needs. Would you have voted/did you vote to fund Connect Transit?

Yes

No

Comments:

4. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in a report cited by the 2016 McLean County Community Health Needs Assessment, found that “Among other issues, use of cars contributes to low levels of physical activity in the US. In the last several decades car-reliance has increased. The percent of US workers driving to work rose from 64 to 88 percent from 1960 to 2000, while the share walking to work declined.”

The report went on: “There is an increasing recognition of the need to focus on environmental factors—including the ‘built environment’—that may help promote activity. The ‘built environment’ describes physical or man-made features such as sidewalks, bicycle trails, streetlights, traffic, safety from crime and parks that may promote or discourage activity.”

In our community - and many others across the United States - the built environment took a dramatic shift starting in the 1960s away from compact, walkable, bikeable communities in favor of suburban sprawl. Do you think revitalizing our urban cores - specifically Downtown Bloomington and Uptown Normal - can help provide citizens with an option to live, work, and play in communities that enable healthy active transportation and recreation?

Yes

No

Comments: I agree and in fact I would not limit that to the urban core. We must increase opportunities for people to be able to do things like shopping, going to school or work using means other than cars alone. For example, having lived in other communities, I have often wondered why neighborhoods do not have small grocery stores people could walk to. This is a very common concept in some of the communities I have visited and it brings together convenience and health in a beneficial way.

5. In addition to the impact of the built environment on public health, sprawl tends to cost municipalities more than compact development; each additional foot of roadway, sewer, water main, and other infrastructure to serve large properties costs the municipality more, typically without an increase in tax revenue large enough to account for that increase in infrastructure costs. Large properties also mean it takes longer to walk or bike places, leading more people to choose other modes more often. Do you think it's important, all else being equal, to promote investment in our urban cores instead of encouraging more suburban sprawl?

Yes

No

Comments: In fact, the 2015 Comprehensive plan we approved encourages the City to incentivize infill. Bloomington has grown too far out and as a result, costing us more money to build and maintain the infrastructure serving those developments.

6. Bloomington's Public Works Department created an award-winning Sidewalk Master Plan, which was adopted by the City Council in October 2015. The plan outlines a few key investments to dramatically improve the walkability of the community, such as:

- \$7.4 million to make the entire network compliant with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act
- \$4.1 million to bring the most dangerous sidewalks up to a minimum pavement quality
- \$261,000 to fill in connectivity gaps in the sidewalk network, which are often very short segments that prevent people from walking at all or - even worse - end up in a collision because they walk in the street.

If elected, would you prioritize making all of these improvements over ten years, as the plan calls for?

Yes

No

Comments: City staff is currently in the process of presenting a Capital Improvement Plan that will allow us to determine those priorities. While there will be many competing priorities, I believe we have to make it easier for people to be able to walk places. As identified in the Comprehensive Plan, this would definitely help us improve the overall health of the community, while helping us preserve our infrastructure. In addition to that, improving ADA accessibility helps make our community more welcoming.

7. Streets are expensive. Bigger streets are more expensive. Standard engineering doctrine over the last several decades has encouraged engineers to build streets to accommodate “peak hour traffic” - essentially building roads that are big enough to move the most cars that might be seen at the busiest time of day, with almost zero delay. That’s why we’ve seen Towanda Barnes Road balloon from two lanes to five; 95% of the time, a two-lane road in this location would be perfectly sufficient, but engineering doctrine requires that they build it wide enough to eliminate congestion for the busiest few minutes a day - even though it more than doubles the cost.

Not every community does it this way. Policymakers are free to instruct their engineers to allow congestion at certain times of day if it’ll save money. These decisions allow communities to repair more streets with the same amount of money, and they usually end up creating safer, more vibrant communities. The drawback, of course, is that commuters may experience some amount of congestion.

As part of the discussion surrounding Complete Streets, proponents argued that policies promoting sustainable transportation could save the community money in the long run by allowing people the choice to commute by bike, transit, or on foot - reducing the number of cars on the street and the associated congestion.

If elected, would you instruct engineers to focus on eliminating congestion or building safer, smaller, more efficient streets?

- Eliminate congestion with bigger streets
- Allow peak-hour congestion so more streets can be repaired

Comments: I agree that bigger streets cost more money. This is why I have always been supportive of biking, walking and public transit as alternative modes of transportation. For the past few years, I have increasingly begun to wonder if streets are the most effective use of our \$ given the average life and cost of pavement. This makes alternative modes of transportation even more imperative and having discussions with the largest employers in the community about how to encourage their employees to use those alternative modes of transportation. If we are able to do this, peak-hour congestion may not even be an issue.