

Candidate Name: Ricky F Mui 7/23/2023

Office Seeking: Rockville City Council, Rockville, Maryland

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 would expect from Elected Officials, and from myself no less, the commitment to keep our bicycle riders (regardless of age) safe as they commute in, across, or through Rockville.

- Without question, I agree to the countless health benefits of regularly riding a bicycle: cardio, reduction of blood pressure and increased blood circulation, muscle strengthening, balance, and improved lung capacity. These health benefits would result in stronger population health, across all ages. I would endorse, support, encourage, and promote bicycle riding for all able-bodied residents of Rockville, especially as a means of transportation, as a mean to socialize, for the health benefits, to visit a friend, for a visit to the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center, a visit to Rockville Town Square or travel to school. Depending on the physical fitness of the individual cyclist, more distant locales like Gaithersburg or Silver Spring might be augmented by a metro ride.
- The use of bicycles as a mass method of transportation is not a novel idea; in fact, almost every person in The Netherlands owns a bike, and in China, there are an estimate 500 million bicycles, according to <https://groundreport.in/countries-with-highest-number-of-bicycle-users/>. Across the world, bicycles trips are commonly between 1-2 miles; with the exception of long-distance rides or competitions.
- In terms of equity, not all bikes are created equal. There will be marked difference between what an average income family can afford vs top tier bicycles. The rule of thumbs is that the lighter the bicycle's material, the more the bicycle will cost. As an anecdote, the average weight of a Mongoose mountain bike (those sold regularly at Walmart) is around 30 lbs and priced in the hundreds; while a higher end Canyon Endurance CF 7 Disc weighs 18 lbs and goes for \$2000. The tenant of capitalism is that as demand for lighter bikes become more mainstream, economic competition may lead to better affordability for a middle-income family. Weight certainly matters in how or how often a bike is transported, carried, or in the ease of maneuvering.
- I always advocate for responsible finances, so cyclists and enthusiasts should purchase responsibly. By partnering with non-profit organizations such as Rockville Bike Hub or commercial businesses, used bicycles may be traded or sold at more affordable price points. Through corporate sponsorships from REI, Dick's Sporting Goods, Walmart, etc., the city may be able to spearhead campaigns to provide affordable accessory gear: like helmets, mirrors, horns, gloves, water bottle holders, bike locks and tool kits. Through partnerships with high school youths, the city can implement campaigns to teach proper bicycle ridership and bicycle handling at Rockville community centers, parks, or closed parking lot courses.
- Rockville could also encourage bicycle registration and work in tandem with Rockville City Police Department and Montgomery County Police, to mitigate thefts and safeguard our investments.

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?

I fully agree that safety and security are major drivers of whether a person decides to own and ride a bicycle.

- Other factors may be physical conditioning, weather, distance, and road conditions. As a city, we could possibly influence the distance between destinations and road conditions (to include proper street lighting, signage, and path availability).
- In terms of path security, I would advocate for biking/walking paths that do not run through secluded areas, but rather, be close to where people live, and is convenient to access. As a parent, I would ask my children to avoid secluded or high-risk paths to school.
- I would certainly agree to utilizing bicycles as a means to get to and from the metro, to visit a friend, for the pleasure of riding, or for the Last Mile. As a personal anecdote, I have experienced limitations to utilizing bicycles: when the destination is shopping, when my children were carrying heavy or awkward musical equipment or if I intend to bring multiple family members. My wife remains fearful of bicycles due to a traumatic experience in her youth (broken arm from falling off a bicycle). Shopping via bicycle requires either multiple trips or forgoing essentials. The same considerations are even more relevant should we decide to walk 1-2 miles, laden with groceries.
- To close these gaps in using use bicycles are the primary mode of transportation, would require:
 - 1.) Adding a trailer to bicycles to haul groceries or other supplies
 - 2.) Shift the Grocery store model to smaller, local stores
 - 3.) Shift to a delivery model to house or apartment by a delivery automobile (Very similar to the COVID experience)

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 have ridden a bicycle along multiple roadways in Rockville, predominantly along MD Route 28, Frederick Road/Rockville Pike/Hungerford Rd, and within adjoining neighborhoods, with my 2 kids. My young son had been very wobbly on his 2-wheeled bicycle, fresh after the removal of training wheels. My daughter considered herself an experienced rider, and even won a bike that was a bit larger: 20” (so she could grow into it), and I had my trusty 24” Mongoose Mountain bike. We did some excursions to the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center and some neighborhood parks and basketball courts; however, I was always a bit precarious of my son wobbling off the sidewalk and into traffic. I also realized I should have placed my basketball into a backpack, while riding a bicycle.

