

# STREET collective

## 2021 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

### INTRODUCTION

Just like in 2017 and 2019, the Street Collective wants to know where Des Moines City Council candidates stand on safe streets and active transportation issues. This questionnaire serves to educate and inform the Collective's members and the public. The Collective is an Iowa non-profit corporation and 501(c)(3) organization, so it does not endorse candidates for office. The Collective will, however, encourage all citizens to vote in the city elections held on November 2, 2021.

After the deadline below, the Collective will post these responses on its website ([www.dsmstreetcollective.org](http://www.dsmstreetcollective.org)), Facebook, Twitter, and other online platforms. All responses should be considered public, including a decision not to respond to a particular question or the questionnaire as a whole. We use the terms "walking" and "walkability" as inclusive of people who use mobility devices.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please submit your responses via email to Mike Armstrong at [Mike@dsmstreetcollective.org](mailto:Mike@dsmstreetcollective.org) by September 21, 2021.

### CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Name: **Connie Boesen**  
**Justyn Lewis**

Ward or At-Large seat: **At Large**

## PRIORITIES

### 1. What are three transportation projects you want the City to complete during your term?

Connie Boesen

- The reconstruction of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave from University to Euclid Ave
- Connect Downtown
- Rebuild University Ave from 31<sup>st</sup>-48<sup>th</sup>
- McKinley Ave from Indianola Ave to Park Ave

Justyn Lewis

I would like to see the city continue to put in sidewalks to add safe walking routes; improve shared road usage and bike accessibility downtown and throughout Des Moines; and work on traffic calming (road narrowing) by removing lanes to slow down traffic; and last, but not least, finally get Fleur Drive completed! Ha. Ha.

### 2. Scenario: a proposed street project would add a bike lane, a wider sidewalk, or a bus-only lane, but would remove some on-street parking spaces or a car traffic lane. How would you decide whether to support that project?

CB

It would depend on the roadway and does it follow the master MOVE DSM plan

JL

There are a number of factors to consider. Traffic flow in that area, potential congestion, alternative routes and parking, and how those alternative routes and parking may impact local businesses (and if that impact will be offset by the addition of a wider sidewalk, bus-only lane and/or bike lane.) Generally speaking though, if it increases accessibility without overburdening small businesses, it is something I am inclined to support.

### 3. Scenario: a developer proposes a project with affordable housing, but there are no transit lines, grocery stores, or sidewalks nearby. How would you decide whether to support that project?

CB

I will not support projects that do not take proper transportation, parks and schools into consideration

JL

I think the solution is to expand transit lines, address food deserts through targeted investments, and build sidewalks and bike paths in order to prevent this scenario from ever happening. If a developer wants to build affordable housing, the city should ensure all the proper infrastructure is already in place for such projects.

- 4. Scenario: a proposed street project would deviate from the MoveDSM and/or Connect Downtown plans for that street. (Note: both were unanimously approved by the City Council and aim to make Des Moines more walkable and bike-friendly.) How would you decide whether to support that project?**

CB

My voting record on Fleur Drive provides insight on how I would vote on new initiatives. There should not be a need to vote on sidewalk issues, the plan and direction on what needs to be done has already been approved.

JL

Unless the proposed project has a similar aim and improves on the MoveDSM and/or Connect Downtown plans, I would not be inclined to support it. The goal here is to make Des Moines more accessible to those who don't have a car or choose not to drive. So, any proposed deviation would need to increase accessibility or decrease costs in a way that doesn't decrease accessibility.

## WALKING

- 5. What investments, if any, do you support that would make sidewalks and crosswalks easier and safer to use for people with disabilities?**

CB

I am supportive of allocating additional dollars from the stimulus funds to get more sidewalks gaps completed and provide access for those with mobility issues

JL

There are far too many areas in this city rendered inaccessible to people with disabilities due to a lack of sidewalks and crosswalks, as well as sidewalks that are poorly maintained. We need to be investing money right away on new sidewalks and crosswalks in high traffic areas that currently don't have them. We also need to make a point of maintaining existing sidewalks.

- 6. In 1969, about 50% of American children walked or biked to school. Today, less than 10% do. What should the City do to reverse this trend?**

CB

Des Moines needs to aggressively close gaps in the Priority 1 sidewalk gaps. It is a much different day today than in 1969, two parents working has led to many parents dropping kids off when they go work. There is greater concern on kids walking safely to school. It is not as much a transportation safety issue as much as a general safety issue.

JL

The first two factors to look at are safety and accessibility. Are there safe biking and walking paths around the school that are easily accessible? The other factor is the culture. We should, as a city, be encouraging people to walk and bike more in general. We should also encourage teachers to bike or walk to work. We also need to be encouraging parents to encourage their kids to bike or walk to school.

## BICYCLING

- 7. Many cities have significant public funding for bike share programs. Do you support increased City funding for the BCycle system? Why or why not?**

CB

Yes

JL

Yes, aside from the obvious public health and environmental benefits, bike share programs are something a lot of young people are looking for when determining whether or not to move to a particular town. Accessibility and inclusivity can increase a city's wealth and fuel its growth.

