

2022 Election Candidate Questionnaire for Montgomery County Council

Dear Candidate,

We ask that you complete our questionnaire, so we understand your views on the pressing transportation issues facing Montgomery County. Your answers will be given to our membership for strictly education purposes only. Answers will also be posted on our website, shared on social media, listservs, and with our members in Montgomery County.

The questions are yes or no as well as questions that require you to elaborate for your response. We ask that you return the questionnaire by COB 4/2/22. Please email the questionnaire responses to me at advocacy@waba.org. If you have any questions, please email us. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete the questionnaire.

WABA **does not endorse** candidates for any political office.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Lowery
Advocacy Director, WABA

Bike Network

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association is proposing that the County fund the construction of bikeable/walkable networks in four Equity Focus Areas of the County, in Wheaton, White Oak, Langley Park and Downtown Silver Spring. Do you support this \$110 million proposal which will also help achieve the County's Climate and Vision Zero goals over six years?

Yes No

What else do you think the County Council can do in the next term to make walking and biking safer and to help increase the biking and walking and transit mode shares?

Yes, I support this \$110 million proposal that will implement safer bikeable/walkable networks in Wheaton, White Oak, Langley Park, and downtown Silver Spring where many bicyclist/pedestrian accidents and fatalities have occurred.

Prior to the global pandemic, residents and people who work in Montgomery County used biking, walking and transit mode share options to transport themselves from point A to point B. However, this is not true in equity areas where communities of color live and work and we must do more to include these communities front and center. This especially holds true as Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately impacted by chronic illness such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and cancer and including alternate transit options such as biking and transit mode

shares, can improve the quality of health for countless residents. The aging and disability communities face similar challenges and are often victims of pedestrian related accidents that cause long-term effects. As Chair of the Health and Human Services committee, I have closely worked with the Commission on People with Disabilities to address transportation equity and related issues to ensure that all of our residents are safe.

If re-elected, I will continue to support transit projects such as the MD 355 Crossing Project and the County's BRT Flash system, which will improve access for residents to key locations including Montgomery College campuses, jobs, healthcare, housing as well as Metrorail and Marc train stations. BRT projects slated for Route 29, Veirs Mill Road, MD 355, New Hampshire Avenue, and North Bethesda have my full support. I believe the BRT implemented in these key and highly congested areas of the County will serve connect and serve communities in a sustainable manner.

I will also work with our local and state partners to implement sidewalk buffers, adjust timing of traffic lights, and reduce speed limits on various points of state roads such as Connecticut Avenue and Georgia Avenue, where many pedestrian related crashes have occurred. These continued partnerships will help address our current Vision Zero and climatic goals, while augmenting public health by providing sustainable and safe transit options for County residents.

Police out of Traffic Enforcement

Do you support removing police from all or some traffic enforcement?

Yes ___ No ___

How will you balance the need for traffic enforcement and equity while in office?

As a member of the Public Safety committee, I truly value public safety for every County resident in our community. Unfortunately, the global pandemic has exacerbated crime in our community. Traffic stops have helped recover 70 ghost guns in 2021 alone, and it has proven to decrease drag racing and speeding vehicles on our local roadways as well as lower the number of individuals driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Thus, there are still traffic situations in which police involvement is necessary. That being said, not every incident requires law enforcement, and we should look into solutions that promote equity in the community while reducing the burdens placed on police.

One method to do this is improved use of technology. We know that red light and speeding cameras significantly lower the rate of traffic and pedestrian collisions. According to a report from the Office of Legislative Oversight, in 2019 Montgomery County issued 373,169 citations for speed camera violations and 54,572 citations red light camera violations. Of these, the automated systems issued 94% of speed camera events and 87% of red-light camera events. This is one example of how we can use technology to perform tasks that would otherwise fall to law enforcement.

Incorporating technology will help our local police department to enforce traffic laws, while keeping our residents safe in an equitable manner. If re-elected, I will commit to working with our Department of Transportation and State Highway Administration to help strengthen a robust infrastructure and a transit ecosystem that delivers equitable results while keeping our community safe.

Trails - repaving

Do you support fully funding the budget request of the Parks Department to include monies for repaving the Sligo, Rock Creek and Capital Crescent Trails?

Yes No

Tunnel

Do you support funding the \$55m project for this important regional trail connection through downtown Bethesda?

Yes No

Do you support funding that will complete construction of the project within the current FY 23-28 CIP period or sooner/later?

Yes No

270 widening

Do you support or oppose the proposal to widen parts of I-495 and I-270 to add four express toll lanes?

Yes No

Why or why not? And how would you show that support or opposition. Do you support other new highways or road expansions?

I have not seen any proposals on how to widen I-495 that are practical or have benefits that outweigh their costs. However, I-270 has more options. Right now, there are considerable traffic burdens for people that live in the northern part of the County that are doing more than just impacting quality of life, but also stifling economic development opportunities in the area.

I, along with the majority of the Council, supported adding managed toll lanes to I-270 and expanding the American Legion Bridge. The recent agreement the County entered into with the

SHA officials will provide desperately needed traffic relief in one of our County's most congested corridors – I-270 and the American Legion Bridge – and at the same time dedicated significant State funding for the County's top transit priorities.

This plan provides \$60 million in funding to pay for traffic links between key regional job and activity centers such as Bethesda, Gaithersburg, Silver Spring, Tysons, and Reston, potentially either the Corridor Cities Transitway or the 355 BRT. It also provides \$300 million in future toll revenue for other future transit priorities.

The resources generated by managed toll lanes on I-270 will help fund other critical transit projects that we know we need but will be difficult for the County to fund on its own. It is a truly balanced approach to traffic relief that will serve our commuters on both our highways and our transit system.

Vision Zero

Vision Zero - is it working and if not, what needs to be done by the County to achieve the goal of zero deaths due to traffic crashes? What would you do to work with the State Highway Administration to achieve true Vision Zero?

I believe the current Vision Zero Montgomery County Plan is a good foundation to begin addressing pedestrian related traffic deaths on our roadways. This issue cannot be addressed as a panacea, and it will take all of us working together to prevent preventable deaths from happening in the future.

There are obvious opportunities we need to take advantage of and one of them is the innovative equity bike lanes, which will have a cascading beneficial effect in the places they are located. We also need to improve lighting on our local and state roadways to improve visibility for drivers, i.e., Veirs Mill Road, and implement HAWK signals, sidewalk buffers and narrow lanes. I will continue to work with our Montgomery County State Delegation to fund transit projects that will incorporate measures that I mentioned above to keep residents safe.

However, these transit projects and safety measures will not be successful if we do not include the communities who are most impacted—black, brown, immigrants, seniors, and the disabled—through a comprehensive, multi-lingual, multi-cultural educational campaign and incorporate their input in this process. I would also stress that we must include partnerships with homeowner's associations, community organizations, our County and State partners, to inform the public the importance of pedestrian and bike safety and to receive recommendations from the community on how to best support safety in their neighborhoods. Eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries is a huge priority of mine and we owe it to the countless number of residents who have lost their lives and had their families shattered to act.

Transportation Equity Pledge

[Will you sign our transportation equity pledge?](#)

Link to sign: <https://waba.org/blog/2022/01/transportation-equity-pledge-for-2022-candidates/>

Signed! – Gabe Albornoz, Candidate for re-election to the Montgomery County Council (At-Large)