- So, I definitely agree that whether riders are experienced or new to the experience, they should not ride in competition with 35 (+) miles/hour traffic; especially young kids.
- When considering traffic patterns and redesigning roadways, the inclusion of protected bikeways should be integral and not only an added after-thought.
- Forcing an extra narrow bike lane into a narrow 2-lane road (one lane travel in each direction) would unlikely be utilized by any small children or those faint of heart. Bicyclists move at different speeds and there must be sufficient space to pass or stop.
- For pedestrians, I would always advocate for the use of sidewalks.
- I have observed that vehicular traffic (cars, trucks, deliver vehicles, 18-wheelers and emergency vehicles) tend to accelerate around slower bicycles traveling on the road, leading to many dangerous head-on vehicular interactions at intersections and roadways. These near-collisions can happen wherever the perfect storm occurs and is not predictable.
- I have seen where cities have purposefully designed physically separated roadways using concrete barriers and fencing just for pedestrians and cycling. We also see plenty of

complementary pedestrian and cycling trails (in Arlington, Falls Church, Fairfax). The precedence is established and can be in our future.

- As to our future: as multiple states are moving to limit the sale of gas-powered vehicles after 2035, we should be prepared for the increase of alternate means of transportation, especially as alternate power sources are not yet mature. I foresee a shift to mass transportation (and once that becomes overcrowded, a shift to bicycles and electric-powered machines for short distances.

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

With the exception of major highways, freeways, or interstates, the city should not restrict or limit the mode of transportation preferred by its individual residents.

- The Voters, non-voters, residents and guests of Rockville should feel safe in whatever mode of transportation they decide to utilize: from feet to wheeled implements. The issue raised here is whether the city wants to mandate safety or leave the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, scooter riders, skaters, etc., up to their own precautions or at the hands of motor vehicle drivers. CURRENT STATE: The city, via the traffic enforcement, speed limiting devices, police patrol, and signs, attempt to persuade motor vehicles to give way to bicycles on the road. FUTURE STATE: there may be higher use of automated safety or controls on automobiles to force braking or maneuvering, augmenting human judgement and reaction time.
- Marginalizing bicycle riders is not the path forward. In the current state, further reducing the width of roadways to add in a bikeway increases the road risks; to include instances of pairing bike lanes with a right-hand turn lane, where cars will need to drive into the multi-use lane to facilitate a turn. In partnership with avid cyclists and city planners, I would advocate for identifying an optimal cycling path through Rockville on connected paths. As we decrease vehicular traffic flow, we will replace lanes with wider cycling and pedestrian paths.
- Alternatively, taking into consideration the will of the Voters, bike paths that transit close to residential neighborhoods, that are well-lit, physically separated from traffic, with adequate width for passing and stopping, and within close range to the services or businesses, would be an IDEAL STATE for Rockville.

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 a country that is based on individual liberties, there will always be friction to mandate or compel mutual respect; which is why there is such a large disparity between selecting a mode of personal transportation.

- During a recent Rockville Suds and Soles run, Rockville closed down multiple adjoining neighborhoods and streets for the safety of the event: nearly all of College Gardens and Woodley Gardens community streets. This demonstrates that it is certainly possible to temporarily redirect the flow of vehicular traffic.
- To promote bicycle transportation, dedicated bike and electric scooter/bike paths should connect the city and minimize dangerous interactions between our kids and vehicular traffic. As the transition toward alternative fuels matures, the need for less gasoline powered modes of transportation will arise. Battery-powered cars will get smaller. With the advent of

electric bikes, scooters, segways, and other powered mechanisms, the roads will have to adjust to handle the changing demand.