- 8. Imagine a 10-year old and a 70-year old bicycling on a busy street. What kinds of infrastructure protections would you want in place to ensure their safety and comfort? If there are budget constraints for a street like the one you described, at what point do finances rise above safety concerns for you?**

CB

Safety should be the driving element to determine how streets are developed and re-designed, streets should be planned for all ages.

JL

The main infrastructure protections I would want in place would be a wide, clearly demarcated bike lane.

Cities have the dual problem of limited budgets and plenty of worthy places to invest money. Finances will never "rise above safety concerns" for me, but I do need to be responsible with our limited budget and ensure that money spent to address safety concerns is spent in practical and cost effective ways.

## TRANSIT

- 9. How can the City help DART improve its bus system and attract more riders?**

CB

Dart is used by more Des Moines citizens than any other community and that is because of how the City was set up. To get more people riding we need to have more routes and make it more accessible. The current funding -enough to get by- makes it a challenge to increase ridership. Park Avenue is a road that could use DART service.

JL

Expand nighttime hours. Many people who would be inclined to use DART to get to and from work simply can't because there isn't a bus available.

**10. We consistently see DART stops blocked by snow and unreachable by sidewalks. How can the City address this?**

CB

We need to work with Public Works and DART to get locations cleared. However funds, personnel, and equipment aren't in the City or Public Work budget. I would be open to a proposal on how we can make that happen.

JL

Des Moines needs to invest in more snow removers, be they people or equipment. We also need to make a point of ensuring low-income areas aren't underserved when it comes to snow removal.

**EQUITY**

**11. What should the role of the police be in traffic enforcement? What is the best way to hold drivers accountable for speeding, blocking bike lanes and crosswalks, failing to stop or yield, etc.?**

CB

They play a role by enforcing the laws that we have but we need a public that understands that there is responsibility to obey the laws. I would support more cameras to issue tickets on busy streets and intersections. We also need a media campaign to slow down traffic. Speeding on residential streets is one of the top topics discussed when I attend neighborhood meetings.

JL

While police need to be able to enforce traffic law, pretextual traffic stops (sometimes called terry stops) are far too often used to target people of color. If police are making a traffic stop, they should have probable cause that a crime or infraction was committed. Furthermore, ordinances banning racial profiling need to be assertively enforced by the city.

**12. Much of Des Moines is zoned for low-density uses like detached single-family homes and commercial properties that require many car parking spaces. What impacts, if any, does this have on the transportation system? What policies, if any, do you support to combat those impacts?**

CB

Low density neighborhoods puts more cars on the streets and require more parking on streets. We need to improve our public transportation system to get people out of their cars. The metro area has not done a good job on developing areas with public transportation in mind, this is a regional issue. When most of the retail is in the suburbs it has forced Des Moines residents to use their cars. To make any major changes to transportation we need to work through the MPO. I would be open to hold more meetings to discuss how we can improve the situation.

JL

There is the concept of Maslow's hammer, "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." If all of your zoning and infrastructure accommodates cars, people will naturally be more inclined to drive instead of ride the bus, bike or walk. Some of this can be addressed through zoning changes that allow higher density housing units to be built and through investing in infrastructure for biking and walking.

**13. Neighborhoods where fewer people can afford a car (i.e., those that are poorer and have a higher proportion of people of color) are also those lacking good transit, safe walking and biking, and quality streetscapes (e.g., trees, benches, trash cans, public art, etc.). How would you address these inequities?**

CB

We must continue to address Complete Streets projects throughout the City. There has been improvements in areas, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor project, Fleur Drive sidewalks, pilot project in Highland Park, plans for Douglas Avenue. When roads are being rebuilt many of these elements are being added and we need to continue those efforts.

JL

Investments, be they directly in infrastructure or in grant programs for things like trees, public gardens and public art.

**14. The largest source of climate change-causing greenhouse gases in America is from transportation. What role should the City have in cutting these pollutants?**

CB

By building more density housing on major corridors where there is public transportation, following Move DSM and providing more electric charging stations for electric vehicles.

JL

We should be, whether it comes from the city budget or Federal and State grants, investing in buses that run on alternative energy. Also, as stated earlier, we need to start promoting and normalizing biking and walking as a formal of transportation in the city.

## YOU PERSONALLY

**15. How often do you walk, ride a bike, or ride transit for your daily needs?  
Would you accept the Street Collective's challenge to live without driving for a week?**

CB

I am not a very scheduled walker and have 2 bikes that I have used very little. I would not accept the challenge to go without a car.

JL

Prior to working from home due to COVID, I would ride my bike to work at least once per week (from NW Des Moines to the capital). YES! I would absolutely accept the challenge.

**16. What is your favorite street to walk or bike on in Des Moines? Why do you like it?**

CB

I like walking at the Fairgrounds

JL

Franklin Avenue because it is bike friendly and in a growing area.