

Candidate Name (Affiliation): **Jeffrey C. McKay (D)**

District: **Chairperson**

1. Improving Public Transit

Public transit is the backbone of a sustainable, equitable transportation system and a thriving economy, and Fairfax County has admirable plans to expand its bus rapid transit (BRT) network to ensure fast, frequent, and reliable service for residents. While public transit ridership on some systems has been hit by the pandemic with reduced commute trips due to increased teleworking, transit remains key for essential workers, and for supporting compact, walkable communities.

Do you support increased funding for public transit to address budget shortfalls and make improvements to better serve riders?

Candidate's Response: **Yes**

What is your experience riding public transit? What ideas do you have to improve public transit in Fairfax County?

Candidate's Response: **I am an occasional rider but was a robust rider of both our bus system and WMATA rail when I served on the WMATA Board of Directors for four years. My experience shaped my desire to advocate for more funding and better customer experiences and that continues.**

Just this week, our Board approved a program to allow all children to ride the Connector bus for free. Removing all barriers – cost, convenience, efficiency and reliability, and of course safety – is critical to making public transit successful.

Former Sup. Hudgins and I created the Free Student Bus Pass program which began in the 2018-2019 school year. Not only does this provide immediate benefits to those students who ride it, it provides environmental benefits by taking cars off the road and builds the next generation of transit riders, benefiting future residents immensely.

2. Active Transportation Funding

The ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan – the County’s most significant overhaul of its bicycle, pedestrian, and trails plans – is expected to be finalized this year. The plan’s recommendations address critical safety needs for residents who already walk and bike and also make improvements to allow more residents to walk and bike conveniently and safely for daily needs. Realizing the Plan’s vision will require substantial, dedicated, and consistent funding.

Would you support Fairfax committing dedicated annual funding to support the ActiveFairfax Transportation Plan, even if that meant potentially delaying road expansion and interchange projects?

Candidate’s Response: **No**

What is your personal experience dealing with or advocating for pedestrian or bicyclist safety issues?

Candidate’s Response: **I would like to explain my “no” to 2a. Road expansions and interchanges often provide the funding to create, complete or improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. I would not want to dismiss those projects totally. I do, however, support prioritizing pedestrian improvements, particularly ones focused on safety, over road projects, when the choice is one or the other. Funding for transportation projects comes from many sources and I don’t think dedicated County funding would require us to delay road projects automatically.**

I’ve personally fought against road expansions when they inhibit our ability to create more walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented places. For example, when we first were approving plans to convert the Springfield Mall into a Town Center, VDOT proposed massive, multi-lane ring roads. I worked with my colleagues in the General Assembly to kill that proposal and preserve as much pedestrian access to this suburban location as possible, with great future potential as more development occurs on that site.

I also made the motion to create the County’s first Bike Master Plan, which was adopted in 2014. The Plan establishes ambitious goals and our Board continues to dedicate funding to meeting those goals, and has stepped up those commitments since I’ve been Chairman, most recently with a \$100M County commitment. This is in addition to the infrastructure that is built when roads are upgraded or expanded, when new development comes on line, and facilities that are built with federal or regional funding.

I brought the first ever pedestrian-only HAWK signal to the county in Springfield. I can and will push the envelope with VDOT to make sure pedestrian and bicycle improvements get the attention they need.

3. Low-Stress Bike Network

Fairfax County has committed to reducing the amount people have to drive and associated transportation-related carbon emissions. The County’s climate plan calls for meeting a goal of 30% non-auto commuting trips by 2030. To make this shift, the County will need robust, accessible alternatives and bicycling is an ideal, low-cost, carbon-free alternative. But that mode shift requires dedicated infrastructure including an expanded network of trails and comfortable, protected, low-stress bicycle facilities – not just painted bike lanes or sharrows – to make bicycling meaningfully safer, more appealing, and more accessible and often requires roadway redesign that reduces parking and/or vehicle lanes.

Compared to the current prioritization, do you think greater priority should be given to the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in the County’s roadway designs?

Candidate’s Response: **Yes**

How would you ensure that people of all ages and abilities have robust active transportation access to and along the County’s major and most important thoroughfares and connecting streets?

Candidate’s Response: **Technically speaking, re-prioritization would have a profound impact on our ability to fund projects of all kinds including bike and pedestrian. Funding formulas at the state and regional level in particular would need to change. However, I fully support exploring options, both within the existing funding framework and discussion of changes to it, to improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure.**

4. Safe Streets for All

On May 10, 2022, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously endorsed the Safe Streets for All Program, a comprehensive initiative to address systemic transportation safety issues for people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving. Included in the recommendations is a call for roadway infrastructure changes to slow traffic on our community’s streets. Unfortunately, the County has not yet dedicated staff or funding to begin executing the program. At the same time, Fairfax County experienced a troubling uptick in traffic-related pedestrian fatalities in 2022.

Do you support the full implementation of the Safe Streets for All Program in Fairfax County, including changes to roadway design guidelines and an expanded automated speed enforcement program?

Candidate's Response: **Yes**

What proven traffic safety improvement policies, programs, and/or technologies would you like to see implemented in your district and throughout the County? Given the lack of clarity around who has the legal and budgetary authority to make roadway safety improvements stemming from state ownership of County roads, what steps would you propose to ensure that these roadway safety improvements are implemented?

Candidate's Response: **We are current exploring more technological solutions, in addition to recently installed photo enforcement cameras in school and construction zones, to improve driver behavior. I hope to be able to talk more about progress there very soon.**

I don't believe there is a lack of clarity – Virginia has far greater responsibilities over the County's roadways than the County. I would welcome the opportunity to work with your organizations to help improve the state's focus on improving our roadway safety, and would work with my colleagues to commit County resources when called for.

5. Safe Routes to School

Trips to and from schools are among the best opportunities to reduce car trips in Fairfax County. A robust Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program can play a critical role in encouraging more families to walk and bicycle to school, which has been shown to increase confidence and sense of independence among children while also reducing pickup/dropoff vehicle congestion and associated carbon emissions. Unfortunately, the County's SRTS program includes just one dedicated staff position for a public school system that serves 185,000 students.

Would you support expanding the Safe Routes to School program, including additional staff capacity, to get more kids to walk and bike to school?

Candidate's Response: **Yes**

What other policies or budget items will you pursue to upgrade transportation infrastructure so kids can safely walk and bike to school?

Candidate's Response: **While I cannot commit to a specific policy item now, I understand Safe Routes is working well to develop recommendations and look forward to seeing how best we can improve safety for students.**