

**Candidate Name:** Marissa Valeri  
**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?**

I frame this as active encouragement of residents to ride bikes, walk, or roll around our City. Due to a mobility impairments or disability, not everyone may be able to ride a bicycle.

For those who can bicycle, I will do everything I can to ensure that cost is no barrier to owning a bicycle. I would like to expand the TERRIFIC Awards to also include a year-long donation program for children in need that provides helmets as well. I will promote the County's BikeMatch program and/or look at the possibility of creating a City BikeMatch with new owners being connected to the Rockville Bike Hub to learn about fixing and maintaining their new bicycle.

Part of encouraging more people to ride is to give the community better bicycle infrastructure both in terms of safety measures but also in terms of enjoyment. New protected bike lanes should have planters (filled with native plants) or installed artwork in the shape of a barrier. There are even pre-fabricated protected bike lane barriers that have footrests built into them that we should consider.

Finally, I want to implement a mandatory Walk, Bike, or take Public Transit to Work Day for all elected officials. The best way to encourage people to change behaviors is to model the behavior you want to see.

Having said all of this, I will solicit input from RBAC prior to advancing any ideas toward implementation.

**Q2. People bike and walk when it's safe, comfortable, and connected 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?**

I believe the overarching biggest gap in the bike network is from the east side of the City to the west side. Take, for example, Twinbrook. There are no shared use paths or bike lanes that connect any place in the Twinbrook community directly to the Millennium Trail. What bike lanes we do have seem scattershot and perhaps not as planned out as they should be.

For example, we have a bike lane on McAuliffe Drive created as part of the safety measures enacted after Chandra Perera was killed crossing the street. This bike lane stands out by itself, with no connection to a shared use path. There is a bike lane on Broadwood Drive from Veirs Mill Road to Baltimore Road, but there is no continuation of this bike lane on the south side of Veirs Mill Road nor even a shared roadway space. And these are just two examples in one neighborhood in a City with way too many examples.

There needs to be a concerted effort to prioritize Vision Zero improvements outside of the opportunistic moments that new developments or renovations give us. How many of the street recommendations from the Bikeway Master Plan have been implemented? How many are in progress? There should be a dashboard for Vision Zero which incorporates the Vision Zero Action Plan, the recommendations from the Bikeway Master Plan and the Pedestrian Master Plan, and provides this information easily to the public. This would allow, at the very least, for existing bicycle advocates to easily see the status of recommendations and projects and focus advocacy efforts accordingly.

**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.**

I strongly support protected bike lanes on City streets as well as on County and State maintained roads. If the burden on cars of a few seconds results in zero deaths or serious injuries, I believe that meager delay is a net good for the community.

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

I am the only City Council candidate with a proven track record of consistent leadership on safe and walkable/bikeable street issues, and when I am elected I will continue to focus on these issues. I co-founded and later chaired the Rockville Pedestrian Advocacy Committee (RPAC). I worked closely with Nancy Breen, RBAC chair, on a wide variety of safe and walkable/bikeable street issues including the development of the Vision Zero action plan. RPAC and RBAC have worked closely since RPAC’s inception to provide our unique perspectives to the Transportation and Mobility Commission as well as to Mayor and Council. I have been privileged to testify on many of the same things that Dr. Breen has, often on the same night, as we shared our joint vision for a safer Rockville for all.

As the past President of the Twinbrook Community Association, I played a key role in advocating for and advancing the pedestrian/bicyclist connector bridge from the residential side of Twinbrook to the Rockville Pike site of the future Twinbrook Quarter development. I even developed a mock-up of a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) for the Bridge for use as a grassroots organizing tool. I also developed a prototype for a neighborhood street safety audit that was used successfully by the Twinbrook community to advocate for needed infrastructure improvements.

My heart is inextricably linked to the families and friends of pedestrians and bicyclists who have been killed or seriously injured on streets in Rockville. Through my work with RPAC, I helped create a Memorial Vigil during Walktober in their memory. I work with the Action Committee on Transit on

ghost shoe memorials for the lives we have lost on streets in Rockville because we must honor their memory while working tirelessly to make the future safer.

