

CANDIDATE NAME: **KATE FULTON**
OFFICE SEEKING: ROCKVILLE CITY COUNCIL

Q1. Bicycling and bike infrastructure enhances quality of life and addresses issues such as affordability, equity, access, health, and the safety of our streets. What can the City of Rockville and you as an elected official do to actively encourage more people to ride their bikes?

There are three primary things Rockville and its elected officials can do to actively encourage more people to ride their bikes: 1) Make it safer and easier to bike in the city; 2) Increase access to bicycles; and 3) Promote bicycling as a viable transportation option.

The city and county have programs in place to address each of these areas that should continue to be emphasized and advanced.

Implementing the Bikeway Master Plan within the context of the city's Comprehensive Plan is vital. People, regardless of age or experience, will not want to ride bicycles where it is unsafe or inconvenient. As an example, increased bike parking is a key aspect of making riding safer and more convenient.

Making it easier to rent, share, or own a bicycle will also encourage increased riding, as well as enhance equity. The city's TERRIFIC bicycle award program is a wonderful way to provide bicycles to children at a young age, when a bike may be their primary means of transportation.

I really admire the work that WABA and the Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee do to schedule, promote, and host rides in the area. Continued support of activities like Bike Month in May, Bike to Work/School events, and partnership with the County's Safe Routes to School program will instill bicycling as a viable - and fun - transportation option.

Q2. People bike and walk when it's safe, comfortable, and connects to the places they need to go. Rockville's bike infrastructure is still disjointed. In your opinion, where are the most urgent gaps in our bike network and what steps do we need to take to close these gaps?

Some of the most obvious gaps are the lack of any safe bicycling infrastructure on state highways such as 355 and 586. I would consider these urgent gaps because successfully converting or adding bicycle infrastructure will take a long time and extensive advocacy and collaboration with state organizations.

Another urgent gap that is closing, but is still not complete, is uninterrupted bicycle infrastructure connecting Montgomery College and Town Center/Rockville Metro Station. Progress along Martins Lane and North Washington Street is great, but a clear, safe, and designated bicycle connection between the college and the metro still does not exist.

A final gap is less geographically specific, but still important. We should ensure that any student who wishes to ride their bike to school can do so safely. Some of our neighborhoods support safe bike paths and others do not. A bike path safety audit conducted within each elementary school's boundaries would be a great place to start.

Q3. Cities across the country are installing protected bike lanes, bike lanes with physical separation between bike and automobile traffic, to encourage more people to ride and increase comfort for cyclists of all ages and abilities. Studies have shown that protected bike lanes increase roadway safety for everyone – people bicycling, walking, and driving. Do you support the installation of protected bike lanes on Rockville’s streets? Do you support installing protected bicycle facilities if it requires replacing a motor vehicle travel lane and delays motorized vehicles by a few seconds? Please explain why.

Protected bike lanes do more than just create a physical barrier between vehicle traffic and bicyclists. They make the entire roadway safer. Protected bike lanes provide additional safety to pedestrians on sidewalks with no buffer along the street. More importantly, protected bike lanes encourage drivers to slow their vehicles, which makes everyone safer.

The recently re-engineering of Maryland Avenue as a successful case study. This project reduced the number of vehicle travel lanes to accommodate (non-protected) bike lanes - and the impact on driver behavior was significant. There was a 72% reduction in speed citations in the months following the bike lane installation - and no adverse effect on traffic flow.

Even if certain needed improvements decrease speed, the physical safety of all residents using our roadways is clearly more important than arriving at a destination a few seconds faster.

Q4. Voters care about street safety, bicycling, transit, and walking issues. Why should these voters vote for you?

The first among my key priorities is public safety. This focus on public safety includes safety on our streets for all people, regardless of mode of transportation. This is more than a campaign pillar for me, it is a personal and family passion.

Our lived experience informs my perspective. My husband, Eric, is visually impaired, uses a white mobility cane, and relies on walking and transit to travel independently, both by himself and with my two children. Safe streets and transit infrastructure are essential for my family - literally every step of the journey. I see every day the importance of safe, comfortable, and convenient transportation infrastructure for people of all abilities.

