

CHARLESTON COUNTY COUNCIL

DISTRICT 3

1.) What are your personal transportation values and how you would lead on transportation issues if elected?

Joe McKeown: I support smart streets so that we can provide safe vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle transportation. I believe it is smart for developers to plan for this early when a new area is being developed. This should be funded on the local level when possible.

Rob Wehrman: I believe in a comprehensive approach to transportation, where everyone has access to safe, affordable, and effective transportation. While there are several road projects in Charleston County that we certainly need to complete, I believe our current transportation system is too automobile-dependent. We can do more to promote public transit, walking, biking, and other alternatives. Expanding these options doesn't just help the people who ride the bus, walk, or bike; it also helps drivers by reducing traffic and demand for parking. Ultimately, improving our transportation system requires us to give residents more options, leading to more opportunity, shorter trip times, and a better quality of life for everyone.

I would lead on these issues by ensuring that the County invests in safe, accessible infrastructure, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit. However, building the infrastructure is only one piece of the puzzle. We also need to encourage development patterns that make it possible to travel throughout the Charleston-area without a car. We can do this by locating stores, restaurants, and other needed amenities near residential areas, so that residents are not forced to travel long distances to meet their daily needs.

2.) Are there specific bicycle, pedestrian and/or public transit projects in your district that are priorities for you? If yes, please tell us about them and how you would lead to address them.

McKeown: I support the LCRT (Lowcountry Rapid Transit). We must stop just discussing this and get busy doing it. We live in a remarkable community. People want to move here and they are. We must provide a different means of transportation from Summerville to downtown.

Wehrman: The most significant project in my district is the Lowcountry Rapid Transit line. This would create a dedicated bus lane running through the I-26 corridor. By creating a dedicated bus lane (and using high-capacity buses), this project promises to reduce commuter traffic flowing from Summerville into Downtown. An equally important component of the project is the use of transit-based development along the route. As discussed in further detail below, this would further reduce the demand on our roadways and encourage more vibrant, livable neighborhoods.

There are several other projects of importance. Just outside of my district, the County is scheduled to select a design for the Airport Connector Road. The County has also selected a design to expand Highway 41, which inexplicably goes straight through the historic Phillips Community (which I strongly oppose). On all of these road projects, I would push for designs that incorporate multi-modal transit alternatives to make sure that our road improvements do not continue the legacy of automobile-dependence. I would also oppose plans, like Alternative 1 for Highway 41, that disproportionately and unnecessarily harm communities that are not responsible for the traffic problems in the first place.

3.) If elected, would you support greater annual funding allocations from the county for bike, pedestrian and public transit infrastructure? And, would you lobby the South Carolina Department of Transportation to increase the agency's spending on bike, pedestrian and public transit infrastructure?

McKeown: Yes and no. I would work with the municipalities and contiguous counties where a road is being built to do all we can to allow for various transportation modalities but would not lobby the SC DOT to provide additional revenue. This needs to be done on the local level.

Wehrman: Yes. For all the reasons discussed in my other answers, I think these investments are crucial to building a more equitable, vibrant community and reducing our traffic problem.

4.) Charleston Moves is intensely focused on addressing the multiple Ashley River crossings, to make them safe and connected for people on bikes and foot. So far, the Ashley River Bike & Pedestrian Bridge is funded and should go out for a design-build contract bid in 2021; the North Bridge Bike/Ped Study is funded, with a design alternatives analysis to begin in late 2020; the James Island Connector retrofits have been assessed, but no action has been taken to move forward; and the Wappoo Cut Bridge (as an alternative to the Connector and a linkage to the Ashley River Bridge) has yet to be examined. How would you

support advancing the North Bridge, James Island Connector and Wappo Cut Bridge crossings?

McKeown: These all need to be done on a case by case basis. They are all different with various safety, volume and space issues to take into consideration. This is why it is so important to take these things into consideration before building any new roads.

Wehrman: Improving bike and pedestrian access on our bridges is critical if we want build an interconnected Charleston County. I would continue to support the recent progress that has been made on the Ashley River Bridge. I am eagerly awaiting the results of the North Bridge study and will do whatever I can to move that project forward. I would certainly vote in favor of any safe, effective design alternative that is proposed, and would make funding for the project a priority. I would also work with the City of Charleston to make progress on the James Island Connector and Wappo Bridge.

5.) What is your vision for Lowcountry Rapid Transit? Would you support zoning changes to encourage transit-oriented development and a robust network of bicycle and pedestrian paths connecting to the system's stations?

McKeown: I support the LCRT and will of course consider zoning changes to allow for it if under the county's jurisdiction.

Wehrman: I envision a system of seamlessly connected stops surrounded by residential and commercial activity, easing traffic and expanding economic opportunities along the I-26 corridor. I would absolutely support zoning changes to encourage transit-oriented development. While a true mass transit system will provide immense value in-and-of itself, the thing that sets the Lowcountry Rapid Transit line apart is the potential for transit-oriented development. This means that areas surrounding the stations should be designed to encourage walking and biking. A bus line isn't very useful if you still need a car to get from the bus stop to your destination (or from your home to the bus stop). Transit-oriented development addresses this problem by allowing a mix of uses closer to the bus line. Of course, we need to have housing in close proximity to the stops, but we also need to make sure that grocery stores, shops, restaurants, and other amenities are located close by and connected by safe sidewalks and bike paths.

I would add that we must also ensure that the current residents in these areas are able to share in the benefits provided by Lowcountry Rapid Transit. All too often, these types of improvements can lead to gentrification and displacement by raising housing

costs. This is why we need to make sure that transit-oriented development is paired with investments in affordable housing along the route.

6.) Do you agree with the following statement (feel free to explain why or why not)?: All transportation projects (related to roads, streets, bridges and/or commercial development) should include access for multiple modes of transportation.

McKeown: *I do when they can be done safely and funded locally.*

Wehrman: Yes. I firmly believe that we need to build a community where everyone can travel safely, affordably, and conveniently as they go about their daily lives. We cannot achieve that goal without giving citizens multiple travel options. Investment in multi-modal transportation is an investment in everyone's quality of life.