**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?**

As chair of RPAC, I have been studying this exact question for a while now. As I see it, there is a short term plan for advancing Vision Zero and a long term plan that we must complete. In the short term, we need to create the Vision Zero dashboard that mentioned in question 2. We need to keep it consistently updated, and we need to hold all relevant departments accountable for any delays in progress. Our budget going forward should reflect our commitment to transportation safety beyond just cars, and our City planning should as well. We need to continue to improve our coordination with the County's Vision Zero team and continue to advocate together for changes we need on roads maintained by the State. We are lucky to have a truly amazing Vision Zero coordinator in Rockville, who understands the importance of progressing steadily forward on Vision Zero, so I am confident we can do it.

In the long term, we need to shift the way that we look at transportation. When an intersection in the City is studied, the goal should be an intersection that is truly safe for people, bicyclists and cars. Right now, the unspoken goal is to ensure that cars get everywhere faster. Vision Zero is indeed data driven. However, through my RPAC advocacy, I have seen the failings of our current data structure, a structure that is inflexible to changing modes of transportation and human behavior. The most effective transportation engineering is the blend of the analytical with the sociology of human behavior. Once this becomes the standard and not the exception, we will be closer if not at our Vision Zero goal.

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

I live in Twinbrook here in the south part of the City. My family and I were drawn to Twinbrook because it reflected the core of our beliefs: genuine socioeconomic diversity in a walkable community with easy access to public transit. My husband and I both grew up in Wheaton, and much of what we love about Wheaton is also why we love Twinbrook.

I have many favorite places! I love the Rock Creek trail that begins just off the intersection of Marcia Lane and Linthicum Street. It's beautiful and so nice and cool in the summer time. Maryvale Park holds a special place for me as my family and I lived in East Rockville when my son was little. I am a huge fan of coffee so many of my go-to spots around the city are coffee shops like Shilla Bakery in Twinbrook or any of the multitude of Starbucks and boba tea shops scattered along Rockville Pike and in Rockville Town Center.

**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.**

I believe strongly that 5% is not enough for us to fully implement the Vision Zero plan. If we are billing ourselves as a bikeable and walkable City, we need to invest the necessary resources to make Vision Zero possible.

The community from every corner of the City wants to be able to walk, roll, and bike places safely and enjoyably. Pedestrian and bicycle projects should be prioritized when it comes to increasing the CIP allocation.

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

I have been looking forward to the Veirs Mill Road (586) and Rockville Pike (355) BRT programs for quite some time now. As someone who lives a block from Veirs Mill Road, I believe that BRT will be a game changer in terms of connecting communities to amenities and retail. It will alleviate the congestion on buses servicing Veirs Mill right now. It will also give us the opportunity to make the necessary changes to our infrastructure as outlined in the Bikeway Master Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan. As the stations are built, we can re-evaluate the needs at and around the stations and advocate for the safety improvements.

In my ideal City, shared use paths or protected bike lanes and adequately wide sidewalks connect to each of the stations along Rockville Pike and Veirs Mill Rd. Each station would have bike lockers and/or racks. It is unclear from the initial designs as to whether the buses themselves will have bike racks but that is something I would advocate for if needed.

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

I do actually, and it's a funny one. Every year when my son was little, we would take him to Chincoteague for our summer vacation. When he was 4 years old, we decided to rent bikes and rent a bike trailer for my son. We had it all planned out: where we rent them, what path we would take, and how to avoid the most mosquitos. So we got our bikes and I had my son's trailer attached to my bike. We headed out, at a leisurely pace, and wound our way over the bridge using the Access trail. I heard this very loud giggling as we got closer to the entrance of the Wildlife Loop, so I slowly pulled over to see if my son was ok. Well, we had all forgotten that it had rained one of those lovely beach thunderstorms that start off quickly and end just as quick. My son was covered in a spray of mud from my rear tire and he was loving every minute of it!