

2017 League of Women Voters/Bike BloNo Normal Candidate Questionnaire - Kevin McCarthy (candidate for Town Council)

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

Comments: I have an office in my home but travel around town for work also. Over the past 6 months I have used a truck, motorcycle, bicycle and walked to work.

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: Yes, I voted in favor of Normal's complete streets policy. For more than 15 years I have served on boards, volunteered time and/or been a member of the Lake Run Club, Tri-Shark Triathlon Club, Friends of the Constitution Trail and Bike BloNo. I participated (as a Normal citizen) in Normal's Bike and Pedestrian master planning process. I am a strong advocate for supporting all modes of transportation be they for work or recreation.

A complete streets policy makes good sense in that we consider everyone and all modes of transportation at the time we reconstruct our infrastructure. Our complete streets policy helps support the safety and access needs of all Normal residents.

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: Yes, I voted in favor of funding Connect Transit on the local level. Public transportation is a key component in community vitality and sustainability. Many residents and university students rely on public transportation to get to work, shop, and complete tasks around town so they can thrive on a daily basis. Our local companies rely on public transportation to access a larger population of potential employees in our community that do not own a car or choose to limit their use of a car. A strong transportation system also enables those who cannot drive yet, or those who can no longer drive, greater access to our community to live, work and play.

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: The short answer is yes. Uptown Normal and the Constitution Trail are very successful examples of this approach. Further, insight into the priorities of our young adults (millennials, etc.) indicates that car ownership among these younger groups is much lower than previous generations. Our young adults seem to place a high value on locating in centers where they can live, work and play in close proximity. Taking these priorities into account as we invest in our community assets will help ensure that Normal and Bloomington are communities young people choose to live and that our companies have young people to fill local jobs.

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: Fundamentally, I do believe it makes great sense to encourage investment in and around Uptown Normal and I have supported that while on the Normal Council. Normal has been focused on in-fill in and around the Uptown for a while. Our Uptown 2.0 plan underscores that focus I believe. However, I believe density of buildings, housing and commerce centers matter in creating places people love to be. In the context of Uptown, scale matters. Although I don't think we are at risk at this point, I think it is possible to create too much density such that we diminish what we have come to love about Uptown.

6. The Town of Normal is considering options to improve the Constitution Trail where it intersects with roadways, such as Vernon, Willow, and Raab. Improvements to favor pedestrians and remind motorists that pedestrians have the right of way could include signage in the middle of the crosswalk, crosswalk LEDs, and signs illuminated with LEDs to remind motorists of the need to stop to provide the pedestrian safe passage. Would you be in favor of such improvements?

Yes

No

Comments: People being safe and feeling safe is the goal. Constitution Trail roadway crossings and other key pedestrian roadway crossings (e.g. Vernon road at Colene Hoose Elementary School) are risky places where cars and pedestrians meet. I support improvements that result in greater motorist and pedestrian awareness and minimize unsafe conditions. It is important to emphasize that roadway improvements are for the benefit and safety of pedestrians and motorists. Of course, we must weigh the cost of any roadway improvements with any demonstrated increase in safety they offer.

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: Normal has adopted a complete streets policy. We have directed engineering to seek opportunities to include all modes of transportation when reconstructing roadways. In our Uptown 2.0 planning a few streets were illustrated as being reduced to two lanes from four lanes (e.g. Linden) and adding separated pedestrian thoroughfare encouraging safer transit and access for all modes. In the recent past, on Jersey avenue some on-street parking was reduced and bike lanes added to encourage pedestrian access and safety. Also, when Bryan street was reconstructed accommodations were made to encourage greater pedestrian use. I support our Complete Streets policy to enhance safety, provide access for all modes of transit and reduce infrastructure costs when possible.

I believe this is a broader conversation about infrastructure and transportation system goals over time. Roadway infrastructure is one part of the issue when considering sustainable transportation and street congestion. I think we have to include population density, public transit assets and private ride sharing availability as important parts of the equation when planning for the future.