

Transportation Questionnaire for Bay Area Candidates

March 5th, 2024 Primary Election

Name: Margot Smith

Which office are you running for?: California State Assembly District 14

1. Which counties does the jurisdiction of the office cover?

Alameda, Contra Costa

2. Which forms of transit and active transportation (bicycling, walking, scooters, wheelchair) do you use on a regular basis and for what types of trips-- and why?

Walking and Uber /Lyft for transport and shopping. I cannot bike or use scooters and do not own a car. My walking is limited to a few blocks.

3. Would you seek additional funding for Bay Area transit and what form of funding do you think makes sense?

We need funding for shuttle buses like Emeryground in many communities and for safe routes for bikes and scooters in communities that have the capacity and need for them.

4. Public transit in the Bay Area is highly fragmented, with 27 transit agencies, each with different fares, schedules, branding, and customer information. Do you believe it should be a priority for the region to create a well-coordinated transit system? And as an elected leader or potential member of a local transit agency board, would you support state legislation that advances a more integrated, high ridership system, even if it diminishes local control?

A well coordinated transit system would be considerate of commuting workers, those going for recreation and entertainment, shoppers. Local agencies like city councils and school districts must give input into local transportation needs and be accommodated.

5. Transportation is the largest single source of carbon emissions in California, and in the Bay Area, and the largest share of transportation emissions come from single occupancy vehicles. What are your top priorities to achieve substantial reduction in transportation-related GHG emissions?

More electric vehicles, charging stations, and bikes and scooters for those able to use them. Mass transit improved to accommodate commuters. Low cost housing so people do not have to travel as far to work.

6. The Bay Area still has road projects under development that would increase Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution. What decisions would you make about projects that increase VMT and pollution?

We need low cost housing so that workers can live near their work places and do not need to travel many miles over freeways in gasoline cars to work. Until we solve the housing problem the road issues will continue unless we provide low cost mass transit.

7. Transit priority improvements are proven to make taking the bus faster and more reliable, while also reducing operating costs. Should local governments be able to stop transit priority improvements on local roads?

Decisions made by agency administrators unaware of local conditions can be disastrous. There must be a way for local officials to give input as to fire evacuation routes, earthquake faults and flood areas, needed pedestrian crosswalks, transportation needs to school and work. Local roads can be improved for buses and routes for commuters. However, transit costs should be low or free so that low income people will prefer them. Low income people are less able to purchase electric vehicles and the cost of housing gives them a long commute to work.

8. What do you think are the most important actions that can be taken to make public transit comfortable, accessible, and safe for all communities?

Careful consideration of routes, safety, location of bus stops, transit usable for people with walkers and canes, differentiation between long distance and local services, prompt schedules, and very low cost or free to commuters.

9. Traffic violence and deaths in California are increasing annually; in 2021, 4,258 people died in vehicle crashes, a 10.7% increase from the prior year. If elected, what will you do to reverse the trend, increase street safety, save lives and reduce injuries in our community? What policies or specific projects would make the greatest impact?

Careful coordination of traffic lights and pedestrian crossing lights, slower speeds for vehicles, well marked pedestrian crossings, enforcing traffic laws especially regarding speed and stopping. Recent data has shown more accidents among scooter users, so safety training for electric bike and scooter users.

10. What do you think are the biggest access and mobility needs for disadvantaged populations in your district, and how would you propose to solve them?

On demand services, shuttle buses, low cost transportation, well thought out routes, frequent buses, wheelchair and walker access to vehicles would make transportation more accessible. A coordinated publicly funded agency could work on this.

11. In what circumstances do you support removing parking or repurposing vehicle travel lanes to create safer and more efficient bus, biking, and walking options? How do you propose balancing the demands of different interest groups who may disagree on how streets should be designed?

Changing human behavior requires research before drastic changes can be successful. Where do people go and why? How many? When? Are they carrying equipment, tools? What if it rains? How far must they travel to get to market, to work? What about the last mile? What are the demographics--kids, elder, disabled. Lots of questions. Removing parking depends on the neighborhood, the street parking needed by households and businesses to accommodate human needs, such as care givers and customers. Unfortunately many of our communities were built in the 20th century with the assumption that cars would be the main form of transit--narrow hilly streets for example. To redesign communities to accommodate more bikes, walking and buses can be problematic. It will take time, research, careful planning and even some new forms of transit to accomplish change. (TinyCars? Vacuum tubes? Monorail? Drones?)

The "Transportation Questionnaire for Bay Area Candidates for Office" is sponsored by a coalition of partners- Transbay Coalition, SPUR, Seamless Bay Area, San Francisco Transit Riders, Silicon Valley Bike Coalition, and Bike East Bay to help educate the public on these important issues.