- No one ever wants to be the recipient of a death notification in a vehicular accident. It is bad enough when it involves two automobiles, but when it is a vehicle vs cyclist, scooter, pet, wild animal or pedestrian (young or old), it is an unbearable tragedy that only goes one way. We can certainly redraw lines on the road and create a new bike lane (on existing roadways), but the challenge lies in compelling individual drivers to yield to alternate forms of transportation. That does not mean we don't try, we have to recognize it takes a consistent and coordinated campaign of safety enforcement by the community, law and traffic enforcement, as well as significant increase in interest for cycling and walking, to reshape behavior toward respecting all persons on the road.
- My concern exponentially grows as we consider sharing the road with aggravated, impatient or distracted drivers, inebriated, intoxicated or drivers under the influence, drivers with a negative mental state, anxiety, fear, risk takers, and drivers who have medical issues or cannot see well. Regardless of any ideals we may have, these drivers will jump all barriers to injure others in their path, on or off the road. The best way to stop these drivers is before they get behind the wheel. The alternative is to recognize, identify and stop as early as possible.

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

I reside along West Montgomery Ave in the Roxboro subdivision. There is consistently significant traffic right outside my door, with an intersection close by. In Rockville, I love to spend time with my kids at the many different parks and playgrounds. We have a mission to visit all 66 parks within the City of Rockville. We will occasionally do a bike adventure around adjoining neighborhoods, taking care to avoid heavily trafficked roads.

- I also enjoy long walks with my series of foster dogs. I like to expand their range of interesting scents to sniff, which increases their curiosity and enjoyment. I routinely drive to the King Farm Dog Park. The foster dogs are enriched with interactions with other dogs.
- I have also walked to Rockville Town Square and the Farmer's Market on Saturdays, with family and a dog. I recall a day when the sun overwhelmed the poor dog, but he sure enjoyed all the smells along the way.

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.

From Page 307 of the FY24 Adopted Budget, it seems the range of CIP funds geared toward Transportation hovers around \$7 million, with an outlook to FY 28. What the City has allocated will serve to maintain existing roadways. As we look to expanding into alternate means of transportation and mobility: a static number cannot suffice (Need additional money for additional movement)

- Most of the FY24 Transportation funds are dedicated to the 12-year cycle of street maintenance, replacement, bridge rehabilitation, streetlight conversion to LED bulbs, and other improvement projects. There seems to be multiple project lines that have some overlap: such as sidewalks, street extensions, road diets, and bicycle and pedestrian paths. I recommend a mix of collaborative projects to repurpose existing resources in the near term, identify corrections that we'd like to make permanent and then allocated the appropriate funding to resolve. For example, crossing train tracks and thoroughfares are inherently dangerous. We should not subject anyone to putting themselves in danger to achieve par (security/safety/risk level) with the rest of the population.

- We must also balance that adding bike paths to heavily traveled main streets will cause a bottleneck in vehicular traffic, which encourages more risky driving.

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.

I had a chance to speak with representatives for RAPID during Rockville Hometown Holidays. The idea is for Montgomery County to commission a bus service that moves directly to Silver Spring from Rockville; less stops than Ride On. From the statement made on the Federal Transit Administration webpage, the BRT will operate in mixed traffic and repurposed shoulders. In the current iteration, the RAPID buses would operate on a pathway that could have potential to be used by cyclists heading down Viers Mill Road.

- In the current state, as interest in cycling grows, either for recreation, sport or necessity, traveling along roadways where traffic exceeds 40+ miles/hr, in relatively poor lighting, would not be optimal for timid or children riders; and arduous for pedestrians. I firmly believe that in the short term, cyclists can benefit from the added bus routes. Perhaps we can propose a cooperative effort: where bus passengers with bicycles have reduced or free rides. That encourages a synergy of using mass transit and then bicycling the last mile.
- Alternatively, if the cost of riding an expedient mass transit service is more convenient and less expensive than driving a personal vehicle; then demand for the bus service will naturally decrease the use of vehicular traffic on MD 355 and 586; giving way to lane availability for cycling.
- Together, we can accomplish many things; either with brute force or with grace, careful planning and preparation, and will power to ACT when the time comes.

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

I have many biking related stories. My earliest one comes from my childhood. My family could not afford bicycles in the 1980s; my parents were new to the United States and every cent counted. My cousins loaned me their bikes, however visits to their home were few and far between. I always looked forward to the next bike ride... even after I ran into a parked car. I apologized profusely to the parked car, and vowed that I would learn to ride a bike and not hit a stationary object. Biking represents a freedom that is only paralleled by a motorcycle ride. You move as fast as you pedal, with the exception of going down a steep hill. I rode my bicycle during my military deployment to Japan (where I had my bicycle stolen and later I recovered it). More recently, I joined members of my company on a cycling trek from Arlington to Reston; I only made it part of the way. I look forward to taking my kids on longer rides as they become more substantial riders. See you on the road.

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