Public safety is not the only reason to promote strong transit infrastructure for walking and biking. Encouraging and incentivizing non-vehicular travel advances many of the City’s stated goals, as well as my own priorities. It will lead to a healthier, more connected, more equitable, and more sustainable community.

This passion is one of the reasons Eric founded and chaired the Rockville Pedestrian Advocacy Committee and why my daughter, Rebecca, served as a Montgomery County Youth Ambassador to Vision Zero. We have been advocating for safer streets for all for years. If elected, I would bring that longstanding passion and focus to the decisions I make as Councilmember.

Q5. The City of Rockville adopted a Vision Zero Plan in 2020, with the principle that transportation should focus on safety of all road users (cyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and

motorists) as a foundation, and that the only acceptable number of deaths and serious injuries on the road is zero. How do you propose to advance Vision Zero in the city of Rockville?

Everyone deserves safer streets and the city's Vision Zero Action Plan is a tangible, measurable path toward achieving this. Advancing Vision Zero within the city takes a two-pronged approach:

1. Advancing the mindset change from "accidents are inevitable" to one that assumes traffic injuries and deaths are preventable
2. Acknowledging and understanding how human behavior and error factor into traffic collisions

To reinforce the city's Vision Zero efforts, I will encourage increased education and enforcement efforts. Unfortunately, it is difficult to change long-standing beliefs, so we must reinforce that here in Rockville, Vision Zero is a priority and we are committed to preventing serious traffic injuries and fatalities.

Our built environment has long allowed - even encouraged - illegal behavior on our roadways. Studies show that people will drive the speed a roadway allows, regardless of the speed limit. To reduce human error and promote safe behavior on our roadways, we must design our roads, sidewalks, and intersections to be safe - this includes addressing everything from lane width, to street lighting, to pavement markings, median landscaping, and more.

Q6. What neighborhood do you live in? Why? Where are your favorite places to spend time in our town?

We currently live in Rockville's West End neighborhood, near Beall Elementary School. We have previously lived in Woodley Gardens West and College Square.

All three of the homes we have lived in have been very close to Welsh Park, and it has been a center point of our daily lives for nearly 13 years. My children played sports there, from lacrosse to baseball through Rockville Recreation programs. They spent hours on the playground there, both before and after it was revamped several years ago. It was where we got fresh air exercise, and safe socializing during the COVID-19 pandemic. My dog still gets walked there every day and my son practices basketball with friends. Welsh Park is just one of Rockville's plentiful greenspaces and recreation areas, and if elected I would work to ensure that we continue to invest in and preserve these parks.

Q7. Approximately 5% of the FY 23 Capital Improvement Program transportation program area budget is allocated for pedestrian and bicycle projects. Do you think that the capital budget allocation for bike infrastructure is too much, just right, or too little? Please explain your answer.

When you look at trends in city planning, construction, and budget allocation - particularly in urban areas or close-in suburbs like ours - it appears that motor vehicle culture may have reached its zenith. While motor vehicles remain the dominant form of transportation in this city and country, the needle is moving as more people embrace the physical, mental, social, and environmental benefits of walking and bicycling. The focus becomes less on moving *cars quickly*, and more on moving *people safely*. To keep pace with change and make sure we are building

toward a future that is sustainable, equitable, and thriving, Rockville will need to increase our investment in pedestrian and safety projects beyond the current allocation.

Q8. Please explain your opinion of the proposed Bus Rapid Transit projects along MD 355 and MD 586, and how bicycling and walking fit into this picture.

Bus Rapid Transit can provide numerous benefits to residents and our local environment - reducing vehicle usage, increasing in mass transit usage, and greater connectivity with surrounding economics areas. At the same time, BRT is not a panacea to the point that other modes of transportation should be ignored. BRT routes and stops must be carefully considered, located, and designed with pedestrians and bicyclists in mind.

A majority of traffic collisions in our city occur on MD 355 and MD 586. This MUST be considered alongside all BRT proposals. While BRT will provide greater transit options for people who choose to walk or ride bicycles - their safety at every stop must be maintained. Early BRT designs include mid-street stops at some of the city's most dangerous intersections. These areas must be reviewed for safety and movement patterns before any decisions are made.

Q9. Do you have a biking related story you'd like to tell?