

2017 League of Women Voters/Bike BloNo Normal Candidate Questionnaire - Scott Preston (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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Public transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Taxicab	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Bicycle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Walked	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Other means	<input type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does
Worked at home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I do	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member does

Comments:

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: I voted for and supported the Complete Streets Policy in Normal. I would certainly make the same decision again today. It increases the practicality and ease of access for various methods of transportation, both commuter and recreational. It also improves safety between all users, vehicles included. The Complete Streets Policy is about more than just bicycles. It is a comprehensive approach to include all forms of transportation when considering future roadway / infrastructure projects. The policy is also being implemented in a cost-effective, thus providing the best value for the people of Normal.

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: Connect Transit is a tremendous asset to our community. Its benefits stretch beyond the service provided. It is an economic development driver and improves the quality of life in McLean County. The additional \$1 million in revenue allocated from the Town and City was leveraged to yield a total of almost \$3 million as part of a matching program with the State. Our investment in Connect Transit is paying dividends for us all.

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: Absolutely. Uptown Normal is a thriving example of urban redevelopment. The 'built environment' created there over the last decade has yielded great benefits for the people of Normal. Uptown is a destination. It is vibrant, and is an economic engine for our community. It's setting promotes healthy activity, increasing access and opportunity. The Constitution Trail is a very fitting asset through Uptown.

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:

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 - on Willow Street

No

Comments: Promoting safety and accessibility on the Trail and our roadways is important. Of course for pedestrians, but also for the many vehicles traveling these streets. Signage such as that described in this question might prove beneficial on a street like Willow, where foot traffic tends to be extra heavy beyond just the Trail.

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 would address this question on a case-by-case basis. I believe our approach should be balanced, providing the most reasonable direction depending on the street and the project. I am not an advocate for bigger streets solely on the idea that they can eliminate congestion. It can be overkill, expensive, and not consistent with the value we hold of promoting Complete Streets. I also would not favor blanket drastic reductions in roadway widths solely on the idea that our maintenance costs could be reduced.

Additionally, the Council's role focuses on overall Town policy. The body supervises only one employee, the City Manager. All other Town staff flow through that organizational chart up to that individual. As such, the Council does not instruct specific departments on how to focus within their given expertise. The daily operation of the Town of Normal is and should be staff-driven, rather than being the role of elected officials.

There is a balance to be had, and my decision for any future vote regarding such a situation will not be predetermined. I will review all facts and consider all sides before casting my vote. I took this approach when I gladly supported the "Complete Streets" policy, and look forward to continuing such service for the people of Normal.